

ALLOCATION OF OUR HOLY FATHER, POPE PIUS IX.

Delivered to the Cardinals, assembled in Consistory, Monday, March 12.

MANY times, Venerable Brothers, in the heavy days of our much-tried Pontificate, have we assembled you around us to deplore the evils and protest against the crimes committed, whether in Italy or elsewhere, to the injury of the Church and the Apostolic See. In these last years, however, we have been witnesses of attacks still more violent which the Catholic religion has had to endure in various parts of the Catholic world through the work of our enemies, to whom the occasion was opportune for assailing the Spouse of Jesus Christ both on account of our unhappy position and the abandonment in which we stand of every human succour. We should have wished to recall your attention to this almost general persecution to which the Church is subjected at present in various parts of Europe, but, reserving the painful description for another occasion, we cannot do less than point out to you to-day the increasing gravity of the situation of the Catholic Church in Italy, and the still harder trials which await us and this Apostolic See. It is already the seventh year since an usurping Government treading under foot every Divine and human right, in despite of the most solemn treaties, and profiting by the ill-fortune of a generous nation, occupied by main force all that remained of our provinces, and invaded this Holy City, filling the Universal Church with mourning at the consummation of so iniquitous a deed. In spite of the hypocritical and disloyal promises made at that moment to foreign Governments, by the usurpers, that they would respect the liberty of the Church and the independence of the Roman Pontiff, we were never under any illusion whatever as to the sad and miserable future in store for us under their dominion. On the contrary, indeed, well knowing the fell designs proper to men bound together by the spirit of revolution and iniquitous ties, we then foretold that the aim of such sacrilegious invasion was not so much the conquest of our State as the wicked design of destroying the more easily, through the suppression of our temporal dominion, all the institutions of the Church, of annihilating the authority of the Holy See, and of cutting down the supreme power of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, to us, although undeserving, confided.

Now this work of the demolition and destruction of every ecclesiastical organization may be said to be completed, if not up to the intentions and hatred of the persecutors, at least in as far as the most grievous injuries which up to the present day have been heaped upon us; and it is only necessary to cast a retrospective glance upon the laws and decrees made in this short lapse of time to see clearly that, one by one, all the means have been taken from us of suitably governing the Catholic Church.

Thus the iniquitous suppression of the religious orders has unfortunately removed from our side valuable and valiant auxiliaries, whose co-operation was absolutely necessary for the transaction of the business of the ecclesiastical congregations, and of so many other duties of our ministry. This iniquitous suppression has at the same time destroyed here, in this sacred city, numerous religious houses where foreigners were in the habit of resorting at stated periods to acquire renewed strength and render an account of their stewardship, and it has cruelly torn up by the very roots innumerable healthy and prolific plants, which carried fruits of benediction and peace to all the countries of the earth. The same unjust suppression, also, which dissolved the houses of the Missions, established in Rome in order to prepare worthy workers to be sent into the most remote and inhospitable regions of the universe, has deprived so many Christians of so pious and charitable a succour, with immense injury to the propagation of the faith, and to Christian civilization itself, proceeding from the holiness and doctrine (teaching) of our religion.

And these laws, already in themselves very bitter and adverse to religion, not less than to human society itself, were not long since made more grievous by new Ministerial ordinances, which severely prohibit both the forming of religious communities and new admission of regulars of both sexes.

The religious Orders being suppressed, next came in its turn the destruction of the secular clergy, and we, together with the Bishops of Italy, were constrained to see—alas, with what grief!—the fairest hopes of the Church torn from the sanctuary, young clerics in the very moment of consecrating themselves definitively to God forced to take arms and lead a life in every way opposed to the spirit of their vocation. What more? With another unjust law we saw the whole patrimony which the Church by sacred and inviolable title possessed, usurped in great part, and in part substituted by slender assignments, subject to the eventualities of the times and the caprice of Governments. We saw usurped and reduced to profane uses innumerable edifices which the faithful had erected at enormous sacrifices, and which formed the fairest ornament of Christian Rome, destined to receive the spouses of the Lord or other monastic families. We saw taken from us, and from the holy ministers of the altar, all the works and institutions of charity and beneficence, some of which the Roman Pontiffs, our predecessors, had erected here in Rome with so much munificence, and some of which were due to the charity of foreign nations; and if some remains of pious works still remain under the vigilance of the Church, it will not be long before a law is presented which will take them also from us and cause them to disappear altogether, as the open words and acts of the present Government convince us. We have seen, and we repeat it with the most intense bitterness of our soul, both public and private instruction, whether scientific or literary, withdrawn by degrees from the authority and direction of the Church, and the office of teaching entrusted to men of suspected faith, or to open enemies of the Church who had no scruple in making public profession of atheism.

