

OUR LEITER FROM FRANCE

(Continued from last week.)

Paris, December 15.

THE REMEDY.

'Gentlemen,' continued Mgr. Gourand, 'there is a way out of this difficulty; there is a remedy. The Church asks you, by reason of interests which are sacred and primordial, interests of which she is the guardian, interests in which you all are most deeply concerned, to sink your party prejudices and differences on certain days and on certain occasions, in order that in the hour of combat you may not divide and weaken our Catholic forces. The Church asks you to form alliances and confederations, which will imply no sacrifice of your party convictions, but which will enable you to fight together for a cause common to you all, a cause of supreme importance—the cause of God, of the Christian Faith and of the Catholic Church. Alliance here does not mean absorption, it means throwing our available efforts and our resources into a common movement for an all-important end. In this sense the present Pope has appealed again and again to French Catholics to unite—to unite under the leadership of their bishops, to unite on the religious basis under the one standard of Jesus Christ: *Uniantur sub unico vexillo Christi*. Surely, such union is not impossible for any Catholic.

THE WORD OF COMMAND OF THE POPE.

'Such is the *mot d'ordre* of the Pope. On this command we are forming our Catholic organisations. In obedience to this command we appeal to you to group yourselves and begin to act. You will thus constitute the party of God. This party is opposed to no other legitimate parties: it is above them all. As the Cross dominates your houses, your fields, your cross-roads, so let the party of God dominate all other parties. As the Cross extends its arms wide to embrace all men, so this party of God has only one ambition—to reunite in one heart and one soul all those who wish to save the Faith of their country. Gentlemen, permit me to say that the flag of this party of God waves now over all the dioceses of Brittany. May God strengthen, defend, and extend it. I ask you, like true soldiers of Jesus Christ, to gather round it and help to realise that prayer. *Avant! pour l'action* Forward! to action! Behold the substance of the discussions of our congress.'

In this speech of the Bishop of Vannes and in the letter of Cardinal Dubillard there are hints in 'religious politics' for Catholic confederationists all the world over. Let them keep their eyes on the body of political 'instructions and directions' enshrined in the letters of the Popes—documents which our politicians would do well to study very closely,—and they will not make the mistakes to which, unfortunately, with their narrow views and limited experience they are so liable. Well for Sagnier and his Sillonists had they devoted more attention to the letters of Leo XIII. and less to Rousseau's *Contrat Social* and its modern noisy interpreters. With eyes turned to Rome they follow the highest authority and the longest and largest experience in this world. Here is the road, and fools cannot err if they walk therein.

A TRAGI-COMEDY.

History tells that Ireland was confiscated and plundered not less than three times. Here was tragedy. But when the Englishman had thus robbed and disabled the Irishman he turned round and called him a useless, lazy beggar! Here was comedy. History repeats itself. The noble body who in the name of liberty, fraternity, and enlightenment 'run' France, are robbing at the present moment bishops, priests, religious, Catholic funds, guilds and institutions. Here is the tragedy; and a fearful tragedy it is. But when the plunderers turn round and accuse their victims of cheating them, here is something farcical indeed! Last month, at Agen, the books, furniture, and like belong-

ings of the bishop's house and of the seminary were seized by the Government officials. They also appropriated the diocesan fund contributed by the clergy for the support of sick and aged priests. The Bishop, of course, protested strongly against this spoliation. But let the Bishop himself, Mgr. Vauroux, tell the tale:—'The Bishop's library, which certainly owed nothing to the liberality of the State, with its papers, carpets, curtains and ornaments, all the private property of myself and my predecessors, were seized. When I indignantly resisted this piece of brigandage certain newspapers accused me of withholding this property! I was no longer the victim; the Bishop and his clergy became thieves deserving the punishments of the penal code! Surely insult added to injury could not be more cruel.' Having referred to the plunder of the seminary and the aged and infirm priests' fund the Bishop added: 'Can we believe that France will go on tolerating such oppression, and regarding as justice, liberty, and fraternity this abominable imposture? Will the fear of being called "clericals"—that is, a sordid human respect or the fear of compromising their personal or family interests—continue long to terrify honest, rational men, who, I am sure, constitute the majority in this country? I have too much confidence in the providential future of France and in the honesty and good sense of my contemporaries to believe that they will allow this tragicomic Government to go on destroying the morals and faith of a noble nation.'" The farce can hardly continue long. You see the nuns being driven out in one town by the Central Government and being recalled in the next town by the people, the municipalities, and county councils. You see seminaries being closed and turned into barracks in one place and new seminaries going up beside them. A form of government so wicked and so weak cannot last in any country, no matter how humbled, befooled and dragooned.'

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