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THE NETTLE AND THE WOODBINE.
BY J. H. B. BAILEY.
"I was in a grove the woodbine grew,
And blossomed all the summer through;
The wild bee wooed it, and the bird
From off its trailing stem was heard;
The schoolboy as along he tripped,
The honey from its petals sipped;
The zephyr with its perfume strove,
And bore it through the fragrant grove;
The flower was loved by every eye,
And never passed unnoticed by.
Chance had it that a nettle sprung
Up where the woodbine blossoms hung;
The herb was tall and strong—not fair,
Yet might have had a welcome there,
And made a pleasing contrast too,
With colours of so bright a hue;
But scarce a hand escaped its sting
Which touched the former lovely thing,
And thus from spring to autumn's fall,
'Twas hated and despised by all.
'Tis so with life. There's many a one
Mid mirth and beauty might have shone,
And even claimed withal a part
In every wise and virtuous heart,
Though nature has combined with fate
To make them never truly great,
But too often envy fills the breast,
And stings companion, friend, and guest;
And one who only treads the earth
To wound the loved, and injure worth,
Will, like the nettle, surely find
The utter scorn of human kind."

Luther at Rome.
Luther often mixed with the monks and citizens of Rome. If some amongst them extolled the Pope and the clergy, the greater number gave voice to their complaints and sarcasms. What stories had they to tell of the reigning Pope, of Alexander VI., and of so many others! One day, his Roman friends related, how Cæsar Borgia having fled from Rome, had been taken in Spain. On the eve of trial, he prayed for mercy, and asked for a priest to visit him in his prison. They sent him a monk. He murdered him, disguised himself in his cowl, and effected his escape. "I heard that at Rome: it is a thing well known," says Luther. Another day, passing along the principal street that led to St Peter's church, he stopped in astonishment before a statue, representing a pope, under the figure of a woman holding a sceptre, clothed in the papal mantle, bearing a child in her arms. "It is a girl of Mentz," said the people, "who was chosen Pope by the cardinals, and was delivered of a child on this spot; therefore no pope ever passes through this street." "I wonder," observed Luther, "that the popes allow the statue to remain."
Luther had expected to find the edifice of the church encompassed with splendor and strength; but its doors were broken in, and its walls consumed by fire. He saw the desolation of the sanctuary, and drew back in alarm. He had dreamed of sanctity; he found nothing but profanation.
He was not less struck with the disorders committed in the city. "The police is strict and severe in Rome," said he. "The judge, or

captain rides through the city every night, with three hundred attendants. He stops all he finds in the streets; if he meets an armed man, he hangs him, or throws him into the Tiber. And yet the city is full of disorders and murders; whilst, in places where the word of God is truly and faithfully preached, we see peace and order prevail, without the necessity for law or severity.' "It is incredible what sins and atrocities are committed in Rome," he says again; "they must be seen and heard to be believed. So that it is usual to say: 'If there be a hell, Rome is built above it; it is an abyss from whence all sins proceed.'"

This sight made, at the time, a great impression on Luther's mind; an impression which was afterwards deepened. "The nearer we approach to Rome, the greater number of bad Christians do we find," said he, several years after. "It is commonly observed, that he who goes to Rome for the first time, goes to seek a knave there; the second time he finds him; and the third time, he brings him away with him, under his cloak. But now, people are become so clever, that they may make the three journeys in one." One of the most profound geniuses of Italy, though of deplorable celebrity, Machiavelli, who was living at Florence when Luther passed through that city to go to Rome, has made a similar remark: "The greatest symptom," said he, "of the approaching ruin of Christianity, (by which he meant the Roman Catholic religion,) is that the nearer we approach the capital of Christendom, the less do we find of the Christian spirit in the people. The scandalous example and the crimes of the court of Rome, have caused Italy to lose every principle of piety, and every religious sentiment. 'We Italians,' continues the great historian, 'are principally indebted to the church and to the priests, for having become impious and profligate. Luther felt, later in life, all the importance of this journey; if any one would give me a hundred thousand florins,' said he, 'I would not have missed seeing Rome.'

This journey was also of advantage to him in regard to learning. Like Reuchlin, Luther profited by his residence in Italy to obtain a deeper understanding of the Holy Scriptures. He there took lessons in Hebrew from a celebrated rabbin, named Elias Levita. He acquired partly at Rome the knowledge of that divine word, under the assault of which Rome was doomed to fall.

But this journey was above all of great importance to Luther in another respect.—Not only was the veil withdrawn, and the sardonic laugh, the jesting incredulity, which lay concealed behind the Romish superstitions, revealed to the future Reformer; but also the living faith which God had implanted in him was then powerfully strengthened.

We have seen how he had at first submitted to all the vain practices which the church enjoins in order to purchase the remission of sins. One day in particular, wishing to obtain an indulgence promised by the Pope to any one who should ascend on his knees what is called *Pilate's Staircase*, the poor Saxon monk was slowly climbing those steps, which they told him had been miraculously transported from Jerusalem to Rome. But, whilst he was going through this meritorious work, he thought he heard a voice like thunder, speaking from the depth of his heart: "The just shall live by faith." These words, which already on two occasions had struck upon his ear as the voice of an angel of God, resounded instantaneously and powerfully within him. He started up in terror on the

steps up which he had been crawling; he was horrified at himself; and, struck with shame for the degradation to which superstition had debased him, he fled from the scene of his folly.—
D'Aubigne.

Religious Condition of France.

