

LACORDAIRE  
COUNT D'HAUSSONVILLE

UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



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LACORDAIRE







LACORDAIRE

From a miniature by Mme. Delliens

*Frontispiece*

# LACORDAIRE

BY COUNT D'HAUSSONVILLE  
OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY  
TRANSLATED BY A. W. EVANS

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## PREFACE

PULPIT eloquence seems, in the history of literature, to be a peculiarly French gift. When we seek the finest models of the eloquence of the bar or of the tribune, it is to antiquity that we go, and no name has overshadowed those of Demosthenes and of Cicero. The England of the last two centuries has given us examples of Parliamentary eloquence that can be compared with those which France has produced during the same epoch, and the speeches of Burke, of Fox, of Brougham, do not yield to those of Mirabeau, of de Serre, or of Berryer. But it is not the same with her preachers, whose inferiority Taine points out in his "History of English Literature," and for pulpit eloquence no country is comparable with the land of Bossuet, of Bourdaloue, and of Massillon. If among the Fathers of the Church we meet with some who can be placed by their side, —a Saint John Chrysostom, a Saint Gregory of Nazianzus,—on the other hand, they are without rivals in the literature of modern peoples, and of this form of human thought it is assuredly the French language that offers the finest specimens.

The ancients, with whose lives eloquence was so constantly mingled, said that the great orator has in him something divine—" *aliquid divinum*." Is not this especially true when he who has received the gift of expressing his thought by speech puts

this gift in the service, not of some human and passing cause, but of that which is eternal and Divine? In truth, he is at once a man of action and a man of thought, for at one stroke he agitates crowds and ideas. While he is labouring for the salvation of souls, he is raising a monument which calls forth the admiration of men of letters, and if "the good" is his object, "the beautiful" is his instrument. Thus, one can say that, of the different forms of human genius, sacred eloquence is that which gives most complete employment to human faculties, for it supposes in the same man the co-operation of an apostle and of an artist both of whom work in God.

With this French gift, with this Divine gift, no one has been more richly endowed than Jean Baptiste Henri Lacordaire, with the exception, however, of Bossuet. But while Bossuet was a universal genius, superior in everything and by everything,—in eloquence, in controversy, in history,—Lacordaire was only an orator; perhaps, I dare to say, more of an orator than Bossuet, at least in this respect, that he had in a higher degree "the tones that move, the voice that vibrates and charms, and the gesture which completes speech." Thus one can say of him that he is the type of the preacher, and in this capacity his place was marked out in advance in a series which would gather together all the literary glories of France.

But is it solely the preacher in Lacordaire that can interest us? Is it not as much and more the man himself, as he appeared living and throbbing behind the brilliant veil of his oratory, or showing himself with open heart in the intimacy of his correspondence? We shall hear all the echoes of



that age, "everything in which he had loved," resounding in the depths of that sonorous soul. From this priest, from this monk, none of our passions or of our sufferings remained alien; for those with which his experience did not make him acquainted, his intelligence enabled him to divine. Finally, he was one of the precursors and authors of that Catholic renaissance of which our contemporaries to-day are the surprised witnesses, and, among the questions that engage and divide us, one will not find perhaps a single one that has not been debated or anticipated by him. Thus, in studying his epoch and his life, it will be in certain respects our own epoch that we shall believe we see passing in advance before our eyes, and our own life that we shall have the illusion of living again. We shall perceive there, as in a magic mirror, the reflection of our own trials, and the presage of our own restless destinies.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There exist two very complete and very interesting biographies of Father Lacordaire. One of them is due to Father Chocarne, who was one of his brothers in Saint Dominic, the other to M. Foisset, his oldest and closest friend. M. de Montalbert has also devoted to him some admirable pages under the title of "A Nineteenth-Century Monk." I am naturally much indebted to these three works, but also to Father Lacordaire's correspondence, which was almost entirely unpublished at the time they appeared, and which to-day comprises no fewer than eight volumes. I have also had access to a certain number of unpublished letters, and I thank those who have been good enough to entrust me with them.