But for the apostate sons of the Church, it was not enough to

have assailed or destroyed so many institutions of such great importance so long as they had not also placed obstacles in the way of the free exercise of the spiritual mission of the ministers of the sanctuary. And they have compassed this criminal object by the law recently approved by the Chamber of Deputies, and which they designate as the law on clerical abuses, by virtue of which they charge with crime and offence so many bishops and priests, and strike with heavy penalties those acts which the authors of the aforesaid law comprise under the insidious name of disturbance of conscience, or disturbance of the peace of families. In virtue also of this law which we point out, the words and writings of every sort by which the ministers of religion believe that, by reason of their sacred charge, they are bound to denounce and disapprove laws, decrees, and every other act of civil authority, as contrary either to the rights of religion or to the laws of God and of the Church, will be equally liable to punishment and penalties; as also the acts of those who may publish or circulate those writings, no matter what may be the rank of the ecclesiastical authority, or the place from which those writings are issued. So soon as this law can be sanctioned and promulgated, a lay tribunal may judge if and how a priest in the administration of the Sacraments disturbs the conscience of the faithful and the peace of families, and the word of the Bishops, of the priests, shall remain shackled and stifled, and not less shall be that of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, who, although he may be personally called irresponsible for reasons of policy, shall nevertheless be punished in the persons of his accomplices; as a Minister had no hesitation in declaring in public Parliament, when alluding to our person, he stated that it was neither a novelty nor an anomaly in penal legislation to punish accomplices when the principal author was beyond reach. From which it was evident that the blow aimed by this law, according to the meaning of the rulers, refers also to us, so that when our words or our acts are in opposition to it, the bishops and the priests who shall publish or shall carry out our resolutions shall bear the penalty of that pretended crime which in their judgment is attributed to us, as to the principal author of the crime and offence.

Behold, Venerable Brethren, how not only so many aids and institutions which had stood the test of centuries and other tempestuous epochs, institutions so necessary to the administration of the Church, have been violently destroyed; but see how the extreme is reached even of impeding that sublime mission which the Church had from her Divine Founder, of teaching, directing, admonishing, by closing under threats of severest penalties the mouth of her ministers, who, while they teach the people to observe all that Jesus Christ has commanded, while they are instant in season and out of season—reproving, entreating, exhorting, teaching with all patience—are doing exactly what is imposed upon them by Divine and Apostolic authority. We pass over in silence other dark machinations of the enemies of the Church to which we are aware some in public authority do not refuse their aid and encouragement—machinations through which they would desire to prepare for the Church days of yet greater desolation; whether in prompting occasions of schism at the moment of the election of the future Pontiff; whether in disallowing the spiritual authority of the Bishops placed by us for the rule of the churches of Italy, which has forced us to declare that the presentation to the civil Government of the acts of their canonical institution may be tolerated, in order thus to prevent, as much as in us lies, most grave evils and dangers, which no longer refer to the simple possession of temporal goods, but which seriously threaten the peace of consciences and the salvation of souls, which is for us the supreme law. But in this that we have done to prevent very serious evils, we desire that publicly, and once again, it may be known that we utterly reprove and condemn this unjust law, which is called of the *regio placito*, declaring openly that the Divine authority of the Church is offended by it, and her liberty violated.

After this painful exposition, which does not include many other deplorable things to which we could have extended our discourse, we ask how is it possible that the Church can be governed by us under the dominion of an authority which deprives us of every means, which closes every way, which at every instant imposes obstacles and embarrassments, and which lays for us at every moment new lynx-like traps? In truth, we cannot understand how men can be found who, we cannot tell whether with greater levity or bad faith, endeavour, either by means of the daily papers, by pamphlets, or by speeches delivered in opportune meetings, to create the belief that the situation of the Roman Pontiff is such, here in Rome, that, even in the presence of a usurping Government, he can exercise his supreme ministry with tranquillity and freedom. And in support of this idea of theirs they let no opportunity escape, when bishops come to Rome, and are received by us in audience, when pilgrims crowd to the Vatican, or when discourses are from time pronounced by us upon the attempts committed against the Church, maliciously to endeavour to convince the incautious that we are really free whether to receive, to speak, or even to govern the Universal Church. In truth, we are surprised at the shamelessness with which these things are repeated, as if the exercise of the acts about which they make so much noise was left in our full and free power, and as if in them consisted the work of governing the Church confided to our care. For who are they who do not know that the acts which to-day it is boasted are free are not dependent upon our power, but upon that of the present rulers, so that we can only perform them within certain limits, and for as long only as they are not prohibited? That upon them depends the exercise of these acts called free is—even if other evidence were wanting—clearly shown by the last laws we have already deplored, in virtue of which, with new and intolerable oppression, the free exercise of our spiritual power and that of the ecclesiastical ministry is limited and shackled.

But if they permit us to perform certain acts because they know it is to their interest to have it believed we are free, how many