

CONSIDERATIONS ON CATHOLICISM BY A PROTESTANT THEOLOGIAN.

Sacred Heart Review.

CCXXIV.

On page 85 of Lansing's book there is a ridiculous parody of Edmund Burke's magnificent peroration against Warren Hastings. Under eight or ten heads the author impeaches the Pope of this, that and the other, with that cloudy confusion of fact and falsehood, of ignorance and malevolence, which is characteristic of him and of all his kind.

One of his clauses is: "I impeach him in the name of the marriage-bond of the majority of the happy households of the Christian world, which he has stigmatized as 'filthy concubinage,' because not contracted in the Romish Church."

We will consider this indictment presently, and will make thorough work of this horrible calumny, which is continually going the rounds of Protestant papers that are about on the same low level, morally and intellectually, as the Lansings and the John Christians. However, let me first come to the man's help by adding another impeachment, which he has forgotten. This is just in his line as an American Protestant. Besides, I have quite as good a right as he to make a fool of myself by laying my poor patchwork alongside of Burke's cloth-of-gold.

Here goes, then. "I impeach the Pope of showing himself the enemy of American freedom and progress by doing his best to impede the happy celerity with which our various states are driving on to extinguish concubinage by abolishing all distinction between concubinage and marriage, as desired by the elder Henry James. 'Married today; parted to-morrow'; that is the grand ideal and goal towards which our legislation has long since been moving. Now comes the Pope and helps to check this auspicious development by re-inforcing the scruples of our old-fashioned Protestants, and emboldening them to say that Caesar's word, in the court of the Christian conscience, is void when it contradicts the word of Christ. Against this pernicious and seditious doctrine an eloquent Baptist brother of the West has raised his voice, and has been echoed, although in more indulgent tones, by a famous Episcopalian brother of the East.

"I impeach him in the name of that great orthodox religious newspaper of our country which informs us that we are not to bother ourselves over what Christ has said in the matter. Christ, it instructs us, was all very well in His day, but His day is not ours. It is for us, not for Him, to determine now, at our discretion and comfortable convenience, the terms on which the marriage-contract is to be formed, maintained, or pleasantly dissolved.

"What excuse could there be for unchastity, when once the State, in the progress now making in our land, shall have brought down the legal definition of chastity below even what is expected of a temperate patron of the brothel? And is this blessed advance towards conjugal purity—which certainly ought to be easily maintainable when marriage need not hold beyond a day—to be obstructed because an old-fashioned Roman priest is trying to dam up the exuberance of our frolicsome Anglo-Saxon freedom, in these unincumbered fields of the West? Perish the thought, and perish the Pope that has conceived it! If it were not that the squeamishness of modern manners is a little against it, I would exclaim with Father Luther: Let us march upon Rome, and seize the Pope and his company, and hang them up on gibbets, having first cut out their tongues."

There now, I make Mr. Lansing a free present of this incomparable outburst, for his next edition. It will go hard, but that our united eloquence will sweep the Pope into the Bay of Bengal.

Let us now come back to his actual impeachment. And let us, for the moment, accept his lie for a truth, and declare with this villainous slander, that the Pope has pronounced all Protestant marriages "filthy concubinage." How would that dishonor a majority of the households of Christendom?

Mr. Lansing's statistics are of a piece with all the rest of him. His whole being is made up of ends and ravelings, and his statistics follow suit. For instance, he tells us that St. Bartholomew's slaughtered 700,000 Huguenots. To be sure, the Huguenots themselves, who ought to have known best, gave the number at 13,000. Poor-spirited things! See how grandly Lansing outgoes them. He gives us fifty-two times as many. That is worth while. Don't let him apologize for having put in an extra cipher. He ought to apologize for not having put in two. That would become a man so unboundedly liberal in murders and massacres, and every possible and impossible thing to discredit the Catholics. It does not go ahead of his feats in resuscitating Bellarmine and Benedict VIII., 150 and 400 years after their burial.

Glancing at an encyclopedia, I find Protestants and Easterns given as one-half the Christian world. Moreover, as Rome declares (see Pope Benedict XIV.) that it is unlawful for Catholics to discredit the Eastern sacraments, where is your majority now? If the Pope had ever said what Lansing declares—which he never has—we have here three Christian marriages out of every four undoubtedly valid, if they are such as would be valid among Roman Catholics.