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# *LACORDAIRE*

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## CHAPTER I

### CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

By a singular coincidence, Burgundy has had the honour of giving birth to the three greatest Christian orators of whom France boasts. Saint Bernard was born at Fontaine, near Dijon; Bossuet in Dijon itself; Lacordaire at some leagues from Dijon, in the village of Recey-sur-Ource, on the twenty-second day of the month of Floréal in the year Ten of the French Republic, as his certificate of birth says, or on the 13th of May, 1802, as we would say to-day. His father, Nicolas Lacordaire, practised at Recey the profession of medical officer. He was a man of rather liberal opinions, but in spite of this, during the Revolution he concealed in his house the parish priest of Recey, who had been proscribed for refusing to take the oath to the Constitution, and, according to Father Chocarne, it was by this very parish priest that Lacordaire was baptised. Nicolas Lacordaire died four years after the birth of this son, leaving his widow, Anne Marie Dugied, burdened with four children who were still young. Madame Lacordaire was the daughter of a councillor of the Parliament of Dijon. "Christian, courageous, and vigorous," her son has called her, but her piety had in it nothing mys-

tical or fanatical, and she gave her children a virile and rather stern education. She read Corneille to them as much as the Gospel, and spoke to them as much of honour as of God. Perhaps it is to this early teaching that we must attach the very keen feeling of honour which Lacordaire held throughout his life, a feeling more human than ecclesiastical, but one which, none the less, came to his aid at several junctures of his sacerdotal career.

Madame Lacordaire was, however, far from neglecting the religious education of her children. When Henri was seven years old, she herself brought him for his confession to the parish priest of Saint Michael's of Dijon. "I do not know what I said to him or what he said to me," Lacordaire has written, "but the memory of that first interview between my soul and the representative of God left a pure and profound impression upon me. I have never since gone into the sacristy of Saint Michael's of Dijon, nor have I ever breathed its air, without my first confession appearing before me under the form of that fine old man and the simplicity of my own childhood."

Lacordaire passed at that time through a period of childish fervour which found expression in rather odd manifestations. His favourite pleasure was to preach in a pretended chapel which his mother had fitted up for him. His brothers and his nurse were his congregation. When the latter, alarmed by the vehemence of his gestures and the trembling of his voice, would say to him: "Oh, Master Henri, you are going to hurt yourself; do not excite yourself so much"; "No," he would answer, "too many sins are committed; fatigue is nothing," and he would go on at a still greater rate with his tirades about departing faith and declining morals.

At ten years of age, the little preacher, to whom a



priest who had resigned his functions and married had taught the first elements of Latin, entered the Imperial College of Dijon, half of his fees being paid by an exhibition. Lacordaire always retained a bitter memory of his university education. Like Michelet (who compared himself with a frightened owl), Lacordaire was at first the sport and butt of his companions during their times of recreation. In order to escape from their ill-treatment, he used to take refuge in the class-room, and there, hidden under a bench, away from all eyes, he would pour out his tears before God, offering Him his sufferings as a sacrifice.

This support and this consolation were soon to fail him. Indeed Lacordaire's great complaint against the education he received at the college was that it had destroyed his faith. At the age of twelve he had made his first communion. But let him speak himself: "It was my last religious joy and the last ray of sunshine from my mother's soul on mine. Soon the shadows thickened around me; a cold night encompassed me, and I no longer received in my conscience any sign of life from God. I was an indifferent pupil, and no success marked the course of my early studies; my intelligence declined at the same time as my morals, and I walked on that road of degradation which is the punishment of unbelief and the great reverse side of reason. . . . I left the college, at seventeen, with my religion destroyed, and with morals which had no longer any curb."

All Lacordaire's biographers and all his contemporaries agree in saying that the judgment which he thus passes upon himself is marked by excessive severity. An indifferent pupil he certainly was not, and the prize-list of Dijon College testifies to the numerous successes he obtained in his final classes, above all in rhetoric.

