

MODERN WAR UPON THE CHURCH.

Remarkable Sermon by Father Robert, the Eloquent Passionist.

Philadelphia Standard and Times.

Father Robert, the eloquent Passionist, who is so well and favorably known in this city, delivered a remarkable sermon in Our Lady of Mercy Church on the occasion of the formation of a men's sodality. In the course of his missionary experiences Father Robert has traversed the entire country, meeting and conversing with men and women of all sorts and conditions. The utterances he attributed to him are born of those experiences and should be weighed and pondered by every Catholic.

Some twenty-five years ago, said Father Robert, a cry went up that spread throughout the whole world and was calculated to cause more or less alarm among our people. The cry that was heard was simply this, that the Catholic Church was a thing of the past; that her power was completely destroyed, that she did not meet the requirements of the present age, and that these had entirely baffled her efforts for existence.

This cry was the effect of a well-concerted plan on the part of the enemies of the Catholic Church to destroy her, under the impression that she was nothing more than a mere human institution. The scientists said that she had long pondered to the ignorance of the masses. While her clergy were educated men, they were so shrewd enough to keep the knowledge of science far from the minds of the people lest it should prove fatal to their existence. The astronomer, whose knowledge penetrated to the skies, pretended that he had discovered truths that were contradictory to those taught by the Catholic Church; the geologist, who went down into the bowels of the earth, said he had unearthed facts positively contrary to her dogmas; the politician, or rather the man versed in political affairs, spoke loudly of her as opposed to all kinds of free government—that she was the enemy of the republic; the literary writer sharpened his pen, and dipping it in gall, issued diatribes that were well calculated to poison the minds of readers against the Catholic Church.

Add to these the ex cathedra pronouncements by which the dogma of Papal Infallibility was proclaimed to the world and the Syllabus condemning the poisonous and heretical literature. All these things excited the adversaries of the Church so far that they predicted the downfall of that institution. They said never more would she govern the intelligence of the civilized world. Again things were brought to a climax at this very time, when Germany, flushed with recent victory, persecuted her Catholic subjects at home and abroad. France, the eldest daughter of the Church, embittered by recent defeats, went back upon her mother; and her once faithful children, the very children of the Papacy, crowned the efforts of her enemies, and entering the Papal city, the capital of Christendom, took from the Pope the patrimony of Peter, made him a prisoner in his own palace and then cried "Down with the Church." Her enemies asserted that she would never more arise to trouble the world.

But, my dear friends, has the Church ceased to exist? Has that mighty institution lessened her power over the minds and hearts of men? Has she ceased in her onward march, keeping pace with and aiding the progress of our day? We know that every effort of her enemies proved futile in other days. In ages gone by she witnessed the downfall of paganism and of its crumbling ruins raised up her imperishable structure, which withstood the mighty hordes of Genseric and Alaric and the onslaughts of Mahometanism. Three centuries ago she withstood the combined powers of Europe. Was it possible that in this nineteenth century she should bow down, crushed by the enemies of Christianity?

The children of the Church understand well that while she uses human power she is strengthened by power from on high. They well understand that the powers of hell cannot prevail against her, and that while, like her Divine Founder, she may have her period of agony—she may, as it were, sweat blood; she may be scourged and crowned with thorns; she may appear dead and buried—and when the world least of all expects it, she arises triumphant over all; she claims victory over death. She reigns to day as she has reigned in every age in which it was predicted that her power was brought to nought.

Yet, my dear friends, while we recognize that our Holy Catholic Church is a divine institution, never without God's special help guarding her, history tells us (and it is well that we should remember the lesson history teaches) that in every exigency she has met her enemies on their own ground, and she has always defended herself according to the exigencies of the time. In her earliest days, when her members were remarkably small in number, when her power, looked at from a merely human standpoint, seemed exceedingly weak, God in a most marvelous manner helped and sustained her. Then, with the termination of her persecutions and the dawn of a brighter era, in the days of Constantine, the Church adapted herself to her surrounding circumstances. She became a most formidable power, even from a human point of view. She then could meet her enemies by human means. She opposed her own mighty strength to their brute forces, and she conquered and triumphed over them.

