

most calamitous social eruption the world has yet beheld seems certain to overwhelm Europe. But if the governments and peoples of Europe will listen to and return to her who, though calumniated and persecuted, in superhuman charity extends her helping hand to her persecutors in distress, then we may expect relief. Reason and history, both tell us that in the Church alone dwells the power to restore the equilibrium in the dual nature of individual man, which the presence of sin has destroyed; and so, too, by necessary consequence, in human society and in the State. For, nineteen hundred years ago voices of angels gave warning to all times to come that "Glory to God in the Highest" is a necessary condition, precedent and concomitant, to "peace on earth."

CATHOLIC SOCIETIES.

BY Catholic Societies we mean those bodies of Catholics who are united together for some purpose more or less relating to religion or morality, and under the guidance and approval of the Church, an approval ordinarily signified by the presence of their chaplain. Not every association of Catholics, therefore, is a Catholic society, otherwise any banking company, composed exclusively of Catholic business men, should be called a Catholic society or association. We are aware that this is sometimes done; but with bad taste, and with more or less harm to religion, often made responsible in this way for the shortcomings of individuals. We remember once reading some sharp remarks of the *New York Herald*, venting its spleen against some one by styling him "*a professional Catholic.*" It was wickedly witty. But our enemies sometimes shoot these remarks at us, not without a certain spice of truth in them. And it is to be hoped that the abuse of the word Catholic, for business or other purposes not religious, will be confined to the narrowest limits compatible with human frailty. In his late Encyclical our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII., recognizing the existence of societies as a special feature of this age, and deploring the evil influences under which societies generally are, which with truthful appreciation he points out, recommends as an antidote for the children of the Church, the formation of other

similar societies among laymen under the guidance of religion. His words are: "It seems fitting that societies of artisans and workmen be encouraged, which, placed under the guardianship of religion, may make their members content with their lot, patient under their burdens, and lead them to live a quiet and tranquil life."

The question, therefore, is not whether we should have societies, a question already practically settled, and now officially settled by the sovereign Pontiff; but how are our societies to be constituted; how are they to be organized; what are the dangers they are to guard against; how are they to stand in relation to the Church; how far is the Church to wield her influence over them; how far are they to be allowed to take their part in solving the labor questions of the day;—all these are very important questions, which we shall strive to answer after we shall first have treated of Societies in general, and the relation of the Church to them in the past.

The spirit of association is in man in virtue of his very nature. Once the inhabitants of the earth became numerous, and the ties of the one family became loosened, common interest formed men into nations, and varied interests common to a number had the effect of making this number cling together, and constitute a body united together by common customs. The remains of antiquity that have come down to us tell us of the existence of colleges of those whose pursuits were similar; the well-known college of bakers of ancient Rome, for example, and the guilds of the Middle Ages are only another confirmation of this tendency of human nature. The Church, whose office is not to pervert human nature but to foster it, with her characteristic prudence took these associations under her protection and guided them in the right path, except where her influence was set at naught by the passions of men. She was herself one vast society, and the experience she had gained by centuries of experience was placed at their disposal. Even at the early period of her struggles she had within her these colleges, and in the catacombs are to be seen the representation of the *fossores*, or guardians of her cemeteries, allusions to coopers and to other tradesmen. Acting under the guidance of the Spirit dwelling in her she formed the most perfect of colleges—the Religious Order, realizing what the Tusculan philosopher had written: *Omnium societatum nulla præstantior est, nulla firmior, quam cum viri boni moribus similes sunt familiaritate conjuncti.* Off., lib. I.

We see, therefore, the Church, given by God to govern and direct the moral order of society, taking the association of laymen under her ægis, laying down for them laws, endowing them with privileges and giving them a canonical status, which made them

respectable; securing also for them a legal entity, she conferred importance on them, giving them a legal power which checked the daring of the feudal lord who chanced to be a tyrant.

