

CHURCH AND STATE IN FRANCE

LECTURE BY THE COADJUTOR - BISHOP OF HOBART

(Continued from last week.)

Ill-luck had it that in the midst of these preoccupations, in 1894, Captain Dreyfus was declared guilty of treason sentenced to degradation, and imprisoned on Devil's Island. Treason there appears to have been, but it seems certain now that he had no share in it. Undoubtedly Jew baiting was, and still is, too common in the Old World, from Odessa to Paris, and Captain Dreyfus fell an innocent victim, I fear, to that reprehensible feeling. The court would appear to have been taken in by one or two villains, who were themselves the traitors, but who knew how to work on the anti-Jewish susceptibilities of the general staff. 'The Dreyfus affair,' says Mr Bodley, 'was about to disarray the nation. When the French people discovered it had gone mad over it, the clergy became in a measure the scapegoat for the infatuation which it shared with nine-tenths of the nation.' It is easy to understand how honest Frenchmen who love their country may denounce attempts to tamper with the integrity of the army, and feel indignant at aspersions on its courts; but it is not so obvious why, when the situation clears up, owing to additional knowledge, the nine-tenths should attempt to save their good name at the expense of those who were no more guilty than themselves. 'Let no one hope,' said Leo XIII. to Boyer d'Agen while the rehearing of the case was in agitation, 'let no one hope to make an affair of religion of this party matter.' Not a single bishop is found to have mixed or meddled in it. The papers dependent on them, the various 'Semaines Religieuses,' were quite reticent. Those papers that did take sides—the 'Croix' in particular—were neither wise nor obedient. Just as the second trial was about to open at Rennes, it was a Catholic committee that issued the following words of appeal for even-handed justice: 'Do not forget that the man who will soon be up for justice is now only an accused party. He is entitled to every guarantee which the laws of civilised countries secure to those on trial.' Among the signatories were four priests. Just after that trial M. Jules Lemaitre, writing in the 'Echo de Paris,' has this among other things to say:—'The clergy of France, the secular clergy, have never intervened in the affair. They, like us and nine-tenths of French citizens, accepted the judgment of the first court-martial, revision, and the judgment of the second—that is all. It is true that "La Croix" and the majority of the Catholic papers (but not all) opposed the "Syndicate"; but the "Intransigeant," the "Petit Journal," the "Eclair," the "Journal," the "Soir," and the "Echo de Paris," Republican papers all of them, and in no way clerical, did the same. If anti-Dreyfusism had been an undertaking of Clericalism, why, all France would be clerical without knowing it. As to the Jesuits, I have never known one of them personally, and I have an instinctive prejudice against them. I can therefore in no sense be considered to hold a brief for them; but it must be acknowledged that not a single fact has been brought forward which proves their interference in the affair. They have acted, it is proved, through the officers they have educated. But amongst the officers who have supported the prosecution, not one was a former student of the Jesuits.' 'The tyranny of a too-powerful clergy,' he goes on to say, 'would assuredly be insupportable, but it is no such tyranny I perceive when I look around. What I do see is the tyranny of pretended "Free Thought," and what has been well dubbed "Masonic Clericalism."'

How the Dreyfus affair was made to subserve other than the ends of justice will appear from the following words of an interview published in the unimpeachable columns of the 'Daily News,' an interview which its correspondent had with one of the most influential members of the Dreyfus party. 'We intend,' said this champion of justice, 'to profit by the agitation from which the country is suffering,' and 'utilise all the resources of our wonderful organisation. We shall take away the right of educating the masses from the priests and religious bodies, and, in fact, we will continue the work of the Revolution, which the party of reaction has so long striven to undo. We will take from the priests and the religious bodies the riches of which they have been so long possessors, and end, as I say, once for all, the rule of militarism—in short, to make an end of the

religious and military ideas or ideals. That is our object, that is our ideal, and, thanks to the Dreyfus affair, we shall see its realisation, and very soon, too.' It is a remarkable coincidence that just about the same time the Socialist, M. Millerand, Minister of Commerce in M. Waldeck-Rousseau's Cabinet, opened a fierce onslaught on Clericalism in a speech at Limoges. 'Clericalism,' he exclaimed, 'the everlasting enemy whom we have held behind all anti-Republican conspiracies.' At this period the anti-religious Press opened

