

such an authorisation was in its nature a privilege. It did not therefore derogate from the common right of every citizen to consecrate his life to the service of God and his fellow-men in the religious state, provided he wished to do so. And this common right was still further emphasized by implication in the first article of the Concordat, which asserts that the public worship of the Catholic religion shall be free; for a much stronger reason the private observance of the same religion should be respected. The Concordat made no account of the distinction between secular and regular clergy. It undertook to provide suitable maintenance for priests charged with parochial care. It does not appear to debar the appointment of regular priests to such cures. If the religious or any of them were guilty of disloyalty to the Republic, why did not the Government prosecute them? To the charge that, as educators, they were setting citizen against citizen and impairing the moral unity of the nation, the obvious reply suggested itself, that such division was introduced by those who banished the priest and the catechism from the schools of the nation and strove through a godless system to stifle the faith of Catholic children. As to the alleged wealth of the religious orders, the Catholic deputies were able to show from Government statistics how misleading M. Waldeck-Rousseau's bare statement really was. The assessors had estimated the sites, lands, houses, churches, hospitals, refuges, colleges, and schools, whether 'owned directly or indirectly,' or 'occupied,' or held on one title or another besides, at about £40,000,000. What came under the head 'occupancy,' and for which presumably they paid rent, was lumped in the £40,000,000. This item alone ran into over £8,000,000. And let us not forget who made the assessment. Sites and buildings had to accommodate, in the first place, 150,000 members of the Orders, next 200,000 orphans, aged poor, invalids, convalescents, insane (those Orders left no form of mental or bodily ailment untended); there were at least 10,000 persons building themselves up anew in reformatories; one million and a-half school children had to be accommodated. I think these statistics will account for the £20,000,000 to £25,000,000 worth of sites and lands and buildings owned by the Orders throughout France. But M. Waldeck-Rousseau complained that it was held in mortmain; it paid no succession duties. I have already called attention to the exceptional taxation imposed upon the religious Orders precisely on that account, and I have shown from the case of the English Passionists how oppressive that exceptional taxation was over and above the rates and taxes levied on ordinary property demanded of the trustees or owners of Sunday schools, Prison Gate Brigades, such institutions as St. Vincent's Hospital, the Home of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and the like! Countries sanely ruled are careful to encourage benevolence by according exemption, not imposing extra taxation, on such institutions. So heavily did those extra imposts weigh upon the congregations that by October, 1900, their arrears under the head of the *droit d'accroissement* ran up to £260,000; the payments made were nearly as much. It will be seen that time would have sufficed to extinguish most of them through this 'ingenious method' alone.

The pivot of the Associations Law of 1901 is the clause compelling all religious communities to apply to Parliament for authorisation. Even with such authorisation, the conditions constitute a hopelessly vexatious existence. We need not enter into them, however, for, as we shall see by the summary procedure of refusing authorisation, the very existence of the congregations

Was Peremptorily Terminated.

During the debates on the Associations Bill, Catholic deputies called attention to the precarious position in which all hitherto unauthorised Orders should find themselves. There was no guarantee that, however willing they were to comply with the provisions of the new law, Parliament would grant them authorisation. M. Waldeck-Rousseau affected great indignation at the bare suggestion that a French Parliament would refuse authorisation to communities who did not compromise themselves by political misbehaviour. But he declined to embody any form of security in the text of the law. The hitherto unauthorised congregations were allowed an interval of three months from July 1, 1901, to send their applications to the Minister. The Jesuits prudently determined not to put their head in the lion's mouth. They quitted the country, and their example was followed by others. Altogether eighty-six congregations of men and 211 of women set their faces towards the frontier. A couple of dozen Jesuits and Assumptionists employed in colleges under their superiors fell into the ranks of the secular clergy in order to continue their work. The Government insisted on

bringing them under the operation of the new Act, but the law courts held they were exempt. That was all the Government did to enforce the new legislation prior to the general elections of May, 1902. Intelligent Catholics clearly apprehended dangers ahead, but nine-tenths of the public failed to do so. Schools and convents were yet untouched. Indeed, those religious bodies that quitted France in good time for themselves were taxed with ungenerous distrust of Parliament and a cowardly dereliction of duty.

In spite of the affront offered to himself and the injustice inflicted on the French Church by the Associations Law,

Leo XIII. Did Not Recede From His Stand

in behalf of the Republic. Monsigneur Pechenard, Rector of the Paris Catholic Institute, back from an audience with the Holy Father, informed a representative of the 'Echo de Paris' that Leo XIII. had desired him to repeat his declarations every where. 'He is more than convinced,' said Monsigneur Pechenard, 'that the only way to obtain a tolerant Republic, respectful of religious belief, is to accept it frankly and unreservedly. "I admit," said Leo XIII., "that there are certain Frenchmen who prefer other forms of government, but it is a duty for them to keep their opinions to themselves. I do not acknowledge their right to pose as defenders of the Church, and to extol a policy which can only be injurious to it." Similar were his instructions to the Bishop of Tarantaise. His priests were to exercise their civic rights, go to the polls, and vote for the candidate of their choice; but they were not to associate themselves with any political party. They had every citizen's right to give advice to such as sought it. Many Bishops issued pastoral addresses on the eve of the elections, in which they laid proper emphasis on the dangers which threatened religion in the blow struck at the religious Orders, and, through them, at Catholic education. The cablegrams informed us at the time that the Church engaged in a violent political campaign. I could find no trace of that in the French Press; beyond general denunciations from Ministers and their supporters. It was easy for them to do that, and easy to stop priests' stipends in order to give colour to their charges. One priest threatened legal proceedings. He was charged with the remark from the pulpit that a good Catholic could not vote for a Freemason. He gave a point-blank denial, and his congregation were prepared to bear him out. Unfortunately, the Catholic Press is not a power in France. There are scholarly papers, but their circulation is very limited. The popular sheet is generally anti-religious. Now, remember

The Overwhelming Odds Against the Church

in such elections. The Government has at the head of each department its prefect and his staff. It has 600,000 officials throughout France, who know well what they are expected to do, and who have no doubt on their minds that their bread and butter is at stake. There are 500,000 publicans, who are hardly less dependent on the good graces of the powers that be. There are at the lowest estimate 20,000 Freemasons distributed over the country, more zealous even than M. Waldeck-Rousseau himself that his party should return to the Chamber masters of the situation, for he and his party are little else but their instruments. Then there is that dead weight of sordid beings who count on the side of power in every emergency—the man who wants a billet for himself, or for his son, or for his daughter; the business man who hopes for local grants to bring money into the district; the peasant ever yearning for a Government providence to make up for the shortage in price or production, which Divine Providence permits. The Government candidates might be Radicals or Socialists. It did not matter which. They might even call themselves Moderates, provided their fealty was secured. Over against them, without concert of any kind or mutual understanding, were a motley crowd—Royalists, Bonapartists, Nationalists, Progressists, Popular Actionists; but Clericals—with the exception of a couple of priests and a mere handful besides—none. In that campaign fought out at the polls you had no Catholic Party, none like the German Centre or the Belgian Catholic Party. There were men of many parties befooling the Catholic electors by denunciations of M. Rousseau and the Government, but most of them ready to forget Catholic interests once they got in.

Combes' Slaughter of the Innocents.

The May elections of 1902 gave the Government an overwhelming majority. M. Waldeck-Rousseau retired from office, and M. Emile Combes succeeded to the Premiership. He lost no time in setting the Associations Law in motion. It will be remembered that prior to the elections the courts had decided that members of unauthorised Orders might remain engaged as

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