

THE CHURCH IN SCANDINAVIA

GRADUAL RETURN TO THE TRUE FOLD.

Throughout the Scandinavian countries there is a steady and rapid advancement of the Catholic Church (writes a Norse convert in the *San Francisco Monitor*). Denmark, which was the first of these countries to assume Christianity which then meant Catholicism, was also the first to abandon it for the Lutheran doctrines, and exercising then the political sway over its sister countries in the North, did much to bring about the loss of the Catholic faith there. But Denmark was also the first to make great strides toward a return to Mother Church. The arrival in Copenhagen some thirty or more years ago of the Princess Marie of Bourbon, an ardent Catholic, who became the wife of Prince Waldemar, gave the greatest impetus.

Religious Freedom in Denmark.

Historically speaking, the reintroduction and further spread of the Catholic Church in Denmark dates back to the year 1848, when King Frederick VII. gave his people a constitution in which was granted and guaranteed not only political, but also religious freedom to all. It was at that time that the Catholic Church was allowed to resume her mission of saving souls in that nation where Protestantism had reigned absolutely since the introduction of the Reformation. When they arrived in Denmark they found only two Catholic churches, which were allowed to exist there as exceptions to the above-mentioned rule. The one was in Fredericia, a little fortress on the east coast of Jutland, and the other in Copenhagen. The former was the parish church of a small Catholic community of about one hundred and thirty members, the remainder of an originally much larger parish. These Catholic people were allowed to remain in Fredericia and to worship in the old Catholic faith by special permission. The other Catholic church tolerated in Denmark was the church of the Austrian Embassy in Copenhagen, where the Bishop of the Danish missions now resides. The priests of that church were absolutely forbidden to spread the Catholic faith among the Protestant population. They were forbidden to preach in Danish to prevent the people from learning anything about the true religion. Even the church building had to be constructed in a special manner; it could have neither spires nor bells, nor windows facing the street, from which, furthermore, it had to be separated by an iron fence. In short, it looked more like a gaol than a church.

To-day things are very different. Not only the civil Government, but, what is of more importance, the Protestant population itself, shows a toleration towards the Catholic Church, priests and people, which is quite unusual in other non-Catholic countries. Even the Protestant ministers, with very few exceptions, refrain from speaking in the pulpit and writing in the press against the ever-advancing Catholic movement. And so where there were only two Catholic churches at the beginning of the missionary labors, there are to-day more than thirty parishes in the different cities of Denmark, to which are attached convents, schools, and hospitals.

Condition in Norway.

As to the second northern country, Norway, the Bishop of Christiania, Monsignor Fallize, assures us that there is no country where the Catholic Church is treated more liberally than in Lutheran Norway. The explanation of this is found in the fact, he maintains, that the Norwegians never really apostatised. They still glory in their Catholic ancestors. In 1814 Norway became a Swedish province, and in 1845 the Norwegians succeeded in wresting from the king his assent to a law granting religious liberty to Christians who were not Lutherans. The Vicar-Apostolic of the latter country, profiting by this law, sent a few priests into Norway. It was not until 1856 that Norway could boast of a Catholic church, that of St. Olaf in Christiania. The faith spread with sufficient rapidity to lead the Pope in 1869 to appoint a Prefect-Apostolic for

Norway. At the present moment Bishop Fallize has the care of the Church in Norway. Religious Orders have been once more allowed into the land. Here is how the education question has been solved. The law declared that all schools should be essentially Lutheran. Then the Government declared that Catholics could not in conscience send their children to such schools, so that the law must furnish every facility to establish purely Catholic schools.

At the consecration of a church recently built, all the State officials, with the Amtmann (Mayor and Prefect) at their head, were present. During Mass the Bishop invited them to pray 'that all may be one,' whereat all bowed their heads and prayed with the Catholics present.

The absence of bigotry is a thing to marvel at. The Bishop narrates how, when he was opening a new mission, an old Protestant lady came and shook his hand cordially, saying: 'Ah, your Lordship, how I thank you for having sent us a priest. When my daughter became a convert some years back, I shed bitter tears. Now I tremble at the thought that she might grow weak in the Catholic faith, for then she would be a poor lost lamb without a shepherd. Now the danger is averted.'

Tolerance in Sweden.

In Sweden religious tolerance was not granted until 1860. It should be borne in mind that Sweden gave to the world one of the foremost Catholic women, known to us as St. Bridget of Sweden. She was born in the year 1303, and in her seventy years of active life played an important part in history at Avignon and in her relation with St. Catherine of Siena. There are to-day many finely built old Catholic cathedrals in Sweden. There are the splendid cathedrals at Upsala, Lund, Linköping, Vistera, and Skara, as well as the celebrated monastery church in the North of Sweden, and the one at Valstena, built under the direction of St. Bridget, with the many smaller edifices scattered over the country, all of which are the work of Catholic hands and are now in the possession of Protestants.

From the time of the Reformation until the publication of the Edict of Tolerance by Gustavus III. in 1781, all public manifestation of Catholic worship was forbidden in Sweden. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass could only be celebrated in private chapels belonging to foreign embassies. If a Lutheran embraced the religion formerly professed by the entire nation, the religion of St. Eric and of St. Bridget, the convert was exiled and his goods confiscated.

In 1892 the Catholics at Stockholm had the happiness of seeing a church erected in honor of the martyred king, St. Eric.

This church is the only Catholic one in Sweden which possesses a bell. The Angelus is rung there, and the residence of the Vicar-Apostolic is situated close to this edifice. The Vicar-Apostolic is obliged to often travel long distances in the exercise of his sacred functions. Sweden is a very large country, and the small number of Catholics who do not reside in Stockholm are scattered over the immense territory. There is also a beautiful little chapel, dedicated to St. Joseph, erected in 1892, in the Catholic cemetery outside Stockholm, the generous gift of Madame de Koudriaffsky, the widow of the Russian Ambassador. In the provinces there are Catholic churches at Malmo, Gothenburg, Norrköping, Gefle, and Halmoe. The latter is the one most frequented by the Polish workmen, who go to Sweden in such large numbers to work in the beet-root sugar fields. These men often sacrifice their small wages in order to purchase a railway ticket, or walk a long distance in order to be able to receive Holy Communion.

The Polish laborers have for many years a faithful friend in the person of an old priest, Count Bernard Stolberg, a descendant of the famous writer, Frederick Leopold Stolberg, a diplomatist, whose conversion surprised the Protestant world. The Abbe Stolberg has his fixed residence at Norrköping, but he undertakes long journeys in different districts of Sweden among the Polish workmen.

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