But if they were made what they became by the power and widespread influence of the Church, she did not give them full sway to do as they listed. On the contrary she curbed them by salutary restraints. From time to time it would happen that they forgot themselves, and asserted their independence of their local ecclesiastical superior. Then would come the appeal to the central authority of the Church, and the decision reasserting the power of the bishop. There are some of these decisions on record, which as interesting exemplifications of what we have said we introduce here.

It must be remarked that these societies came to be known as Confraternities, and were instituted for all kinds of purposes, all more or less connected with religious exercises. Thus there existed at Lanciano, in Italy, a society or Confraternity, known as the society for taking care of the dead. These good people came into conflict with their archbishop, and the case went to Rome. They didn't want him to have anything to do with the election of their officers, and much less did they desire him to look into their accounts; and if he did, they wanted the work done through men of their own choosing. The Sacred Congregation of the Council, on the 20th of September, 1710, decreed, after mature deliberation: 1st, that they must proceed with their election in the presence of the vicar-general, as commanded by the archbishop; 2dly, that an election made otherwise was invalid; 3dly, that the election of the officers required for its validity the confirmation of the archbishop; 4thly, that the society must give an account of its funds and expenses to the archbishop; 5thly, that the archbishop could make use of his own agents, and was not bound to make use of those chosen by the members.

There was another society at Offida, near Ascoli, in Italy. They were also a body of men who, in like manner as the above, had as their special object to pray for the dead. They had their legal and canonical status. They differed with their bishop, and the case went to Rome. Like those just spoken of they tried to keep the bishop from having anything to do with their elections, and from auditing their accounts. The same Sacred Congregation of the Council, on the 3d and 24th of March, 1725, decreed, in answer, that the bishop, personally or by deputy, could be present at the elections; that he could remove the officers who were unfit for their place; and that the society was bound to give an account of their pecuniary administration to the bishop. It is of no use to

multiply instances. These are enough to show the spirit of the Church, and her mode of dealing with such societies.

The societies we have nowadays are of two kinds; one is the Confraternity as described above; the other is the society which has no recognized legal or canonical status, but which consists of laymen united together under the patronage of the Church for some beneficial purpose. They are societies for mutual aid; and that aid, according to the scope to which it tends, generally gives the name to the organization.

It is of these latter societies that we shall now specially speak, as they are those which have arisen from the circumstances of our time, the outcome of the vicissitudes of the nineteenth century.

It may prove a useful guide to us at the outset to remember that these Catholic Societies have been rendered necessary by the secret societies that have overspread the nations of the earth. They have been constituted as it were in self defence. The manner, therefore, in which secret societies have been constituted will to some extent give us a clue as to the constitution of our Catholic societies.

It is no secret that the so-called secret societies here in America are in great part merely beneficial associations, for mutual aid in sickness or distress, and especially for the advancement of business relations. That some of them, if not all, have affiliations with the secret societies of Europe, societies political and rationalistic, as well as beneficial, is a fact known to us; for we have had it from the mouth of those who, not understanding the languages of the countries through which they were journeying in Europe, found, in spite of that, the sign-manual a passport, and a command obeyed with alacrity. Their principal feature, however, here, besides their secrecy and strange forms, or rituals, is the business and beneficial feature.

From these societies, Catholics are necessarily excluded by the circumstances of the case. The oath of secrecy, and the false principles which are the basis of these societies, sapping the foundation of religion and government, have long since, as we all know, made the sovereign authority of the Church condemn them formally. The exclusion in this way of Catholics makes them look around in self-defence for means of protection. The movement is general, and we should regard it with favor. Our Catholics should band together, come to each other's assistance, and give that mutual aid and comfort and even business help, denied them by the other social combinations of the day; for it is an undeniable fact that unless a man belong to some secret trades-union, he will hardly be able to find employment. We are the last person to wish to array our fellow-Catholics against our non-Catholic fellow-countrymen, to whom we acknowledge ourselves sincerely attached. But

