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THE
CHURCHMAN

NOVEMBER, 1899.

ART. I.—WILL ENGLAND BECOME (ROMAN)
CATHOLIC ?¹

THE Anglican Church is at this moment passing through a crisis which profoundly agitates the country, and has a wide echo, not only in the press, but also in Parliament. The question interests Italy as well, because from this religious agitation in England not a few, especially in the Vatican circles, nourish a false hope that the English nation will return into the bosom of the "Catholic" Church. This hypothesis appears worthy of special examination, both because a signification which it does not possess has been attributed by the foreign press to the so-called "Catholic movement" in England, and also because I am convinced that the English people never have, and never will, separate themselves from that strong and robust Protestantism to which they have remained faithful for nearly four hundred years. I shall endeavour in the course of this brief article to present to my readers arguments in favour of my conviction, which is purely an objective one, as I also belong to the (Roman) Catholic Church. First, however, let me crave their indulgence for a foreigner who dares to write in a language which is not his.

Since the death of the lamented Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Manning, we have heard a great deal said about an extraordinary development of "Catholicism" in England. It is worthy of note that during the life of this illustrious prelate, when the Roman Church really was gaining sympathy amongst Englishmen, little was heard of such a fact. Cardinal Manning thoroughly knew his fellow-

¹ By Richard Bagot. Translated from the "Nuova Antologia," by Constance A. Radclyffe.

countrymen, and never deluded himself with the idea that their conversion to the "Catholic" faith was probable. Born a Protestant, educated in Protestant colleges, for many years a prominent ecclesiastic of the Anglican Church, he had every opportunity of studying English character. We may be allowed to presume, therefore, that Manning knew well how to distinguish between that toleration which the English people always grant to every form of religion—holding that each one should be free to select that road to Paradise which seems to him the best—and the inclination to embrace the Roman Catholic faith.

With Cardinal Manning there expired the real, genuine progress of the Roman Church in England, while there began an epoch of agitators and ecclesiastical harangues which Manning would never have encouraged. The truth is that Roman Catholicism in England, far from being a progressive movement, is, and has been for some years, stationary, if not retrograde. But the Catholic press, English as well as foreign, assures us that not a month passes without a considerable number of converts being received into the fold of the Roman Church, and every now and then some newspaper publishes an imposing list of these conversions. We read also of new churches being built, of monasteries and religious communities being founded—in a word, of a movement which would mean an extraordinary activity and growing development of the Roman Catholic Church in Great Britain. It is true that no one has ever thought of denying the activity of the Roman Church in whatever situation it finds itself. But as to the development of "Catholicism" amongst my countrymen, I shall endeavour to show that it is nothing but a purely superficial movement, which does not act at all on the thought or on the real religious sentiment of the Anglo-Saxon race. Seeing the great "Catholic" churches of London and other English towns, so full of devotees of both sexes attending the functions of Roman worship, performed with a luxury and a pomp hardly to be seen even in Rome, it is very natural that a foreigner should be much impressed, and that after Mass he should feel persuaded that the triumph of "Catholicism" in England must be a matter of a few years at most. How should the foreigner know that perhaps three quarters of this crowd which he has seen attending the functions are not "Catholic" at all, nor have the smallest inclination to submit themselves to the spiritual authority of the Pope? Many go from curiosity, to enjoy the music and the spectacle, the diversions of an English Sunday being but few. And if we examine carefully these numerous conversions to "Catholicism" we shall find that the converts whose

personality could exercise the smallest influence on the thoughts of the people are very few. Amongst the recruits the Roman Catholic Church has made in England in the last five and twenty years one can hardly find a dozen prominent persons. Scientific, literary, political men, with one accord, saving some very rare exceptions, are conspicuous by their absence from the list of the converted; nor is it amongst them that "Catholicism" finds its new adherents. The greater part of the conversions take place amongst the small tradespeople and the women of the middle classes in the great towns.