A Veritable Campaign of Calumny

on priests and Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods. The news agencies sped unsavory items over the world, certainly over the English-speaking world. When one tried to trace them out later on in the French Press, it proved a bootless search. But the French papers had enough of their own; they had the usual cowardly generalities which just evade the law. Many of the less prudent made specific charges, generally of a lighter kind. The courts for over a year were pretty busy, for the secular clergy took their slanderers to book, and usually obtained damages. The papers did not appear to suffer thereby, and one is tempted to explain the audacity with which they faced those foregone condemnations by the words of the 'member of the Dreyfus party' cited earlier. In order to crush the clergy and religious bodies, it was expedient to befoul them. Although I was constantly coming across reports of those successful actions in the French Press, I do not remember a single case cabled to us or even noticed by the Home correspondents.

The year 1900, following upon the second Dreyfus trial, and consecrated to the grand commemorative pageant of the Revolution—I mean the Paris Exhibition—was no less devoted to preparing and maturing the great onslaught on the Church. At length, in October, M. Waldeck-Rousseau, in his now historic speech of Toulouse, disclosed the programme of coming legislation. The main provision should be an Associations Bill, and what that Bill chiefly contemplated was control of the religious Orders. Candidates for State billets—he called them 'functions'—must no longer be eligible from the Catholic schools; they must prove their loyalty to the Republic by going only to State institutions. The regular clergy were invading the rightful place of the parochial priesthood, and both as missionaries and teachers were sowing discord. Children educated by the teaching Orders would grow up alien to their fellow-citizens, sundering the moral unity of the nation. Another national menace lay in the wealth of the religious Orders. Their realty was now £40,000,000, in mortmain, thus withheld from the economic current of the country. To remedy such evils, all Orders and congregations should be compelled to apply to Parliament for authorisation. Some already enjoyed this State privilege; the rest should have to apply for a like recognition, and if they were refused their property would go to form an old age pensions fund. The sop was thrown to Cerberus. 'We are by no means displeased,' said the Socialist, M. Maxence Rodès, to the Comte de Mun, 'to see M. Waldeck-Rousseau make a breach in the right of ownership. He has given us the premises; we shall be able to draw the conclusion.' But such unimpeachable Republican organs as the 'Temps,' the 'Journal des Debats,' and the 'Republique Francaise' viewed with regret the ultra-Radical tendency of this momentous declaration. 'Systematic anti-Clericalism,' deplors the 'Temps,' 'is the first, and, one may say, the only article in the Radical programme, which the Premier has but made his own.' 'The Times' correspondent (M. Blowitz) described the projected measure as 'one of the most formidable which, for thirty years, had occupied a French Parliament.' The 'Spectator' characterised it as the 'Irish Penal Code over again'; but the 'Daily News' Nonconformist conscience permitted it to observe, with evident satisfaction, that M. Waldeck-Rousseau had 'hit upon an ingenious method of combating indirectly forces against which it is not feasible directly to contend.' Just so; the drip of the guillotine is too nasty for modern nerves; you must compass your end 'ingeniously' by process of legislative robbery and starvation.

The Associations Law.

The Associations Law was promulgated July 1, 1901. During the debates the threadbare charges against religious Orders in general and the Jesuits in particular were paraded as if they were discoveries of yesterday, and, I am happy to say, were riddled for the hundredth time. But fact and reason were thrown away upon the self-styled party of 'Republican Defence.' Let us briefly consider those more pertinent grounds of complaint insisted upon by M. Waldeck-Rousseau. Previous Governments had seen fit to authorise certain Orders. Yes, but

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