

THE POPE'S ANNIVERSARY.

MOST REV. DR. CROKE'S SERMON.—*Concluded.*

No man, it is now said, has a right to regulate another man's movements. Each one is to guide himself. There is no certain measure of right and wrong. Every ruler is a tyrant; every restraint is unreasonable. Liberty alone is to be worshipped; and whosoever dares to stand in the way of universal liberty is the avowed enemy of human progress, and a fit object for the vengeance of every freeborn man. I shall not pause here to refute the oft repeated calumny that the Catholic Church is unfavorable to human freedom, and that Catholics from the very nature of their creed must necessarily be slaves. We unhesitatingly assert the contrary. We fearlessly say that we yield to no denominations of Christians in our love of liberty. Life would be scarce worth having if it were not accompanied by freedom, and one of the choicest gifts of the God of Nature to his creatures is liberty. Look around you and above you, and see are not all things wholesomely free. What can arrest the progress of the earth's waters towards the sea, or who dares bid the ocean to cease its murmuring? Fire is free to consume—it is its nature. The lion is free to roar; the fishes are free beneath the wave; the birds are free in the air; and even the meanest reptile that crawls beneath our feet is free to roam within the limits which the generosity of Nature has assigned it. And can it be that man, the masterpiece of creation, may be rightfully despoiled of this, the grandest portion of inheritance? No. Tyrants may trample on the outward shrine of liberty; but they cannot extinguish the living flame on which it feeds. Like the vital spark within us, which leaves its earthly tenement only to travel to a better sphere where it hopes to be clothed in perennial beauty, liberty expelled one country is sure to settle in another; its home may be altered, but its essence is immutable and eternal. We, Catholics, then, are for liberty, but we are for liberty founded on the Gospel. "Where the spirit of God is, there," the Scripture says, "is liberty." Now, the spirit of God is a spirit of order, a spirit of meekness, a spirit of fair-play, a spirit of charity that thinketh no evil, a spirit of universal love; and such is the spirit of liberty which the Council of the Vatican was anxious to encourage and diffuse. Liberty to teach, liberty to command her subjects, liberty to point out evil that it may be avoided, and the right road that it may be followed; freedom of education, freedom for the religious orders, now so scandalously trampled under foot; freedom of association for all righteous ends; such is the only liberty that deserves the name; that liberty the Church has always claimed, and in defence of that liberty every Bishop of the Church, like the martyred Bishops of the German empire—yea, every Catholic now before me, should, and I believe would, be prepared to risk his life and fortune. And, beloved brethren, in this respect, as in all others, our Holy Father the Pope has set us a most encouraging example. Robbed of the sacred patrimony which had come down to him through an unbroken line of his predecessors since the time of Charlemagne; scoffed at, calumniated, and almost reduced to poverty; expelled the palaces hallowed by the footsteps of so many saintly pontiffs, a prisoner in the very city in which the ashes of the first Pope have found a fitting resting-place; he has spent the last seven and twenty years of his life in praying for his enemies, in blessing the children that have remained faithful to his gentle way, in extending the boundaries of that Church of which he is the holy and infallible head—condemning errors, proclaiming God's truth, offences at the peril of his life; erecting new Sees, establishing sentinels on the watch towers of Israel, walking fearlessly in the footsteps of his Lord and Master, ever "zealous for the law," and defeating all the machinations of his enemies by the dignified uniformity of his attitude, as well as by his thorough and uncompromising independence. Long live, then, our Holy Father, Pope Pius the Ninth, to rule over, to edify, and encourage us. May his days on earth be yet many; and may triumphs to come fully atone to him for all the trials and troubles of his past Pontificate. He was "zealous," brethren, "for the law;" and let me now add, as a temporal ruler, he was the true friend and the best benefactor of his country. Let us briefly glance at the history of this case. The present illustrious occupant of the chair of St. Peter, Pope Pius the Ninth, was raised to the Papal dignity on the 16th of June, 1846; and on the 16th of July of the same year, just one month after his election, he published the famous amnesty of which you all have heard, and which opened every prison door in the Pontifical States. One condition alone was imposed on each political offender—that he should sign a declaration as follows:—"I, the undersigned, acknowledge the spontaneous pardon which my lawful Sovereign, Pope Pius the Ninth, has accorded me, and I promise upon my word of honor not to abuse in any way, nor at any time, this act of his sovereign clemency in my regard." Immediately after the promulgation of that decree there was not in Europe, it may be safely stated, a more popular prince than the Pope. That is to say, he was popular amongst his own people, and in every country where constitutional liberty was respected. But he was not popular in certain despotic European States; in Austria, for instance, and Naples, and the smaller Principalities of the Italian Peninsula; and he became less so when, on the 19th of April, 1847, he announced his intention of summoning a National Council to aid him in all his deliberations, and to share with him the responsibilities of government. Austria, thereupon, became not only angry, but insolent; and the Correspondent of the 'Times,' writing from Rome on the 28th of March, 1847, for once spoke the truth when he said—"The resolution of the Pope to pursue a course of reform, to encourage railroads, to emancipate the Press, to admit laymen to offices in the State; above all, the dignified independence of action manifested by the Court of Rome, has filled the Austrians with apprehension and anger." The promised Council was inaugurated on the 15th of November, and his Holiness addressed the assembled Senate in the Quirinal as follows:—"I have three millions of subjects as witnesses that I have hitherto accomplished much to unite with me my people. You will now aid me with your wisdom to discover that which is most useful for the security of the throne and the real happiness of my subjects." Shortly after came the year of revolutions.