Now, one quite understands that, as regarding only the form of religious faith about a human being, the soul of a beggar is worth as much as that of a Minister of State. But, setting aside sentiment, the *value* of a conversion depends essentially on the intellectual and social position of the individual convert. This value of a religious conversion is in a direct ratio to the positive influence which he could exercise over the minds or over the religious feelings of others. When Newman, Manning, Ward, and other great intellects of the same order forsook the Anglican Church and submitted themselves to the Roman Catholic Church, English Protestantism received a severe shock, and if Pusey had also renounced Anglicanism, and followed the example of his other colleagues in the Oxford Movement, he would have taken with him a great part of the Anglicans. Dr. Pusey, however, could never bring himself to take the last step, and contented himself with drawing the National Church out of the state of lethargy into which it had fallen, and giving it the principles of a pseudo-Catholicism without the Pope, which is known to-day by the name of Ritualism. From that period until now the recruits of Rome in England have been of very small importance as regards their personality, except in the case of two or three peers, whose conversion made some noise in the country, or of some Anglican ecclesiastic.

In what consists, then, these conversions to "Catholicism" in England? and why has it been so persistently asserted that England will end by being a "Catholic" nation for the second time in history? Those who have had an opportunity of studying the social life and the popular feeling of the nation will not find much difficulty in answering such questions. The Roman Catholic party in England has always remained, to a certain extent, foreign to the social life of the country, and I will endeavour to give the reasons. Up to nearly the half of this century the English "Catholics" still felt the effects of the anti-Catholic penal laws. The old "Catholic" families were only known by name, and hardly ever moved off their own properties, while the laws did not permit them to take

any part in the affairs of the country. Their sons were sent exclusively to school in "Catholic" colleges kept by priests, so that they grew up in a little world of their own, having nothing in common with real English life. In fact, it is only in these latter years that the "Catholic" authorities have permitted their youths to enter the public schools and the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and this still under certain restrictions and conditions. In such a state of things, how was it possible that young "Catholics" should take their part in the life of their own country? They were looked on with coldness, and almost with aversion, by the great majority of their countrymen, and therefore they were compelled only to frequent the company of their co-religionists. It is, however, only fair to remark that this condition of Roman Catholic youths in England is now much improved, and it is permissible to hope that, with the inevitable progress of more liberal ideas, it will improve still more. These observations only apply to the upper classes. The truth is that it is difficult to find Roman Catholics of pure English blood amongst the lower classes, and this fact appears to me to deserve a little consideration, because in it lies an important point in my argument. The greater part of the inferior classes which belong to the Roman Catholic faith in England and Scotland are of Irish origin. This means that they do not belong at all to the Anglo-Saxon race, but to the Celtic one. Those who know the distinguishing characteristics of this race can judge if the "Catholic" Church can draw from it any great advantages to increase its propaganda amongst the English.

Let us now go on to examine more closely those conversions to the "Catholic" faith which undoubtedly do take place in England. The priests and the "Catholic" press assure us that these conversions occur very often, and that the number of English who abandon Protestantism is ever increasing. Let us admit that such is the case, and that all those who become "Catholics" always remain faithful to their new ideas—a supposition, however, which is not proved by facts. I do not think I shall be making a mistake when I affirm that almost 90 per cent. of these recruits in both sexes, with a notable preponderance of the feminine one, are persons of already advanced years. Amongst these we shall find not a few clergymen, already married, and fathers of Protestant families, who with a self-abnegation worthy of the highest praise have listened to the voice of their consciences, and have had the courage to sacrifice the goods of this world, from love of that Divine truth which they believe they have found in the Romish Church. We have also converts who become priests, and converted women who go into convents.

These naturally belong to a younger class of recruits. There remains, therefore, a very small proportion of those who could become parents of future Catholics. This fact suffices for the impartial observer of the so-called "Catholic movement" in England to deem it a barren one.

