

## A REMARKABLE CHAPTER.

(Continued.)

But whatever may be the precise nature of the judgment impending over a guilty world which Anna Maria and many other holy souls, not only in modern times but in ages past have combined to predict, one thing seems to be unquestionable, that it will be most sudden and terrible, and such as shall force men to confess the power and hand of the Almighty. Our Holy Father himself lately used some very remarkable expressions with reference to the future triumph of the Church and the nature of the Divine intervention in her behalf which we have reason to expect. It is contained in a letter which he addressed on the 6th of February, 1863, to the Director of the 'Unità Cattolica,' then engaged in collecting an offering for his Holiness on occasion of the late centenary of St. Gregory VII. After speaking of the successful vindication of the Church's usurped rights by that holy Pontiff, although he himself breathed forth his soul in exile, and alluding to the still fiercer battle now being waged, not against certain of the rights of the Church alone, but against her very existence and constitution, nay, against the Catholic religion itself, and that, not by one prince alone, but by well-nigh all the powerful of the earth, the Holy Father proceeds to say, 'Seeing that we know for certain that the gates of Hell shall not prevail against the Church, these many and great difficulties ought not to depress the mind of him who considers them, but ought to animate him to greater hope. For, relying on the incontrovertible oracle of God, the very atrocity of a war so vast and manifold, waged by Divine permission against the Church, is sufficient to convince the believer that such a triumph is prepared for her as for fulness and splendour shall surpass all that have preceded. And whereas God in lighter and less perilous struggles prepared for her an efficient aid in the arms of princes, or in the marvellous energy and authority of holy persons, and whereas in the present far greater trial He withholds all succor, this again proves that He has reserved to Himself the victory over His enemies. And this will be more manifest if we consider that the root of present evils is to be found in this,—that men, having turned themselves with their whole mind and strength to earthly things, not only have forsaken God, but have altogether rejected Him, in such wise that it would seem that they could in no other way be recalled to Him save by some fact which cannot easily be attributed to a second cause, but is of such a nature as to constrain every one to look up and exclaim, "This is the work of God, and it is marvellous in our eyes."'

The Pope expressed himself in similar terms to an Eastern prelate who, writing to the Bishop of Angoulême, thus describes what passed:—'The Holy Father said to me, "The world is immersed in sin; it cannot thus continue; a human hand is powerless to save it, the hand of God must manifest itself visibly, and, I tell you, we shall see this divine hand with our bodily eyes." These words he pronounced with an air of inspiration, raising his two fore-fingers significantly to his eyes as he spoke.'

As a popular interest attaches to all the utterances of Pius IX. especially with reference to the present crisis, we record the following words, pronounced by him in public on the 16th July, 1871, and addressed to the Collectors of the Archconfraternity of St. Peter:—'There was a good old priest,' said the Holy Father, 'Mgr. D. Raffaele Natali, a zealous promoter of the cause of Anna Maria Taigi, who related to us marvellous things of this servant of the Lord and, among others, various predictions regarding these present times. We do not place too much reliance upon reported prophecies; these, however, are recorded in the Processes, and the Holy See will judge of them. We have not read them, but this good priest repeated several times that the Venerable, foretelling the trials we now behold, said that a time would come during which the Holy See would be obliged to live upon the alms of the entire world; but that the money would never be wanting. Truly,' added the Holy Father, 'it would be difficult not to recognise the accuracy of such a prediction.'

Anna Maria never declared the precise time at which the impending judgment was to take place, although we may be led to infer that the period is not far distant, on account of its connection with other events which she foretold, and of which we seem to be now beholding the progressive fulfilment; viz. the violent persecution of the Church and the despoilment of the Vicar of Christ, a despoilment which, she said, would be so complete that 'The Pope, shut up in the Vatican, would find himself hemmed in as by an iron circle.' All human hope, she added, would have failed, and it would be then that God would cause His mercy to shine forth. The same conclusion may be drawn, as we have said, from the prophecies of other holy persons who have enjoyed the possession of supernatural lights in our times; and they have been more numerous than is commonly imagined. Amongst these was P. Bernardo Clausi, a Religious of the Order of the Minims, who often foretold the coming of a terrible judgment on the wicked and the subsequent glorious triumph of the Church, and who always spoke of it as near at hand. He told Sister Maria Margherita Laudi, a religious of San Filippo and his penitent, who has now attained her eighty-third year and who will appear, or, more probably, has appeared, to make her deposition as a witness in the process for the introduction of his cause, that she would behold the coming chastisement which he himself would not live to see, and also the general reorganisation and triumph of the Church which were to follow. 'Blessed,' he added, 'are they who will live in those happy days, for it will be a reign of fraternal charity. The joy you will feel will be so great that it will cause you to forget all past sufferings. But before these things come to pass, evil will have made such progress in the world that it will seem as if all the devils had issued from hell, so great will be the persecution raised by the wicked against the just, who will have to endure a very martyrdom.' He also told her that the scourge which God would bring upon the earth would be something new and unparalleled, and directed solely against the wicked. 'Heaven and earth,' he said, 'will be united, and great sinners will be converted, because they will then know God. This scourge will be felt throughout the world, and will be so terrible that survivors will

imagine they are the only persons spared. All will be good and penitent.' He spoke in a similar manner to others, who have also attested the same on oath, saying that when things were come to the worst, and when all will seem lost, then God will set His hand and rectify all, as it were, in the twinkling of an eye, so that the impious themselves will be constrained to confess that it is the work of God. If persons of so advanced an age as this nun are indeed to behold these things, it must be concluded that the time is not far removed.