As for his morals, it would be a complete mistake to make him out a sort of Saint Augustine, whose youth had been a prey to gross disorders, and who had to expiate a long period of excess. The truth is, I believe, to be found in these lines of M. Foisset, his intimate friend and his companion in the law school : "The love of study and the elevation of his sentiments had preserved him from vulgar excess ; he was even relatively chaste, without contact with women, like the Hippolytus of Euripides, yet without prudishness." What remains certain is that, with an ardent nature, susceptible not only of tenderness but of passion, he entered into the world without a positive religion, without an assured moral doctrine, having no other rule of life than the feeling of honour, and no other beacon than "the human ideal of glory." One understands how, some months before his death, casting back on his past life the austere glance of a priest, he had a very vivid feeling of the perils which he had incurred, and how he could not forgive the University for having exposed him to them.

Lacordaire left the college at the age of seventeen, and inscribed his name as a student in the Dijon faculty of law. The teaching there, without depth and without philosophical bearing, interested him but little, and he was, at least by his own account, an indifferent student of law. Happily he was destined to find elsewhere a use for the rare faculties with which his fellow-pupils already agreed in crediting him. The period was 1821. A great movement of ideas impelled the youth of the time into paths which were still new. "It was," M. Caro has said, "an epoch unique in the free and fruitful variety of talents, in all the noble curiosities that were simultaneously aroused, and all the emotions of the beautiful that were simul-

taneously felt, in the almost heroic activity of mind which was impelled in all ways to the conquest of the unknown, and also in the open-mindedness of the public, which was then enthusiastic to the point of self-deception. Critical philosophy had not yet withered these enchanted hopes, nor desolated the new imagination of the generations who represented the century's youth."

In this great movement, the youth of Dijon (Dijon had always been a literary city) could not fail to take its part. A certain number of the pupils of the faculty had founded a society which was called "The Society for Studies." Almost all these young people, although holding liberal opinions, were Monarchist and Catholic.

"Lacordaire had, on the other hand, brought with him from the College, what almost all of us had brought from it," says M. Lorain, one of his fellow-pupils at that time, "the deism and republicanism of an undergraduate." Nevertheless, they opened their ranks to him, and, without entirely converting him either to their religious faith or to their political convictions, they certainly inclined his mind towards the doctrines and opinions which he was afterwards to embrace.

In the meantime he wrote essays to be read at the Dijon Society for Studies. Now it was a narrative of the taking of Jerusalem by Titus; again, it was a dialogue between Plato and his disciples at Cape Sunium, which ended with the words "liberty is justice." Many years afterwards his hearers remembered the unexpected effect produced on them by the reading of these pages, in which they believed they heard again something of the tones of Chateaubriand. His superiority was especially manifest in their oratorical contests. The words came from his lips, gasping, nervous, hurried, as if they could not follow the

train of the thought, but coloured, dazzling, and rich in ideas and metaphors. Some fragments of these improvisations have been collected, and there are portions of them that would not disfigure his most famous discourses. "Corrupt morals give birth to corrupting laws," he exclaimed on one occasion, "and licence hurls peoples into slavery without giving them time to utter a cry. Sometimes they expire in a miserable death-struggle which they love as if it were pleasant and agreeable repose; sometimes they perish in the midst of festivals, singing hymns of victory, and calling one another immortal." At the same time he was working on his own account, learning Italian, reading Alfieri, and, like the Italian patriot, secretly writing a liberal and republican tragedy in verse, which was to be entitled "Timoleon"; or even, a detail which Father Chocarne has revealed to us, making a verse translation of Anacreon's Odes.