Let us now consider the position of Roman Catholicism in England as regards national feeling, and what are the visible signs of the good disposition of the English to submit themselves to the spiritual authority of the Bishop of Rome.

Certainly we cannot be surprised that the Roman Catholic party should be mistaken as to its true position in the United Kingdom. We must remember that a century has not yet elapsed since the Roman Catholics were subjected to a system of real persecution on the part of the English Government. Nor did all the blame rest on the Government. Under colour of religion, the Roman Catholic party never ceased to labour underhand in favour of the restoration of the Stuart dynasty and of the ancient faith, and in this anti-patriotic aim they were cleverly seconded by the secret agents of Rome. The fear the nation had of falling again under the yoke of the Papacy may be measured by the severity of the Acts of the English Parliament passed against Roman Catholics, and especially against the priests.

Now what have we seen in times nearer our own? The anti-Catholic persecutions have passed away like the fires which once consumed the martyrs of the two inimical faiths. The Romish Church is not only free in England, but even respected, and the Crown has no more loyal subjects than the English Roman Catholics; whilst the Roman Catholic clergy have known how to make themselves respected even by those who are decidedly contrary to the religion they preach. We cannot wonder, therefore, if the Roman Catholic party nourishes certain hopes for the future of the Romish Church in England when it compares the present with the past. However, the official statistics of the relative position of religious parties in the United Kingdom in no ways correspond to such hopes, and I affirm that English feeling towards Roman Catholicism has never changed. May I be allowed to add that if even (a purely hypothetical case) the Anglican Church was to become "Catholic" and Romish to-morrow, this would not mean that Roman Catholicism had taken hold of English religious feeling or that England had therefore been changed into a Roman Catholic nation. It is very natural that a person not being English should believe that the religious question should be limited in England to a struggle between Roman Catholicism on the one side and Anglicanism on the other. If the question was really on these issues, it would

be a great deal more simple than it really is to decide it. The Anglican Church already boasts of being Catholic and no longer Protestant, and the great High Church party which now has the command in the National Church designates Roman Catholicism as a Roman *schism*, and has never admitted that Catholicism is only to be found in the Romish Church. The haughty and dignified answers which the Anglican episcopate gave Leo XIII. when he addressed his celebrated letter to the English people, and when he pronounced himself in a sense contrary to the validity of Anglican ordinations, cannot have been forgotten. There is something to suit all tastes in the National English Church, and in this fact may be found its strength and its weakness. Do you wish for a Roman Catholic ritual? You will find it in one of the numerous Ritualistic churches, where, if the English language was not used instead of the Latin one, one might believe one had entered a Roman Catholic church by mistake. Do you wish for Protestant rites pure and simple? You have only to go across the street, and close to the Ritualistic church you will find the Protestant one you are seeking. As may be seen, the National Church provides for all.

But Roman Catholicism has not to fight against Anglicans only. The Anglican Church may be considered as the Church of the aristocracy and of the country folks. There still remain the multitudes who are perhaps most powerful in the democratic country England has become, who constitute the middle classes. An enormous proportion of these popular classes hate the Anglican Church almost as much as the Roman Catholic one, because in it it finds what pleases least of all—sacerdotalism. When Talleyrand, speaking cynically of the English, said: “*Quelle drôle de nation, cent cinquante religions et une seule sauce,*” the great French statesman was perfectly right. For it is true that there exists at the present moment in England 296 diverse forms of religion,¹ while unfortunately we do not hear of a similar increase in the number of sauces. Now if we leave out the National Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Hebrew religion, we shall still have the large number of 293 religions whose adherents represent an enormous part of the middle classes. The Roman Catholic propaganda is absolutely powerless before this formidable army of true Protestants, which is continually on the increase, not only in England, but in every part of the British Empire. The real obstacle to the progress of Roman Catholicism in England is to be found in the fact that it has to struggle not only against a State religion, but also against so many religious sects, divided amongst themselves in

¹ The large majority of these are so minute as not to be worth taking into account.—EDITOR.

appearance, but united in their implacable hatred of any system of sacerdotalism. These sects are all comprised under the designation of "Nonconformists"—that is, of those who will not conform to the National Church of the State.

