

JANSENISTS, OLD CATHOLICS, AND THEIR FRIENDS IN AMERICA.

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THE Jansenist Church at Utrecht, in Holland, with its pretended archbishop, suffragans, and a handful of adherents, after dragging on a feeble existence for nearly two centuries, was brought into prominence by the countenance and support which the imperial government of Germany gave the little body of professors and priests who refused to acknowledge the decrees of the Vatican Council. They assumed the title of Old Catholics, which was odd enough for new heretics. Like the bodies who broke away from the Scriptures and the Church in the 16th century, these people, having no bishops, had no means of perpetuating the ministry; and, while professing to believe in seven Sacraments, and of course in Holy Orders, found themselves in the peculiar position of a Church believing in the Apostolic Succession, in the Episcopate, and in ordination by the bishop's hands, but without a bishop. They were, indeed, acephaloi, an Episcopal Church without an Episcopate.

They proceeded to elect bishops, and the question was, where these men were to obtain episcopal consecration. Protestant attempts to obtain consecration at the hands of bishops in oriental churches did not inspire much hope of success in that quarter. To ask it of the Anglican bishops was to avow themselves Protestants, when they denied that they really were so. They then turned to the little schismatic church in Holland, founded in 1723 by seven Jansenist priests, who, assuming to be the chapter of the Cathedral of Utrecht, a see swept away at the time of the so-called Reformation and never restored, proceeded to elect one Steenhoven archbishop of that dormant bishopric. To obtain episcopal consecration, Van Steenhoven applied to one who had been a missionary in Illinois, Dominic Mary Varlet, who, after ministering at Cahokia, became Vicar-General of Quebec for the Mississippi Valley, and stood so high that he was appointed and consecrated Bishop of Ascalon and coadjutor to the Bishop of Babylon. While on his way to the east, having become, by the death of its incumbent, bishop of the latter see, he was summoned to Rome, where it had been ascertained, somewhat too late, that he was an avowed Jan-

senist, and actively working with the leaders of that sect. Instead of obeying the order of the Sovereign Pontiff, he retired to Holland, and there committed the crime of sacrilegiously consecrating as Archbishop of Utrecht a priest chosen by a self-constituted body, without any bulls of the Pope or confirmation of the election. As death removed the pretended Archbishop of Utrecht, the wretched Varlet consecrated others. To keep up a succession, one of the pseudo-archbishops established sees at Haarlem and Deventer, and consecrated bishops for them. This was the utterly irregular, schismatical, and sacrilegious source to which Reinkens, chosen bishop by the Old Catholic party, applied for consecration.

Some Protestant-Episcopal writers in this country lay great stress on the necessity of consecration by three bishops. According to their theory, even, Van Steenhoven's consecration was irregular and void, and the consecration of the first suffragan bishop was no less irregular.

This schismatic Church of Utrecht owed its origin to one who had been a missionary in America. Towards the close of the second decade of this century an attempt was made to create a schism in the Catholic Church in this country, and have a bishop consecrated for Norfolk, Virginia, by the pseudo-Archbishop of Utrecht. In New York, Philadelphia, Norfolk, Charleston, and elsewhere, congregations, or rather trustees pretending to represent congregations, men often utterly ignorant of Catholic doctrine and discipline, and strangers to all practices of religion which the Church requires from her members, claimed the right of appointing priests in the churches where state law authorized them to manage the temporal property of the congregation. The bishops resisted this attempt to introduce a feature of Congregationalism into the Catholic Church. A Dominican stationed at New York, one Father Carbry, was a busy fomentor of these disturbances at Norfolk and Charleston, where troubles lasted for years. They had defeated all efforts of Archbishops Carroll and Neale for the good of religion by upholding unworthy priests against them, and driving away clergymen who were really doing good and reviving religion in the hearts of the people. When the malcontents found that Archbishop Maréchal was even less disposed than his predecessors to yield to the demands of schism and irreligion, Carbry advised them to apply to the pseudo-Archbishop of Utrecht. There was at the time an Irish priest, Rev. Father Hayes, O.S.F., who, as agent of the Irish bishops at Rome, had so hotly opposed the plan of giving the English government a veto on the appointments of Catholic bishops in Great Britain and Ireland, that he was ordered by the Papal authorities to leave the Pontifical states. Carbry supposed that he had a pliant tool in this priest, but if Mr.

Hayes had been intemperate in language, carried away by his zeal for the safety of the Church in Ireland, he was no hypocrite and no traitor. When he received from Carbry a letter urging him to go to Utrecht and be consecrated Bishop of Norfolk, Rev. Mr. Hayes at once laid the letter before the authorities at Rome. That ended the first attempt to plant here a branch of that wretched little schism which never has had five thousand adherents, one of the pseudo-bishops, who claims the See of Deventer, not having a priest or adherent in his imaginary diocese.