The Catholic church in France had been severely punished for her idolatry of selfish passion and interests, at the terrible period of the Revolution, when she was involved in a common proscription with those interests and passions. But without profiting from the sad reprisals of cruelty and intolerance on the part of the philosophical spirit of the eighteenth century, she resumed, under the Empire, her old policy of attaching herself to this or that political interest. Instead of maintaining in her misfortunes, the calm dignity of Christian resignation, she tried, with the eagerness of a gambler, the chances of temporal prosperity. To recompense Napoleon for his services, she laid at his feet the most extravagant flatteries; but the statues of Cæsar were everywhere set up, only to be insulted and destroyed upon the re-appearance of the ancient kings. The altar was now erected at the side of the throne. The interests and passions of the church and of the royalty were blended, so that their cause became one and the same. "Thus," says a French writer, "religion condescends to a perilous mis-alliance, she abdicates heaven to share a crown which is fragile in proportion to its antiquity." The degrading prosperity which this church enjoyed under the restoration, strengthened her less than fresh persecutions would have done, to resist the storm of popular indignation, which, in 1830, swept away the dynasty in which she had reposed. And when the revolution of July broke forth like a thunderbolt, she believed herself lost, because the sceptre dropped from her hands. The priests were filled with alarm. They were not ignorant that they had excited the national anger by their haughty pretensions, and absurd exactions. The whole country accused them of having given the unhappy Charles X, the most perfidious advice, and of having provoked the violation of the charter. "Down with the Jesuits—down with the priests," was the cry of thousands of citizens. And, for a while, the tempest raged so furiously, that it really seemed that the clergy would be swallowed up in the vast wreck. The popular prejudices were so strong, even in the month of February, 1832, that the church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, in Paris, (from the belfry of which the signal for the dreadful massacre of St. Bartholomew had sounded two hundred and sixty years before,) was plundered, the palace of the archbishop was demolished, and all the ecclesiastical insignia were thrown into the river, because the priests had dared to celebrate a mass in favor of the old Bourbons. For already does the Catholic church take courage. It even revives its hatred against the French Revolution. It declaims instead of praying. It puts in the same scale of the balance the cross of Jesus Christ, and the ensign armorial of the ancient monarchy. No wonder that the fanaticism which would turn piety into sedition, inflames the wrath of the triumphant people.

But it must be allowed that this opposition to the Catholic church embraced scarcely any religious elements, and was, therefore, unlikely to be permanently effectual. The Jesuits were well aware of this fact, and patiently waited in their retreats until the excitements of the period should gradually subside. The following paragraph from the pen of a French Protestant, (to whose letters I acknowledge my indebtedness

for any important facts,) thus describes the influence exercised at that time in France, by the disciples of Ignatius Loyola.

"Cunning, insinuating, quick in discerning, and prompt in seizing favourable opportunities, they re-appeared when least expected, and exercised immense influence over the secular clergy. The popish bishops received from these ambitious monks directions by which they servilely regulated their conduct. They adopted all, or nearly all, the principles of Ultramontanism, abandoning the articles of the Gallican Church, in order to form a more compact phalanx around the Holy See. At the same time, the ecclesiastics of an inferior order—curates and deacons—undertook to make proselytes among the inferior classes of the population, and particularly among the female portion. They organized congregations, or associations of the 'Holy Virgin,' and of the 'Sacred Heart,' and promised numerous indulgencies to those who should consent to become members of these confraternities. This was a kind of subterranean work, which neither provoked the suspicion of government, nor the attacks of political journals, and which, by degrees, re-established the power of the clergy."

There are at present in France, fifteen archbishoprics, and sixty-five bishoprics, in all, eighty sees, or eighty-one, if that of Algiers be included. According to the census of 1845, the clergy forms a total of 42,495—one priest for every seven hundred and sixty inhabitants. To the French Episcopate, belong several bishops *in partibus infidelium*, missionary bishops, and five cardinals, two of whom received the red hat last summer from Pius IX., who said, upon making the appointment, that he rejoiced thus to testify his regard to his dear son the most Christian king, Louis Philippe. "Our king," remarks the writer, from whom I have before quoted, "has resumed the title of our ancient monarchs; he is called *Most Christian*, that is to say *Most Romish*, according to the Pope's meaning. He is the very dear son of his Holiness. Certainly it was not supposed by France, in the month of August, 1830, that the king, who had just been borne to the throne on the shoulders of the people, would cultivate so close an acquaintance with the Holy See as this. She had no idea that there was to be so touching an interchange of affection between these two high powers. Louis Philippe is growing old, and perhaps he no longer perceives what are the real opinions of the country on these matters. As for us Protestants, we have to pay the expense of these transactions with Rome, and our liberty is the more restricted as the Crown is more desirous of acquiring the good graces of the Holy Father."

It is certain that Louis Philippe has not been wholly uninfluenced by the favor with which his wife regards the priesthood. "Queen Amelie—a lady undoubtedly worthy of the utmost respect for her virtues—is a bigoted papist. Having been educated at Naples, she brought from Italy all the superstitions which Rome teaches her most ardent disciples. She was confined in her narrow prejudices by the priests, who persuaded her that the death of her eldest son, and of her daughter Mary, was the punishment of Heaven, because both married Protestants! The unhappy Queen thenceforth became more earnest than ever in advising that every thing should be done agreeably to the wishes of the clergy. And without any direct interference in religious or political affairs, her influence has not been inconsiderable in their behalf. The king and his ministers, however, would, perhaps, naturally be