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Rome and Religious Liberty.

BY THE REV. T. J. PULVERTAFT, M.A.

THE British Empire, on the authority of the Pope, is “rightly famed for the liberty it extends to its citizens, and to whose authority and laws so many millions of Catholics render faithful and due obedience.” Coming from the Vatican, this testimony to the value of religious liberty has made a great impression upon the public mind, and it is advisable that those interested in the subject should know how the Church of Rome to-day carries into practice the principles praised by Pius X. Facts are facts, and they cannot be gainsaid. Lip-service of great principles is the cheapest kind of adulation, and to form a true conception of policy profession must always be checked by performance.

The long reign of Pope Pius IX. was remarkable for the publication of the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Infallibility of the Pope. It also witnessed the issue of the famous “Syllabus, containing the chief errors of our time [1864] which are censured in the consistorial letters, allocutions, in the encyclicals, and in other Apostolical letters of our most holy Lord, Pius IX.” This document is an *ex cathedra* utterance of the Papacy, for subsequent declarations of Pius IX. and Leo XIII. have removed any doubts on this point. It is the authoritative pronouncement of Rome on the subject, and is of living force in that Church. In the words of Dr. Döllinger, the Syllabus “condemns the whole existing views of the rights of conscience and religious faith and profession: it is a wicked error to admit Protestants to equal political rights with Catholics, or to allow Protestant immigrants the free use of their worship; on the contrary, to coerce and suppress them is a sacred duty, when it has become possible, as the Jesuit Fathers and their adherents teach. Till then, Schneeman says, the Church will, of course, act with the greatest prudence in the use of her temporal and physical power, according to altered circumstances,

and will not, therefore, at present adopt her entire medieval policy."

It is impracticable for the Roman Church to put its will into force in the modern world, and to see what it desires we have to observe its policy in that portion of the world where its hold is strongest. One of the most influential of the visitors to the Eucharistic Congress was Cardinal Sancha, Archbishop of Toledo and Primate of Spain. We have seen the Cardinal in Toledo, a personally kindly gentleman, who received almost royal honours from those he met. His position is recognized as a Prince of the Church, and, without exception, he is acknowledged to be the first subject of the Crown. In Spain, according to the Concordat, "The Catholic Apostolic and Roman religion, which, with the exclusion of every other form of worship, continues to be the only religion of the Spanish nation, will be always preserved in the dominions of his Catholic Majesty with all the rights and privileges which it ought to enjoy according to the law of God and the disposition of the sacred Canons." This is still a fundamental law of the State, and governs the secular State as far as possible, for Spain has passed since 1851 through the throes of revolution, and necessity forced certain modifications to be made in its national policy.

During the absence of the hereditary Monarchy, from 1868 to 1874, religious liberty reigned, and no one was interfered with in the free exercise of his convictions. This naturally caused great indignation among the Ultramontanes. In a catechism published in 1869 by Cardinal Cuesta, Archbishop of Santiago, the following statement is made: "It is not certain that in all countries religious liberty prevails. Not to speak of others, in Denmark and Sweden the Catholic religion is not tolerated; and as far as Rome is concerned, you ought to know that the Jews are only tolerated with due restrictions—among others, they have to live by themselves in a separate district; they are permitted to live there by the side of the Universal Pastor of the Church, for they have been established there of old, and are a living proof of the fulfilment of the prophecies

and of the authenticity of our sacred books. With reference to the many Protestants, principally English, who go every day to admire the marvels of Rome, I shall tell you that they are not molested, provided they do not become propagandists, and even if they meet in a suburban house to read the Bible on Sundays this is overlooked. The Protestants exploited the captivity of the Pope by France to hold their worship in a suburban house, and diplomatic pressure has made it impossible to prevent them. That is all. But even if it were certain that in all countries—which it is not—with the exception of Spain, there was religious liberty, this is no reason why it should be established among us; as if the cholera were everywhere it would be no reason to desire it and to bring it here also to our Spain. Truth has the right to reign alone. Error has no right to be seated by its side. Liberty of error is not liberty, but an abuse of liberty."