It will scarcely be credited that an attempt has been recently made in this country to introduce the progeny of this Holland schism, the moribund Old Catholic schism, among Catholics in this country, and that the scheme originated with, and has been managed, by the once respectable Protestant Episcopal Church, with an amount of duplicity that has nothing to equal it in the whole religious history of America. The Catholic Church has had violence shown it in deed and word. Churches, convents, and institutions have been destroyed. Libels of the grossest immorality have been sent broadcast to embitter the ignorant against her. But for a Protestant body to sneak in among Catholics and impose on them by sending men to teach a corrupted Catholic doctrine and pretend to be Catholic priests, has never had a precedent. This system of hypocrisy and double dealing certainly cannot appeal to the sense of honor, truth, and decency in any man. It is a case that admits of no excuse and no palliation.

One René Vilatte, who had been for some time in Canada, went to the Western States, where he entered a house of the Alexian Brothers, and subsequently became cook among the brothers of St. Viateur, at Bourbonnais, Kankakee County, Illinois. Here he seems to have fallen in with Chiniquy, and resolved to work under him. In 1884 he went to Green Bay, and began to preach in the French Presbyterian Church, and to distribute Chiniquy's tracts among the French Catholics. He did not succeed, however, to any extent, and in August obtained ordination as a Presbyterian minister. He soon made an addition to his chapel, and in October invited Chiniquy to come and dedicate it. He was ere long lecturing against the Catholic Church at Green Bay, Fort Howard, Marinette, and other points in Wisconsin. This seemed to close his career as a Presbyterian, for early in 1885 it was announced that this gentleman had seen the error of Presbyterianism, and had been received into the Protestant-Episcopal Church by Bishop Brown, of Fond-du-Lac, who was soon reported to have ordained him deacon. But whether this was really so or not, Bishop Brown did not give him priest's orders in the Episcopal Church. He had no use for him as an Episcopal minister, having no French Episcopalians for such a

clergyman to minister unto. The field where Bishop Brown proposed that Vilatte should work, and where the ex-Presbyterian minister proposed to work, was among the French-speaking Belgians who had settled on the peninsula between Green Bay and Lake Michigan. Vilatte had learned by experience that a Protestant minister, as such, could not effect much among these people. It seemed to him and Bishop Brown that if he could go in the guise of a Catholic priest, he might meet with some success. It was therefore devised that he should go to Europe and obtain ordination from Herzog, Old Catholic pseudo-bishop in Switzerland.

To tell his real antecedents, his recent conversion from Presbyterianism, would not do; hence pretty little romances like the following found their way to papers in the east and west, and the man who had been a Presbyterian in 1884, was represented as having been a Seminarian in a Catholic theological seminary in 1885, when in fact he had never been one at all.

"It was in 1885 that a young man who had been educated as a Seminarian at Paris came to America to complete his studies for the Roman priesthood. After he had finished these studies, and when within a few months of his ordination, he reached the conclusion, though not breaking with the Roman authorities, not to enter the Roman priesthood. His sister was the mother superior of a convent in Paris, and all his fortunes were in the line of the Roman communion, but his convictions more and more led him into dissent from the doctrine of papal infallibility, and without the slightest rupture with the Roman bishop, under whom he was preparing for holy orders, he quietly withdrew. It was some little time before he found his bearings. He had already seen a field white for the harvest among the French-speaking Belgians, and his convictions as a Catholic led him to think of establishing modified Roman Catholic services among them. In his perplexity he wrote to Père Hyacinthe in Paris, who suggested that he should come to Europe to receive his ordination at the hands of Bishop Herzog of the Old Catholic Church, and should then return to America and place his services at the command of the Anglican bishop of the west, in whose diocese lay the communities where he thought that there was a field for his efforts. Bishop Brown was not more surprised than delighted to find that this young priest had come to him at the very time when he was in the greatest quandary as to the best methods, if any were possible, for reaching a people who were slipping away from Christianity, and for whose instruction no provision could be made. Young Père Vilatte offered to go among these Belgian farmers and see what he could do."

Certain it is that Vilatte returned, having been ordained by Bishop Herzog in June, 1885, on the recommendation of Bishop

Brown, styling himself Catholic Bishop of Fond-du-Lac, but was received by Bishop Brown and sent as an Episcopal minister under Catholic colors to seduce Belgian Catholics from the Church, and of course, in time, make them Episcopalians. A pamphlet published in connection with Vilatte's mission admits this fraud and dishonesty. It says: "This course was decided upon on account of the religious prejudices on the part of the Belgians for whose religious wants Bishop Brown had selected him. If he had gone as an American priest among them, he would have been ignored as a Protestant minister. Anglican orders, particularly when derived from an episcopate officially styled 'Protestant,' are in disrepute with all Roman Catholics; the very name of Protestant is hateful and makes them shrink back; in short, they will have nothing to do with anything connected with Protestantism. On the other hand, Old Catholic orders, like the Greek, are held to be valid by them. The Bishop of Fond-du-Lac had the sagacity to see this and decide accordingly."

