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Poetry.

HINDMOST WITH THE STANDARDS.

BY W. POOLE BALFERN.

"They shall go hindmost with their standards."—Num. 2: 3.

What though the hindmost place is thine,
And thou art in the rear?
This need not cause thy heart a pang,
Nor cost thine eye a tear.
The post of duty is the place
Where oft the Captain shows His face.

All cannot charge or lead the van,
All can be brave and true;
And where the Captain's standards wave
There's work for all to do;
And work from which thou may'st not flee,
Which must be done, and done by thee.

Among the stragglers, faint and few,
Thou dost thy march pursue;
This need not make thy heart to droop,
The weak may yet be true;
Through many a dark and stormy day,
The Captain thus holds on his way.

What though no shout of victory comes
To greet thy listening ear?
Nor voice of friends, nor martial songs
Like wine thy spirit cheer?
O, let not sense thy faith betray
For they are best who best obey.

What though no foeman feel thy steel
Where fame is to be won?
Yet thou canst lend a loving hand
To help the weak and on;
Contentment, too, will spread her feast;
Who would be great must serve the least.

And when the Captain comes to greet
And bring His army cheer,
Not only will he praise the van,
But smile upon the rear;
And all who make His work their choice
Shall see His face and hear His voice.

Lord, from success, its noise and glare,
And often shallow life,
Guide me to where thy soldiers lie,
Faint, wounded in the strife;
Give me a brother's heart, I pray,
To watch and help the weak to-day.

Religious.

The following paper read before the New York Conference will have additional interest from the more recent events which have occurred at Rome.—Ed. C. M.

RELIGION IN ITALY.

BY THE REV. MATTEO PROCHET OF GENOVA.

I have prepared two or three heads for my discourse, each one of them too long to go under the line of half an hour, and, desirous as I am to comply with established rules and to obey orders, I cut them off, and without any introduction I will at once enter into my subject, "The State of Religion in Italy."

A very complicated state indeed it has been for some years past, and is now so more than ever. "The Roman Catholic religion is the religion of the State," says the first article of the Italian Constitution, and in fact 25,000,000 Italians have been baptized by the priests, are on the priests' rolls, and entitle Italy to the name of a Roman Catholic country. But the shades of Romanism are so many with us that I feel it impossible to treat them under one head. On the other hand, the Protestant efforts in Italy are also divided that, to be truly impartial and give you as accurate an idea as possible of the state of things, I must be satisfied with a series of panoramic views or tableaux, to which I take the liberty of calling your indulgent attention, begging that you would bear in mind that over-squeezed things become rather bony and dry.

I. First comes the venerable looking old man whom his adherents call the Angelical Vicar of Christ, the infallible representative of God on earth. Whatever he may be as a man, he is conscious of the diminution of his power and influence, and his words from time to time betray the bitterness of his feelings as he sees his children turning upon him. Yet he has his faithful

band who do their best to make up for the deserters by redoubled activity and by their hyperbolic praises.

II. The clergy as such, with few exceptions, have gathered themselves more closely around the Holy See, determined to stand or fall with it. You would say that they feel that the wreck is fast approaching, and as sailors, who in the moments of impending danger cluster around the captain, ready to obey his orders, so they cling to the Pope. They take in Syllabus and Infallibility, and seem to sacrifice more completely their own liberties, minds and consciences upon the altar of the church than they did even in the dark days of the past. The old rivalries between regular and secular orders, between this and that monastic rule, are hushed to silence. One common foe is before them—Light; they must put it out, and they are determined upon doing so.

Does this mean that all the priests really believe all that Rome teaches. I do not think so. Some years ago 9,000 priests signed a petition to Pius IX., begging him, for the sake of the country, for the sake of religion, to throw off the temporal power. The Pope refused, and the 9,000 priests teach that the temporal power is from God. When Garibaldi entered Naples in 1861, hundreds of priests joined the liberal party, and with little or no connection with Rome, said masses in churches assigned to them. Two years after, the Cardinal Bishop of Naples, reinstated by Ricasoli, suspended a divine, and they all disappeared. Last Spring I was offered through a friend eight priests at a time willing to throw away the collar if I would give them a position. I refused, and those priests say masses to-day. What does this prove?

