

priest and anti-convent tales non-existent, and the whole business a fabrication from beginning to end. But in the meantime the evil tale had gone round the earth on seven-league boots, while slow-paced truth was drawing on its sandals. L'Estrange, in his 'Fables,' tells of a cavalier who ordered his lawyer to draw up the sort of affidavit that would suit his case—a false one, to wit; 'and let me alone,' he declared, 'to do the part of a gentleman and swear to it.' Among the 'cavaliers' that conduct the anti-clerical gutter-press of Continental Europe and its foreign echoes there is a steady demand for anti-priest and anti-convent fiction. The Swiss-Milanese bureau played to them the part of the pettifoggling lawyer. And the cavaliers swore 'like gentlemen' to the truth and honor-bright of every concocted tale. We had a part in exposing the perjured character of some of the Swiss-Milanese productions that found their way into the New Zealand secular press. The operations of the slanderous association ceased through the imprisonment of its principal for a nameless and abominable crime against morality.

A Brace of Falsehoods

The fellow mentioned in the last paragraph—or one of his school—seems to be 'at his dirty tricks again.' The anti-clerical 'Etoile Belge' recently reported a 'great scandal,' which (it alleged) had taken place at St. Quentin. Horrible accusations (it declared) had been laid there against a Catholic priest, the Abbe Jacques Lefebvre, who was born on October 23, 1856, and was Professor of Humanities in the College of St. Joseph in that city. The accusers were three young men, whose names, ages, and places of abode were all duly given. The police were investigating the matter, and the whole story was as circumstantial as the envenomed romances that emanated from the 'Bureau of Press Information' in Milan before its gaol-bird chief went, like Judas, 'to his place.' But mark how plain a tale did put the St. Quentin story down. Here is the result of the investigation conducted on the spot—we take it from the 'Catholic Times' of May 26:

'There is no priest of that name at St. Quentin; there is no college of St. Joseph, the police know nothing at all about the matter.' Yet this scandalous report has been issued broadcast, and has, doubtless, been read by thousands, who, in their simplicity, believed it to be true. One can only conclude that some infamous agency exists for the manufacture and dissemination of these fiendish lies against priests. And as if to support the conclusion, we see that a number of men in Brittany have publicly apologised to the clergy for spreading scandalous tales against them, and have thanked them for not insisting on their being punished by law!'

Another 'yellow yarn,' in the same general style, comes from farther afield. It tells about a priest 'offering himself as a human sacrifice at the altar of his own cathedral, at Cuale, State of Guadalajara, Mexico.' The poet Gay laid down in the following couplet, the guiding principle of the ungentle art of falsehood:

'Lest men suspect your tale untrue,
Keep probability in view.'

This lesson of caution is, however, lost upon those who venture upon a description of Catholic usages which they do not understand. A 'priest' with a 'cathedral' of 'his own' would indeed be a curiosity in the Catholic Church. This Mexican story is thus disposed of by the 'Southern Messenger' (San Antonio, Texas):—

'We do not usually pay any attention to the sensations and horrors of the yellow press, and we advise our readers to pursue the same course. Even if this horrible story were true, it would indicate nothing more than that the poor wretch was a madman. But

there is every evidence that the story is nothing but a miserable invention. The clipping before us is from the yellowest kind of a yellow journal, published in New York. The story is dated from "Houston, Texas," and the scene of the event is said to be "the Cathedral at Cuale, State of Guadalajara, Mexico." Now, there is no Cathedral at Cuale, and there is no such State as Guadalajara. There is a city named Guadalajara, but it is in the State of Jalisco. The story is false on the very face of it, and about as clumsy a falsehood as we have lately come across.'

The moral of these stories is this: Readers should be very sceptical—or at least suspend judgment—regarding anti-Catholic stories that are imported into this country from lands that are far away.

The French Tyranny

The following brief cable-message appeared in the New Zealand secular papers a few days ago: 'The Chamber of Deputies passed by 311 to 223 the Bill for separating the State from the Church.' This marks a fresh and distinct advance in a course of legislation which comprises the wholesale plunder of the property of the Church and the proscription and banishment of tens of thousands of persons the head and front of whose offending consisted in their efforts for the cause of Christian education and their devotion to the sick and suffering poor. The object of the dissolution of the unequal partnership between State and Church is to enable the State to more effectually gag, cripple, and strangle the Church. The recent vote of the Chamber of Deputies is merely the latest step in the long-drawn campaign to destroy the last traces of the Church's rights and liberties which even the great Revolution spared.

From the fifteenth century till the outbreak of the Revolution in 1789 the Catholic Church was the religion established by law in France. All this was brought to an end when the great upheaval swept like a tidal wave over the country. On August 26, 1789, the Revolution Assembly voted the declaration which severed the olden bond between Church and State. The possessions of the Church were swallowed up. Many of the bishops and clergy were banished, or had their heads shorn off by the fall of the guillotine, and a 'Goddess of Reason'—of shady reputation—was set up and worshipped in the Cathedral of Notre Dame. By the time that Napoleon became First Consul, on December 15, 1799, the sane bulk of the nation were sick with horror and loathing of the bloodthirsty and irreligious excesses that had been brought into play by the Revolution. Napoleon himself realised (says a historian of the period) 'that it is impossible to rule over a people destitute of religion, and that, to restore order and peace to the State, it was absolutely necessary to re-establish the Church' in France. At his request, negotiations were opened between him and Pope Pius VII. They resulted in the historic Concordat or agreement of July 15, 1801, which the Chamber of Deputies has now set aside.

Pope Pius VII. accepted the Concordat under moral compulsion, as the lesser of two great evils—open persecution (including the absolute confiscation of Church property), and a threatened schism. The Concordat consisted of seventeen articles. The Pope, on his part, allowed the rulers of France certain privileges in connection with the nomination of bishops and pastors, the determining of the boundaries of new parishes, etc. He furthermore guaranteed that neither he nor his successors would in any way disturb those who were in possession of the ecclesiastical property seized and sold during the Revolution. Napoleon, on his side, guaranteed, in the very first article of the Concordat, the 'free exercise' of the Catholic religion in France. He also, in the name of his Government, pledged himself to make adequate provision for the due and proper maintenance of the bishops and priests, and to sanction any new foundations that pious persons might make in the interests of the Catholic religion in France.