

OUR FALSE ACCUSERS

Mr. Anstruther continues to add to his little brochures published by the English Catholic Truth Society, and deals in his latest with some popular fallacies about Catholics and their beliefs. Are we forbidden to read the Bible? Far from it, we are encouraged to do so, though the Church several centuries ago restricted the people (mostly uneducated in those days) from reading it promiscuously. This was for the protection of the people themselves, and particularly in order to protect them against the false teachings of so-called 'reformers' who sought to interpret the Scriptures in a sense contrary to the teaching of the Church. Rightly the Church reserved her privilege to authorise a Version, and the first printed book was the Catholic Bible, the work of John Gutenberg, to be afterwards known as the Mazarin Bible. Prefixed to the Douai Bible is a letter from Pius VI warmly commending the popular reading of the Holy Scriptures, and Leo XIII in 1898 attached an especial indulgence to reading them.

Convent Inquiry Societies, which seek to effect a legal visitation of convents are for the most part work of anti-clerical and anti-Catholic bodies. In England such societies (under one S. J. Abbott) has covered itself and its leader with infamy owing to the cowardly and libellous charges it has made. That there is, however, pecuniary profit in work of this kind, is shown by the fact that the funds subscribed for the purpose of maintaining such 'inquiry societies' have been proved to keep their directors in luxury and idleness. Even non-Catholic papers of Great Britain have castigated those who have been responsible in that country for calumniating the convents, prominent among these right-minded organs being the *Scotsman* and the London *Daily Telegraph*.

Then, again, the sins of the Spanish Inquisition are being constantly thrown up at us. Says Mr. Anstruther: 'The Inquisition is an institution (still in existence) for the purpose of investigating and dealing with heretical teaching. It is needless to say that it never inflicts capital punishment, nowadays, or imprisonment, or any other of the penalties which followed from its action in bygone centuries. The Inquisition, as such, should not be confused with the Spanish Inquisition which was founded in 1481 by Ferdinand and Isabella, and its severities were condemned by some of the Popes themselves.'

No Catholic would for one moment desire to condone its excesses; no Catholic nation would nowadays permit them. But we must remember (says Mr. Anstruther), in order to judge even the Spanish Inquisition fairly, that in the days when it was in operation, torture and death were inflicted all over Europe for an enormous number of offences, and heresy was then adjudged, especially in Spain, to be a serious crime against the State. As a matter of fact, while the Inquisitors decided as to the guilt of the accused, the State executed the sentence, the Inquisition being a joint-tribunal of Church and State. The *History of the Spanish Inquisition*, written by Llorente, on which most Protestants rely for their charges, is full of statements and statistics which cannot be reconciled with those from other sources, and it is significant that he burnt the official records which would have enabled his figures to be checked. The Spanish Inquisition was not more cruel in its procedure—it was, indeed, more just—than were the civil courts of that time. Llorente gives the almost certainly false total of 6024 victims of the Inquisition under Torquemada during fourteen years. According to a yearly average computed by the Judge, Sir James Stephen, there were in a similar period 11,200 executions in England, under Queen Elizabeth.

Anti-Catholic tracts often make reference to the 'Iron Virgin' as a torture devised by the Inquisition for Protestant victims. The figure was that of a woman and was made of wood, the hollow interior being studded with spikes on which the hapless victim was impaled when thrust within the figure's embrace. Evidence has been adduced to show that no such instru-

ment of torture was ever used by the Inquisition, but was in fact used at Nuremberg by the civil authorities several years after Lutheranism had become the ecclesiastical polity in many German States. In any case, there is no question but that in the Middle Ages both sides resorted to torturing victims of their oppression and tyranny. Long after Protestantism had become the established religion in England, the 'Scavenger's Daughter' was busy mutilating Catholics at the Tower of London.

As to the accusation that Catholics, being bound to allegiance to the Pope, cannot be loyal to the Government under which they live. Mr. Anstruther says: 'There was a time when, by the recognition of Christendom, the Pope was above other sovereigns and had the power to dispense Catholic subjects from, for instance, allegiance to an immoral King. This was once formally recognised as a political power of the Pope. Nowadays, however, he possesses no such power, and Catholics only obey the Pope in matters of spiritual jurisdiction. The whole teaching of the Church makes for social order and preservation; it follows, therefore, that Catholics are always among the best and most loyal of subjects, and all the forces of disruption, like anarchism and secret societyism, find in the Catholic Church their common enemy.'

A Great Dramatist

One of the most eminent dramatic authors that the last century produced was the Irishman, James Sheridan Knowles, who was born 128 years ago. Several of his plays and tragedies are still as universally popular as they were at the first presentation, and hold the place of honor with the best productions of his contemporary, Bulwer Lytton, of England, or the more recent Sardou of France.

It was in his play, 'Virginius,' that Macready won his greatest laurels in Drury Lane Theatre. James Knowles, the father of the dramatist, was a teacher of elocution, and was also the author of Knowles' *Pronouncing Dictionary*, which is quoted as a standard authority by all current dictionaries.

The family moved to London from Cork while the dramatist was a young boy. At the age of twelve years he had written a play for an amateur dramatic performance, which had considerable merit, and at 22 years he had made his debut as an actor. After the age of thirty his productions attracted wide attention, and many of them were pronounced successes.

Knowles won his fame as dramatist rather than as the actor, but retired from the stage only when he had passed his sixtieth year. In his later years he was pensioned by the Government, and lived in retirement on the income. He finally passed away in his seventy-ninth year, at Torquay, England, on the 1st of December, 1862. He taught school in Belfast for many years when a young man.

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