

Council of State. Now, you remember that even after the Pope and bishops had condemned those associations of worship, we were informed by cable that hundreds of such associations were applying all the same. And, in point of fact, it was well known that in parishes all over France steps had been taken by enemies of the Church to rush the associations, and, of course, thus have complete control of property and worship. For bear in mind that the law expressly fixes severe punishment for any attempt by word or deed to induce a member of such an association to leave it. If a number of good Catholics formed themselves into an association, a set of Masons might have forestalled them, or might any time for six months contest their position. The case had to go before the Council of State—a council of Masons mostly, if not all. Neither bishop nor priest was to be heard; that Council alone decided, 'after taking into account all the circumstances of fact connected with the case.' We hear nothing at all of the circumstances of faith and practice. In fact, M. Combes himself has confessed in the pages of the Vienna 'Neue Freie Presse' that the Pope could not have accepted such associations.

The Bogus Associations

broke down, both because Catholic associations were not formed and because no priest could be found to place his ministrations at the service of the anti-Catholic associations. Government ignored them once it discovered their usefulness. If the Catholics had formed associations, then the anti-Catholic opposition associations all over the country would open up an interminable series of suits, all coming before the Council of State, and religion would be thrown into utter confusion. Parties would spring up in every parish, and that deplorable division of French Catholics on dynastic issues which has played into the hands of the Masonic block would be reproduced in every parish on issues touching the Church more nearly still. But those astute calculations have been defeated by the splendid courage of the Church and the heroic self-sacrifice of the bishops and priests of France. They simply declined to have anything to do with any association of worship in the sense of the law. But at what a sacrifice! By this noble attitude of theirs to safeguard the peace and honor of religious life they found themselves deprived of everything. The stipends which would be continued them during a brief period of transition were stopped at once. Over 41,000 bishops and priests were thus stricken. The funds they and their predecessors had created to provide for sickness and age—for the French priest was very poorly paid—were taken over by the Government. Those funds were trust funds, what the law calls 'an ecclesiastical establishment,' and, as the trustees were wiped out and no association of worship formed to take them over, they pass on to the Government. And the case is the same with every sort of pious or religious foundation created under the inspiration of Catholic faith for over one hundred years. Bonaparte's Concordat expressly declares that Catholics shall be free to 'provide for the churches by foundations.' It was an invitation to supply the place of the wreck and ruin left by the Revolutionary confiscation. The hint had been most generously taken, and every diocese, almost every parish, saw itself in possession of pious trusts for the furtherance of worship, of education, of poor relief, and other salutary objects. Every penny of that lapses automatically to the State, or its local expression. It is estimated that the monetary sacrifice involved in the noble refusal to compromise Catholic unity amounts to £16,000,000. The Abbe Klein puts it at £20,000,000, and the Comte de Mun still higher. The Government has all along followed

An Astute Line of Policy.

They began in each case with promises of liberal concessions to one party, while pouring vials of wrath on another. The good sisterhoods and brotherhoods who kept to their proper business would be authorised. Only political intermeddlers had anything to apprehend. The patriotic parochial clergy must be protected from the encroachments of cosmopolitan missionaries. Finally, the long-suffering Catholic laity must be emancipated from the servitude imposed upon them by the clergy. Then, again, the Church was to be starved out of existence, but with as little commotion as possible. It was easy to close a convent here and a convent there, but it meant that in a year or two pretty well all went; yet, except for a momentary demonstration in the streets at the departure of the religious, no more was heard. The cheap Press, which falls into the hands of the million, had not a word to say,

unless calumniate. In like manner bishops have all been evicted from their residences in perfect security. Crowds have, indeed, gathered round them on their departure, but the memory of a crowd is proverbially evanescent. The eviction of the priests came into closer touch with local life. But that was smoothed over at first by empowering the communal authorities to let the presbytery to the priests at a rent. Now the same authorities are directed to insist on a full rent, and as the impoverished priest finds it hard enough to keep body and soul together, he is thus automatically expelled. Many parishes are already without a priest. In the expulsion of the ecclesiastical students from the greater and smaller colleges there was a momentary tumult; but once they were out of sight the neighborhood resumed its wonted calm. The closing of the churches has been the sore point. The chapels of the religious establishments have been closed, and many diverted to most profane uses. But they were not parochial, and the people have not missed them so very much. The parish church is interwoven with the domestic history of the nation, and will hold its place in the people's affection for a generation at least. Now the law of 1905 takes over all the old churches, and every church in case no associations of worship are formed. This, then, is what has come to pass. The Government, in virtue of this law, already owns

Every Church in France,

its furniture, ornaments, and sacred vessels. But the Government has a mortal dread of closing them. M. Clemenceau chivalrously declared that they should not be closed. His motive was not generosity, but fear of popular disfavor. The people may walk in and out, the priests may celebrate Mass, but both feel that they are merely passing occupants without the smallest title to use the place, much less to exercise the least significant act of administration. Everything in the church is the property of the State or of its local expression. Finally, to bring matters to a head—automatically still—the State does not engage to make any repairs, nor even the repairs which are usually incumbent upon owners, and as soon as the buildings have suffered so far as to put them out of use they lapse from the condition of open churches, and will be sold or converted to other uses. The 'great ancestors' got rid of the Catholic bishops and priests of that day by massacre, execution in hundreds, transportation, and general outlawry. Their descendants of to-day are more prudent, more up to date. They starve the present generation, and by confiscating the colleges and endowments provided by the faithful for the education of students for the priesthood they hope to do away with ecclesiastics in course of time. Even with colleges, the Conscription law applies to students about to be ordained, and to young priests after ordination. In revenge for the attitude of the Church thousands of those young men were drafted off to the army as common soldiers early in the year. There, since Andre's odious 'reforms,' everything redolent of religion has been put away, and unblushing immorality and irreligion more than tolerated. The young priest in his soldier's uniform is bound down by the regulations of the place, so that he cannot discharge a single one of his sacred duties—duties the exercise of which is the mainstay of a priest. He cannot celebrate Mass. He cannot even attend Mass, unless by chance. If the commanding officer is hostile, which is now more than probable, such a good chance will be now carefully forestalled. Yet

There is a Silver Lining

to this thick cloud. For the first time in four long centuries the Pope is free to choose the bishops of France as he chooses them here, in America, Great Britain, and as he has ever been free to choose them in Ireland. The bishops are free, in their poverty, to meet one another, as they never were free during the Concordatory rule of four long centuries. They are free to create parishes as the needs of the faithful suggest, without let or hindrance from the Government. The Archbishop of Paris created six new parishes just as he was being expelled from his home. They are free to assemble their clergy in synod, even were it under the canopy of heaven, and they are free to speak out boldly in Press and platform, and call men and deeds by their proper names. The age of constraint is past, of ceremonious affabilities and hollow felicitations. The Catholic Church in France, as elsewhere, will have to put aside much that was striking in function, much that was majestic, but she will not long miss those things; in her emancipation, putting forth freely all her native energies, she will wax strong, prosper, and reign in the hearts of the people.