

THE
CHURCH
IN
FRANCE.

It is fortunate for the cause of Christianity in France that the numerical strength of the Church's enemies there is not in proportion to their wind-power. A few weeks ago three motions affecting the relations between the Church and State in that country were debated

in the Chamber of Deputies. The first called for the complete disavowance of Church and State. The Government set their faces hard against the proposal, and it was kicked downstairs by 328 votes to 128. A motion by a Socialist deputy to withhold the appropriation for the Ministry of Public Worship was (figuratively, of course) thrown out of the window by 338 votes to a paltry 89. Then the Premier brought forward his motion to re-allow the stipends of bishops and clergy that had been cut off by the shears of the Budget Commission. This was carried by 322 voices against 194. Another of the many signs of the growing activity of the Church's life in the country is the work done by her clergy and laity for the foreign missions. The Association for the Propagation of the Faith began among a few women factory hands at Lyons in 1816. Its total receipts for the year 1898 amounted to £268,035. Of this sum France contributed no less than £163,088. And this is but one phase of her thousand and one activities which are engaged in sending 'moral conquerors' yet 'harbingers of peace' to the pagan on the mission-field. Cardinal Mathieu was well supported by facts when he said some time ago at S. Sabina in Rome, in reply to some noisy Pharisees who had been piously thanking God in the newspapers that they were not as the French people: 'France is worth far more than the reputation she is daily making for herself by her polemics and her continual agitation leads to suppose. We must not judge her by the surface. As the depths of the ocean conceal inexhaustible treasures of life, so she holds in reserve an extraordinary amount of good sense, of capability for work, and of active and generous piety. This gives her a place apart among Christian nations. Which other country maintains an army of more than 40,000 priests; which presents to the eyes of angels an ornament of more than 1,000,000 nuns; which spends yearly several million francs for the propagation of the Faith, which sends missionaries to spread the Gospel from the Black Continent to the Polar regions, and this often at the expense of their lives? In the face of all this it seems to me that the French people have a right to say that they are not abandoned by God. To give full expression to my thoughts on this subject, I must say that I think the French people have a right to reply to the Pharisees who are now holding them up to the contempt of Europe. Before accusing us, go and do even as well as we have done, and let him among you who is without sin cast the first stone at us.'

LENTEN PASTORAL BY HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF WELLINGTON.

The following Lenten Pastoral has been issued by his Grace the Archbishop of Wellington.—

Dearly beloved brethren and dear children in Jesus Christ,—The holy season of Lent has come round again, beginning on the 28th of February and ending on the 15th of April, and it is our duty to exhort you to spend it worthily. We can fitly apply to it these words of the Apostle St. Paul: 'And we helping do exhort you, that you receive not the grace of God in vain. For He saith, "In an accepted time have I heard thee, and in the day of salvation have I helped thee. Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation"' (2 Cor. vi. 2). Now is the time to enter into ourselves and amend our evil ways. 'Thus saith the Lord: Be converted to Me with all your heart, in fasting, in weeping, and in mourning. Blow the trumpet in Sion, and sanctify a fast' (Jer. ii.—12, 17). Lent is, indeed, a holy time, a time of prayer, penance, and mortification, a time of sorrow and weeping for our sins and those of our fellow-men, and also a time of especial mourning over the sufferings and bitter passion of our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Transport yourselves in thought to that wilderness in which Jesus spent forty days and nights in prayer and rigorous fasting. Contemplate Him prostrate before His Heavenly Father with His sacred brow in the dust, now pouring out His soul in intense acts of adoration, praise and thanksgiving; now imploring mercy upon poor sinful man, and accompanying His tears and supplications with incomparable mortification; since for forty days and nights He neither ate nor drank, while His couch was the hard ground and His shelter the vault of heaven. O, how forcibly He teaches us by His example the holiness of Lent! Though His life was eminently holy at all times, He imparted to it during those forty days an exterior character of special sanctity. He spent those days in retreat, thereby telling us to spend them in holy recollection, a necessary condition for hearing God's voice in the depths of our soul, and so coming to know, love, and enjoy Him; and also in a spirit of earnest reflection, an indispensable condition for self-knowledge and reformation.

He spent that time in prayer, to teach us that we ought to pray more and better during the precious season of Lent, for then God is more disposed to hear us. 'In an accepted time have I heard thee, and in the day of salvation have I helped thee.'

He spent that time in most rigorous mortification, to enjoin us during Lent to be less indulgent to our sensuality, tastes, and pleasures, and to accept with resignation, nay, with sincere glad-

ness, the privations imposed on us by our kind and merciful Mother the Church. Thus our Lord teaches us the holiness of Lent, and His teaching has been continued and enforced by the whole Catholic Church. For why these frequent instructions and sermons, these additional religious exercises, why that prescribed fast and abstinence, unless it is to oblige us to sanctify the period of Lent? O, blessed be the Church for this salutary lesson! In the course of our life we are so apt to forget the duty of penance, to forget that there are only two gates into heaven, the gate of innocence and the gate of penance; and, as we have lost our innocence, we have no hope but in penance. Hence our Saviour says to sinners like us, 'Except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish' (Luke, xiii., 5). We stand in need of being reminded of this duty every year; for penance is indispensable, either to atone for our past sins, or to hinder us from relapsing into our evil ways.