That our readers may more easily understand the relative positions of the great religious parties in the United Kingdom, let us pass on to examine statistics, and let us see the position of the Roman Catholic party as opposed to the different forms of the traditional English Protestantism; we shall then be able to judge what truth there is in the asserted development and progress of the Romish Church amongst the English.

Let us begin with the National Church of the State. This numbers in England two archiepiscopal seats, with a clergy calculated at 27,000 persons; and the number of churches in which the Anglican rites are celebrated was, in the year 1891, more than 14,500, a number which will have been much increased during the last eight years. The National Church enjoys an annual income of about £7,250,000, or 181,250,000 francs. In 1891, the Nonconformist churches of England and Wales numbered 27,253, and the number of their ministers amounted to 10,057. These figures do not include the different Nonconformist¹ parties in Scotland, the number of whose adherents would not be less than 3,000,000 people. The annual income of these religious bodies reaches an enormous sum, but it is not possible to collect the statistics. The Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales in the year 1896 numbered 1,500,000 adherents, and in the month of December of the same year there were 1,456 Catholic churches and chapels, with 2,686 priests. In Scotland, in 1896, the Roman Catholic Church had 2 archbishops, 4 bishops, 404 priests, and 349 churches, chapels, and religious institutions. The total of the Roman Catholic population was calculated to be 365,000 souls. It must, however, be noted that the great majority of the Roman Catholics in Scotland are Irish immigrants. Of the marriages celebrated in England in the year 1894, 68·6 per cent. were according to Anglican rites, 11·9 according to the rites of the different Nonconformist churches, 14·8 before the civil authorities, 4·2 according to Roman Catholic rites, and 0·5 according to the Hebrew rites. The reader will understand that these statistics of marriages are most important, because the real progress of a religion in a civil State can be ascertained from such figures. The conversions of individuals who from one cause or another are excluded from marriage remain without permanent effects on the race, and therefore do not deserve to be considered as

¹ "Nonconformist" is here evidently intended to include the Established Presbyterian Kirk, which does not conform to the Church of England, but has no hostility to it.—EDITOR.

signs of the progress of a religion. It has been proved that of the conversions to Roman Catholicism a considerable proportion takes place amongst people who are already of mature age, or amongst those who dedicate themselves afterwards to religion, and remain, therefore, debarred from marriage. The small proportion of Roman Catholic marriages in comparison with those of the Anglicans and Nonconformists is an irrefutable proof of the weak position of the Roman Catholic religion in England. One observation deserves to be made before we leave this subject of marriages amongst Roman Catholics. Up to a few years ago, when a Roman Catholic married a person belonging to a different religion, the Romish Church contented itself with insisting that the sons born of the marriage should follow the religion of the father. For instance, if the father was Roman Catholic and the mother Protestant, the sons were to be educated in the Roman Catholic faith, and the daughters in that of their mother, and *vice versâ*. Nowadays, profiting by the greater tolerance accorded to the Roman Catholic religion in England, the Romish Church demands that where there is a "mixed" marriage between Roman Catholics and Protestants, all the children born of the marriage should be brought up in the Roman Catholic faith. The reader may judge if such an example of clerical intolerance is not hurtful to the interests of the Roman Catholic religion.