Again, when the power of intellect

was brought to bear upon the Church, and an attempt was made to crush her out of existence by the pen of the philosopher, she opposed intellectual powers to her intellectual enemies. When the Moslem sought to overrun Christianized Europe, to place the crescent where the cross had been, she called upon her children to stand up as one man, and, under the guidance of and led on by a Bernard and others with zeal like him, they conquered the vast infidel powers. Down to the days of the Reformation, the days that witnessed the most cruel persecution of the Church, when nation after nation went out from her, stood, as it were, in battle array against her, she combined her splendid strength of intellect, she concentrated her power. The faithful children of the Church became as one, and all the powers of earth and hell could not overthrow her. In our own day, when it was asserted that the government of the Church had become effete, that her teachings were not up to the standard of this age of progress, that she was bitterly opposed to free government and free institutions, that her intellectual teachings were inconsistent with the development of scientific research—when these things were asserted she came forth to prove their falsity and the falsity of the cry that her existence was a thing of the past.

But the enemies of the Church are not dead. As long as the world lasts, and Christ is adored upon this earth, so long will there be anti-Christ. And so long as the true Christ has His followers, so long shall anti-Christ have his minions. At this present day a new mode of warfare is being instituted. The nations do not rise up in their wondrous power and try to crush her. They know it is useless. Rulers do not institute their series of awful persecutions because they are living in an age of intellectual progress. The philosopher of two centuries ago knew well that his lies and calumnies had been refuted. Yet I say that there is a new method of warfare; and perhaps never before in the history of Christianity has the world witnessed a more insidious and determined onslaught on the Catholic Church than we witness in our own day.

Knowing that the history of the Catholic Church has been in days gone by, we rely almost too much on the Divine protection that supported her in the past. As I remarked a few moments ago, it is well that we learn the lessons history teaches us. The Church has always met her enemies on their own field. Never aggressive, ever on the defensive, but when her own force attacked her, God or her own children stood in her defence. When intellectual forces were brought to bear upon her, the intelligence of the Church refuted these enemies, and in our own day it behooves us to know what the tactics of our enemies are, what the means of warfare they employ, and what their ultimate objects are.

On these points I am not going to give you any startling news to-night. The principal thing is that they are carried on in a most quiet and orderly manner. My dear friends, outside the Catholic Church to-day the enemies of Christianity understand that she is not only a mighty institution upheld by God, but that regarded from a merely human point of view she is physically and intellectually strong. They well understand also that in order to cope with her it is necessary above all things to concentrate power behind. There are secret societies that, while under the appearance of benevolent objects, have essentially as their chief motive the destruction of Christianity. There are again formidable bodies of men, who tell us that their object—and they do not tell us in which direction—is that their main object is to crush out to-day the Catholic Church. They have used their most concentrated means to bring about their object, and have succeeded to some extent in bringing their efforts to bear upon whole States. We shall very soon find out that our enemies are making themselves felt. We see it in the ballot box, in the appointments of State, city and county officials; we see it in the very halls of representation in our great Republic. We talk of the American flag and we scream as loud as the eagle herself about freedom of speech and of the press, and yet only a few days ago in our halls of legislation in an appropriation that was made to charitable institutions in the very District of Columbia, when the matter was brought up, this money goes to be refused because it is the mode of Catholic purposes. This is the mode of warfare. It touches our people in a very delicate spot. It is, perhaps, the most scientific mode of warfare against the Church ever witnessed since the very birth of Christianity.