At the age of twenty, Lacordaire had ended his law studies. It was necessary for him to choose a career. Endowed as he was for public speaking, there could be no hesitation in the matter for him or for his relatives. He chose the Bar. But to his mother, Dijon seemed too narrow a theatre, and, at the price of heavy sacrifices, she did not hesitate to send him to Paris, recommending him, through the intermediary of President Riambourg, to M. Guillemin, an advocate in the Court of Cassation and the Court of Councils, and an ardent Catholic and Royalist. M. Riambourg had written to M. Guillemin that it was only a matter of giving the young man good direction. M. Guillemin understood this as choosing for him a confessor in Paris, but, to his astonishment, Lacordaire answered: "Oh no, sir, I don't do that." None the less, M. Guillemin kept him as his secretary. He gave him documents to study

and pleadings to draw, and at the same time he endeavoured to procure him some business. Lacordaire made it his duty to plunge into the study of law, as much on grounds of conscience as to relieve his mother of the allowance she paid for him. But he did not do this without some regret. "Alas!" he wrote to M. Lorain, "I have said farewell to literature. I have retained only that mysterious correspondence with it, that secret contact, which unites a man of taste to all that is beautiful in the world. And yet I was born to live with the Muses. The fire of imagination and enthusiasm that devours me has not been given me in order that I should extinguish it in the ice of the law, or stifle it beneath practical and arduous reflections."

Law as a science never interested him more than slightly, but he however obtained successes at the Bar which did not fail to encourage him. At his very first test he had acquired a just confidence in himself. "I felt," he wrote, "that the Roman Senate would not have made me nervous." One day he had occasion to plead before Berryer, who was so struck by his talent that he sent for him for an interview on the day following, and said to him: "You can place yourself in the front rank of the Bar, but you have great dangers to avoid, among others the abuse of your facility of speech." President Séguier's saying about him is also quoted: "Gentlemen, he is not a Patru, he is a Bossuet"; but instinctively I have a little distrust of such sayings. However that may be, Lacordaire experienced no disappointments in this respect, and he had already something to satisfy the only passion which he then felt, "a vague and feeble torment for renown."

I have said the only passion. Is that exact? This is, in truth, a question which it is impossible

not to ask as often as we look back on the past of a being who has lived, and it is one which respect does not forbid us to raise even in the case of a priest. Lacordaire was twenty years old. All those who knew him at this period agree in describing him to us as very fascinating in appearance, tall, slight, of an elegant figure, his face pale and already ascetic, but lighted up by deep eyes fringed with long lashes. At this age when the torment of renown is not, as a rule, the only feeling which makes a man's heart beat, did he love and was he loved? We have already seen that he could preserve his youth from gross excesses; but if he was not dissolute, still did not love ever penetrate into his soul? Father Gratry gracefully tells us, in his "Reminiscences," that for two years he kept a rose that had been thrown him one evening at a ball, and that at the time when he resolved to devote his life to God, no sacrifice cost him so much as giving up that rose, excising that feeling from his heart. "I felt," he adds, "the chill of that excision for a long time." Was not a rose also thrown in Lacordaire's life? On this delicate point I would not trust completely to the inquiry made by Father Chocarne, nor even to that of M. Foisset, but it is necessary to have recourse to the testimony of Lacordaire himself. "I have loved men," he wrote, at the age of twenty-one, to one of his young colleagues at the Bar, "I have not yet loved woman, and I shall never love them on their real side." Six months after having written that letter he entered the seminary. One of his cousins has told us how, during his early holidays, as he was walking with her in the country, he saw a branch of honeysuckle on the top of a little hut. "Ah! cousin," he exclaimed petulantly, "how I am tempted to climb up there and pluck that branch and offer it to you! But it would not be in agree-



ment with my garb." If both testimonies were not equally sincere, who would believe that Father Gratry kept the rose for two years, or that Father Lacordaire did not even pluck the honeysuckle?

If, by a rare privilege, Lacordaire's youth was able to escape from what he himself calls "the easy emotions of flesh and blood," the first two years of his stay at Paris were none the less a painful time during which he was disquieted "beneath the Etna of life." On one day he would dream of glory; on the next, he would write to a friend: "I do not understand how a man can give himself so much trouble for that little fool. To live tranquilly by one's own fireside, without pretensions and without noise, is sweeter than to abandon one's rest for renown, so that she, in return, may cover us with a few golden spangles." Sometimes his restlessness took the form of a desire to see fresh countries, and the mere words, "great Greece," made him tremble and weep. Then, on the contrary, he would persuade himself that he would never be contented until he owned a few chestnut trees, a field of potatoes, a field of corn, and a cottage in the depths of some Swiss valley. In his lonely room in the Rue du Dragon, he dreamed of a country parish; hardly had he crossed the Pont Neuf than this dream was replaced by that of an active and brilliant life, and these incessant variations aroused in him a disgust for an existence which his imagination had exhausted in anticipation. "I am surfeited with everything," he wrote to M. Lorain, "without having known anything."

