

TAXING THE CHURCHES.

EXTRACTS from the speech of Hon. P. A. Collins, before the Committee of the Massachusetts Legislature on "Just and Equal Taxation":—

"It is officially reported that there is some 48,000,000dols., worth of Church and other property devoted to religious, charitable, scientific and educational uses in the Commonwealth at present exempt under the law; and it is estimated that this exempted property, if taxed, would yield some 543,000dols annually. This sum looks large, but distributed among the countries, cities and towns, with a share to the State, I fancy it would not much affect the rate of taxation. It would give the tax gatherers a larger field to work in, extend taxation over a wider area, and that is all. It would take a few less cents or dollars out of one pocket, and a few more dollars and cents out of another—the same men in either case would bear the burdeus of Government, and pay the bills. If you have a million dollars to raise in a given community by taxation, you may tax the property that you tax to-day, you may tax everything in the shape of property, visible or invisible; in the former case the aggregate of property taxed will be small, but the rate of taxation will be high; in the latter case the amount of property will be large and the rate low. What difference will it make? Will there be any more or any less property; or will you raise or need any more or less revenue? Double the valuation of all the property in the State to-day, and reduce the rate of taxation one-half—will you cheat any man into the belief that the people are twice as rich and only half as heavily taxed as before? You cannot make property by a stroke of the pen. But it is said that such an argument as this is a fallacy, because, after all, there are some people in our midst who pay taxes and who do not believe in churches, or in these other institutions. To show the number of such persons, attention has been called to the number of churches and their seating capacity. It is said that in 1870 there were in Massachusetts 1764 churches, containing 882,000 seats, and one petitioner triumphantly remarked that many of those churches were not half filled during services. Well, I don't know what churches he refers to. He certainly cannot be acquainted with mine. I can bring him to churches within whose walls three times or more on every Sunday more people worship than can find seats. No Catholic church in this Commonwealth is half large enough to hold the people who worship in it. The number of seats in churches by no means represents the number of believers. The number of seats is four-sevenths of our population. While some churches may have empty seats at their single Sunday service, others are crowded twice and thrice and four times. Moreover, the necessities of modern civilisation compel the employment on Sunday of a great number of our population. Others who profess religion do not or cannot attend services. Add to these the aged, the infirm, and those of tender years who occupy no seats in the churches, and you make up nearly the whole inhabitants of the State. Tax-payers and the supporters of churches and institutions which I have named are identical in Massachusetts. The plea is that this exemption is an oppression of unbelievers—a plea for justice to infidels. How many infidels have we here? What property do they own? What taxes do they pay? Wherein are they injured by the law as it stands? These are proper questions, but you will have no answer for them.

"The movement is avowed to be an infidel movement; another phase of which one of the speakers called 'The conflict between Church and State, between theological tyranny and Republican equality.' The Church stands in the way of those gentlemen. In their opinion churches are a nuisance. The true doctrine is 'Liberty, equality, fraternity.' Their ideas sometimes get a free range, become crystallized into acts, and Paris makes a bonfire, in the light of which these zealous patriots send a few score of useless churchmen into eternity, and fraternally sack the city to emphasise their doctrines. Wheresoever you find them, and under whatsoever name, you will find disturbers, however small their numbers. Thus far in America they have done but little open violence. In New York the International has not been a success, because the police and military are strong. But there and here, and elsewhere, they have done what they have been able to do in the direction of disorder. They are the enemy of social order and religion in every form. Do you wonder that they come here and ask you to take a departure in State policy in their direction? They do not ask all they want, but they ask all they think they can get. If they thought your temper would go the length of burning the churches and making religion an outlaw, they would not hesitate to ask for it. I have said that these 'freethinkers' have been reinforced by others who profess to be Christians. One of these 'Christians,' in response to a question from a member of the Committee, boldly answered that the common school is a greater conservator of morals than the Church—that education without religion makes a better citizen than religion without education. Hence he would foster the common school and discourage the Church. I leave the clerical members of this Committee to say what kind of Christian doctrine this man's is.

This is a movement for 'equality.' Mr Chairman, we often hear the changes rung on that word. We are told that the constitution declares that 'all men are born free and equal. If they are, how few remain so! There is no such thing on this earth as perfect equality in these things. Equality is the dream of the socialist—and it is only a dream. But these men do not go the full length of their doctrine in taxation. They do not propose to disturb the exemption of cattle, horses, sheep and swine under a certain age, the property to the amount of 500dols. of an unmarried female, the property of a female minor to the amount of 1000dols., income to the amount of 2000dols., household furniture, wearing apparel, mechanics' tools and farming utensils. Why not? Are these things not property? If these gentlemen are to give us 'just and equal' taxation, let us have it in its full strength. Upon what principle of theirs can any of it escape? Why spare the scant earnings of the poor, the small patrimony of the orphan, the sewing machine of the seamstress, the tools or utensils of the workmen? If they can't afford to pay taxes for their property, the proper thing is to divide it around among the good people who

love 'liberty, equality and fraternity.' Make no exemptions; allow the assessor no discretion. Tax property wherever you can find it, regardless of the means of its owner, or the purpose to which it is devoted. Push the idea of the petitioners to its logical conclusion.

