

LORD LLANDAFF ON THE PERSECUTION IN FRANCE

The thanks of the Catholic world are due to Lord Llandaff for his masterly paper in the current number of "The National Review" upon the persecution of the Church in France. The main facts upon which Lord Llandaff relies in his reply to M. Combes' recent apologia are, of course, familiar to the readers of the "Tablet" but they are now arrayed with a lucidity which can hardly fail to make a lasting impression upon English public opinion. At the outset we were taken back to the passing of the Law of Associations in the summer of 1901 and shown how most solemn pledges given by the then Prime Minister, and author of the law, M. Waldeck-Rousseau, were violated by his successor. Under the terms of that law all unauthorized congregations were to be dissolved unless within three months they had made a formal request for authorization. The professed object of the measure was to regularize the position of the religious orders, and not suppress them. The request for authorization had to be accompanied by copies of the rules of the Congregation making it, as well as by a statement of the object for which it was formed and a complete inventory of all its property. Supplied with this information the Minister of the Interior was then in each case to consult the Municipal Council of the district, and to call upon the Prefect for a special report. After that it was to be the duty of the Minister to draft Bills granting or withholding authorization as the case might be. The law contemplated a judicial decision upon the merits of each case after a careful inquiry as to all the facts. During the discussion in the Chamber an amendment was moved calling for the summary suppression of all the congregations. It was successfully resisted by the Prime Minister on the ground that it would defeat the whole purpose of the Bill. When it was objected that even so the Bill, if passed, might be used to effect a wholesale proscription of the religious orders, M. Waldeck-Rousseau was properly indignant. "Do you believe," he said, "that French Chambers, having before them rules that are sincere and free from dissimulation, rules that proclaim objects philosophical, philanthropic or of social interest, will be animated by an absolute parti pris, and will say, it is a Congregation, we refuse to authorize it?" In the same debate reference was made to the Congregation of Piepus, of which Father Damien was a member. The Minister replied that an order of that sort had nothing to fear, and indeed, had no reason even to be interested in the discussion that was going on. The Senate ordered the affichage of this speech and so it was placarded in every commune throughout France. These Parliamentary pledges of the Prime Minister were thus communicated and repeated, to the electors, and as Lord Llandaff observes, may well have had considerable influence on the general election which took place soon after.

The law of 1901 had hardly been passed when M. Waldeck-Rousseau resigned, and was succeeded by M. Combes. The new Minister at once proceeded to falsify all the pledges of his predecessor. Many of the religious orders, reading aright the intentions of the Government, anticipated their fate by going through the form of asking for authorization. Others, relying upon the pledges of investigation given in the Chamber, and believing that each case would be decided upon its merits, hastened to comply with all the requirements of the law. They forwarded copies of their rules, inventories of their property and statements as to the objects for which they existed. In many cases these were, from any point of view, so obviously beneficial to the nation that authorization seemed almost a matter of necessity. This view of the case was strengthened by the fact that the reports of the Municipal Councils were overwhelmingly in favor of the Congregations. Even the Prefects, whom the breath of a Minister can make and unmake, declined to condemn. It is true that of those who replied to the Ministerial circular 751 were hostile, while only 72 were in favor of the Congregations, but no less than 539 returned to answer. "The silence of a Prefect when a Minister questions is significant. It is fair to conjecture that the desire to please would have prompted the answer that was expected, if the weight of opposing fact had not been too great to overcome." The reasons given by the Prefects who opposed the Congregations were very instructive. Some reported that the schools carried on by religious orders were too successful and attracted pupils away from the lay schools; others laid stress upon

on the fact that the political influence of the Congregations was hostile to the Government. It seems to have been felt on all hands that this was an offense for which banishment for life was a suitable penalty. And this view of the Prefects was fully endorsed by the member appointed to report to the Chamber on the question of granting authorization. M. Rabier said: "The action of the Congregations is prejudicial to the development of Republican ideas; the disappearance of these inveterate enemies of our regime constitutes the best propaganda we can use against the reaction * * * We are politicians. Our charge is to accomplish a political work and to preserve by all means in our power the patrimony of the Republic." Under these circumstances M. Combes saved the time of the Chamber by declining to consider the case of each congregation separately. In his view all of the religious orders were tarred with the same brush, and so it seemed better and simpler not to make any invidious distinctions between them. He classified the Congregations into three divisions. Even that must have seemed a superfluous formality. For three Bills were at once introduced denying authorization to each of the three classes. M. Rabier felt constrained to admit that certain services were rendered by some of the orders, but he added: "It must not be thought that these services of the Orders are a sufficient tribute for the dangers they represent." And the law prevailed. The arrangements for inquiry into the merits of each case provided for by the law were set aside, and the Congregation of Piepus, to which Father Damien belonged, and which, in the words of M. Waldeck-Rousseau, had no need even to concern itself about the law? It perished with the rest. Its offence was that its members, in the vague words of the official reporter were "hostile to the present form of society and government."

