Sacred Heart Review.

POPULAR PROTESTANT CONTROVERSY.

VI.

As we know, there is found in Tristram Shandy a string of imprecations, given as the Roman Catholic form of excommunication. They begin with the hair of the head and proceed successively down through all the members of the body, invoking a curse upon each, as also upon every function and activity of body and soul. The whole disgusting thing is so utterly alien to the use of the Roman See, that almost all Roman Catholic clergymen, even those of eminent scholarship, suppose nothing else but that it was invented by Lawrence Sterne out of his own head. However, some of the learned professors of the Brighton Catholic Seminary give me their judgment that it is an amplification of an actual formula used in some barbarous country and barbarous time, by some barbarous priest. Sterne has retouched it, and out of his own humorous indecency has perhaps given it some additional obscenities.

Some sixty years ago the bishop of Philadelphia excommunicated a priest named Hogan. Forthwith some zealous Protestant, hearing the word "excommunication," pricked up his ears, got out his Tristram Shandy, and published Lawrence Sterne's string of curses as the form of the sentence used. If it caught the Bishop's eye, he doubtless published a denial, but how much good would that do, above all, in Philadelphia, the city that was soon to distinguish itself by murdering Catholics and burning their homes and churches? I remember reading the curses, perhaps fifty-eight years ago, with the undoubting faith of childhood, as the authentic way in which Rome puts people out of the Church.

In some other barbarous country and barbarous time another formula was more or less in use, less obscene than the former, but even more ferocious. Out of the two somebody has compounded for Mr. Lansing's use a form, which he assures us is that used by Pius IX against Victor Emmanuel when the latter entered the States of the Church. Would it do any good to him or his to refute this? Good? Let us remember what Holy Writ says about those whom we may bray in a mortar with a pestle among wheat, and fruitlessly. In reality Pius IX. never excommunicated Victor Emmanuel at all. At the time of the invasion I read the sentence in full, and, as pointed out in Johnson's Cyclopedia, it is not properly a papal sentence, even of *minor* excommunication. It mentions no names; it gives no directions as from the Pope's fresh will; it pronounces no forfeiture of membership in the Church. It is simply a notification of the standing law of the Church (from which the Pope finds no call to depart), that those who despoil the Church of her possessions incur thereby privation of the sacraments, except *in extremis*, lapsing again under privation should they recover. Call it excommunication or what you will, it is in fact almost precisely equivalent to what we in Protestantism call a sentence of suspension, having this in its favor, however, that whereas with us the Church must act afresh before even a dying person can be restored, here every confessor can, at his discretion, absolve any dangerously sick penitent whatever, who, if he dies, goes hence free of all ecclesiastical censure.

This sentence, and no other (if it can be called a sentence), was pronounced against Victor Emmanuel, not by name, but inclusively. He, too, died absolved, and comforted by an affectionate message from the Pope, who loved him, and whom he loved. Destiny set the two men in public hostility, but neither of them was capable of a malignant act or word against the other. Vittorio died with all the sacraments of the Church, "housel'd, appointed and anealed."

It is a curious study, to make out in what sort of world such men as the Rev. Isaac J. Lansing live. They are members of civilized society; if not cultivated themselves, in any true sense, they at least have cultivated associates; they read the current literature of the day. Yet here he is found, capable of supposing that in courteous Italy, in the midst of cultivated Europe, in 1866 or thereabouts, that refined Italian nobleman, Count John Mastal, was capable, in war or peace, of hurling out against a great Italian king, his own personal friend, a string of filthy imprecations unknown to the Roman chancery of the rudest ages, such as it is wholly improbable that even a John XII., was capable of pronouncing. And we are to suppose that civilized Europe stood quietly by, wholly unaware of such a volcanic explosion of hideous barbarism in her centre, although such a thing was unknown to the Europe of Boniface VIII., nay, of Innocent III., and Gregory VII., before whom kings trembled, and laid down their crowns! Even the indecencies once put in the mouth of that bad man, Philip the Fair, against that not very good man, Boniface VIII., have faded out of history. The three days' waiting in the snow of the Emperor Henry has, in the light of closer research, turned into a three days' expectancy — doubtless sufficiently anxious— in warm apartments, of a prince who had simply thrown the symbolic sackcloth over the dress of his rank. The crown of Barbarossa, struck off his head by the disdainful foot of Alexander III., as the Emperor stooped to kiss it, has followed Pope Joan to the land of fable. All through the Middle Ages, says Dean Milman, the sternest Popes, in their sternest sentences, were careful not to depart from the language of Christian compassion and hope. This, he says, through more or less perfunctory, was far from being hypocritical, or ineffective. And after the traditions of centuries had fixed this style immovably for the Papacy, we are told, to be sure, only by Lansing's incredible ignorance and boundless malevolence, that a Pope, in our day, when the most anxious courtesy has penetrated every form of public intercourse, suddenly broke out into such unmeasured vileness of abuse that even his own Italian, which is sufficiently expressive of such things, did not suffice, but he must turn Lawrence Sterne's nastiness to account! Mr. Lansing, too, has undertaken to turn some of the most unmentionable words of the horrible thing into Latin, and I need not say has broken down ridiculously in the attempt.