That the race of Savanarola is extinct in Italy; that we cannot expect a reformation from the Italian priests. Where is the Dollinger of Italy? Where is the bishop, nay the priest of some standing, who opposes the dogma of Infallibility? Even France had her Father Hyacinthe—Italy had none. Father Hyacinthe lectured in Rome, created a momentary excitement among her people, but the clergy, left him alone, or the few adherents were such that nothing of any importance could be done by them. Yet convinced or not they work, and how they do work! You may disapprove of the end, you may condemn the means, but you must bow before the devoted activity, the relentless energy displayed. Whether they be discouraged or not by their repeated misfortunes is not apparent; they defend their ground and try to reconquer what they have lost with a courage and a perseverance worthy of a better cause. The confessional, that powerful weapon of Rome, makes its influence felt throughout the country from the steps of the throne to the shattered shanty. Societies of all kinds, made to suit the tastes of every class, have been formed, and, like a spider's web, cover the whole nation. Salvation of souls—Beneficence is the motto in golden letters on the banner floating outside. To bring the people back to the good old times is the object which the initiated have in view. Competitive schools are opened wherever they cannot have the whole management of the public ones, and in them they offer better instruction and better education. Their reasoning is simple and a comprehensive one; let us have the women through the confessional, and the children through the schools, and the nation will be ours. We will still see better days for us, and they would see them, it is my full conviction, if they had only to fight against human agencies. But there is a power mightier than theirs at work. The Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin, has been pronounced upon their systems from the day in which an old man made the impious attempt to snatch with a trembling hand a jewel from God's own crown. Yet the struggle may be a long one, and will certainly be a terrible one. Let us not forget it, nor neglect our part in the battle.

III. Clustered around the priests are the good Roman Catholics, the convinced, the bigoted and fanatics, recruited unequally from the different classes. The nobility and the peasantry are largely represented in their ranks, and the women occupy quite a prominent position, while they are the most useful instruments. There are many earnest souls among them—souls that have deep religious wants—and though perhaps not wholly satisfied with the Romish teaching and practice, yet they cling to them as the only anchor of salvation they know of. But how many also are there who alas, are superstitious without religion—fanatics who would repeat to-morrow the St. Bartholomew if they had the power to do it.

IV. Following these we find an enormous proportion of the population which, while it remains outwardly Roman Catholic, belongs really to the religion of "I don't care, or is no religion at all, if by religion we mean a personal knowledge of God and a personal communion with Him. They are Roman Catholic by birth, and consider it their duty to belong to the church of their fathers. Habit, indifference are sufficient chains to bind them. They would by no means build the stakes, and they would not go to them either were they called upon to do as a seal of their religious belief. Ask any of them if he believes in the infallibility of the Pope and he will laugh at your simplicity; but if you want to draw the natural consequence of his belief, that he must come out of the Church of the Pope, he does not understand you. He is so well as he is that he does not see how he ought to give a place to religion in his life.

V. The religious question has been for many years entirely laid aside by the great bulk of the Italian nation specially by those who more actively and energetically wrought out its freedom and unity. The thought of freeing the country from civil bondage was so absorbing that they could not think of anything else. Italy is now free and united, and the question begins to force itself upon the attention of many thoughtful minds. Carlo Conzoni, in a very elaborate article in one of the best periodical publications of Italy, says: "When a people has obtained full liberty of conscience, it has not completed its work; it has merely acquired the means of complying with and giving satisfaction to its moral and religious exigencies; and inasmuch as by neglecting these a people declines and goes back to barbarism or loses itself in an unversed and corrupted civilization, so we Italians ought not to make a mere negative use of our religious liberty by throwing ourselves into the arms of skepticism or of indifference. Our political regeneration would be of no value were it not followed by a moral and a religious one." These very significant words, healthy symptoms of the moral recovery of Italy, do not stand alone, thanks to God. Another distinguished writer, the Roman Count Terenzio Mamiani, discovering what he calls the "Religiosity" in Italy and France, states the fact that the former begins to feel uneasy under her mantle of religious indifference, and almost instinctively is looking for something that would save us from the tyranny of Rome on one side and the comfortless doctrines of infidelity on the other. Other voices have been and are heard from different parts of the Peninsula trying to draw the attention of the people to such an important subject. It is true nothing determined is offered to the people by their advisers. Perhaps they don't know it themselves, but one immense step would be made on the day in which the Italian people would rise and say, "We will have a religion in which we can believe with our hearts and souls."

The petition of Roman Catholics, which from time to time comes to the Evangelical churches, asking for evangelists, marks still more accumulated symptoms of that latent work which is slowly but gradually being done in Italian minds.

VI. Here I ought to speak of the New Catholics, of the Liberal Catholics and it would be very interesting to follow them in their attempt to conciliate the exigencies of their more enlightened consciences with the requirements of a religion which has always baffled them. To see some of them by a slow process separating gradually from the Church of Rome, others keeping in their inner heart the belief in one living God, and suffering the, to them, meaningless ceremonies as necessary for the ignorant mob, others severing the evangelical moral from all doctrine keeping the former and making very light of the latter. But time will not permit us, as we have still to look at a party which is making awful progress in Italy—I mean the Unbelievers.

VII. The number of those who have come to the rejection of all religion from a more or less philosophical and logical inference, from assumed principles, is comparatively small; but their influence is increasing every day and pervading the masses. Whether their names be free-thinkers, positivists, or naturalists, they all find themselves on the same platform—"No personal God, Creator or judge; man's conscience his only rule; the religion of humanity the common bond that will one day bind together all nations in one family." Confounding Romanism with Christianity, it is an easy work for them to show the former in complete opposition to every freedom, and to find adherents among a people which it the more eager for liberty that it has been longer deprived of it. Add to this the natural tendency of man to say in his heart "there is no God," and you will readily realize the importance of the impending danger, more dreadful than superstition itself.