He suffered alike from his loneliness and from this unsatisfied want in his heart. At Paris, amidst eight hundred thousand men, he felt in a desert. He sought human friendships, and these friendships eluded him or deceived him. "Where,"

he exclaimed, "is the soul that will understand mine?" He no longer took an interest in anything, no longer had a liking for anything, neither for sight-seeing, nor for the world, nor for the satisfactions of self-love. He felt his thought growing old, and he discovered its wrinkles beneath the garlands with which his imagination still covered it. He began to love his sadness and to live a great deal in its company. But listen to him later on describing the evil from which he had suffered :

"Scarcely have eighteen springs gladdened our years than we suffer from desires that have for object neither the flesh, nor love, nor glory, nor anything that has a form or a name. Wandering in the secrecy of solitude or in the splendid thoroughfares of famous towns, the young man feels oppressed with aspirations that have no aim ; he withdraws from the realities of life as from a prison in which his heart is stifled, and he asks from everything that is vague and uncertain, from the clouds of evening, from the winds of autumn, from the fallen leaves of the woods, for a feeling which fills him while it distresses him. But it is in vain ; the clouds pass away, the winds fall, the leaves fade and wither without telling him why he suffers." This is the tone and almost the language of René, but of René become a Christian, for he immediately adds : "'O my soul,'" said the prophet, "'why art thou so heavy? Hope in God.' It is God, in truth, it is the infinite who moves in our twenty-years-old hearts that have been touched by Christ, but that have strayed from Him through inadvertence, and in whom the Divine unction, no longer producing its natural effect, none the less raises the waves which it was destined to appease."



It was, in truth, God who agitated his twenty-years-old heart, but it was that very heart which was to help him to find the remedy for the ill from which he suffered; *remedium animæ*, said the pious workers of former times who laboured on the Gothic cathedrals. Lacordaire reached faith, not by a sudden illumination or a flash of grace, as they said in the seventeenth century, not by philosophical reasoning and the influence of a man, but by feeling. Writing to a friend who had just lost his father, he said to him: "When I learned the news I was unwell and given up to the saddest thoughts; my heart was almost overpowered by this blow, and I desired to leave a world whence all that is good departs. My melancholy took on a religious character, and for a moment I was a Christian." And in another letter: "I remember that on one evening I read the Gospel of Saint Matthew and I wept. When one weeps one is very near to belief." "I wept and I believed," says Chateaubriand. But Lacordaire's conversion, or rather the return of his faith was destined to be less rapid and, perhaps for that reason, more solid than that of the author of "Les Martyrs." One can follow its stages in the letters which he wrote at the time to friends of his own age. "I have an extremely religious soul and a very unbelieving mind; but as it is in the nature of the mind to allow itself to be subjugated by the soul, it is probable that some day I shall be a Christian." And some months afterwards to another: "Would you believe that I become a Christian every day? The progressive change which is taking place in my opinions is singular; I am a believer and I have never been more of a philosopher." One of his lawyer companions was astonished to encounter him at the church of Saint Germain-des-Prés, on

his knees before a column, and with his head in his hands. At last the day came when Lacordaire felt with an invincible certainty that he was a Christian, and he came to his decision. By a singular predestination he went to that very church of Notre-Dame which was destined to be the theatre of his fame, and it was there that "pardon descended on his faults, and that on his lips, fortified by age and purified by repentance, he received for the second time the God who had visited him at the dawn of his manhood."