But let us continue our statistics. The total number of the Roman Catholic population in Great Britain and Ireland was calculated in the year 1891 as 5,640,891. To this total, however, Ireland alone contributed 3,547,307. It is worthy of note that in Ireland also, a Roman Catholic country, during the ten years from 1881 to 1891, it has been ascertained that there has been a diminution of 10·4 per cent. in the Roman Catholic population. But we need not occupy ourselves with Irish statistics, because Roman Catholicism has always been the dominant religion of the Celtic race, and therefore can only be looked upon as the hereditary faith of the Irish people. Putting aside, then, the Irish Roman Catholic population, there remains a number of 2,093,604 souls which represent the amount of the Roman Catholic population of Great Britain—that is, of England, Scotland, and Wales—in the year 1891. Let us suppose that these figures have been increased during the last eight years, and that the conversions to Roman Catholicism have amounted to 120,000 souls more during that period—a number that is very improbable; we should then have a population of about 2,200,000 Roman Catholics in Great Britain, exclusive of Ireland. The total number of the population of Great Britain, exclusive of Ireland, was in the year 1896 about 35,000,000. The popula-

tion increases each year in an extraordinary proportion, but from the statistics it is most clearly shown that an analogous increase in the number of Roman Catholics does not take place. I do not indeed understand how, in the face of such statistics, the Roman Catholic authorities in England can deceive themselves, nor with what object they make the Vatican believe that the Romish Church there is making such strides. If we carefully examine the small increase in the number of English "Catholics" verified in the last eight years, we shall see that the Roman Catholic movement, far from being progressive, is retrogressive. This is all the more worthy of notice, because of all the religious parties in England that of the Roman Catholics is the one that most distinguishes itself by the activity of its propaganda, the enthusiasm and zeal of its clergy, and by the munificence of its laity in helping with money every undertaking which can promote the interests of its faith. The Roman Catholic clergy and laity in England unite in one supreme aim and object, that of working for the glory and the triumph of the Holy Roman Church. The Roman Catholic laity, though very poor as compared with the Protestants, offer us a splendid example of generosity and charity which is really extraordinary; nor do I think that in any Roman Catholic country we can find a clergy so worthy of respect and admiration as that of the Roman Catholics in Great Britain. It is a pity that the same cannot be said of the Roman Catholic clergy in Ireland. One cannot question that if it had not been for the sad example given us by that unfortunate island, where the great majority of the people are under the superstitious and ignorant rule of its priests, Roman Catholicism might have attained amongst us English much more favourable results than is at present the case.

To really appreciate the true attitude of the majority of my countrymen towards the Romish Church, we must study English history, and that not only since the Protestant reformation in 1532, but from the time of the assassination of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas à Becket, in his own cathedral in 1170. But the field is too vast a one for me in this brief article to follow the struggle between the monarchy and the English people and the Papacy. From the time of the Norman sovereigns to the year 1532 English history reveals to us a continually growing irritation of the nation against the intolerable abuses and the unjust ways by which the Papacy endeavoured to hold the kingdom of England in a state of vassalage. The Protestant movement in Germany gave the last spur to that profound desire which had for centuries burnt in the heart of the English nation to free

itself from Rome ; and though it is impossible not to blame the so-called Reformers for the barbarous and sacrilegious acts which they committed in order to obtain the religious and political liberty so necessary for the social and intellectual progress of the race, still we cannot deny that, hardly had the authority of the Papacy ceased in England, than the English nation began to enter that liberal pathway which has ended in carrying it to its present position amongst the other nations of the world. The political intrigues and the insatiable ambition of the Papacy in the Middle Ages were a perpetual menace for England. What sort of combination was it when, during the reign of Mary Tudor, a fervent Roman Catholic, and determined to eradicate Protestantism in her kingdom, the English nation, hardly reconciled to the Papacy by the furies of the fires of Smithfield, was threatened with the danger of becoming a dependency of the Roman Catholic majesty of Spain ? And some years later, when, fortunately for England, the great Elizabeth wore the English crown, what sort of a combination was it that made Spain, with the political and spiritual consent of the Pope, send her fleet to the British coasts in the vain hope of mortally wounding the proud English Protestantism and the glorious Sovereign who knew so well how to lead it ? Was it also by a mere combination that King James II., a creature of the Jesuits, sought to submit the kingdom anew to the Papal dominion, and was compelled to fly to foreign parts ? To form a just appreciation of the horror that the English of that time had of Roman Catholicism, I think one should be born of that race. A foreigner would have a difficulty in understanding the affection and the sentiments of loyalty that the English had for the Stuart dynasty. Yet the fear of Rome, and the horror of finding themselves again exposed to the political intrigues of the Papacy, acted in such a powerful manner on the popular feeling that the English did not hesitate to turn off their legitimate and ancient royal house and to call in a foreign prince, whose Protestantism was to save the nation from the Roman Catholicism they so much dreaded and hated. Is it credible that the English people would easily forget the lessons taught them by so many centuries of their past history ? I really do not know what symptoms of such lightness my race can have given to justify such a suspicion with regard to it. And if the lessons of the past were not sufficient, those of our present times are not wanting. The English people, as Protestants, can draw instruction from the present condition of Roman Catholic nations.

