

A REMARKABLE CHAPTER.

FOR the authenticity of all the prophecies reported to have been uttered by this holy woman we could not vouch. The following, however, has the sanction of a respected name. We extract it from a letter which the author of the 'Derniers Avis Prophétiques' received from a 'venerable friend,' and which he gives at greater length than is needful for our purpose. It is dated June 20, 1872.

'You know by reputation that the Abbé de Brandt: he has arrived from Frohsdorf, from Oria, from Naples, from Rome, and from La Salette. He saw Henri V. for three hours, Pius IX for two hours at least, Mélanie for half a day, and the holy widow Palma (the Statica of Oria) twice, and for more than an hour each time.' Passing by what concerns France and the visit of the Abbé to the Comte de Chambord, we proceed to what the latter relates concerning his interviews with Palma. 'From Frohsdorf, M. de Brandt repaired to Oria. Thanks to letters of recommendation which he had procured from a Cardinal, he was able to see the Signora Palma. For more than seven years this stigmatized woman has taken no material nourishment. Three times a day, our Lord communicates Himself to her visibly under the form of an ordinary host, and M. de Brandt saw one of these marvellous communions with his own eyes. She also communicated every morning from the hands of a priest. Here are some particulars of the conversation—which this time are most authentic—of this extraordinary woman; for the respected and worthy M. de Brandt, who has related them to me, is no liar. First, the seer said to him that she knew that he had had some difficulties with his bishop in respect to the direction of souls, but that he had always been in the right way, and that he was to continue in it. She afterwards said to him, "There will be dreadful massacres of priests and religious in Spain, in France, in Italy, and especially in Calabria; this will be soon; we are on the eve of these things; then, suddenly lighting up, she spoke of the happiness of martyrdom in accents of ineffable joy. M. de Brandt had laid it down to himself as a rule not to ask her any questions out of pure curiosity, but he thought he might venture to inquire if these massacres would take place on the 15th July, as the 'Universe' had made her say. "I said that!" she rejoined; "I know nothing about it. I retain no recollection of what I may have said when in ecstasy. I know the time, but I may not willingly reveal it. There will be three days' darkness; not a single devil will remain in hell: all will come out, either to urge on the executioners or to discourage the just. It will be terrible! it will be terrible! But a great Cross will appear; and the triumph of the Church will soon cause all miseries to be forgotten."

These last words recall to mind what P. Bernardo Clausi said to the nun, his penitent, when speaking of the judgment which she was to live to witness, and of the subsequent joy which should obliterate all memory of sorrow.

It does not enter into our subject to dwell further on the marvels connected with this extraordinary woman; we will therefore refer the reader for a circumstantial account of her state to the 2nd volume of 'Les Stigmatisées' by Dr A. Imbert-Gourbeyre. Although the supernatural facts manifested in her person are his main topics, he also makes allusion to her prophecies. We may safely add what he heard from her own lips, on the 25th October, 1871. "I questioned Palma," he says, "concerning Henri V. "I hope he will come back," she said, "but it will not be yet, not yet"—making as she spoke a significant gesture with her arm, as if to put back the time, and added, "Paris must be purified." "And the Pope," I asked, "what of him?" "I experience," said the seer, "many alternations concerning him. I know not whether he will be obliged to quit Rome. I always behold over Rome the Immaculate Conception protecting the Holy Father. The Blessed Virgin," she added, smiling, "'owes it, indeed, to the Pope, were it only from courtesy and gratitude. Such,' says Dr Imbert-Gourbeyre, 'are the prophecies I heard from Palma's lips. I know from others that she has often spoken of the woes which will overwhelm France. At the time of the Prussian war she was heard to say several times that this was nothing to what was in store for us later. A lady,' he adds, 'who has seen Palma since my journey to Oria, wrote to me last June (1872) that she still announces great woes, but also the triumph of religion. "The blood of the priests," she said, "will flow like a stream."

Sister Rosa Colomba, a nun of the Convent of Santa Caterina of Taggia, near Nice, who died in 1847, after a holy life spent almost entirely in the cloister, uttered predictions very similar to those we have recorded. She seemed to have had a permanent possession of the spirit of prophecy, but she knew so well how to veil her great gifts, as well as her eminent virtues, under a simplicity almost child-like, that her companions gave very little heed to what she said beyond occasionally laughing at some of her utterances; as when she would exclaim, 'Poor Louis Philippe! you will one day fly from France, and will go and die an exile in England.' It was only when events began to justify what their holy sister had said, that they took note of all that they remembered her to have foretold; and an authentic record was drawn up, which has been kept in the archives of the diocese. She predicted the chief circumstances of Charles Albert's reign, and described that of his successor as 'unverno di fanciulli—a reign of babies,' which would end in his dethronement. When she spoke of the 'friend' of this new king by name as Napoleon, the Religious used to be greatly amused, and would ask her if the exile of St. Helena was to return to life. She announced a great persecution which, after Napoleon's fall, was to burst forth against the Church, and which was to be the work of some of her own children. In the visions which she had of those times she saw Russian and Prussian armies invading Italy and the former stabling their horses in the new Convent of Taggia. For this reason she never would give her vote for its being built, and said that never would she hear mass in the church which should be thus desecrated. And, in fact, she died six days before its consecration. In describing the Revolution, she spoke particularly of the persecution of the Religious orders, initiated, as usual, by an attack upon the Jesuits. Nations were to march against nations and exterminate each other with the most murderous weapons; the Revolu-

tion was to spread throughout Europe, where there would be no tranquility until the White Flower should again ascend the throne of France.