The act which Lacordaire had just performed was decisive in his life, for, owing to it, he almost immediately determined on another which was to bind him for ever. The desire of the priesthood took possession of him as a result of his return to faith, an ardent, unquenchable desire. He did not understand how he could be a Christian and not become a priest. Only six months passed between his first positive act of faith and his entry into the seminary. Yet this definite entry was retarded by the resistance of his mother, who, happy to see her son a Christian again, yet could not make up her mind to the sacrifice of his worldly hopes. She wrote as many as ten letters to him in order to divert him from his vocation, which, on account of this resistance, Lacordaire had to keep hidden from all his friends. At last she became resigned, and she authorised her son to ask the Archbishop of Paris for an exhibition at the Saint-Sulpice seminary. "At the bar you defended causes of temporary interest, now you are going to defend One whose justice is eternal," said Mgr. de Quélen to him. It remained to obtain from the Bishop of Dijon his *excorporation*, that is to say an authorisation to enter the seminary of a diocese other than that in which he had been born. The Bishop required

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no pressing. "What could you expect?" he said afterwards. "He wrote me a letter that lacked nothing but faults of spelling. I took him for the greatest booby in my diocese." On the 13th of May, 1824, the twenty-second anniversary of his birth, two priests with whom he had already formed close relations which were destined to continue, the Abbé Gerbet and the Abbé de Salinis, took him to the seminary of Issy. He entered it very young, and, doubtless very inexperienced, but having already lived the life of his epoch in heart, mind, and imagination. He was still a good deal of a child, as much, he has himself said, in his love of liberty as in his understanding of the sufferings and needs that tormented him. Accordingly, in order to win himself a hearing, he was later on to find the accents of a son.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SEMINARY—FIRST RELATIONS WITH LAMENNAIS

“WHEN one enters a seminary, above all in the country, one experiences a great peace. It seems that the world is destroyed, that wars and victories have been done with for a long time, and that the heavens, without torridness and without thunder, encompass a new earth. Silence reigns in the courts, in the gardens, in the populous corridors of the cells, and, at the sound of the bell, one sees the inhabitants pouring out in a crowd, like bees from a mysterious hive. The serenity of their faces matches the whiteness and cleanliness of the house. What the soul experiences is a sort of engaging intoxication of frugality and innocence.” And so the description goes on, Lacordaire relating in minute detail, for several pages, the inner life of the seminary, the hour of rising and that of meditation, the nature of the religious exercises, and the way in which the periods of recreation were spent. But one would look in vain for these pages in the fullest editions of his works. They have, as it were, strayed into a strange romance, with a rather unpleasant title, which, if the form were a little simpler and the theme a little less subtle, would none the less remain one of the psychological masterpieces of our time. When Sainte-Beuve sought an ending for “*Volupté*,” which, unlike the rest of that book, was not drawn from his own experience, the idea occurred to him to make his

hero take Holy Orders. In order to be sure that he would paint accurately the customs and the interior of a seminary, he went to Lacordaire, then a young priest, whom he had often met at the house of Lamennais. Lacordaire took him at once to the seminary of Issy, and afterwards, just as Sainte-Beuve was preparing to embody his impressions in writing, he received from Lacordaire a long letter which contained an exact and minute statement of the life of the seminary, "a statement," says Sainte-Beuve, "marked by imaginative turns such as inevitably flowed from his pen." These are the pages which, on his own admission, Sainte-Beuve has simply introduced into "Volupté," adding to them, however, some turns of his own style of that period, which are not always in the best taste.

If this account by Sainte-Beuve did not deserve full credence in itself, one would if necessary find its confirmation in the similarity between this chapter of "Volupté" and certain fragments of Lacordaire's early letters, dated from the seminary. Thus the description of the Issy kitchen-garden occupies a great deal of space in "Volupté." In like fashion Lacordaire says in one of his letters: "In the morning I walk in the cool, and I amuse myself by watching the progress of the fruits which I have already seen the evening before and which I see again the day following. The cherries no longer show me their red heads amidst the verdure of their leaves; it is now the turn of the prunes, of the apricots, and of the peaches, which are beginning to clothe themselves with a light tint. Above all I like the kitchen-garden, and the sight of an ordinary lettuce is a great pleasure to me. I see them, quite small, and ranged in a quincunx in a manner agreeable to the eye. They grow; their long, green leaves are drawn together by

tying them with straws ; they become yellow, and at the end of some days there is for them neither dew nor sunshine."