Now my object to-night is not to deliver a political tirade, but the Lord knows that I would be willing to speak till I could not utter another word. I say I would give my voice as a sacrifice in denouncing from every pulpit and rostrum in the land those who stand up and in merely political affairs try to crush the Catholic Church, to stab her in a vital part—they are enemies of the republic that we as Catholics have reason to call our own. We discovered the land, we civilized it, we colonized it, we Christianized it, and yet to-day to our faces we are told that we are here on tolerance—told to get out, that we have no business here, and we fold our hands and we listen to all this and we do nothing. Let there were no means of only, he tell you, my dear men, right here is where we are to concentrate our thoughts, to understand what our position is in the world to-day, to know that while the Catholic Church cannot be destroyed by any means of which

man is capable, as individuals we can be harmed, and even Catholic nations might be wiped out of existence, for God never promised that He would preserve the whole Catholic Church. Obedient to the behests of our Holy Father Pope Leo XIII, one of the greatest of the Pontiffs that have occupied the seat of Peter, every Bishop in the land and every priest in the land filled with zeal for the house of God are seeking to draw together the men of the Catholic Church. Let them be united in societies, in sodalities, in confraternities that are thoroughly Catholic. We have a number of societies that have the name of being Catholic, but that are so only in name, for there is a difference. A Catholic society, thoroughly Catholic, thoroughly religious, is the kind of Catholic society we want to-day. We need men whose faith is shown by their practical piety. Catholic men who can be called up at a moment's notice to have their Catholicity put to the severest test. This is the kind of men we need to-day.

It is time to recognize this. I am talking to-night to an intelligent body of men and women thoroughly conversant with the literary, political and religious events of the day. Do you not think it is about time that we Catholics should understand our forces? Politically? No! Morally? Yes! by all means; and right here, by concentrating these powers in some thoroughly religious organization it is that we are to find our strength. I have come a long way to meet you this evening. Your pastor had no idea of what I should speak about, nor had you the slightest conception that I should mention these facts, but I consider it high time for the priest of God to lift his voice to warn her before them. There is no danger to the Catholic Church itself as a body, but to Catholics as individuals and as a society. We see it, but have not yet seen the full extent of it.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION AND THE SPANISH ARMY.

Devotion to our sinless Mother, the august Queen of Carmel, is not confined to any particular section of the Spanish population. No class can monopolize it. It dwells in every Catholic heart. Neither misery nor happiness can shut it out from the domestic hearth. It is not confined to the innumerable Sodality of the Blessed Virgin, nor is the exclusive privilege of her countless Confraternities. It so pervades all grades of society, that clergy and laity, the civilian and the soldier, the poor and the rich, the patrician and the plebeian, the burgher and the artisan, are equally animated with this eminently Catholic characteristic.

This is evidenced particularly on the grand national feast day of the "Purissima."

It is on this day, at the beginning of winter, that the Spanish army, exalted by faith, radiant with hope, and overflowing with fraternal charity, celebrating with unusual splendor, the festival of the Coelestrial Patroness of one of its chief divisions. The cavalry have chosen St. James, "the Cavalryer," as their patron, ever since the time of the battle of Clavijo, when he appeared, mounted on a white charger, at the crisis of the combat, and secured by his apparition the complete and final rout of the Moslem hosts.

The artillery have chosen St. Barbara, the virgin and martyr, as their Patroness.

But it remained for the great bulk of the national forces—the infantry—to place themselves under the special patronage of their Immaculate Mother, "La Purissima."

Therefore, the glorious feast of the Immaculate Conception, is a day specially set apart by this great and distinguished arm of the military body, to honor their august Patroness with civic and religious festivities, whose splendor goes far to prove the deep Catholic feeling which animates the army of Spain.