The close connection between the peace of France, secured by a return to her legitimate government, and this grand peace of the world, exceeding any it has yet enjoyed and accompanied by the exaltation of the Church, was, as we have seen, foretold by Anna Maria Taigi, and has been the burden of prophecy, we may say, since the days of St. Remigius, when that holy bishop, in anointing Clovis, declared that France was predestined by God for the defence of the Church. Hence she was to enjoy greatness and power co-eval with the world's duration; but every time that she should fail in the fulfillment of her vocation she should meet with terrible punishment. (connected with this prophecy is one which can be traced as high as the ninth century; that which announces that in the latter days shall arise a great and powerful Monarch of that illustrious nation, against whom no one will be able to stand, for the hand of the Lord should be with him. He was to have dominion in East and West, and subjugate Turke and barbarians to his sway. 'Doctores nostri dicunt,' wrote Rabanus Maurus, who was Abbot of Fulda (822), and subsequently Archbishop of Mayence, 'quod unus ex regibus Francorum Romanum Imperium ex integro tenebit, qui in novissimo tempore erit, et ipse maximus et omnium regum ultimus.' In his time there was to be a great and holy Pontiff, with whom he is ever associated; and so strong was this ancient belief, which has never died away, that the non-appearance of this great king was held by a monk, at the close of the ninth century, as proof that the world could not be near its end at the commencement of the tenth. It is interesting also to note that St. Francis de Sales expressed a hope that Henri IV. might prove to be the predicted monarch. An ancient and celebrated prophecy attributed to St. Cesarius, who flourished in the fifth century, and recorded in a book entitled 'Liber Mirabilis,' printed in 1524, a copy of which exists in what was the Imperial Library of Paris, after minutely describing the horrors of the Revolution and the persecution and desolation of the Church, proceeds to say that when the whole world, and France in particular (Lorraine and Champagne being specially mentioned), shall have been a prey to great miseries and tribulations, succour will come from a prince who shall regain the throne of the lily. This prince will extend his dominion everywhere. At the same time there will be a great Pope, a man most holy and of consummate perfection, who shall have with him this most virtuous prince sprung from the blood of the Frankish kings. This king will aid him in reforming the world; and there will be one only law, one only faith, one only baptism; he will bring back many from error to the Holy See, and for long years peace shall endure, because the anger of God shall be stayed. Examples might be multiplied.

The same traditional belief prevails, and has prevailed for ages, throughout the East. The Turks in the height of their power, and at a time when Asia seemed to menace Europe much more than Europe to menace Asia, had not forgotten the ancient prophecies, which announced the destruction of the Ottoman Empire by the Christians. With them Christians and Franks are one and the same, seeing that in the East the French represent Christianity. Now these Franks, or French, are to be led by a great king who shall subject the whole East to the religion of Christ. A prophecy well known in the East, and attributed to St. Gregory of Armenia, called the Illuminator, says, 'A valiant nation shall come: it will be that of the Franks; and the world will join itself to this nation, and Asia shall be converted.' 'The East is in expectation,' writes an Oriental traveller; 'tradition has taught it that a great king of France will be at once its conqueror and its liberator.' So lively have ever been these Oriental traditions that the Arabs and Turks of Jerusalem have walled the gate by which it is said the great King of France will enter when he comes to vanquish the East.

The Comte de Maistre, who was gifted with marvellous sagacity and penetration, almost resembling a prophetic instinct, thus expresses himself in his 'Soirees, de St. Petersbourg': 'the great event of this century will not be a political, but a moral revolution, and it is the French nation which is to be the instrument of this revolution, which will be the greatest of revolutions. Many theologians and great scholars have believed that facts of the highest order and near to their accomplishment are announced in the Apocalypse. More than ever, then, should we study prophecies; for we must hold ourselves prepared for an immense event in the divine order, towards which we are hastening with an accelerated speed that must strike all observers. Religion reigns no longer on earth; the human race cannot remain in this state. There is not a religious man in Europe (I speak of the educated class) who at this moment is not in expectation of something extraordinary.' How much more cogent do these words seem in our time!

Saints of old have, as we said, combined with holy persons in our own days, in foretelling a great judgment that should come upon the world, in terms which, while they preclude the idea that they are alluding to the end of all and the final judgment, nevertheless point to something entirely unprecedented in times past, which shall introduce the era of peace and glory to the Church of which we have been speaking. The grand and leading ideas of tribulation, judgment, and renovation seem embodied in the following words of St. Catherine of Sienna, set down from her own lips by her director, the Blessed Raymond of Capua, and reported in the life he afterwards wrote of the saint:—"The evil," she said, 'of which bad Christians will render themselves guilty by persecuting the Holy Church, will bring her honor, light, and the perfume of virtues. After the tribulation and distresses, God, through a means unforeseen by men, will purify His Holy Church, and renew the spirit of His elect. Such a reformation of the Church of God and such a renovation of holy pastors shall ensue that the sole thought of it makes my soul exult in the Lord. The spouse of Christ is now, as it were, disfigured and clothed in rage, but then she shall be resplendent in beauty: she will appear adorned with precious jewels and crowned with a diadem of all the virtues. All the faithful people will rejoice to see her endowed with such holy pastors.'