We may, however, imagine that all his letters to his two friends of this period, Lorain and Foisset, were not filled with descriptions of this nature. It was, above all, of his inner feelings that he spoke. "You do not know, my dear friend," he wrote to the former, who did not then share his beliefs, "how pleasant my solitude is. You do not, doubtless, suspect me of wishing to deceive you, and of telling you of a happiness which I do not really enjoy. It is only in the world that we smile with our lips while there are tears in our hearts. Well, then, my sad and solemn disposition has vanished before the peace of this house, and I only perceived that I had become gay because everybody told me so. That is a three years' store of happiness." And in a letter to M. Foisset he writes in the same strain : "My friend, I have nothing to tell you about myself ; I am what you have seen me. I feel more and more that I am in my place, and that God wished me here ; I hope, with His help, to make a good priest some day, and to work successfully for the salvation of souls. My friend, knowledge, talent, strength, all are vain in themselves when one does not apply them to eternal things. Time, and what is in time, have only been given us in order to conquer eternity."

The feeling of peace and contentment which he experienced found expression sometimes even in effusions of mysticism and sensibility. "One evening," he wrote, "I was at a window looking at the moon whose rays fell gently on the house ; a single star was beginning to shine in the sky at a height that seemed to me incredible. I do not know why I came to compare the littleness and

poverty of our own habitation with the immensity of that vault ; and whilst I was thinking that there are in these few cells a small number of servants of the God Who has made these marvels, and that those servants are regarded as madmen by the rest of mankind, I wanted to weep for this poor world which cannot even look above its head." Lacordaire had always a liking for thus looking above his head. Many years afterwards he wrote : " God has made the stars in order to make us dislike the earth."

However, this period of peace and enchantment was not to last always. Lacordaire was not long before he encountered a trial which he was destined to meet with down to his life's end—the distrust of his ecclesiastical superiors. Though having profound faith, sincere piety, and an ardent vocation, his demeanour was the least seminarist that ever existed. He was petulant and vehement, with a licence of language which he sometimes pushed to impertinence. He seemed to his masters like a spirited horse, and none of them felt that he had strength enough to bridle him. His inconsiderate humour found expression, to their despair, in the most varied ways. He vehemently took up the cause of the new cap, shaped like a cardinal's, against the old square cap which had been worn by the theological students, and which, though still dear to the professors, had already been partially abandoned by the pupils, and he carried his opposition to such a length that with his own hands he threw into the fire the square caps of his companions. A graver matter was that in the theological course he took it upon himself to speak, raised questions or objections, and, when the answer did not appear to him to be satisfactory, he did not hesitate to reply, sometimes leaving the professors overwhelmed by his retort, and the seminarists un-



certain which of the two, professor or pupil, was right or wrong. The Sulpicians, his masters at that time, were pious and judicious, but a little timid. "They had a horror of two things," Father Chocarne has said, "noise and novelty." Accordingly, this young seminarist, so independent in demeanour and so bold in speech, could not help disturbing them. On the other hand, if he was suspected by his masters, he gained repute among his companions, who were better able to perceive his genius than were the learned Sulpicians.

It was, and I believe it still is, the custom at Issy for the seminarists to preach in turn in the refectory at meal-times. It was thus in far from favourable circumstances that Lacordaire preached his first sermon. He himself, in a letter to M. Lorain, described the impression he felt when he mounted the terrible stairs that led to the pulpit, and amidst the noise of plates, of spoons, and of the whole attendance at the meal, began to preach on the Incarnation, in a refectory where a hundred and thirty persons were eating. But soon the young seminarists began nudging one another with their elbows; knives and forks stopped of themselves, and everybody gave an attentive ear to the tones of a voice which, at first sober and muffled, rose little by little until it made the humble hall resound with echoes hitherto unknown to it. A fragment of that sermon, transcribed by Lacordaire for a friend, has been included in the collection of his works, and cuts a good figure there. On the next day all the seminarists were enthusiastic. But the masters were less pleased. The professor of eloquence addressed some observations to Lacordaire. He blamed the mould in which the sermon was cast, and urged the pupils—in this, indeed, he was not very wrong—not to imitate it,



