

so, they have found it necessary to treat facts in a rather drastic way. But

'In vain we call old notions fudge,
And bend our conscience to our dealing,
The Ten Comramdments will not budge,
And stealing will continue stealing'.

The few British papers that defend the burglary of the Montagnini residence happen to be those that, echoing the 'Bloc'-subsidised 'Matin', also huzza'd the regime of plunder and persecution that has been in progress for the past five years in France. That is a circumstance which should make cautious journalists hesitate before accepting their testimony or their inferences at par. So wideawake a journal as the Christchurch 'Press' might be reasonably expected to pause and inquire further afield before making itself, in regard to the Montagnini affair, their echo. Had our Canterbury contemporary been in possession of the facts, it would, no doubt, have joined in the general verdict, that M. Clemenceau has committed that which (according to a French wit) is, in statecraft, worse than a crime—he has been guilty of a blunder. The burglary at Monsignor Montagnini's house was indeed 'A Paris Sensation'. But it was a 'sensation' of a somewhat different kind from that which our Christchurch contemporary makes it out to be.

Every crime has its pretext. 'If ye'd turn on the gas in th' darkest heart', says 'Mr. Dooley', 'ye'd find it had a good raison for th' worst things it done—a good, varchous raison, like needin' th' money, or punishin' th' wicked, or teachin' people a lesson to be more careful, or protectin' th' liberties iv mankind'. M. Clemenceau had, of course, his 'good, varchous raison' for breaking and entering the Montagnini dwelling. Monsignor Montagnini had (he positively declared) instigated three Paris pastors to violate the Associations Law, and the Holy See was engaged in a 'plot' to destroy the French Republic. The world now knows that both these statements are utterly devoid of foundation. But M. Clemenceau 'needed the money'—he wanted the documents, hoping, no doubt, that something might be dug out of them that might be used as a weapon of offence against the Vatican. It was a gambler's 'plunge'. M. Clemenceau made the 'plunge'—to 'protect th' liberties iv mankind'. Burglars in the uniform of the French Republic made a forcible entry into Monsignor Montagnini's residence. They seized and carried away all the papers found therein, and placed them in the possession of M. Clemenceau. Our Christchurch contemporary says:

'It appears, however, that the seizure was made after relations had been broken off with the Vatican, that the papers taken were such as passed after that event, the diplomatic documents proper having been lodged with the Austrian Ambassador.'

Even that would have been, in good sooth, bad enough. But our contemporary is in error as to some important facts. (1) The private papers and 'the diplomatic documents proper' were alike stolen. (2) They were read and sorted out by the French Government, which had no other means of knowing what documents had passed before, and what after, 'relations had been broken off with the Vatican'. (3) The 'diplomatic documents proper' were for a considerable time in the possession of the French Government. And (4) they were only 'lodged with the Austrian Ambassador' after the scandal had, so to speak, become a diplomatic question of international importance, and the Austrian Government had officially demanded their surrender. Monsignor Montagnini's stolen private papers are still in the possession of M. Clemenceau. He waded through injustice and dishonor to secure them. But poetic justice has overtaken him. Another Epimetheus has opened what is for himself another Pandora's box.

'The view taken by the French Government', says the Christchurch 'Press', 'is that Monsignor Montagnini was then' (after the rupture of diplomatic relations) 'merely a private citizen'. But even in France 'a private citizen', whether a Frenchman or a foreigner, has some rights that the law recognises and is supposed to protect. And the papal representative was denied the protection which the law is (on paper) supposed to extend even to one who is 'merely a private citizen'—he was, in a very real sense, outlawed. Here are some extracts from a legal opinion by M. Boyer de Bouillane, an eminent lawyer of the Paris Court of Appeal:—

'When the Government wishes to proceed against a foreigner, two courses are open to it:

'That of the common law, according to which the Government prosecutes, arrests, searches, sequestrates, while the accused on his side defends himself with all the guarantees of liberty granted and prescribed by the law; after which comes the sentence—if the charge is proved, he is condemned; if not, he is acquitted;

'That of the power of "high police", in which case the Government expels without being obliged to give any explanation; it expels on the sole ground that the presence of the foreigner on French soil is disagreeable to it.

'The right of the Government to select between these two courses is incontestable. But what the Government has absolutely no right to do is to combine the two methods of procedure'.

In 'applying the two measures simultaneously' against Monsignor Montagnini, the French Government (says M. Boyer de Bouillane) 'perpetrates a flagrant illegality, for the prosecution necessarily implies the right of defence, whereas the expulsion necessarily suppresses it. So true is this', adds he, 'such a crying abuse has never been committed against anybody before. All the ministerial archives do not contain a single instance of it'. These proceedings (continues this noted legal authority) 'concern and menace all foreigners who pass through France or who reside in France. Everybody, no matter what his nationality or what the motive of his presence in France, is liable now not only to be turned out of the country, but to be subjected to the sequestration of his papers, his effects, his bonds, his furniture, without any legal assurance that everything will be returned to him within a given time'. Here we have the Pecksniffian champion of 'the liberties iv mankind' violating one of those elementary laws of civilised nations which are intended to protect 'the liberties iv mankind'. Such pretexts are the unwilling tribute that tyranny pays to justice. But

'We are best of all led to
Men's principles by what they do'.

When Roper, the historic forger and coiner, was at last run to earth, he had a look of seraphic guilelessness upon his face, and was singing a hymn from a manuscript that lay before him on a table. The studied theatricality in the one case did not deceive the agents of justice. Nor will many be impressed, in the other case, by the now admittedly ungrounded pretexts for illegal violence and outrage upon international law and usage perpetrated by the man who with grim and elephantine humor speaks of Satan as his father.

The outrage on the person and property of the representative of the Holy See furnished 'A Paris Sensation' of a sufficiently novel and startling kind. Another followed in swift sequence. This was the publication of what the Parisian press generally agrees to call 'les papiers Montagnini'—the Montagnini papers. The 'Press' commends the Holy See for its 'wonted wisdom in such matters'. Yet in the course of the very same article it states, as a sheer matter of fact, that the Holy See authorised the publication! In other words, it asks its readers to swallow, without salt, a statement which, in effect, lays to the charge of the Vatican the sort of lunacy that one expects to find, not at

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