

and candour that he should have answered at all. He was regarded at Rome with something more than suspicion, and nobody quite understood why he had escaped the fate of Döllinger. There was nothing that Mr. Gladstone could say of the decrees too strongly condemnatory to command his assent. But his invincible integrity of mind would not allow him, for the sake of his own peace, to acquiesce in the practical conclusions which Mr. Gladstone drew from irrefragable premises. In several letters written for the *Times*, one of them addressed personally to Mr. Gladstone, Lord Acton gave the only reply which could in the circumstances be given. Mr. Gladstone's reasoning was unassailable in argument. But man is not a logical animal. People are sometimes better than their principles, sometimes worse, very seldom consistent. As Mr. Gladstone himself had said a few years before, "The limit of possible variation between character and opinion—aye, between character and belief—is widening and will widen." Lord Acton, with all his subtlety and all his learning, could only take refuge in the old and familiar truth that what a man will do cannot be inferred from what he believes. The *Corpus Juris*, he said, makes the murder of Protestants lawful. Pius the Fifth justified the intended assassination of Elizabeth. Gregory the Thirteenth condoned, or rather applauded, the massacre of Saint Bartholomew. Was it therefore fair to assume that all Catholics who accepted the Vatican decrees, or even all Ultramontanes, were potential murderers? "Communion with Rome," he said at the same time, "is dearer to me than life." He concluded his letters in dignified and moving sentences, which made a deep and just impression upon Catholics and Protestants alike. "It would be well if men had never fallen into the temptation of suppressing truth and encouraging error for the better security of religion. Our Church stands, and our faith should stand, not on the virtues of men, but on the surer ground of an institution and a guidance that are divine. I should dishonour and betray the Church if I entertained a suspicion