

change during the reign of Napoleon. Conferences! this provoked curiosity. In a conference, the speaker seemed to commence a dialogue with his hearer; questioned him, consulted him, weighed his objections, strove to answer them, and placed him upon a level with himself. No commanding tones were heard; no galling authority displayed; Romanism grew mild and gentle, and the public were flattered by so much condescension.

But it was not enough to have changed the word: it was also necessary to change the thing; for if the conferences had been sermons in the old style, with their scholastic divisions, their quotations from the fathers, and their open exhibition of Popish dogmas, the auditors would speedily have seen through the trick, and have made these modern preachers the objects of their ridicule. The conferences were, therefore, discourses which were, in fact, new both in matter and style. Philosophy, history, politics, the fine arts, and even little anecdotes, took the place of doctrine; and all this was presented in a lively, entertaining, and conversational manner, and accompanied with numerous expressions borrowed from the periodical press. M. Lacordaire especially excelled in this singular kind of discourse; his preaching was not *Romish* but *romantic*.

M. Denis Affre, who had succeeded M. de Quelen as Archbishop of Paris, did not altogether approve of these innovations. He published a pamphlet, in which he recommended preachers to *make frequent use of Scripture and of the Fathers*. He also suggested, that they ought to pay due respect to modes of speech consecrated by ecclesiastical usage. "The auditors," said he, "must never for an instant forget that the words of the speaker fall from the Gospel pulpit, and that they are spoken in a church, and not in a saloon or a school-

room."* This was excellent advice, but the Archbishop appointed as preachers precisely those persons whose faults he theoretically condemned. Whether these conferences were orthodox or not, in the Popish sense of the term; whether they were clothed in grave or in frivolous language; this was not the principal affair. Above all, it was requisite to bring back within the sound of the Romish pulpit the wandering sheep of the Church, and the prelate practised on this occasion the Jesuitical maxim, *that the end justifies the means*.

The scheme was crowned with success. The churches of Paris, till then almost deserted, were filled with hearers. Ladies went in crowds; gentlemen followed. Magistrates, Peers of France, deputies, literary and even military men, thronged around MM. Lacordaire and Ravignan in the spacious cathedral of Notre Dame. Many people were probably astonished at themselves on finding that they had crossed the threshold of a Romish place of worship. But they were required to attend these conferences by *bon ton*, and its commands every one hastened to obey. If these persons were not good Christians they were at least spectators, and the priests congratulated themselves on having thrust the multitude into the paths of the Church.

The same tactics were adopted in the provinces. Itinerant preachers, young for the most part, of agreeable person, sonorous voice, and pleasing manners, proceeded to hold conferences in the principal towns of the kingdom. Their arrival generally produced a great sensation. Card-parties were postponed, drawing-room assemblies adjourned, and the Church became the rendezvous of all who set any value upon the good graces of the fair sex.

* "Lettre Pastorale sur les Etudes Ecclesiastiques," by M. Affre, 2me. Partie, ii.