

FRANCE AND THE VATICAN.

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THE present conflict between France and the Vatican, which is sure to end in the separation of Church and State, is one of the consequences of the Dreyfus affair. That long struggle showed that the Jesuits had got control of the French army, and that the clerical party was bent on transforming a liberal republic into a monarchy or Cæsarean republic. It further revealed the fact that this party was in a state of perpetual conspiracy against the present constitution of France. This condition of affairs was the cause of the drawing up and passage, in July, 1901, of the law whose purpose was to curb these religious orders, which were a danger to our republican institutions.

Thereupon, the Jesuits, who control the policy of the Vatican, thought they might bring about an uprising in France at the moment of the enforcement of this law. They did their best to turn the army from the path of duty. They strove to awaken rebellion among the pious and ignorant peasantry of Lower Brittany. But all their pernicious activity ended in producing exactly the contrary effect from that which they hoped for. The popular mind throughout France was disgusted with their tactics and alarmed at their aims. So much for interior results.

In its treatment of foreign affairs, French clericalism is always Anglophobist and anti-Italian. But here too they counted without their host. The visit of King Edward to France and that of President Loubet to London checked this clerical policy. The diplomatic attitude of England and France led up logically to a better understanding between France and Italy, for Italy rightly considers England her protector against the efforts of the Pope to recover his lost temporal power. So the Jesuits advised the Pope not to receive M. Loubet when he went to Rome to visit the King. They even thought that the President would not dare to go when he knew that

the Vatican would be shut against him, and they felt sure that this attitude of the Pope would discredit M. Loubet in the eyes of French Catholics. Pius X even went further than refusing to receive the President; he sent out to the various governments a circular communication which was as insulting to France as it was impolitic. Not a Catholic deputy in the French Chamber dared to defend the course of His Holiness, and M. Ribot, leader of the Moderate Republicans, did not hesitate to condemn it.

But this was not enough. The Vatican was not satisfied with obtruding on the international affairs of France. She must next meddle in the home religious matters. Suddenly the Pope refused the investiture of the bishops selected by the French Government in accordance with the Concordate. Pius X adopted the policy of Pius VII in his famous encounter with Napoleon I. This course caused considerable commotion in 1810, but did not disturb anybody in 1904. The papacy has lost ground in a century, and the European mind, especially in France, has made progress in religious things during the same period. Then the unwise Jesuit counselors pushed the poor Holy Father further on the wrong path. Pius, in direct violation of the Concordate, called the bishops to Rome, suspended them and revoked them. By so doing, His Holiness cut the link which held together the Papacy and the French Republic. Separation could only follow. By this act the Pope deprived the defenders of the Concordate of the old stock argument that religious peace was assured by the government having a controlling hand over the bishops. The moment that the Pope declared that the bishops were alone subject to him, from that moment the main reason for the existence of the Concordate disappeared. It was the beginning of the end, and the end will come this year. Before the Chambers adjourn next July, the bill of separation will have been voted, and on January 1, 1906, the new order of things will come into practice, thank heavens!

The predominant character of the French people in matters religious is indifference. So long as the Church is an official institution, there is a disposition among many to accept, at least outwardly, many of its practices and observances. But let the Church once become a private institution, and it will slowly but surely lose its followers and see its resources diminish. The separation means, therefore, an advance of the free thought tendency of the French nation. The deluded Pope may think otherwise; but it is not the first time that an Italian ecclesiastic has misunderstood modern France.

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