when we behold them acting as they do, and treating worthy men and faithful citizens with disregard, and neglect, and ostracism, because they are conscientious, then we say the time has come not to array ourselves in a hostile manner against our countrymen, but to band ourselves together in self-defence; then we say the time has come for us to stretch out our hands to each other, to employ each other, to favor each other, to form societies for mutual aid, and for mutual benefit in sickness or distress, and to further each other's business relations, to secure insurance of property or life, in a word to form the counterpart of the associations from which the laws of the Church exclude us, but without their objectionable features, and in a spirit of charity which will contrast to advantage with the spirit that animates them, and therefore not to the exclusion from employment of non-Catholics, who of course are not members of our societies.

Our societies thus constituted as to their general form are to be organized on the basis of religion. The Church which is given us by God to guide us, which is God working in the midst of mankind, is our only sure corner-stone, and anything standing without her is sure to fall. We want our societies to last, to prosper, and to do a real good work. The only thing then to be done is to make God's Church, first and last, the foundation and the binding power of our fabric. The way to do this is to take as our standard the decisions and openly declared principles of the Church, to make respect for her authority paramount, to resolve that a word from her will make us give up any cherished plan; and all this must be from the deep-seated conviction of our faith, looking on all authority, and especially the authority of the Church, as of God. Here, again, the principles that are the basis of the secret societies in general will serve as an indication to us, telling us what principles held and taught by the Church are to be those especially held as guides for our Catholic societies. We find these societies standing on a selfish principle. They seek themselves at the expense of society, for they disregard the essential safeguard of society, authority, when they deem their interests require it. The history of these associations, if not here, certainly in Europe, is one of plotting against government, of thwarting of justice, of violation of trust, of violence, bloodshed, and even secret assassination. How far anything of this kind takes place here we will not go on to say. We know that the excesses of Europe have not, thus far, been imitated here; but that there is imitation to some extent of the blamable features of European secret societies in this country, is true. We shall only mention one fact to show we are not speaking wildly. A friend of ours was passing the night with a family that had given him hospitality in his journeying. The members of the family were

all together talking with our friend, in saddened tones, of one of their number, who had led a bad life and, as a result, had killed a man, and was to suffer the penalty of the law by hanging on the following day. While they were yet talking, there was a rap at the door. It was opened, and who should walk in but the condemned man himself. For a moment all were breathless; but when a near relative found words to ask him, how it was he escaped from prison, his answer was: "Had I not been a Freemason, it would have been all up with me."

It is unlawful to thwart justice; and therefore such an act as the above could not be tolerated one moment among conscientious Catholics, and could not be the act of a Catholic Society, whose blazon must be *respect for authority*. In fact, this spirit of obedience and respect, and, what is more, love for authority, is a special characteristic of the True Religion. For God is the Author of all things, and the Author of all authority. He Himself is Authority itself, and any created authority is but a participation of that authority which is essentially in Him. In the same way we owe to that primal essential authority, God Himself, obedience, respect, and love, so do we owe to the created participation of it a proportionate degree of obedience, respect, and love. This is the reason why the Catholic should set himself against that spirit born of Protestantism, private judgment and self-assertion, which leads men to condemn authority, to look on it with jealousy as an enemy, and to cherish unkindly feelings towards those that exercise it, even though they exercise it justly. Catholics, on the contrary, must follow the advice of the Apostle, obey cheerfully, and from conscience, that those ruling them may discharge their onerous duties in joy, and not in sorrow.