If the very general hope entertained by the faithful, and amounting almost to an expectation, that Pius IX. will witness the beginning of the Church's triumph be well grounded, this again would give us reason to expect this terrible event very shortly; for a well-attested prophecy of Anna Maria's, which has perhaps become more generally known than that of the days of darkness, assigned to Pius IX. a reign of twenty-seven years, and something more. It is also very confidently asserted, and the assertion certainly seems to rest on good authority, that she declared that Pius IX. would witness the beginning of the Church's triumph. If, then, this 'something more' signify but a portion of another year, then, indeed, brief would be the time remaining which separates us from this awful judgment and the subsequent triumph. Prophecies, however, are not designed for the purpose of satisfying curiosity, even though it may be a holy curiosity, but for higher ends, and purposes more profitable to our souls. At present, however, the predictions of this favored soul concerning events yet future—predictions to which naturally much importance is attached owing to the fulfilment of so many that she uttered concerning events now past—have reached us but in fragments, those fragments also having been only orally transmitted. But, supposing it to be proved beyond a doubt that she promised that Pius IX. should witness the beginning of the Church's triumph, it would still be impossible for us to decide in what sense the promise is to be understood. It is well, therefore, while sharing the general hope and, above all, while joining in the fervent prayers which the whole Church is unceasingly offering to God for his deliverance, not to be led away to entertain a conviction which might only prepare for us a sharp disappointment, a disappointment which would result, not from the failure of the prophecy itself, but from our own premature and rash interpretations.

Leaving, then, this deeply interesting question for the future to decide, we are perhaps not wrong in concluding that the close of the reign of Pius IX. is at least closely connected with the predicted deliverance. P. Calixte, writing evidently sometime in the latter half of the year 1870, and considering as he does that Anna Maria's prophecies imply that he will witness the commencement of the triumph, observes, 'We may therefore conclude that the present uneasy state of things will yet last nearly three years; and it is precisely during a period of three years that the secret of La Salette, now partially disclosed, avowed that God would seem to have forgotten France the born protectress of the Holy See.' These three years are now approaching their completion. 'Marie Lataste on her part,' continues P. Calixte, 'speaking of Rome, declared that the Saviour Himself said to her, "Oppression will reign in the city that I love, and where I have left my heart. It will seem to succumb during three years and a little longer." "It would appear, then," adds P. Calixte, "that we must date the beginning of this trial from the entrance of the Piedmontese into Rome." Marie Lataste also declared that our Lord, after announcing these three years of captivity to the city of Rome, during which time she was to be "in sadness and desolation, surrounded on all sides like a bird taken in a net," said, "but my Mother shall descend into the city; she will take the hands of the old man seated on a throne, and will say to him, "Behold the hour, arise, look at thy enemies: I cause them to disappear one after another, and they disappear for ever. Thou hast rendered glory to me in heaven and upon earth, and I will render glory to thee on earth and in heaven. Look at men—how they venerate thy name, thy courage, thy power. Thou shalt live, and I will abide with thee." These are doubtless encouraging words, but they cannot be said to specify with unmistakable clearness the nature of the glory which Pius IX. is to receive in this world. Heaven has a different measure from that of earth. Yet one thing we know. If God has His absolute decrees, which not even saints can move Him to reverse, all that he has revealed to us in Scripture, and all that the testimony of such chosen souls as that of Anna Maria makes known to us, of His adorable goodness and His readiness to hearken unto prayer, serve to prove that He can be turned from his conditional purposes, and that He will prolong seasons of grace or of life at the cry of His children. To Pius IX. has been promised a reign of twenty-seven years, and something more. He has now completed the twenty-seven years. The more remains. What that more imports Anna Maria did not say. Perhaps its length, which is thus left indefinite, may depend upon our own fervent and united prayers.

CHARLES DICKENS.—Charles Dickens—how did he die? This question is put by a contemporary, and answered thus:—The life of Charles Dickens teems with interest; his death gives a most salutary lesson. An eminent medical writer gives a short summary of the various shocks to the system of Dickens, which naturally weakened him and predisposed his frame to affliction, and gives the most conclusive evidence that paralysis, which ended the great *literateur's* earthly career, was due almost exclusively to that very act of his life which drew admiring thousands to listen to the delineations in person of the leading characters of his published works. On leaving the platform after reading "Copperfield," so laborious, earnest, and pathetic were the exertions made by Dickens, his whole soul being thrown into the work that the pulsations of his heart numbered 96, being 24 in excess of the ordinary pulse, 72; after "Marigold," 99; "Sikes and Nancy," 118; "Oliver Twist," 124. Thus, while his audiences were rejoicing over his talented histrionic display, the efforts of the reader himself were driving nails into his coffin, breaking down the delicate walls of the nervous system of the brain, flooding that great organ with an inundation of fluid, which doomed the birth-place of Pickwick and a host of other interesting characters of English fictitious history.