"But, Mr Chairman, the State will gain nothing by a change. It will lose much. Suppose taxation of these classes of property would yield 543,000 dollars a year. I can count in this vicinity institutions owned and managed by Catholics, the existence of which saves that amount to the public. Suppose we had no house of the Angel Guardian, no home for destitute Catholic Children, no Carney Hospital, no House of the Good Shepherd, none of the score or so of other Catholic institutions I could name, the care of the inmates of these institutions would be thrown on the State—and you can calculate the cost. The rev. gentleman who preceded me gave you the details of these institutions. Knowing what it costs to build and keep these institutions annually, now multiply by three and you have the cost of running them by the State. The State cannot afford to cripple these institutions. Moreover they do what no State Institutions can do,—what no institution managed by the State or any county or city in it has yet done: they reform those whom they profess to reform. Let them alone, and they will save the public more than all this 48,000,000 dollars worth of property will yield in taxes; besides saving many a life, and leading many an erring one, who might otherwise be lost, into the right path.

"Do not tax them for the good they do. These institutions were founded, and have since been supported by the contributions of the public spirited and the charitable, and it is the duty of the government to foster and encourage, and not to crush them. They have cost the State nothing. How much they have saved it can scarcely be measured. These institutions and the churches have been erected under an implied promise from the State that they should be free from taxation. These structures contribute to the beauty of every town and village in the State, and enhance the value of property around them. They are a source of no income to their supporters. They are erected and maintained for the moral good they do to individuals and to the State. They are a kind of property that no civilized country has yet made taxable. Is Massachusetts to make the innovation? Then will the shock be rude. Wisely and well the pioneers of this State saw the good that churches and private charities could do, and encouraged their establishment and growth, not only by exempting their property from taxation, but by grants from the Treasury in many instances. Wisely and well, to the glory of the Commonwealth and the benefit of its people, that policy of encouragement has been maintained to this hour. That policy has been as economical as it has been generous. Catholics can bear as much as their neighbors—they have borne more in the past, and even now bear more,—but they join with other denominations in the State, with other men whose generous hands have helped the poor and soothed the suffering, and led the erring to better ways; they join to-day with the vast majority of the citizens of Massachusetts, in asking you to stand between them and a false economy dictated by men who either will not or cannot see the good fruits of generous and Christian policy.

PERSECUTION IN BRAZIL.

From the Paris correspondence of the Bombay Catholic 'Examiner,' we take the following:—

After the condemnation of the Bishop of Olinda to four years' imprisonment with hard labor, there comes a summons to Mgr. de Macedo Costa, Bishop of Para, to appear before the same tribunal. He is guilty of the same crime as his colleague—that of not admitting the interference of the civil power in purely spiritual causes, and of resisting the attempts of the freemasons to govern the Church of Jesus Christ. At the sitting of the 24th of last month, three commissaries were chosen by lots for this cause. The Government, under pretext of avoiding a popular movement against the Portuguese—which was intended only as a demonstration in favor of the Bishop—had taken military precautions. The sentence of four years' hard labor pronounced on the Bishop of Olinda has been commuted into four years' confinement in a fortress. Are we to believe that this mitigation is the effect of some little respect still left in them for religion? It is hard to say so. The Ministers are rather in fear of popular anger; they thought the faithful would not like to see their bishop having to go through the streets, with his feet chained, and in company with some great malefactor, and the Republicans themselves differed on this point. The honest portion of this party blamed the *Republica*, for having defended the persecutors, and in consequence of this disagreement, that journal ceased to appear. The result of this condemnation has made itself felt already, in the growing dislike of the people towards Don Pedro. Several papers interested in calumniating the Bishops, have spoken of a brief of Pius IX. condemning the conduct of the Bishop of Olinda; but they have not yet published the brief, for very good reasons: it never existed. So then, the penalty having been commuted, Brigadier Gabuo repaired to the prison of the Arsenal for the purpose of conducting the Bishop to the fortress of S. John. But the officer of the guard, having received no orders to that effect, refused to give up his prisoner. There was in consequence a delay of two hours, during which several persons could come to pay their homage to the prelate. When he reached the fortress nothing had been prepared for him, and the commandant was absent. The officers, however, placed a few chairs and a sofa at the bishop's disposal, for which His Lordship thanked them. Those who condemned him were all Masons, and the president himself was a Grand-master of the Sect. The Lodge "Esperanza" hastened to present the Public Prosecutor with a gold pen enriched with diamonds. His Grace the Archbishop of Bahia had addressed a circular to his colleagues, exhorting them to remain firm in the faith and to combat freemasonry with all their energy.

Fifteen hundred new journals have been registered in France during the last three years.