Another dangerous principle against which Catholic Societies must guard, and with regard to which they will find the Church guiding them in the right way, is the levelling tendency of the day. If any one will take up the preamble of some of the trades-unions, he will find therein more or less of socialistic theory—the arraying of the working classes against the moneyed class; and it may be that he will find the condition that when a member becomes an employer, he must cease to be a member. He becomes one of the hostile class. Certainly this state of things is not Christian. We are not going to censure unduly the working class; we feel more disposed in our heart to censure the wealthy class, whose grasping at wealth has brought about this uprising against them. But undeniably both classes are wrong. Each has ignored the other; each disregards the rights of the other. As the Sovereign Pontiff, in the Encyclical, *Quod apostolici muneris*, beautifully and learnedly writes: "Catholic wisdom, taking its stand on the precepts

of natural and divine law, has with great forethought provided for public and domestic tranquillity by means of what she believes and teaches with regard to the right of dominion, or of property, and the division of those possessions which have been gotten together for the wants and uses of life. For, while socialists traduce the right of property as an invention of man, repugnant to natural equality; and, affecting a community of goods, think that poverty is not to be borne with equanimity, but that the possessions and rights of the wealthy can be violated with impunity; the Church with more propriety and utility recognizes among men, differing naturally in the strength of their body and intellect, inequality also in the possession of property; and requires that the right of property and dominion, which is from nature itself, be for every one sacred from the hands of others and inviolate."

How true is this! One man is born almost an idiot, another with talent; will the career of these two be the same, their success the same? One man has health, the other is a cripple; will these two be equal in the results of their physical labor? One man has given him the advantages of education, and culture, and experience; the other's lot is ignorance and neglect; will their social position and influence be the same? The socialists themselves know it is their men of education that lead them; they follow.

There is no such thing as universal equality. It is a figment of the wild brain of the agitator, coquetting with the ignorance of the mass of mankind! We are equal in this, that God loves us all, wishes us all to be saved, and will judge us all according to our works, without respect of persons. We are said to be equal before the laws of our country. Beyond this, there is and can be no equality, unless you change nature, which even the Socialists will not pretend they have the power of doing.

The first duty, therefore, of a Catholic Society, after recognizing the right of God to our obedience, is to recognize the rights of one's neighbor, the right of property, the right to liberty undisturbed by interference of others, the right to social position, the right to influence and reputation honestly gained by talent, industry, and good conduct, the right of each one to lead a life of tranquillity and happiness; in a word, the rule of charity which does unto others as we should wish them to do unto us—this is to be the principle of action among Catholic Societies. We are to respect inviolably the rights of others as we look to having our own respected. If the Catholics who compose these Societies of ours will take care to follow the decisions and teaching of their Church, they will have an unerring rule, by which to discharge this great and imperative duty; while by doing so they will show themselves to be the salt of the earth.

How are Catholic Societies to stand in relation to the Church, is a point which may receive a different answer, according to the way in which one understands the question. We simply say, first, that every one in the Church is subject to the higher powers in it, in all that relates to spiritual matters; secondly, that in what is temporal, it would seem advisable that the liberty of administering their own affairs should be interfered with as little as possible by Church authority. But they should always cherish a loyal and submissive spirit towards the Church, God's Representative on earth. How far the Church should wield her influence over them is a delicate question. But when we consider that she is given us from above as the guide to truth, there can be no other opinion but that, as the influence of the Church should penetrate our whole life and influence every action of ours, in accordance with the great expression of St. Paul, "The just man liveth by faith;" so this influence should be felt in the same manner in every Catholic body of men. This influence should be represented in them by their chaplain, who, if for no other reason, should be there to keep the members from being indoctrinated with the false notions of to-day, so easily taken up from the newspapers, even so-called Catholic newspapers, from the workshop, and from the example and principles of men of like avocations, banded together in secret organization. We consider this of the very first importance; for it cannot be denied that not a few Catholics of the lower walks of life have imbibed socialistic principles to a greater or less extent. They have forgotten their Catechism, and are learning the catechism of the secret societies.