Without entering at length into questions which are, to say the least, of a certain delicacy, we must admit the fact that

England is almost the only nation whose internal situation is free from those difficulties and those religious-political embarrassments which seem the inheritance, not only of those States who have Roman Catholicism for their dominant religion, but also of those in which the same religion, though not that of the State, has assumed sufficient proportions to be able to influence political parties; and without entering more thoroughly into this argument, I will confine myself to quoting a single example of the sort which exclusively regards England. Is it not a fact that the only internal difficulty of this sort that England has had in recent times, and which threatened to become a real rebellion of one part of the United Kingdom against the English Crown and constitution, was encouraged, from purely political motives, by the Roman Catholic clergy in Ireland? Well, as everyone knows, the Irish population in the centre and south of the island—in those regions, that is, which are disaffected and malcontented—is almost entirely Roman Catholic, whilst all the north of the island, where the Protestants are in a majority, and where the Roman Catholic priests are not in command, has always remained loyal and content. I may be told, in reply, that this state of things is more to be attributed to the difference of race than to the domination of the Roman Catholic religion. But in this objection, which I have often heard, there seems to me very little logic, for the reason that similar things occur in other States where the population consists of one race only. Justice demands that we should remember how, after a silence too much prolonged, the Vatican decided to call to order the Irish clergy, so that they should cease from a state of things which would certainly not have helped the progress of Roman Catholicism in England. It is not likely, however, that the people will forget from what source arose the difficulties and the sad episodes of which Ireland for many years has been the stage; nor that it can forget that the Irish Roman Catholic clergy, whose authority over its people is unlimited, instead of using it to pacify excited souls, did all in its power to foment the discord, even to the point of instigating the population to commit the most terrible crimes, and that notwithstanding the remonstrances of the head of the Church.

Now, whilst statistics prove that Roman Catholicism in England is in a stationary state, with a tendency to diminish, the international Roman Catholic press and the clergy assure us that it goes on increasing. How, then, can we reconcile such different assertions? That the spiritual part of Roman Catholicism has made a noteworthy progress during the last fifty years is an undeniable fact. The development of the Oxford Movement resulted in the Anglican Church trans-

forming itself into an imitation Roman Catholic Church.¹ There is not a function of the Romish Church which is not copied by the Anglicans of the Ritualistic party.