The Cardinal, in these pointed sentences, simply expresses the mind of the framer of the Syllabus. On the return of the Monarchy the pressure of the Papacy became greater. Religious liberty became religious tolerance, and the Constitution of Spain, made in 1876, contains the famous Article XI. :

"The Catholic Apostolic and Roman religion is that of the State. The nation is obliged to maintain its worship and its ministers. Nobody shall be molested in Spanish territory for his religious opinions as for the exercise of his own worship, saving the respect due to Christian morals. Nevertheless, no ceremonies or public manifestations will be permitted other than those of the State religion."

The Pope was indignant at the promulgation of this Article, for he saw that it involved the negation of his Syllabus, and accordingly he wrote to the then Archbishop of Toledo: "We declare that the eleventh Article completely violates the rights of Catholic Truth and of religion, and, contrary to all right, the Concordat of this Holy See with Spain is abrogated in its principal and most precious part." Feeling ran high, and the Prime Minister gave an authoritative interpretation of the

Article by declaring that all public manifestations of worships or sects dissenting from Rome are prohibited outside buildings or cemeteries, and extended the interpretation of public manifestations to include placards or announcements by bills. This is the law in force to-day. In the city of Seville the handsome little church used by the English colony has its entrance in a side street. It is forbidden to put up any notice pointing the way to the church, or to place the words "English Church" in English outside the building. When the church in the Calle Beneficencia, Madrid, was erected, the plans approved by the Town Council provided for the words CHRISTUS REDEMPTOR ÆTERNUS to be sculptured on the façade. The Central Government ordered them to be removed before the church was permitted to be opened. It did so, acting on the appeal of the Ultramontane party.

In 1905 the English colony in Barcelona arranged to have their church in that city opened. In ignorance of the prohibition of the Constitution, some plain crosses were placed on the exterior, and these crosses were on the plans submitted to and passed by the Barcelona Town Council. The Roman Catholic Professor of Canon Law in the University of Barcelona, in an article in the *Diario* of that city, called the church a monument of infamy, and wrote: "All those who work and live and breathe for Christ in this city should work without rest or truce until they secure that in this land, watered by the blood of martyrs and vivified by the devotion of our saints, we may not have to look upon a temple which defies God, completely denying to Him what He values most—the worship He values most—the worship which He demands from men." He goes on to say that Barcelona is a cesspool of the foulest vices, but the opening of the church would bring it face to face with heresy which is worse than vice. Cardinal Casañas himself, in a long Pastoral, declared liberty of worship to be impious and absurd. In spite of these protests, and a numerous signed petition, the church was opened, but the crosses had to be removed. In Spain to-day one piece of Protestant property has a cross over its

gate—the cemetery of Malaga. When this was allowed to be erected—out of gratitude to the Consul, who had spent his substance and risked his person freely during a cholera epidemic—the inhabitants remarked with wonder: “Do these Jews honour the Cross?”

Cardinal Casañas simply expressed the mind of his Church, for in 1899, in Burgos, a Congress of Spanish Bishops was held, presided over by Cardinal Sancha, who was in England last September. This assembly declared that Perdition is the “daughter of that liberalism which, by its application to Spain, causes such grave sins.” The capital error of liberalism is substituting private judgment for the authority of the Church. Among the resolutions passed was one urging the confinement of religious toleration to the narrowest limits. Two Cardinals and twenty-six Bishops, in an address to the Queen Regent, presented on the conclusion of the Congress, complain of the impudence and audacity of the Protestantism which builds its schools and opens its temples in the capital, and classes this action with the horrible blasphemies heard in the streets and public places and the repugnant exhibition of indecent pictures. On reading the resolutions of the Congress a Roman Catholic writer recalled the saying of a Spanish Bishop at the Council of Trent: “If the Church of Spain needs a Reformation, the most illustrious Bishops themselves need a more illustrious one.” Leo XIII. was a far-seeing diplomatist, and even he declared: “One thing remains perpetually true—that liberty accorded for its own sake to all, and for all, is not desirable, since it is repugnant to reason that what is false should enjoy the same rights as that which is true.”