It is true, we can understand the use of harsh formulas, that have become official. The present Pope, the most courteous of men, has once or twice used language which would have been intolerable to us as Protestants, were we not willing to suppose that it expresses a curialistic style fixed in the embittered controversies of the Reformation. Queen Victoria assuredly does not regard Cardinal Vaughan as a superstitious idolater, yet at her coronation she was made to sign a document declaring Transubstantiation and the Mass "superstitious and idolatrous." No Catholic lays it up against her, knowing that she is not permitted to choose the form in which she shall profess her Protestantism. Her son, should he survive her will sign the same formula, and will not lose a single Catholic friend thereby. Every Presbyterian minister, assenting to the Confession of Faith, has to take into the bargain the declaration that the Pope is Antichrist, and all "Papists" idolaters, although he is perfectly free to affirm the next moment that he believes neither the one nor the other. It is true, he is only made to say that the confession contains the system of doctrine revealed in the Scripture. It may also contain a great many things not revealed in the Scripture. But Mr. Lansing gives us something utterly different. The style of Christian love and compassion is as fixed in the papal sentences as an ordinance of nature. The Pope might about as well undertake to contravene the law of gravity as to turn aside from it. Yet precisely this miracle of evil is supposed to have been wrought by Giovanni Mastai-Ferretti, of all men, and in this age of all ages.

Even the famous excommunication—actually, I suppose, the greater excommunication — launched by Pius VII., against the elder Napoleon, did not *name* the Emperor. I have never chanced to see the Bull, but my historical sources mention it as excommunicating Bonaparte, unmistakably, indeed, but inferentially. Setting aside the petty Duke of Parma, of whose case I know little, no European sovereign has been excommunicated by name since Queen Elizabeth, more than three hundred years ago. Pius V., who fulminated the Bull, was not, as Mr. Lansing will have it, "the ferocious Ghislieri," for "ferocious" implies a different style of character. Yet he was unquestionably the *intensest* persecutor of Protestantism that has existed. Moreover, not content with excommunicating the Queen, he insisted on exercising the now antiquated medieval prerogative of deposing her. All this gave great discontent to his successor of the next century, Urban VIII. Urban, while allowing that Pope Ghislieri (to use the Italian idiom) meant excellently, thought the old man's look had been fixed too much on the past, and that he was not sufficiently aware that a different age had opened. As Pius IX. has remarked, the deposing of kings is not an inherent attribute of the Papacy, but grew naturally out of the Pope's medieval position as supreme arbiter of Christendom, at a time when Church and State were not so much united as indistinguishably interfused. It therefore, remarks Pius, naturally faded away under a different system of public law, and he who should now talk of reviving it would justly expose himself to universal ridicule, and to the Pope's laughter first of all.

Yet, discounting the now untenable assumption of Pius V., there is nothing in his Bull from first to last unbecoming the gravity and temperance of a Christian man. There are no threats against the Queen, no imprecations, no wishes unless it be for her repentance and salvation. The Bull is even less austere in tone than the Roman Pontifical, although this, in its form of anathema, contains not an imprecation or a threat.

Pius V., doubtless, with Melanchthon, Beza and Knox, would have thought it lawful to put an obstinate tyrant or his agent out of the way, even by a private hand. Yet in the Bull there is no incitement, however oblique, to any violence against Elizabeth. Whether the Pope was accessary before the fact to Ridolfi's plan of murder, as Knox as least after the fact to the murder of Rizzio, and Beza to that of Guise, I do not know. Mr. Lansing says that he was, which makes it almost certain that he was not. At all events a Catholic gentleman, who wished to put a stop to the executions of the English priests by assassinating the Queen, could not find a divine in France or Belgium to assure him that it would not be a mortal sin, and therefore desperately, though fruitlessly, resolved to undertake it for himself in the hope of living long enough afterwards to repent. However, neither the Protestantism nor the Catholicism of to-day can justly be held responsible for the rude and fierce theories of a rude and fierce time, a state of society whose constitutive principles are hardly any longer intelligible to us. Certain it is that this famous Bull gives no encouragement to any such opinions. And although Melanchthon expresses an ardent wish that God will raise up some bold Englishman to strike down Henry VIII., yet this is only once, and in a private letter, so that Protestantism can not justly be held answerable for it.

In fact, the almost uniform temperance of speech (for it must be supposed that there were occasional lapses) maintained by the Popes in their severest and sternest penal sentences, is the more surprising, as the very same men, when only Cardinals, were involved in all the unrestrainedness of language of an unrestrained age. The great traditions of the office did not obliterate, but severely coerced the most impetuous temper.

CHARLES C. STARBUCK.

Andover, Mass.

A TOUCHING INCIDENT

A Non-Catholic Volunteer who Wanted "A Little Man in a Metal Case, Just Like Those the Catholic Soldiers Have."

