

OUR LETTER FROM FRANCE

Paris, September 1, 1913.

A New Decree of the Consistorial.

According to general canon law, ecclesiastics are excluded from taking upon themselves the offices of members of parliament, municipal councillors, mayors of boroughs, and so on. However, in some countries, in special circumstances, and for the good of religion, priests have been permitted to seek election to these civil functions. In France, for instance, priests have been for a long time members of parliament. At present there are two such—the Abbe Gayraud and the Abbe Lemire. By law, though eligible for the House of Deputies and for the Senate, the clergy were not allowed to assume other civil functions. From 1913 onward, all restrictions are taken away. Forseeing that a greater number of priests may in future present themselves for election to different offices, some French bishops have asked the Holy See for guidance in the matter, and the Sacred Consistorial Congregation has replied that it will be lawful for priests to become candidates on two conditions—viz., that they have the permission of their own bishop, and of the bishop of the place where they canvass. A very reasonable rule.

Religious Toleration in Prussia in 1913!

Recently a religious retreat conducted in Coesfeld had been interrupted because it was conducted by the Jesuit Fathers, who are not tolerated in Prussia. Recently, a secret circular has been sent to the mayors of one of the Rhine provinces ordering them to give detailed reports of missions and retreats given in their towns, of the names of the missionaries, and of the religious Order to which they may belong. They are asked to be particular in the matter as to whether the missionaries say anything against the government and the established order of society. Just fancy! Atheists, Socialists, Anarchists may spout out their views in halls and street corners on the government and the established order; they may even try to rouse their hearers to club together to overthrow them, and not one mayor, or magistrate, or policeman, says a word! Indeed, the spouters are protected by the police from molestation. But the priests of some religious Congregation, who come to give a quiet retreat or mission, according to the established forms of the Catholic Church, must be watched lest they set about overthrowing civil society! Can stupid bigotry go further? How long the anti-Catholic intolerance, suspicion, and hatred roused three hundred years ago take to die! The comical aspect of this curious phenomenon in religious fanaticism is this, that those, under this cloud of ignorance and prejudice, are the people who talk loudest of their enlightenment and of their spirit of tolerance, and who accuse Catholics of narrowness and intolerance! But then we must remember that a man is his own standard of judgment; he thinks all others are like himself.

The Old Catholics of Germany.

Dr. Döllinger's sect still lives, but it only just lives. It is reaching the end of its absurd career. In June the sect held a synod at St. Imier. The bishop, one Herr Herzog, declared that he had recently received letters from 25 priests 'emancipated from this tyranny of Rome.' The alleged emancipated or escaped reverend gentleman asked to be admitted to this Old Catholic Church of Switzerland. When questioned as to where the new apostles were, the bishop said he could not receive them as he had no work for them to do, not even for one of them! The congregations in the parishes of his lordship's diocese, by his own admission, are clearly not going up in numbers. But never say die till you're dead. Keep on boasting of your health and strength till the end. 'Tis best: it will encourage yourself to hold on, and some one may believe you and think you are thriving. So the Old Catholics are going to hold a general council or congress at Cologne from September 3 to September 7. They have invited all 'the independent episcopal churches' in the world to take part and help to realise

the dream of the great Döllinger of a truly Catholic Church. No doubt some Anglican bishops and some American Episcopalian bishops, who may be on tour in Germany at the time, will take part to show their Catholicity. The writer of the encyclical calling the council, grandiloquently exclaims: 'Let this congress be a demonstration and a manifestation of our sentiments and of the sentiments of our co-religionists before the great world public, and of the need of a Church Catholic, truly Catholic, and yet independent.' Magnificent from a tailor of Tooley street, who has got hardly a co-religionist left! But it is the age of the tenor and of the big drum; and seeing that he is 'independent,' why should not the one tailor shout and strike and make a noise? Fortunes are made by noise—mere noise. But hardly such luck in the case of the poor Old Catholic sect; it is on its last legs.

A Shouting Parliamentarian Disappointed.

Shouting and bombast do not always succeed. Elections for some of the cantons have been just held in France. The elections were a test as to whether the nationalist parties (amongst these, of course, are the truly Catholic deputies and senators) or the socialist and radical parties had popular sentiment behind them. The Nationalist parties have been, all spring and summer, trying to carry the *Loi de trois ans*. This law had for its object to create and keep up to an efficient standard an army fit to defend France, and make her feared and respected in the present troubled state of Europe. The Socialists and Radicals have done everything in their power to obstruct the passage of the law. They have even raised mutinies of a dangerous kind in four or five of the large barracks. They have by their speeches and newspapers left nothing undone to arouse an anti-army feeling through the country. Treason to the interests of beautiful France could not go further. Her degenerate sons, in their wild socialistic fanaticism, deputies of the House, and conductors of influential newspapers, have been using tactics calculated to drag her down to the status of a second or third-rate power—the easy prey of her powerful neighbors. One of these radical-socialist deputies, writing in the *Lanterne*, on the eve of the elections in which he was one of the candidates, beat the big drum thus: 'I have full confidence in the good sense of the electors. This consultation of the country will turn out most interesting—a revelation of the public feeling of France. It is in the secrecy of the ballot that one finds out truly the popular sentiment. Victory will be ours, and the clericals and adorers of the good God will go to hell.' But on the morrow the electors of Dampierre sent M. Ponsot home to attend to his private affairs, and write articles on *le sentiment populaire* for the *Lanterne*. He now knows the *sentiment populaire*. Beating the big drum did not succeed for M. Ponsot, late deputy of Dampierre.

Freemasonry Expelled From the Republic of Columbia.

Columbia is advancing with rapid strides in religious, social, and economical prosperity. This is due to the way in which law and order, and interior national unity and peace are maintained. Freemasonry and its accompaniment, disorder, and revolution, have been the curse of the South American republics. The people of Columbia know Freemasonry and its dark plots and intrigues, and they will have none of it. M. Casas, a member of the Chamber of Representatives, recently introduced a proposal for a law to banish Freemasonry completely from the Republic. He delivered a powerful speech in introducing his project. Here is a summary of it: 'The Popes, from Clement XII. to Pius X. have condemned the Masonic sect as opposed to Christian doctrines and morals, but according to article 47 of our constitution sects or associations of that kind cannot be allowed to exist in Columbia. Again direct proofs of the corrupting influence of Masonic lodges, and of their participation in the gravest political and social crimes of modern times, are to hand and are decisive. Further, the Masonic society conspires against law and order, if these be based on Christian morals and Christian doctrines. The events

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