It is a pity the bishop was not guided by his sense of truth and honesty, rather than by his sagacity. Bishop Brown in his own name wrote in July, 1885: "In this diocese English-speaking people are in the minority. We have masses of Germans, Belgians, Hollanders, Welsh, Danes, Swedes, Poles, Norwegians. In some districts English is hardly known. This state of affairs is very trying to the diocese, as missions and parishes succumb to the foreigner and new work is difficult. I have long felt that the Church ought to meet the stranger and be his guide and friend, and that then his children would become hers. Near Green Bay are thirty thousand Belgians, French-speaking of course. Many of these, I am told,—six or eight thousand,—are somewhat affected by the Alt Katholik movement. An unusually intelligent and sagacious young Frenchman offered himself to me as a missionary to these people. His acquirements being sufficient and the urgency great, I determined to send the young gentleman to Bishop Herzog. The object was two-fold. First, to save discussion as to authority. We had reason to think that all Alt Katholik ministrations would be welcomed. Ours would be questioned. Next, we wished to win the immigrants of mature age, men and women with religious habits formed and with prejudices fixed and not likely to ever learn the English language. . . . If we get *them*, the next generation will be with *us* thoroughly."

Vilatte, after an essay of his powers at Green Bay, went to Little Sturgeon, and opened a church under the title of the Precious Blood, and here Bishop Brown soon came to lay the corner-stone of a seminary, for French something, whether Episcopal ministers avowed, or Old Catholic priests ostensibly, it is not easy to say.

Appeals were made in the east and means obtained to carry on the work. Then a Catechism and Prayer-Book were printed for the use of the new church. The Catechism bears the express approbation of Dr. Brown, who again styles himself Catholic Bishop. "Catechisme Catholique. Publié par le Rév. Père René Vilatte, et approuvé par Mgr. J. H. Hobart Brown, Evêque Catholique." Then a Cross with rays; a text from St. Matthew xxiv., 30, and the date 1886.

The prayer-book printed for his mission was one compiled by M. B. Vimeux, of Geneva, and approved by Herzog. The title is less deceptive than that of the Catechism: "Livre de Prières Liturgiques, à l'usage des Vieux Catholiques." It does not, indeed, bear the name of Bishop Brown as the Catechism does, but was issued from a well-known Episcopal publishing house in New York, and was undoubtedly used with his full sanction.

Now let us see into what strange inconsistency and double dealing the desire to seduce Roman Catholics from their Church led this bishop. The Articles of Religion in his Book of Common Prayer used in his English-speaking churches declare that the Nicene creed ought to be received.

The Little Sturgeon French prayer-book mutilates the creed and virtually denies the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son.

In the English prayer-book (Art. xx.) images and invocation of saints are condemned as repugnant to the Word of God, but in the French Catechism, approved by the Bishop of Fond-du-Lac, is the question: "Does this Commandment (second) forbid honoring the Blessed Virgin and the Saints"? "No, for honoring the Blessed Virgin and the Saints is not adoring them or making idols of them."

In the English-speaking churches of his denomination the people were taught (Art. xxv.): "Those five commonly called Sacraments, that is to say, Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel"; but at Little Sturgeon he authorized this teaching: "How many Sacraments are there"? "There are seven Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Orders, and Matrimony."

The Episcopalians in that part of Wisconsin were taught in their Book of Common Prayer that the "Sacrifice of Masses were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits" (Art. xxxi.); and yet, in the Catechism approved by a bishop habitually using the Book of Common Prayer, is a chapter devoted to the Mass, in which, contradicting the English prayer-book, it says: "The Mass is not only a memorial of the Last Supper, for in the Mass Jesus Christ

really exists under the forms of bread and wine after the consecration."

The French prayer-book opens with "Rubrics of Mass," contains "The Ordinary of the Mass" with prayers "In Masses for the Dead," Introits, Collects, etc., for the Sundays of the year, and for "Feasts of Mary," for Festivals of Saints, for All Souls, and a Mass for the Burial of the Dead.

The Catechism, though it rejects the authority of the Pope and exalts that of the Ecumenical Councils, advocates the marriage of the clergy and Mass in the vernacular, retains more of Catholic faith and discipline than the prayer-book of Vimeux, and shows more clearly the design of deceiving and entrapping the unwary; while once within the toils, a congregation could be easily led to substitute the French Book of Common Prayer, in use in the French Episcopal Church in New York, for Vimeux's, and the Catechism would disappear. These books were but scaffolding to aid in erecting the building, and destined to be pulled down, with very little regard, when the edifice was completed.