There remains one point more to be dwelt on,—how far any Catholic Society can be permitted to take part in meeting the labor questions of the day. The matter is a very extensive one, and we do not pretend to exhaust it in a few words. Still, certain principles can be laid down that are very important. The labor question, as understood by those who generally speak of it, is the question not of finding work, for the demand regulates the supply, but the struggle between employers and employed. It is carried on by the trades-unions on the one side and capitalists on the other. The action of the union is ordinarily despotic. They settle the question of strikes, and how much is to be asked as wages. If capitalists always gave fair wages, we may confidently say there would be no need of such associations with such an aim. But it is notorious that greed of wealth does not often allow capitalists to be generous or even just. Hence the poor hardworking man seeks support in combinations and in his numbers. The order given must be carried out; the strike is ordered, and woe to the man who will not take part in it. What is worse, if any one presumes to work in

spite of the prohibition, he is made to understand that he must desist on pain of risk to life or limb, and the threat is very often carried out.

We suppose the existence of a Catholic trades-union, for our ordinary Societies have nothing to do with this question; their scope lies in a different direction. Obviously, a Catholic Society could not countenance active interference with the rights of others; it could not take the law into its own hands; it could not foster sedition, destruction of property, violence and bloodshed. There is one right, however, the members have, and which they could not be denied the use of. As they can hire out their labor, so if they do not think the remuneration sufficient, they can refuse to work singly, or in a body. They can use all lawful means to gain their point; but they cannot go further. But even this exercise of right might be in abeyance, owing to the danger of civil discord that might arise; and it should, therefore, be used with moderation. We apprehend that among Catholics, who are not so only in name, such a state of tension would be next to impossible; for charity on the part of the employer, and reason on the part of the workman, would settle the matter at once, or prevent its coming up. Still, the conflict is possible, and the men have their right to labor or not as they wish; but, as we have said, no right beyond what the law of God, and the law of the land when not in contradiction with God's law, allow them. They could, therefore, to that extent, and to that extent alone, sympathize with their fellow-workmen and take part in the solution of the question of just remuneration. They would, however, even in this, encounter stumbling-blocks, for they would find that many of the labor associations are led on by men whose principles are Socialistic, and they would for this reason find that many propositions are broached and measures initiated which would not observe the just and natural relations of labor and capital. In reality the laborer has no right to a cent more than he has contracted for. He is at liberty not to enter into the contract; once he has done so he must keep his word.

We do not refer to instances of grinding exaction on the part of employers taking advantage of the poverty of their employees. But we speak of those who aspire to get possession of their employer's goods, to have a community of goods. They form their own ideas of how much they ought to have of the profits, and take advantage of their employer's straits to force him to terms. This is what checks industry, and contributes to people the country with tramps. Ordinarily speaking, the daily support of the man himself and of his wife and children, ought to be the least remuneration a good workman should receive; what his wife could

make should go to provide for the future. Skilled labor should, of course, receive proportionately more. Once workmen receive this amount they have no just reason to complain. They should stifle envy, and, to use the words of Pope Leo XIII., learn to live contented with the lot God has given them. What will certainly make the Catholic workman so live is the truth so beautifully announced by the Apostles: we have no permanent citizenship here, but we look for another. We are not here forever; we are journeying to our real country and home, the hereafter; and our status or condition there depends not on worldly wealth or influence, but upon our works done here; so that it is in every man's power to secure for himself a high position and a great degree of glory in his true home. If any man will keep this well before his eyes he will find it a powerful help to make him content with the station of life Providence has allotted him.

We close these few remarks with an observation regarding the importance of our Catholic Societies looking to the Church more than ever for guidance. There never was a period when wilder theories were broached, more extensively circulated, or more read by the people. In our own midst we have hosts of Europeans, many of them clever and well-educated, who were forced to leave their respective countries because of their efforts to overthrow social order. These men have become editors of newspapers, and have been feeding our simpler American population with what they call their advanced ideas, till we hardly recognize the land of our youth. These false ideas in religion and in the social order the Church examined thoroughly where they first arose. She has condemned them, and her condemnation has been met with an acknowledgment that she has spoken truly, but at the same time with a cry of defiance. Let us, therefore, stand to this Church, which has the Spirit of Wisdom from above; let us have as our compass the Syllabus of the great Pius IX.; let us reverently receive and emblazon on our banner the late Encyclical of the learned Leo XIII.