On this day of general rejoicing all grades of military life, commissioned and non-commissioned, gather at the foot of the altar and around the sanctuary. Here air and numerous medals whose grey hair and numerous medals recalls many a heroic skirmish, and blood-stained battle-field, meets in fraternal intercourse with the "quinto," the conscript fresh from his mountain heather, and together they proclaim solemnly, before their fellow citizens, and in the presence of the divine Solitary of the tabernacle, their ardent sentiments of faith and piety, their love and devotion to our immaculate Mother. They profess their adhesion to the Catholic faith and their childlike submission to its dogmas, in whose defence their forefathers performed such noble deeds of valor and heroism, many of them watering their native land with their life blood in this holy cause. It was for the protection of this holy faith that, during the historic siege of Granada, was born the Artillery Corps. At this sanguinary conflict, between the Crescent and the Cross, the cannons of the Spanish army first belched forth their fearful missiles of destruction against the Moslem. The daring heroism of the new-born artillery, in defence of altar and country at this siege, as well as the later ones of Algiers, Cordova, and last, but not least, of Zaragoza and Gerona, deserves to be written down in letters of gold. Thus, to-day, Spain rejoices with her military sons, who in times of peace, as well as in the stormy days of war, have recourse to Mary, and place themselves under the mantle of her maternal love.

In the celebration of this feast no

expense is spared. With lavish spirit of religious chivalry, in every garrison city, in every military center throughout the kingdom and its foreign dependencies,—wherever a Spanish soldier is stationed to-day—the most elaborate preparations are made to add eclat to the grand ceremonial of the religious celebration. Ancient tapestries, priceless heirlooms of many noble houses, are unearthed from the museums to drape the walls of the churches; the floral wealth of the cities are unstintedly contributed, the most valuable orchids are generously supplied to beautify the altars; the sanctuary is one blaze of lights with its thousand of lighted tapers. But the most conspicuous decoration is all made with the trophies of war, all the insignia of military life. Bayonets and drums, swords and shields, cannon and banners, guns and spears, flags and banners, are artistically arranged, forming exquisitely con-structed chandeliers, shrines, pedestals and columns in honor of the Immaculate Queen.

Not content with this tribute of homage, music and oratory are invited to add their artistic charms to this great military feast. The most popular and celebrated choirs are called to interpret the grand Masses of the masters. Gounod's "Messe Solennelle" is a favorite, as it gives such welcome opportunity to military bands and invited musicians to form full orchestras, whose matchless performances are the grand "Te Deum" of the festivity.

The most distinguished orators of the peninsula, such eminent men as Father Marcellus de la Pay, of the Jesuit house of San Sebastian, Father Ludovico, the Carmelite, Father Paulino Alvarez, the Dominican, Father Noyes, the Franciscan, and in Madrid, the distinguished Court Chaplain, the Bishop of Zion, occupy the pulpits on this day.

All the immediate friends, relatives and admirers of the national forces are invited, and these, with the ordinary congregations which this holiday of obligation brings to the churches, fill every available work of our large basilicas.

To add a finishing touch to his interesting picture, so unique in its beauty, to heighten the gorgeousness of the ceremonial, to crown the pious aspirations of the valiant soldiers, to cheer him on the eve of his departure to the far distant battlefields of Cuba, to complete his happiness on this great feast, the rich dresses of the ladies vying in dazzling splendor with the elegant military costumes, honors the brave troops with its august presence. Thus it fosters among the soldiers that love of religion, that devotion to the Immaculate Queen of Carmel, which is so eminently practised by the illustrious Queen Regent, the august Infantas and the whole Royal Household.

The pious sentiments of the noble Queen Regent, find their highest gratification and reward for the Royal patronage bestowed on the troops, when she subsequently learns many a sweet miracle of conversion that wrought, unseen to human eyes, beneath the kindling sunshine of the Church's glorious ceremonial.

Yes, these days of religious festivity are often pioneers of grace to many a brave soldier's heart, in whom the distractions of the service, and the poisonous atmosphere of the guardroom have prematurely debilitated the supernatural health, which once danced so innocently in his veins when he roamed the glens and mountains of his native province.

This day recalls all the good resolutions of his boyhood, which have been shipwrecked so sadly in the promiscuous companionship of the barracks. Once more he struggles to climb the rugged mountain on the road to heaven, and the magnificence of the military services in the churches acts as a potent magic to draw him to God. For, "beautiful" as they are "before Almighty God, sweet to His taste and music to His ear," they become inexhaustible fountains of grace and divine mercy.