"So it is true that Roman Catholicism is becoming popular amongst the English," the Italian readers will say. But nothing of the sort. There is no Roman Catholicism without the Pope, and in the Anglican churches everyone is at liberty to make himself a Pope. If a great part of the Anglican Church has imitated the spiritual and dogmatic part of the Romish Church, it has, on the other hand, left all the political entirely on one side, and has manufactured in these last forty years a so-called Catholic Church which does very well without the Pope, and does not wish to hear any mention of him. The authorities of the Romish Church in England, as well as the Vatican, look on this "pseudo-Catholicism" with contempt, it may be, but also with a certain amount of satisfaction; for they think that the Ritualists are playing their game in accustoming the English public to receive those dogmas and doctrines which really belong to the Roman Papacy. This supposition is, however, another illusion which will one day be seen to be vain. We may study an interesting example of the English feeling towards real Roman Catholicism at this very moment. In 1898 some religious agitators by profession protested against the Romish ritual adopted in many Anglican Churches, which, according to them, was illegal and contrary to the doctrines of the National Church. Indignation meetings were held everywhere to protest against the ritualistic priests, who were called traitors and Romanists in disguise. The authority of the Anglican bishops, and finally of Parliament itself, was invoked to suppress these abuses in the State Church. At first this agitation had no other effect than to fill the empty pockets of those who had promoted it; but all of a sudden the thing was transported to the higher political spheres, and suddenly changed its aspect.

The leader of the Liberal party in the House of Commons, Sir William Vernon Harcourt, wrote to the *Times* some fulminating letters against the ministers of the National Church, who preached in their churches the doctrines of Rome. This religious escapade of the Liberal leader was a matter of general wonder in political circles, and still more so amongst the Liberals themselves, who did not show themselves at all inclined to follow their chief on a road which might end goodness knows where. Those who knew the eminent statesman did not believe he was inspired only by religious zeal, and his action was generally looked upon as a means of

¹ It must be remembered that the writer is a Roman Catholic.

pleasing public opinion. But seeing himself abandoned by his lieutenants, who did not wish to join this rabid Protestantism, Harcourt wrote to Morley, giving in his resignation and retiring from the presidency of his political party.¹

And here we find the interesting point in this "anti-Catholic" agitation, because in it we shall see an example of the true national feeling. Hardly had the English people become aware that political men were occupying themselves with the ritualism of the Anglican Church, when a unanimous voice made itself heard in the country. A universal outcry ensued, not so much against the ritual, nor against the "Catholic" doctrines preached in Anglican Churches, but against the danger of the introduction of the Confessional. The higher clergy of the National Church, the Ministers of State, the Peers and Members of Parliament without distinction of parties, the entire Nonconformist body, and the English press, all raised their voices in a cry of protest against that system of obligatory confession which the Roman Church insists upon, and which is now urged also in the ritualistic Anglican Churches.

The Anglican Church does not forbid its members to confess; indeed, in special cases, and for sick people, it recommends confession to a minister of religion. What the National Church will not tolerate is that confession should be considered in any sense as a regular duty, and that the Sacraments should be refused to those who do not like to confess. Every English party and sect are in perfect agreement in condemning regular confession as an intolerable abuse of the moral and spiritual liberty of the individual, and as a usurpation on the part of the priests of powers which belong only to God. It is not necessary that I should enter into the arguments which almost the whole people adduce against this exclusively Roman Catholic institution. It is sufficient to say that, with the natural exception of the Roman Catholics who speak the English language, confession is abhorred as a menace to liberty, and danger for family life; a system which weakens and enervates the moral part of the individual—an act of humiliation, in short, not worthy of man, and contrary to the will of God, whose pardon, the English say, can be obtained without the intervention of the priest. Let us be clearly understood. The right of everyone to confess is not denied even by the most fanatical Protestant; and who would dare deny this consolation to a suffering soul which asks for it? What the English do not tolerate, nor ever will, is that the priests will have the right to insist, as a regular duty, on auricular confession. Public opinion, therefore, which remained almost apathetic as long as the Protestant agitators

¹ This is not quite an accurate account, but probably the view suggests itself naturally to Roman Catholics.—EDITOR.