Now let me come to the smallest part, which, however, is the part that is ascendant here. I am sorry to say I have no commission from the Pope. The only communication we have had is that from year to year I get a new excommunication. Our guests in Italy—those who come there for art or literature or to open their purses—have formed themselves into congregations of 30 or 35 worshippers. Their influence is of very little value. Several of the Protestant ministers at Genoa and other places, have made attempts to evangelize the people, and are using their spare time for their benefit. Allow me to begin with the Waldensian Church, not because I belong to that church, but because it comes in chronological order, for I spoke of the Pope first. To Luther and Calvin and Knox, whose names were mentioned last night with praise. I say amen with all my heart. We have 6,000 communicants, with 1,200 children in the Sabbath-school and a classical college of 80 pupils. In 1855 the Waldensian Church was perfectly convinced that her form of church government was confirmed by the Gospel. We did not pretend to Waldensianize Italy, but to call her countrymen to Christ. The only charge the Evangelists received was: Go thou to this field, which has many times been dripping with the blood of your fellow-men, preach the Gospel, be faithful to your master, and may God bless you." Each congregation that they gathered was free as the bird, whose only law is God's law. These congregations have united themselves now. They rejoice at numbering 2,000 communicants from the Church of Rome, with 1,500 children in the schools, and 1,200 in the Sabbath-school. To show how un-ecclarian we are, they have a theological school in Florence, which is open to students of every denomination; they are never asked to leave their religion to join another. Almost contemporary with the Waldensian efforts in Italy were the efforts of those who came from Switzerland, Germany, England, and France, to help in the evangelical work. They employed agents who gathered churches, which, though, had no connection with each other. Afterward they united, forming what is called there by the official name of the Union of the Free Christian

Churches of Italy. You know them better here under the name of the Free Church of Italy. They have about 28 or 30 congregations, with a thousand communicants, and when it will be possible for them to have more instructed and learned ministers, they will have a good part of the evangelization of our country. The few churches which did not join the Union, and which call themselves the Christian Churches of Italy, are about the same in number. Following these are the Methodist brethren. They have gathered in the north of Italy 12 churches to and in the south, 7 churches. The next are the Baptists, who have dropped their names, for what reason I do not know, it crossing the ocean. They call themselves the Apostolic Church. I tell this for the benefit of the Baptists present, who might not recognize their brethren under this name. Then we have the Methodist Episcopal. They opened a mission last year, and now have two men, one in Bologna and one in Rome, working for them. Altogether, we have ten denominations. The literature is our weak point, but we have now the Book of God through the whole of our peninsula. Six evangelical papers are printed, beside some papers for children. But that is nothing compared with what is wanted. The problem is what shall we have to read? We have 17,000,000 people who cannot read. The next generation will see them reduced to 8,000,000. But what will they read? What shall they read when they are able to?

Now, reducing it all to three words, Italy is divided or worked upon by three differences: the priests on one side, the evangelists, and the infidels. The priests have habit and indifference on their side. The infidels have the natural tendency of the human heart. The evangelists have for them the Gospel, which shall have the victory? The thanks of those who hope and work and pray for this victory rise to the Almighty. Will you not join us?

MARRIED LIFE.

Good counsel from a wife and mother: "I try to make myself and all around me agreeable. It will not do to leave a man to himself till he comes to you, to take no pains to attract him or to appear before him with a long face. It is not so difficult as you think, dear child, to behave to a husband so that he shall remain forever in some measure a husband. I am an old woman; but you can still do what you like; a word from you at the right time will not fail of its effects. What need have you to play the suffering virtue? 'the tear of a loving girl,' says an old book, is like a dewdrop on a rose; but that on the cheek of a wife is a drop of poison to her husband.' Try to appear cheerful and contented, and your husband will be so; and when you have made him happy, you will become so, not so in appearance, but in reality. The skill required is not so great. Nothing flatters a man so much as the happiness of his wife; he is always proud of himself as a source of it. As soon as you are cheerful you will be lively and alert, and every moment will afford you an opportunity to let fall an agreeable word. Your education, which gives you an immense advantage, will greatly assist you."

COVETOUSNESS.—There is a fable of a covetous man, who chanced to find his way one moonlight night in a fairy palace. There he saw bars, apparently of solid gold, strewed on every side; and he was permitted to take away as many as he could carry. In the morning when the sun rose upon his imaginary treasure, borne home with so much toil, behold! there was only a bundle of sticks; and invisible beings filled the air around him with scornful laughter. Such shall be the confusion of many a man who dies in this world worth his thousands, and wakes up in the next world not only "miserable and poor and blind and naked," but in the presence of a heap of fuel stored up against the great day of burning.