

ing to the Church and to the Religious Orders, despite many further nefarious acts, the apostolic reconstitution of the episcopate was assured; and this is the main element of the national regeneration. Furthermore, the University is on the way to reap what it has sowed for the last hundred years. The personnel of a hundred and some odd thousand school teachers of both sexes is partly gangrened by doctrines socialistic, anti-military, anti-patriotic, and, of course, anti-Christian. The most distinguished and highest in dignity, M. Bocquillon and several of his colleagues, unconscious anarchists, pretend to combat anti-patriotism without the aid of Catholic doctrine, and while they continue to extol, as the educational ideal, the schools of the demagogue Ferry, officially neutral, but downright godless or rather against God, the training schools in the departments of France and the higher normal school, contain large numbers of socialists, according to recent disclosures in the press. Finally, in the lycées into which the suppression of colleges conducted by Religious Orders has caused a portion of Catholic youth to enter, the pupils are daily more and more obliged to react against an historical and philosophical teaching, the anti-national character of which has shocked even the youngest minds. This sum of facts has disaffected numbers of rural and urban families more and more weary of an obstinate and systematic school policy which is constantly turning out young people devoid of conscience and morality, lazy, desperate, in a word *apaches* of every sort. When comes the failure of the Third Republic obviously doomed to end like the bankrupt Directory; when comes, by the syndicalists or otherwise, the fall of these parliamentary demagogues who employ centralisation for public oppression, then the reaction of parents will restore the possibility of rechristianising French youth by the restoration of full educational liberty, by the Municipal Councils regaining the perfect right to select teachers of all kinds, by the just acknowledgment that families have the faculty to carry out the scholarships gained by their children in the schools of their own choice. These steps taken by the liberating Government, and assured by the national representation of moral interests as well as professional, will reduce the University to the students (holders of scholarships and others) who are completely free to go to it, and will thus lose a great part of its baneful influence.

Among many adults, both in the higher and lower strata of society, ignorance of religion—with impiety, indifference, and tepidity—explains every kind of hostility, apathy, and neglect of social and political duty. These failings of varied gravity and endless number, all through the 19th century, have wrought the actual condition of France, and the domineering of two hundred thousand Freemasons, Protestants, and upstarts, over ten million electors.

These millions of Frenchmen actually abused, bought over, or terrorised, can, up to a certain number, be brought back to the defence of society by the action of the press and of lectures emphasising the financial and political blunders of the Government. The social catastrophes which must unavoidably close the period of mad expenditure, of crimes against every species of liberty, of hypocritical or violent persecutions, of promises of unrealisable reforms, will finally bring light into many minds, to show the social and individual necessity of religion, especially if the natural heads of the people apply themselves, in every grade of the social hierarchy, to set up picked leaders over the rank and file of the various social groups.

But it is doubtless most urgent that French electors should be enlightened about the dangers of today and to-morrow, well instructed on their political and electoral duties, and banded together in all possible numbers against the enemies of society. If it is important that the rising generation should receive a Christian education, remotely preparing them to play the game of patriotism, by inbuing them with the spirit of duty, valiance and sacrifice—there is still more need, owing to the importance of beginnings in every kind of work, of the utmost solicitude in the up-bringing of children.

As has been stated in the outset of this essay, many children in France are much injured by certain lacunæ in their religious training. Rare indeed (save among the working classes) are the families who do not see that their children make their First Communion; but many, alas! are those who liken somewhat to the wearisome period of military service the time spent in the teaching of catechism to prepare for First Communion, and thus induce their children to regard the religious instruction preparatory for the great act, and the great act itself, in the light of an irksome task requiring temporary restraint to be followed shortly by youth's resumption of uncontrolled liberty.

Despite the religious indifference of so many parents, the parochial clergy could lead most of the first communicants to the faithful frequentation of the Sacraments, if the formation of these children's conscience had begun, not at nine years of age, but at seven, by easy catechism lessons and frequent confession. Unfortunately, owing to inveterate Jansenistic tradition, other customs prevail in France; most generally in the forty thousand French parishes, numbers of children do not go to Communion before the age of nine or ten years; many others confess only three or four times in the ninth year, and so in their case bad habits, contracted by evil communications, are well nigh incurable; and very rare are those who are brought to confession from the beginning of the eighth year.

Catechists complain of the indocility and naughty spirit of children, nine, ten, eleven, twelve years old, who are put under their care, and whose Christian perseverance can hardly, in consequence, be expected. How different the case would be if catechetical instruction began at the beginning of the seventh year, or earlier, and First Communion took place at seven years of age! It is not rash to suppose that such children would assume habits of frequent confession and Communion, to enable them to persevere in a good Christian life and in innocence, to acquire the virtues of industry, order, and economy. The decree of Pope Pius X. on First Communion has begun to realise the reformation suggested in this essay, the first edition of which was prior by some months to the publication of the Papal decree. This laying of the foundation of virtue in childhood is the paramount work of a Christian nation. Ignored or neglected during the 19th century under the influence of a dying Jansenism, restricted to the ephemeral christianisation of two or three half-years, it gave to unhappy France little else but young men devoid of religion, and grown-up men of Malthusian practices; it finally left France anaemic, sickly, incapable of intellectual and moral resistance to the demagogues (Gambetta, Ferry, and their successors) who, for the purpose of swaying and governing her to their own profit, inoculated her with the poison of the deification of man, of the suppression of all restraints as opposed to the fulness of liberty, with the errors of political egalitarianism, of social levelling, and of equality in sensuous pleasures. Without this initial and all-important training, by the catechism and the confessional, of children in their sixth and seventh year, all after training, however excellent in itself, will be sterilised in advance, or at least deprived of its best results: with this reformation in France will see her population multiply tenfold in a few years and her success become incomparable in every line of true civilisation. A whole series of happy results will be the consequence:—

The prosperity of schools and of works following on schooldays;

The increase of priestly and religious vocations;

The multiplication of Christian marriages;

The end or at least the diminution of race-suicide;

The progressive betterment of the public mentality and electoral results; and, to sum up all in a word, the regeneration of the French nation, which again becoming the eldest daughter of the Church, will take her place in the forefront of civilised nations.

And lest some of the readers of this sketch should regard the above conclusion as utopian and chimerical, they will do well, before yielding to a first impression, to survey the considerable advance already made in the last few years by the Counter-Revolution.