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A PROTESTANT TESTIMONY.

Roman Catholic Missionary Enterprise.

Dr. Ambrose Shepherd, a well known Congregational minister of Glasgow, who preached the annual sermon on behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society lately at Bloomsbury Chapel, said that no one believed less in the sacerdotal pretensions of the Romish Church than he did. No one would defy her spiritual tyranny at the risk of body in this world or soul in the next, more strenuously than he would. But he bore this witness for Rome. She was to-day, as she ever had been, a missionary church. With evils at her heart, which would have killed off half a dozen Congregational or Baptist churches, she had yet lived by her missionary spirit. She had kept her marvelous continuity during the centuries. She was to-day the power behind the powers in the councils of nations—not because of her august statesmanship, her crafty diplomacy, her innumerable agencies working from a common centre—nor because of a surface and imposing unity, with its pomp and pride and gorgeous ceremonial. Those were but the flimsy fabric of a dream as compared with the consecration of her sons who, on the threshold of a splendid manhood and on the way to the fever swamp, can answer the questions: "When do you expect to return?" "How long do you expect to labor?" with the utter self-sacrifice represented in the two-fold answer: "Never; I expect to be dead in two years."—Westminster Gazette.

MARK TWAIN, THE BAPTISTS, AND THE CONGO.

A new authority has arisen on the situation in the Congo Free State, says the "Catholic Sentinel," and our good friends, the Baptists, are helping Mark Twain to sell his pamphlet on "King Leopold's Soliloquy." It does not make any particular difference whether he knows anything about the Congo Free State or not, Mark can draw on his imagination, jolly along the Congo Reform Association, and receive in grateful return twenty-five cents per. It is unfortunate, however, that just as the book is put on the market, Baron von Krints, the Austrian explorer, should return from his visit to Africa and show up the real condition. He says:—

"A sojourn in the Congo would convince any fair-minded man of the satisfactory administration of King Leopold's dependency. The Congo government has done everything possible to improve the conditions. The natives are now infinitely better housed, clothed and fed than they were fifteen years ago. The government has opened factories and manual training schools for the native children. The statement that compulsory military service is a disguised form of slavery is not tenable, since the conscription is practically the same as in European countries.

Although isolated cases of cruelty may have occurred, this is not part of the Congo system, all officials guilty of cruelty being severely punished."

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FRENCH FREEMASONRY

Timely Article by Countess de Courson

In a timely article in "The Month" for September, on the French Freemasons and their work, the Countess de Courson writes in conclusion as follows:

We cannot better conclude this brief sketch than by laying under the eyes of our readers an account of the proceedings of the "Grand Orient" at its last meeting, in September, 1904. The date was selected with the purpose that those of the brethren who wished to attend the Congress of Free-thought in Rome might be at liberty to do so.

The mystery that formerly shrouded the speeches and actions of the Masonic body no longer exists, at any rate it has been partially dispelled. Thus we know that the spirit that pervades the sect in France was manifested from the outset of the meeting when M. Laquerre, a prominent member of the sect, speaking in the name of his colleagues, sent a message to M. Combes to express "warm sympathy and entire confidence," urging the minister to persevere "in the struggle he had so bravely undertaken to defend the Republic against clericalism."

M. Combes, who was then in the full swing of his "brave" struggle with helpless nuns, naturally replied to the message. He spoke of the "feelings of affection" that bound him to the "Grand Orient," and begged his brethren to feel sure that he would faithfully carry out what they expected from him.

That was not enough, and at the suggestion of several "loges" it was decided that a testimonial under the shape of a work of art, should be presented to M. Combes as a proof of "esteem, admiration, and gratitude, with which his friends, the Freemasons looked upon the war "he was waging against a clerical reaction in the country."

In another meeting, one of the members pointed out that the laws framed against the Congregations had not, so far, been applied in Algeria; he added that the matter required immediate attention, the law courts having decided that without a special provision the laws could not be applied in the colony. The suggestion was not lost; a few days later, the government made the new laws and decrees binding in Algeria, and the teaching orders there, as in France, were ruthlessly sent adrift.

Another discussion on a paragraph in the statutes stating that the Freemasons profess liberty of conscience for themselves and for others, gave rise to utterances that proclaim once again the real spirit of the sect. Some of the speakers declared that one of the chief aims of Freemasonry was to

"deliver men's minds from dogmatic religion;" another complained that certain brethren, while professing the doctrines of the sect, continued to observe some religious practices; a third reminded his hearers that a French Freemason is bound to renounce his belief in any "revealed religion," and that the Masons of other countries had broken with their French brethren because the latter had struck out from their statutes the clause that recognized the existence of the "Great Architect of the Universe."

As may be supposed, considering the evil work accomplished within the last few years, the assembled brethren had cause to rejoice at the rapid progress made by their sect: "We have made more progress within the last two years than during the previous ten years," exclaimed M. Bonnet in a long speech when he urged his hearers to pursue the anti-clerical campaign so successfully started. He reminded them that the law against the congregations is but one of the many conquests that they wish to achieve, the separation with Rome, the ruin of the Church, the complete emancipation of the human mind, these are still to come! He concluded by congratulating the members of the sect who intended to go to Rome to be present at the Congress of Free-thought, which is to inform the Vatican that "humanity has, at last, obtained its rights . . . the destruction of the Church (he added) will open an era of justice and mercy; with the ruin of dogma and of a supernatural religion will begin the reign of science and reason."

We might quote whole passages of these ravings, where the shallowness of the orator's arguments is as striking as his intense hatred of the Catholic Church: but enough has been said to show, how, only ten months ago, the French Freemasons boldly proclaimed the theories which some 30 years past they prudently veiled under vague declamations.

Strong in the support of a government whose prominent members belong to the sect, they no longer conceal their real aims, and openly declare war, not only against religious men and women, but against God Himself.

From the fact of the French government being in the hands of Freemasons at the present day, it naturally follows that the safest, indeed the only certain way of obtaining preferment, is to enter the sect. We speak here of the profession or careers that are more or less under government control. Hence the extraordinary progress made by the brotherhood within the last few years. The members of the "Association Antimaconique" have carefully drawn up a list of the French Freemasons, and so accurate is their information, that their assertions on this head have never been contradicted. On these lists we find many names of employees in the different government offices, prefects and sub-prefects, some officers, a certain number of small tradesmen and shopkeepers, a large proportion of doctors and lawyers.

Pitiable instances might be related of the way in which principally in small provincial towns, the poor, the timid, and the weak are tyrannized over by the sect. We might give names of places where a government employee, who happens to be a practical Catholic, knows as a certainty that if he goes to Mass on Sundays, the small post that affords him his one means of supporting his family will be taken from him. His colleagues who belong to the sect are ever on the watch; by denouncing a "clerical" they are certain to gain the good graces of the "brethren." That a similar system of secret denunciation was organized in the army was sufficiently proved last October by M. Guyot de Ville-neuve's startling statements in the French Chambers.

If an outsider interested in the subject inquires from the members of the "Association Antimaconique" what may have been, so far, the practical results of their campaign, they will reply that these results are difficult to put down in black and white. What is absolutely certain is that their work is carried on with unflinching perseverance; that they never allow their zeal to get the better of their prudence, that all their statements are carefully proved, that slowly, steadily, with unerring accuracy, they are endeavoring to show the deluded French people what are the true aims of the men into whose evil hands the government of the country has been given up. The task is an arduous one, it implies long and continuous efforts, but its practical value at the present day is undoubted, and, with God's blessing, it will in time be crowned with success.



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