

fluence; but, be it remembered, that Giovanni Mastai was a man of liberal ideas and tendencies before he became Pope, and even for some time after he had ascended the Papal throne. It was only after the death of Grazioli, his former confessor, that Pius IX., falling into the hands of a confessor devoted to the Jesuits, began to incline a favorable ear to their suggestions, and they have led him ever since the dance we wot of, until, at last, they have made him the self-constituted infallible laughing-stock of all Europe—a king without a throne, and an infallible Pope with a remnant of a church. Two reasons are to be assigned for the popularity the Jesuits have always enjoyed as confessors,—a popularity which has not fallen off, even in our day, though it must be admitted that the attendance, especially on the part of the sterner sex, is not as assiduous at the Confessional door as it was three centuries ago. The first is, that they enjoy the privilege of absolving from every censure, even in cases reserved for the Pope alone. This privilege they enjoyed within the first twenty-five years of their establishment, together with several others, such as having a private chapel in every house, and, the right to celebrate mass even in time of interdict, the power of dispensing from religious vows and impediments to marriage, of conferring academical degrees, a dispensation from the payment of tithes

and all other ecclesiastical contributions, and, above all, complete independence from the jurisdiction of bishops. These extraordinary privileges were not, however, all granted again to the Society when Pius VII. re-established them in 1814; but we believe that to this day they hold greater power in the Confessional than ordinary priests. The second, and much more potent reason for their popularity, as confessors, and a reason which holds to-day as strongly as it did three centuries ago, is, that they are much more lenient than any others, regulating the severity of their penances very much by the character of the penitent. To justify themselves for the course they adopted in so doing, they put forth their doctrines of “probabilism” and “mental reservation.” Laying down the broad principle that to commit a sin one must have a clear perception and understanding of the sin, as sin, and of free-will consent to it, the Jesuits have therefrom deduced the following consequences:—

“A confessor perceives that his penitent is in invincible ignorance, or at least in innocent ignorance, and he does not hope that any benefit will be derived from his advice, but rather anxiety of mind, strife or scandal. Should he dissemble? *Suarez affirms that he ought; because since his admonition will be fruitless, ignorance will excuse his penitent from sin.*”

(To be continued.)