But how could an honest man in the position of a bishop of the Protestant-Episcopal Church authorize or encourage such contradictory teaching; profess the procession from the Father and the Son in his diocese generally, and yet impugn it in certain places; condemn the veneration of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints as anti-Scriptural, and yet commend and justify it; declare that there are only two Sacraments and declare that there are seven; deny and admit that Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony and Extreme Unction are Sacraments, and yet teach that they are really Sacraments; denounce the Mass as "a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit," and yet uphold it in Catechism and prayer-book? Is there an example anywhere in this country of any denomination putting forward, at once, such contradictory doctrines? It cannot be pleaded that the Thirty-nine Articles had grown obsolete, like the Augsburg Confession in a Lutheran prayer-book, and that it was retained merely as a monument of bygone days; for no one will pretend that the Episcopalians of the diocese of Fond-du-Lac profess to honor the Blessed Virgin and the Saints by invoking them or keeping their images; or believe in Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony and Extreme Unction as Sacraments; or hear Mass as the great act of public worship of the new law in which Christ is really present after consecration.

These are not points held by the Episcopalians of Fond-du-Lac diocese, and to send a minister to teach them, and to approve the teaching, while holding contrary doctrine, or really holding these doctrines, and habitually denounce them, is a strange position for any man of uprightness and honesty. Are we to infer that it is

claimed that in the attempt to diminish the number of Catholics, any falsehood, calumny, trick, or fraud is permissible, or what is more, to be encouraged and believed?

It is certainly to give unbelievers who scoff at Christianity some pretext for their conduct, when they can appeal to such double dealing in defiance of all moral honesty, as being practised and defended by professing Christians.

The diocese of Green Bay has always been one where the Catholic bishops have had great difficulties to encounter in the general poverty and scattered condition of the faithful, as well as in the multitude of languages spoken. The bishop has to find priests able to give instructions and hear confessions in English, French, German, Holland Dutch, Walloon, Bohemian, Polish, and Menominee. In a small congregation of a hundred families a priest may find three languages necessary for the exercise of the ministry. It was not easy to obtain priests able to take charge of these missions, or to prevent their becoming discouraged when they found even the scanty allowance expected by a priest almost impossible. Hence, there were occasional vacancies, but the charge that the late Bishop Krautbauer, or his successor, Bishop Katzer, has neglected the Belgian Catholics on the peninsula, is utterly unfounded. The Very Rev. Mr. Daems, himself a Belgian, more than thirty years ago, began establishing churches and schools among them. The Sisters of the Holy Cross were the pioneer religious teachers; but Bishop Krautbauer soon felt that the district was one that could be properly attended only by a religious community, and during his administration made constant efforts to find an order that would assume the care of that part of his diocese, and from a central point attend the scattered missions; while he found that stationing priests, as he did at the principal places, all could not be attended frequently enough to maintain faith and devotion among the people. Bishop Katzer, entertaining the same conviction, also sought a community for this mission ground, and succeeded in obtaining a colony of the Priests of Mercy. Priests of this order are now laboring at Green Bay, Bay Settlement, and Rosière, and attend stations at Brussels, Delwiche, Dykesville, Grandlez, Little Sturgeon, Marchand, Martinsville, Robinson, Thiry Daems, Walhain, aided by Franciscan Sisters, who have charge of schools.

Men like Vilatte are not uncommon; "weeds from the Pope's garden" have been and will be taken up among Protestants, who, by encouraging them, hope to do God service. This we know and expect, as a matter of course, and can only deplore the blind credulity which lavishes money on such unworthy men. The injury done to the Catholic Church in this country by such men has

never been comparatively great after they left her bosom ; the mischief was wrought chiefly while they remained, discharging a ministry of which they were unworthy.

Vilatte's case is peculiar from the double dealing which he led an Episcopal bishop to practise, and from the curious spectacle of the head of one denomination endeavoring to set up another inconsistent with his own. Vilatte will effect less injury to Catholic souls in Wisconsin than to Protestant pockets in the Eastern States. What will become of him and his projects when the Episcopal Church withdraws, as it must in all decency withdraw, its countenance, and zealous Episcopalians their financial support, cannot be decided. He may return to the Presbyterian fold or try some other Protestant denomination, or may set up as a bishop or lapse into obscurity. In himself he is nothing ; for amid a district inhabited by seven thousand Catholics, with all the means placed at his disposal by generous but deluded people, he never succeeded in getting more than twenty families.

The only peculiarity in his case is the fact that he has been able to draw a respectable Protestant denomination into plans and methods hitherto unheard of, and which outspoken ministers in that very body do not hesitate to condemn and denounce with all the energy of upright honesty.