When we behold the long lines of infantry prostrate before the altar, at the elevation of their arms placed as trophies around the sanctuary, the incoarse arising amidst the exquisite music of the military bands, in a cloud of praise and thanksgiving, symbolical of the fervent prayers welling forth from the lips of priest and soldier; when we see religion and the army entwined, as it were, in one affectionate embrace, our hearts are ravished at this heavenly union, cemented, consecrated and sanctified by these beautiful festivities in honor of "La Purissima," the Queen and Mother of all Spanish chivalry in the past and in the present.

Nor does it lessen our love for our dear Catholic country, to know, that, sadly enough, the devotion of the military sons of Spain to their Immaculate Patroness is not equalled by the troops of any other Catholic nation of Europe—Carmelite Review.

Taken in Time Hood's Sarsaparilla has achieved great success in warding off sickness which, if allowed to progress, would have undermined the whole system and given rise to a strong foothold to cause suffering and even threaten death. Hood's Sarsaparilla has done all this, and even more. It has been thought to be incurable, and, after a fair trial, has effected wonderful cures, bringing health, strength and joy to the afflicted. Another important point about Hood's Sarsaparilla is that its cures are permanent, because they start from the solid foundation of purified, vitalized and enriched blood. But it is not what we say but what Hood's Sarsaparilla does that tells the story. There are a number of varieties of cures. Holloway's Corn Cure will remove any of them. Call on your druggist and get a bottle at once.

WORSE THAN THE OPIUM HABIT.

A recent dispatch from Indianapolis states that the most interesting part of the closing day's session of the State Teachers' association was the work of the librarians' section, which devoted its time to a discussion of "the effect of pernicious literature on the young." It developed that the librarians had been conducting some original investigations to determine how much weight is to be given to the common report that bad literature is largely responsible for precocious criminals. In following this work, Supt. W. A. Hester of the Evansville High Schools spoke of an investigation that was made in the Evansville schools as to the kind of reading indulged in by the pupils. Out of 714 pupils who answered the inquiry it was shown that 107 boys and 53 girls were reading dime novels; that 65 per cent. of the boys and 69 per cent. of the girls who were reading trashy stories had lost interest in their studies. Their attendance upon school was compulsory, and most of them had serious difficulties in school.

In following up his investigations he wrote to many reformatories and prisons for information as to the effect of bad literature. Supt. Keely of the Indiana Reform School, for girls, and the Woman's prison, found that thirty-six of the girls admitted they had been led astray through the reading of trashy stories. Supt. Charlton of the Reform school for boys wrote that he wished he could speak of all that he had seen during the last sixteen years. He mentioned many cases where criminal character was directly traceable to vicious literature.

Mr. Hester read extracts from letters from prison chaplains and wardens in all parts of the country, all speaking of the evil effects of unwholesome literature. This is a prevalent evil and one that ought to excite the lively interest of every parent for its suppression. Very little can be accomplished by schools or teachers, though they can help, if proper methods are adopted. To the parents themselves we must look for effective work in that direction. And to Catholic parents especially, we appeal, for a more faithful and vigilant performance of duty in this connection. If they do not select and provide the reading matter that passes into the hands of their young, they can and should at least know what is procured elsewhere. They can take an interest in the matter and foster the reading habit in their children and direct it in pure and wholesome channels.

No sane parent would wilfully permit his child to acquire or cultivate the habit of opium-eating or any other habit injurious to the intellectual faculties and physical health, but many view quite indifferently the growth of addictions that menace and must ultimately destroy the moral faculties and jeopardize the life of the soul. There is no agency that works with so great certainty to this end as the practice of immoral reading, and unless this be checked at the beginning an unhappy future for its victim can be calculated with almost mathematical accuracy.—Cleveland Inquirer.

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