War and its perils and privations develop and make manifest much that is good and much that is bad in man. In matters spiritual the effect produced upon the individual suddenly summoned to face the dangers of conflict is immediate and most beneficial. The faith which wells up in the heart under such conditions is in many instances a source of surprise even to him in whom it is manifested. In the hour of trial the Catholic soldier, even though he has been Catholic in name only, with years and years of total estrangement from his duties to God to look back upon, feels the faith of his youth revive and his confidence in the mercy and protection of the Almighty renewed. But this revival of faith, this natural leaning of poor humanity upon the Supreme Power, is not confined to avowed Catholics, as was evidenced by a touching incident that transpired on a Philadelphia thoroughfare some days ago. The principal actor in it was not even nominally a Catholic; he was nominally a non-Catholic. But some kindly wind had dropped a seed in the rich soil and it had taken root.

He was going to war. In the din and bustle of preparation he had noticed that among those who were to be his comrades on the field were many who appeared to draw sustenance and strength from an invisible source. Now and then he saw an exchange of confidences and a mutual exhibition of valuable possessions—not intrinsically valuable, but treasures nevertheless. The time of final departure draws near, and as he passes from his home to his regiment's quarters, his farewells all spoken, he sees to his right the portals of a quiet convent—a cross over the door. Several lads are at play on a neighboring pavement. He summons one of them, and this colloquy ensues:

"My boy, take this quarter and ask one of the ladies in the house opposite to sell you one of those little men in a metal case."

An expression of doubt appears on the lad's face, and the man hastily adds:

"Like those they give to the Catholic soldiers; they'll know."

"Oh," ejaculates the boy, "I understand:" and as he mounts the convent steps the man waits on the sidewalk.

To the gentle nun who answers the summons the youthful messenger explains his mission—explains it, with a smile in the exact words of his employer. He wishes to purchase "a little man in a metal case, just like those they give to Catholic soldiers." A question or two, and the nun understands the exact situation. The mother superior is summoned. More questions and answers follow, and the nun and her superior exchange happy glances. A few minutes elapse and the boy emerges. He carries "a little man in a metal case, just like those they give to Catholic soldiers," and besides, a number of blessed medals. These he surrenders to the man on the sidewaik.

"And Sister told me to return the money," explained the lad, handing back the quarter.

Big tears appeared in the man's eyes and coursed down his bronzed cheeks. He was deeply moved.

"Do you know any of the ladies in the house?" he inquired, in tones that betrayed his emotion.

"I know one," replied the lad, mentioning the Sister superior.

"Thank you very much," said the man, and he continued his journey to the armory.—F. P. G. in Philadelphia Catholic Standard and Times.

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THE CHRISTIAN HOME.

We need hardly remind you, beloved brethren, that while home life would not, as a rule, be sufficient to supply the absence of good or counteract the evil of dangerous influences in the school, all that the Christian school could accomplish would be inadequate without co-operation of the Christian home. Christian schools sow the seed, but Christian homes must first prepare the soil, and afterwards foster the seed and bring it to maturity.

The basis of the Christian home is marriage; that is, marriage entered into according to religion and cemented by God's blessing. So great is the importance of marriage to the temporal and eternal welfare of mankind, that, as it had God for its founder in the Old Law, so, in the New Law, our Divine Lord raised it to the dignity of a sacrament of the Christian religion. Natural likings and instincts have their own value and weight; but they ought not, by themselves, be a decisive motive in so important a step as Christian marriage; nor are they a safe guarantee for the proper fulfilment of the high ends for which marriage was ordained. That Christian hearts and lives may be wisely and rightly joined God must join them, and religion sanctify the union; and though the Church sometimes permit the contraction of mixed marriages, she never does so without regret and without a feeling of anxiety for the future happiness of that union and for the eternal salvation of its off spring.

The security of the Christian home is the indissolubility of the marriage tie. Christian marriage, once consummated, can never be dissolved save by death. Let it be well understood that even adultery, though it may justify "separation from bed and board," cannot loose the marriage tie so that either party may marry again during the life of the other. Nor has "legal divorce" the slightest power, before God, to loose the bond of marriage and make a subsequent marriage valid. "Whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder." * * * * In common with all Christian believers and friends of civilization we deplore the havoc wrought by the divorce laws of our country. These laws are fast loosening the foundation of society. Let Catholics, at least, remember that such divorces are powerless in conscience. Let them enter into marriage only through worthy and holy motives, and with the blessings of religion, especially with the blessing of the nuptial Mass. And then, far from wishing for means of escape from their union, they will rejoice that it cannot be divided but by death.

The pervading atmosphere of the Christian home should be Christian charity—the love of God and of the neighbor. It should be the ambition and study of Christian parents to make their home a sanctuary where no harsh or angry, no indelicate or profane, word should be uttered, in which truth, unselfishness, self control should be carefully cultivated, in which the thought of God, the desire to please God, should be sweetly and naturally held before the children as their habitual motives. From the home sanctuary the incense of prayer should ascend as a most sweet morning and evening sacrifice to the Lord.—Pastoral Letter of Third Plenary Council of Baltimore.

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