The fate of the female Congregations was much the same. In the words of Lord Llandaff, "some of them were contemplative Orders, whose members led cloistered lives, secluded from the world, and having no contact with life outside the convent walls save through their prayers for France. Others bestowed all their time on the arduous task of instructing the ignorant, of feeding the hungry, of nursing the sick, and of relieving the miseries of indigence and infirmity. All alike were doomed to destruction." Schools, orphanages, hospitals, alms-houses, establishments for the dumb and the blind have all been overtaken by the common ruin. And what is the offense thus ruthlessly punished—for mere membership of an unauthorized Congregation involves fine and imprisonment? The offense is an alleged antagonism to the spirit of Republicanism as it is understood by M. Combes. In the name of liberty this persecution of opinion is sanctioned. We are told that the teaching orders are "unfit trainers for free citizens;" that their "educational system is incompatible with our ideals;" and that they are "pernicious instruments of that monstrous theocratic doctrine which is fatal to our whole social and political conception of which the fundamental axiom is, the absolute independence of the State of all dogma, and its recognized supremacy over every religious communion." M. Combes tells us the Congregations "openly conspired with the monarchical factions to compass the ruin of our institutions." Lord Llandaff replies: "If this means a conspiracy which was a breach of the law, when was it committed? Why was it not prosecuted under one of the provisions of the Penal Code which deal with such offenses?" If it means that here and there Frenchmen have used their constitutional rights as the free citizens of what is nominally a free State to agitate for a change in the form of Government, what harm is there in that? Is there any justification for persecution or a reason why one set of Frenchmen should pass laws of proscription against another? If the elementary principles of civil and religious liberty had ever been understood by the rulers of contemporary France the present crisis could never have arisen. And that seems the main moral of Lord Llandaff's admirable article.—London Tablet.

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WHATELY AND THE DOMINICANS

(By Rev. I. C. P. Fox, O.M.I., in Donahoe's for May)

In connection with St. Kevin's Reformatory I must not omit the Earl of Granard—who was an active member of our committee, and a distinguished convert,—The Bishop of Canea, Dr. Donnelly, who spent a few days with us, and Sir John Lentaigne, Government Inspector of reformatories and industrial schools. The last named was of Huguenot descent, but was a fervent Catholic, and had both a brother and a son in the Society of Jesus. He was the owner of the ruined abbey and former church property of Tallaght, where Father Tom Burke, O.P., lived and died. He wished to sell what he owned there, and no one was more anxious to purchase it than the erudite but bigoted Dr. Whately, the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, the prime supporter of the so-called Model and National Schools, which boasted of the openly-avowed object of counteracting the good that was being wrought by the Christian Brothers, and other Catholic teachers. But Sir John Lentaigne was equally resolved that what once belonged to the Catholic Church should not fall again into the hands of Protestants, so he sold it to the Dominicans, who eventually founded their novitiate there. On the day subsequent to this sale, when the Archbishop and some of his intimate friends were seated in the drawing-room of his palace in Merrion Square, a gentleman came into the room and exclaimed in a loud voice, "Your Grace, Tallaght is sold." "And who has bought it?" "The Dominicans." "Ah! those d—d Inquisitors," retorted the Archbishop. "What a calamity!" The above anecdote which betrayed so vividly the animus of this Protestant dignitary was told to me by one who was present on the occasion, a young man named Pope, a nephew of the Archbishop, who soon afterwards became a Catholic, and in course of time a priest.

MARBLE ALTAR COMES IN FREE

In New York, last week, Board No. 3 of the United States General Appraisers announced a decision sustaining a protest in the matter of a marble altar imported for presentation to St. James' Pro-Cathedral, Brooklyn. The Collector of the Port assessed duty at 50 per cent. ad valorem under the provision for manufacturers of marble in paragraph 1115 of the tariff act. It was contended that it should come in free under the exemption in paragraph 703 for works of art imported expressly for presentation to various kinds of institutions, among which are included incorporated religious societies. The board is of the opinion that the altar should be classed as a work of art. The altar was ordered by Father Peter Donohoe, the rector of the Pro-Cathedral, while he was in Italy two years ago. Hugh McLaughlin donated \$15,000 for its purchase.

A SCIENTIFIC REASON

Rev. Silas Swallow tells that when he was a student at the Wyoming seminary, a farmer came to Kingston, to visit his nephew, a student there. The uncle had some decidedly rural customs, including the habit of pouring his tea into his saucer. This greatly annoyed the nephew, who at last said: "Uncle, why do you pour your tea into the saucer?" The old farmer looked up in surprise. Then he said, in a loud, hearty voice: "To cool it, to be sure. The more air surface you give it the quicker it cools. These here modern seminaries don't teach much science, do they?"

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