Moreover, this teaching of Rome at once knocks out Lansing's underpinning. He declares the reason of the Pope's supposed denial of our marriages to be, that they are not contracted in the "Romish" Church. Now here are 100,000,000 Eastern Christians, outside the "Romish" Church, whose marriages the Holy See forbids Catholics to deny. Lansing will have to find some other ground for this imagined denial of Protestant marriages.

Here, perhaps, somebody that knows a thing or two—for Lansing knows nothing about anything—might whisper to him: "Say that Rome owns these priests, though schismatic, for real priests. Therefore their administration of the sacraments, though irregular, is valid."

This won't work at all. The Church anathematizes all who maintain that the presence of a priest is intrinsically necessary to a Christian marriage. And Pius IX. declares that wherever a Christian marriage is valid, it is also sacramental. This, say Archbishop Heiss and the Catholic Dictionary, finally extinguishes the opinion that the priest is the minister of the sacrament. The consenting parties are the ministers, and the priest—in some cases a simple acolyte, if a titled pastor—is needed to ratify the contract, and thereby the sacrament, if the Church requires it, not otherwise.

Lansing will have to shift his ground again. Perhaps somebody—for I once found, by his own admission, that he knew nothing about the action of Trent in the matter—might suggest to him: "Since Trent the presence of a Catholic clergyman is required for every Christian marriage." Indeed, Lansing, universal and unflinching blunderhead as he is, declares it, in Roman view, necessary for every marriage whatever.

Here, let me inform any Protestant reader, the man, as almost invariably, blends a lie and a blunder into one inextricable mess. It is amusing to see him, like a person so incomparably his superior as Froude, always blundering because he wishes to lie, and always lying because he is perfectly willing to blunder.

Now, as Lansing confessedly knows nothing about the decree "Tametsi," which controls this whole matter, of course he does not know that the Church forbids any pastor to act on the Lex Clandestinitatis where it has not been formally published in his parish, and that as it has not been published in Protestant countries, even Catholic marriages there, however censurable, are valid without it. Still less—if we can talk of more or less in the blankness of absolute ignorance—is he aware that mixed marriages are dispensed from it in Malta,* Rhenish Prussia, Belgium, Ireland, Quebec, and some other Catholic regions, and in the strip, once Catholic, from Georgia to California.

Of course it is more than certain that he is wholly unaware that where a Protestant husband and wife, canonically competent, and both baptized, become Catholics it

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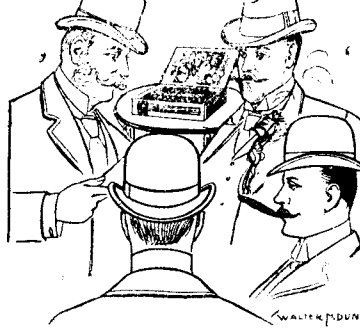
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is forbidden to repeat the marriage, even if the validity of one baptism is doubtful. Here is a fact that alone would be enough to lay all the Lansings and Christians flat on their backs, but that their absolutely invincible effrontery would buoy them up against a thousand decisions of the Holy See.

Has not Pope Pius then spoken about "filthy concubines"? Certainly, twice; once concerning New Grenada and once concerning Piedmont, both being countries governed by the decree "Tametsi," in which, therefore, the neglect of it annuls their marriages in the eyes of the Church. In neither address, therefore, is there the remotest reference to Protestant marriages, or to Catholic marriages in Protestant countries.

CHAS. C. STARBUCK, Andover, Mass.

*I doubt now whether this is true of Malta.

Each man is responsible for his own character. Each man has the liberty of sowing what he pleases. The harvest that he reaps is the aggregate of his habits—that is to say, his character. Accordingly, then, it is for each man to say whether he will be good or bad, whether he will grow better or worse. Each man is responsible for his destiny. He is responsible for his character. Character determines destiny. A profound truth lies in the adage of Sallust: "Every man is the architect of his own fortune." Daily character is shaping your future destiny.

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