only fulminated against Anglican ritual, showed itself as anything but indifferent when it began to realize that the Romish system of habitual confession was really at work in not a few Anglican churches and institutes. The excitement of the people, without distinction of class, on this question of the Confessional in the National Church was thorough and lasting, and the Government, though very much averse to interfering in matters of religion, found itself obliged to present to Parliament a Bill on the subject, if it was only not to offend that powerful political machine called in England the "Nonconformist conscience," or the party of Protestants independent of the State Church. The events which have recently taken place in England show clearly that there is a limit to the tolerance of the Roman Catholic religion, and that not even the Anglican can go beyond that limit without the English people rising in indignation against it. Unfortunately for the Roman Catholic party's hopes, this robust Protestantism makes itself felt exactly when doctrines are treated of which are integral and indivisible parts of the Roman Church, such as, for example, the supremacy of the Pope and habitual confession. If the Anglican Church is, as is undoubtedly the case, powerless to introduce the Confessional into English religious life, how can the Roman Catholics flatter themselves that they would be allowed to introduce it? And it is not to be supposed either that the Roman Church would make concessions to English prejudices on the subject of confession. The system of obligatory confession is too powerful a weapon, both spiritually and politically, for the Roman Church to dispense with it, even to get possession of schismatic England.

There are many other dogmatic and political questions, not to say social ones, which will always form insuperable obstacles to the conversion of my country to Roman Catholicism. I have not alluded to these dogmatic questions, because my intention in this article was to demonstrate to my Italian readers the true position of Roman Catholicism in England, and to offer to them arguments and official statistics which, to my mind, prove in an impartial manner that the persistent voice which the "Catholic" international press raises, in accord with the English Roman Catholic party, is born of illusions founded on absolutely erroneous impressions as to the political and religious opinions and sentiments of the vast majority of my countrymen. I leave, therefore, dogmatic questions to bigots and theologians, confining myself to one single observation, and that is: the English have now learned how to manufacture Catholicism at home, and that if the manufactured article is not in the least genuine, at any rate it costs England less dear than would the real.

Before, however, concluding this article, I must briefly notice a question which, while it is in Italy a matter of fact, which has been disposed of, still exists in England in the ambitious dreams of the high clergy and the Catholic press and laity. I allude to the question, really dead and buried thirty years ago, of the temporal power of the Papacy. As is well known, the English Catholic party is, for the most part, highly "intransigent," and a fierce enemy of Italian Unity. This attitude of English Catholics would not deserve to be remembered here, if it were not that in it is found yet another reason why Roman Catholicism will never gain the sympathy and confidence of the nation. England saluted the fall of the temporal power of the Papacy with real enthusiasm; and it would have been curious had it not been so, because it had never experienced anything but hurt from the Papacy as a foreign State, except, perhaps, when Pius VII. refused to associate himself with the attempts of Napoleon Buonaparte, who tried to constitute a Continental league to annihilate it. There still live in the hearts of the English people, and especially amongst the country-people, the traditions of the times in which the Pope was feared, not only because he was the head of the Church, but still more because he was always to be found among the ranks of the enemies of England.

One cannot understand why the Roman Catholic party should have thought it opportune to take every occasion to show itself so enthusiastic for a deceased foreign sovereignty, of which the English have certainly no pleasing national traditions. The English Roman Catholics, however, never fail to consider the Pope as a pretender to a foreign throne, without reflecting that the position of liberty which the Roman Church enjoys in England is really owing to the fact that the head of this Church is no longer the head of a territorial State, and that the Roman Catholic religion can therefore be freely exercised in England equally with the other 295 religions practised there without the English having to fear being drawn into political or diplomatic imbroglios on its account. So, for the reasons I have stated, and for many others into which I could not enter, I think we must make answer to the question, "Will England become Roman Catholic?" with the simple word "Never!" Another question arises in my mind, and that is, if it would be for the benefit of my nation to abandon Protestantism for the Holy Roman faith? I answer it to myself by another question: "Is it not, perhaps, possible that Christian faith maintains itself alive by the diversity of opinions, and that religion, like commerce, requires competition not to die?"