

ART. IV.—PADRE CURCI.

IN Curci a man has passed away who might have made his mark in the history of the Italian Church if he had had more courage and confidence in himself, and if his natural strength had not been sapped by his Jesuit training.

He was born in 1809 at Naples, and joined the Jesuits about 1830. Being a man of more than average ability, and throwing himself zealously into the Jesuit cause, he became the champion of the party, leading the attack upon Gioberti and founding the *Civiltà Cattolica*, which he kept up by his own talent, assisted by Bresciani, Taparelli and a few fellow workers. The periodical became a power in Italy, having as many as 14,000 subscribers, and being known as the organ of the Society; and the reputation of Curci grew with its growth. But this very thing led to his downfall. "The majority of my brethren," writes the padre, "who were good and spiritual, were pleased at the Divine favour that attended my various labours, but there were not wanting those who felt in a different way about it. The reputation of Padre Secchi (the astronomer) for his special gifts was an honour to all, gave no umbrage to anyone; but in fallen claustral families it is an ugly misfortune to do *that* a little better than the rest, in which all may aspire to distinguish themselves. I paid no attention to this till I saw and felt the outburst of that long pent-up spleen" ("La Nuova Italia," ch. x.).

The padre laid himself open to an attack by a Letter which he addressed to Pope Pius IX., and by some private conversation, in which he appeared but a lukewarm advocate of the Temporal Power. The General at once threatened expulsion, and Cardinal Simeoni and Monsignor Claski told him that he could not escape it. With the anger of mortified vanity he wrote to the General, telling him to do as he would, and he was accordingly expelled; and his character was assailed by a pamphlet called "Breve Exame," having the signature, "A Father of the Society of Jesus," in which, says the padre, "I am painted in their wonted vulgar platform style as a liar, an impostor, a plagiarist, as one possessed by evil spirits, a follower of uncatholic doctrines, a common apostate, and a rogue of the lowest sort . . . so completely is lying, abuse, and evil-speaking seen to be the elements of that sort of journalism, natural to it and inseparable from it."

Driven from what had been his home for fifty years, the padre took up his residence with an unbeneficed priest in Tuscany who offered him hospitality, but the day after his arrival the priest was summoned by the Vicar-General and forbidden to harbour the renegade. He drifted down to

Naples, where, "kept aloof from the society of the clergy, turned almost into an outlaw, and shunned as a *pecus morbida*, I found myself in an absolute isolation, in something of a state of ostracism;" "scarcely one here and there dared to salute me." The padre went to Rome and appealed to Cardinal Pecci for protection; but the cardinal, though an old friend and well-disposed towards him, shook his head. "Those men," he said sadly, "will not allow it—those of the *Civiltà Cattolica* are irreconcilable and merciless." The old man had to return to Naples with no more than permission to say Mass privately in his own house. But he was quite happy. He was engaged in the great work of translating the New Testament into Italian, and as long as that occupation lasted, he was satisfied with his lot. He lived in a garret in the street of St. Marco with no companion but a servant lad, rose at three a.m., and went to bed at nine p.m., devoting twelve hours each day to literary work. No true student will doubt that such a life was one of almost perfect enjoyment. But it could not last for ever. His New Testament was brought to a conclusion. He threw himself into polemics. "Moderno Dissidio," advocating resignation under the loss of the Temporal Power, had already appeared. "La Nuova Italia ed i Vecchi Zelanti," "Il Vaticano Regio," and "Lo scandalo del Vaticano Regio," followed one another in succession, showing to the world the abuses and scandals of the Italian Church, the Jesuit Order, and the Roman Curia.

From the time that he first assailed the dogma of the Temporal Power Curci was suspended *a divinis*. His later books earned him excommunication. As long as the excitement of the battle kept him up he stood his ground; but he was an old man of seventy-three, with no family ties, as much afraid of Protestantism as of Popery, with no one like-minded to commune, with no one at all except his servant lad to speak to. For fifty years he had been under Jesuit direction, which makes it a virtue to sacrifice conscience to obedience. Leo XIII. and his brother, Cardinal Pecci, were personally friendly to him. If he stood where he was, he had nothing to depend upon except the precarious income derived from his books, if he reconciled himself to the Curia he might look forward to a pension, to a post in the Vatican, and to rehabilitation in the eyes of his friends. With his early training what it had been, he could not be expected to stand firm. And he did not. An equivocal form of recantation was placed before him, so worded as to seem to the world a retraction, while he could persuade himself that he was withdrawing nothing; and he signed it. From that moment his reputation, which stood very high, sank in the estimation of his countrymen to zero.

He attempted, indeed, to take part in the discussion of the Socialist Question, but his name had become a by-word for weakness, and no one listened to him. He had but to wait ingloriously till death took him away two months ago. He might have been an Italian Döllinger had he not been trained in the methods of the Jesuits.

F. MEYRICK.

ART. V.—ARCHBISHOP TAIT.—I.

FEW men have ever been more misrepresented and less understood than Archbishop Tait. It is a misfortune of men who, in prominent positions, are the advocates of a moderate policy, whatever their own convictions may be, to incur the odium and provoke the dislike of all who rejoice in "the falsehood of extremes."

The two volumes¹ which the Bishop of Rochester—whose restoration to health, sufficient to discharge the duties of the episcopate, is most earnestly desired—and Canon Benham, have given to the world, is more than "the plain record of a busy and eventful life." It is a real vindication of the career of a great and good man, of whom we may emphatically say, to use his own words, taken from a most interesting memorandum, after seven years of episcopal life, "that his main object has been to endeavour so to present the Church of England, as that, fully maintaining the truth of Christ, it shall become more and more rooted in the affections of the people." It has been said, with a good deal of partisan venom, that Archbishop Tait was a great man, but a bad Churchman. If to realize the peculiar position the Church of England holds in the world and in Christendom, to maintain the standing-ground with regard to episcopacy, held by Richard Hooker, Jeremy Taylor, and Bishop Lightfoot; if to believe that the much-dreaded criticism of sacred documents must conduct inquirers to a fuller appreciation of essential truth; if to look upon a reasonable relaxation of such an obligation as that to use the Athanasian Creed in public service, as not necessarily hurtful; if to endeavour to maintain the ancient rights of the Church, and to establish a generally acceptable Final Court of Appeal, be the aim and intention of a bad Churchman, we can only say, that we hope and trust the race may increase and multiply. It is really provoking to see how seldom men

¹ "Life of Archibald Campbell Tait, Archbishop of Canterbury." By Randall Thomas Davidson, D.D., Dean of Windsor, and William Benham, B.D., Hon. Canon of Canterbury. Two vols. Macmillan and Co.