Europe was in a blaze. Popular excitement everywhere knew no bounds. Louis Philippe fled from France. The Austrian Eagle was trampled under foot in the streets of Milan. Barricades became fashionable in Berlin and Vienna, and the ancient Republican glories of Venice were for a season, at all events, revived. Rome partook largely of the general intoxication. The so-called apostles of liberty were abroad, and nothing short of a Republic would satisfy the excited populace. What need I say more? The amnesty was forgotten; past concessions were despised; the Pope's Prime Minister was assassinated in open day; the Pope himself was forced to flee from his palace; the great High Priest of revolution was installed in his stead, and the Eternal City had to witness the most Satanic atrocities from the 25th of November, 1848, to the 14th of April, 1850, when the Pope returned once more to his capital amidst the blessings and acclamations of his people. Since then, and up to the period of his last dethronement, his policy was one of liberality and reform, and I was, therefore, justified in saying that, even as a temporal Prince, he proved himself to be the true friend and best benefactor of his country. But, brethren, speaking individually for myself, and yet I fancy, reflecting the convictions of many, if not all of you, I unhesitatingly say that even though I did not recognise in him the divinely constituted head of Christ's Church upon earth, or the wise and beneficent ruler of a portion of God's people, I yet, somehow, should respect Pope Pius the Ninth, and entertain for him the highest reverence and esteem. He has been so tried, so braved, so patient, so consistent, so unyielding! Borne down upon, and buffeted, and reviled, and persecuted, no effort of malignity was spared to precipitate him from his lofty station. But it was all in vain. He is always dying, and yet he lives; he is always falling, and yet he holds his ground; he is always growing more and more feeble, and yet he flourishes; he has far exceeded the average years of man, and yet he is radiant with the smiles of youth and cheerfulness; he is always losing his power, and yet when he strikes a blow, hammering down a King, or bidding defiance with unarmed hand to an arrogant Emperor, the sound thereof reverberates through the universe, and is felt and spoken of from pole to pole. The wires are always busy with him. The movements of the mightiest of the world's great ones are but rarely noticed, and their utterances, as a rule, held in small account; but a word from the Pope is flashed to the ends of the earth; it decides the fate of dynasties, dissipates the doubts of thousands, and fixes the faith of the great body of believers. How potent he must be when all conspire against him! There is no combination against imbeciles. Europe, in our epoch, allied itself against one man; but he was the genius of warfare, the greatest captain and strategist since the days of Alexander. We have no fear, then, for the Pope. The last moment of darkness expires 'midst the first rays of light. Humiliation is often the harbinger of triumph; and so, as the Lord liveth, He will soon scatter the enemies of our Holy Father, even as the wind scatters the sand on the sea shore. And proud am I, brethren—I, who for some years past have been a waif and a wanderer on the great waste of waters, living as a missionary Bishop on a lone island at the Antipodes—proud am I, when I return once more to the old land in which I was born, to find the attachment of the Irish people to the Pope and to the faith of their fathers more intense, if possible, more active, and conspicuous, than at any past period of her history. Yet, for these great and truly exceptional favors which you have received from on High; for Ireland's unalterable attachment to the faith; for her unbroken hierarchy, happily crowned in our days by an Irish Cardinal, whose fame for wisdom and sanctity is over all the Churches; for the unpurchasable priesthood, and the unswerving fidelity of her noble-hearted people, humanly speaking, you could have had no good grounds to hope. Ours, you know, was not amongst the Churches that were most favored in their origin. There were Churches founded by the Apostles themselves, protected by the Emperors of Christian Rome, and presided over for a long series of years by the most pious and enlightened pastors. The Church of Ephesus, founded by St. John, is long since fallen to decay. The Church of Alexandria exists no longer, though St. Mark labored much to give it strength and stability; and even the Church of Jerusalem itself, governed, as it had been, for a number of years by St. James the Apostle, formed no exception to the decline of other Apostolic Churches. What has become of the illustrious Churches of Asia and Northern Africa, of the Churches in which Chrysostom preached, for which Cyprian suffered, and Augustine wrote? Weeds are now growing over the ruins of Carthage; and in the capital of the Eastern Empire, built as it was by the first Christian Emperor, and adorned by the piety or patriotism of his successors for above a thousand years, the Crescent has long since displaced the cross, and the fanatical followers of the Arab Prophet prefer Mahomed to Christ—the licentious teaching of the one to the sublime morality of the other. But here, here in this remote island, now so undistinguished, but once the fairest in the sea, the lamp of Faith once lighted has never yet suffered the dimness of an hour. Like the sacred fire guarded by the Vestals of another age and clime, we have preserved our faith pure, and in all things unchanged, during the long, long period of fourteen hundred years. True, indeed, that in some respects our Church's first glory has gone down; that the saint and the scholar journeying from afar have long since ceased to seek shelter on our once hospitable shore; true that our religious houses of European fame, the abodes of piety, of peace, and learning, and which furnished the chief glory and greatness of this ancient island, teach now no lesson except by their ruins; true that our sceptre is broken and our name is without honor in the councils of the great, still may we boast with pride and truth that we have preserved our faith untarnished, undiminished, unalloyed, 'midst the revolution of empires, and the utter ruin of seemingly more favored Churches. Furthermore, brethren, look around you everywhere on the scattered children of your creed and race, and what do behold? Abroad you see our Irish missionaries laboring for God's Church in every land that the sun shines upon, and carrying the glad tidings of redemption to the people of every clime and color. At home you see the sublime spectacle of a poor and but recently emancipated people building up and beautifying the fallen temples of the Most High, supporting the ministers of their Church in more than ordinary