These are the principles that actuate Roman Catholic policy in Spain, but happily the State does not support them. The Pope was defeated in his efforts to stamp out religious liberty in every form in 1876. Against his will, toleration instead of repression took the place of liberty. Although the front door of the Madrid Church was kept illegally closed for more than ten years, the agitation concerning the Barcelona Church led to its being

opened. The colporteurs of the Bible Society receive protection where a few years ago they would have been illegally imprisoned, and the modern State is not inclined to accept Vatican domination. The ecclesiastics are angry, but are powerless in the presence of the will of the people.

The local tyranny of priests and their followers still continues. The writer was once fired at because he dared to visit a village to attend a Reformed Service; friends of his have been imprisoned because they sold Bibles; Evangelicals have had false charges brought against them of disrespect to the State religion, and, although the evidence against them was well manufactured, just judges and juries have acquitted them. One of the favourite charges is to allege disrespect to the Host carried in procession. Evangelical Spaniards know that to refuse to kneel or raise their hats is an offence against the law, and as their consciences will not permit them to do this, they invariably absent themselves from the processional route. Their inability to see the procession through rows of houses does not present any insuperable objection to the framing of allegations against them. Nevertheless in Spain to-day large numbers of men and many women refuse to show obeisance when the Host passes. Last year in Burgos the writer was amazed to see a considerable number of Spaniards refuse to kneel as the Host was carried through the cathedral in procession by the Archbishop. Even in the central church of the district the people refused to reverence the Host.

This narrative ought not to incite Churchmen to intolerance. It is a piteous travesty of liberty which is ready to tolerate everything except the intolerant. Those who know the truth have no fear for its holding its own in the presence of error. Provocative demonstrations are, however, to be deprecated, and even the Roman Catholic Irish Archbishop Murray and Bishop Doyle, at the time of the Catholic Emancipation discussions, protested against processions with the Host. To carry the Host through the streets of a population mixed in its religious views is to invite from those who witness it acts which must of necessity be

considered either irreverent or idolatrous by opposing sections. It is as offensive to a Protestant mind as the parading of a Consecrated Wafer as the "God of Roman Catholics" is to Roman Catholics. Both actions are improper and unchristian. Those who condemn the one would deplore the other as wrong and outrageous. Liberty is the natural fruit of the truth which makes men free, and history teaches that repression never yet permanently suppressed honestly held convictions. It is the duty of those of us who protest against Roman intolerance to be always ready to extend to Roman Catholics the liberty we claim for ourselves.



Literary Notes.

MR. SWINBURNE'S "The Age of Shakespeare" was issued the other day. Able as it is from the standpoint of literary criticism, one cannot help detecting underneath all this undoubted literary brilliance a substratum of disbelief in, if not contempt for, orthodox Christianity. Of course, Mr. Swinburne is a great literary critic and a greater poet, but to the orthodox Christian and to the devout believer there will always come a shudder at his hedonism. Even in his "Age of Shakespeare" I find many subtle and superior scoffs at what is dear to the Christian. In a dedicatory epistle which precedes one of the editions of his poems he says that he "finds nothing that he could wish to cancel, to alter, or to unsay, in any page he has ever laid before his reader." The same flippancy and lightness—I regret to use the words in connection with such poetic genius—may be found in "Atalanta in Calydon," probably one of his greatest works. Says Mr. More, who is himself one of our most brilliant of literary critics, in connection with this particular work: "And yet in the end it is itself light, and not grave." And to quote again from Mr. More in support of what I have said relative to the trend of the whole of Mr. Swinburne's writings: "There is a lack of emotional breeding, almost an indecency, in Swinburne's easy familiarity with these great things of the spirit." It would have been more than a deep pleasure for the disciple of Christianity to acclaim the writings of Mr. Swinburne, but his distinctive heterodoxy—nay, even the fervent hedonism which so emphatically permeates his work—forbid it. Let me, in closing this paragraph, quote a well-known Churchman whose business it has been of late to sift the propaganda of the secularist movement: "He (Mr. Swinburne) has prostituted his great gifts to the service of unblushing paganism. I know his sentiments have been less reprehensible in recent years, but for at least half his poetical career he was an avowed hedonist."