To all these reasons for spending the season of Lent in a worthy manner there is added another most cogent one derived from the great mysteries of the Passion and Resurrection of our Saviour, for which Lent is intended to be a preparation. The fruit of the celebration of these mysteries ought to be death to ourselves and a new life in God, and for God. But such will not be the happy result of Lent, unless it has been truly sanctified. We shall receive the fulness of the grace attached to their celebration, if we come to them with the perfect disposition of a well-spent Lenten fast; but the contrary will happen, if we have the folly and misfortune to squander the precious days in dissipation, thoughtlessness, or tepidity.

But how shall we sanctify the time of Lent? We must first endeavour to perform our ordinary actions and discharge our usual duties with greater perfection. In this lies the very essence of sanctity. Hence during Lent we must say our prayers better, employ our time better, watch over our thoughts and words, offer our actions to God in union with the penance of our Saviour in the wilderness, and in expiation of our sins.

Again, we must keep faithfully the fast and abstinence prescribed by the Church, and, if through weakness of health or excessive labour, we have obtained dispensation from them, according to the judgment of our respective pastors, we ought to supply the place of them with interior mortification, making our will fast and abstain by the spirit of obedience and condescension, our temper by unalterable equanimity, our tongue by silence or greater discretion, our mouth by the privation of certain luxuries, our eyes by increased watchfulness, and our interior by the retrenchment of those myriad useless thoughts, imaginations, and desires which often make the soul like a highway, where the seed of God's word cannot grow, but is plucked away by evil spirits ever on the watch to surprise and tempt us. Such mortifications as these will never hurt our head or our health, and will do our souls no end of good.

Furthermore, we ought to accept with resignation and patience the crosses and trials which God sends us; supporting each other's burdens with gentle forbearance: 'loving one another with the charity of brotherhood, with honour preventing one another; in carefulness, not slothful, in spirit fervent; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; instant in prayer; to no man rendering evil for evil: if it be possible as much as in you having peace with all men; not revenging yourselves, my dearly beloved, but give place unto wrath, for it is written—Revenge to Me; I will repay, saith the Lord. But if thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him to drink. For, doing this, thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good' (Rom. xii., 10-21).

We ought, indeed, during Lent, to enliven our charity to all men and multiply our alms-deeds. One direction which our charity can take, the most profitable and meritorious results, is towards the relief of the many sufferers in the terrible war now raging in South Africa. Let us give generously the help of our constant and fervent prayers, that Almighty God, the Lord of Hosts, may speedily bring the war to a happy close, and turn its results to the good of His Church and the welfare of mankind, temporal and eternal; and let us contribute nobly, according to our means, to the relief funds in connection with that dire and bitter struggle for supremacy.

Our contributions for Peter's Pence ought this year to be particularly generous, for the following reasons:—

Our Holy Father the Pope, in May last, by an encyclical addressed to the Christian world, proclaimed the celebration, in 1900, of what is known as the Holy Year, such being the name given for many centuries to the year in which, from time to time, the Sovereign Pontiffs have proclaimed to the world extraordinary indulgences, on condition of a visit to the sanctuaries of Rome. His Holiness, on the same occasion expressed his gratification to know that preparations were being made to sanctify in a special manner the closing year of this century by a solemn homage to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Doubtless, in the course of this year, the Holy Father's hopes will be realised; vast numbers of his children will journey to Rome, there to renew their faith and their piety, and thence to return with the Apostolic blessing of the venerated old man who holds the keys, and whom we hope God will spare to see that outburst of religious fervour which marks the Holy Year.

Accordingly, this year should be conspicuous for increased generosity in the offering of Peter's Pence. He who gives to St. Peter lends to God. He who makes sacrifices for the Sovereign Pontiff arms him with fresh and powerful weapons for the great struggle in which he is the divinely-appointed leader.

In preparation for the close of the Holy Year, and in association with the whole Christian world in its Solemn Homage to Jesus Christ, we hereby direct that in the archdiocese, until the end of this year, on each Sunday, at all Benedictions of the Most Blessed Sacrament, there be sung, in Latin, after the 'O Salutaris,' either the canticle 'Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel,' or the 'Magnificat.' The clergy will be careful to point out to the flock how these sacred canticles are pervaded by the spirit of praise and thanksgiving for the great dispensation of the Incarnation, which is the origin and fount of man's eternal bliss, and the supreme glory of the whole