Thus the prejudices that Lacordaire had aroused shortly after his entrance into the seminary grew worse. By command of the authorities he was transferred to Saint-Sulpice in Paris, and the Superior-General, the Abbé Garnier, wanted to be his confessor. An attempt was made to utilise his talent by making him a lecturer and a catechist. But, although more restrained in his demeanour and more measured in his language than he had been at Issy, Lacordaire did not altogether succeed in removing the distrust of his superiors. They doubted his vocation, and kept putting off from term to term the moment when he should be called upon to take his early vows. Two years and a half had passed, and even the sub-diaconate had not been conferred upon him. He had reason to believe that he was rejected. At that time he very nearly took a definite resolution to leave the seminary, not to resume secular life, but to enter the novitiate of the Jesuits at Montrouge. Through the intervention of the Abbé de Rohan, he even requested the necessary authorisation from the Archbishop of Paris. But Mgr. de Quélen refused this. He had a juster instinct of the high value of the young seminarist than his own masters had, and he did not want his diocese to lose a priest whose future seemed to him to be full of promise. Perhaps he had even something to do with the resolution to admit Lacordaire into Holy Orders, upon which the Sulpicians decided a short time afterwards. On December 2nd, 1826, he received the sub-diaconate, and on September 22nd, 1827, he was ordained by Mgr. de Quélen's own hands in his private chapel. "What I wanted to do is done," he wrote to Lorain; "I have been a priest for the past three days, *sacerdos in æternum, secundum ordinem Melchisedec.*"

Lacordaire had hardly left the seminary when

he had to make up his mind regarding a brilliant proposal that was made to him. One of the directors of Saint-Sulpice, M. Boyer, wished to nominate him to his relative, Mgr. Frayssinous, for the position of ecclesiastical judge of the Rota. Ecclesiastical dignities and perhaps even the purple would have certainly been his after a short interval. Yet Lacordaire refused. "I want to remain an ordinary priest," he replied to M. Boyer, and "probably some day I shall be a monk." But in the meantime what was he to do? Mgr. de Quélen, who, all through the period of his relations with Lacordaire, was in turn to uphold him out of personal sympathy and to abandon him out of timidity of mind, seemed for the moment rather embarrassed by his favourite. He found nothing better to do for this young priest of twenty-five than to bury him in a convent of the Visitandines, to which he appointed him chaplain. The convent was also a boarding-school, and his chief occupation was to teach the catechism to some thirty young girls of from twelve to eighteen years of age. Let me say at once, to the honour of these young catechumens, that the extraordinary worth of their catechist did not escape them. For many years it was the glory of the boarding-school of the Visitandines to preserve Lacordaire's instructions and sermons in copy-books that had been written out by his first pupils, and which were transmitted from generation to generation. The good nuns, however, reproached him for dealing too much in metaphysics.

The following year he was appointed assistant almoner of the Lycée Henry IV. In this capacity he was entrusted by the other almoners, his colleagues, with the task of drawing up a memorandum on the religious and moral state of the Royal Colleges of Paris, a memorandum which



LACORDAIRE, AGED THIRTY-FIVE

From a drawing by Des Robert

*To face p. 20*



was intended for the eyes of the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs and of Public Instruction. That memorandum is a long lamentation over the spirit of irreligion that reigned in the colleges, and the powerlessness of the almoner to remedy it. He did not find scope to spread the fire of proselytism that was in him among the pupils of the Lycée Henry IV. any more than among the schoolgirls of the Visitandines. Neither his time nor his faculties seemed to him to be properly employed. Vainly, with the thought of writing a great work on apologetics, he devoted himself to a course of reading in which he intermingled Plato and Descartes, Aristotle and Saint Augustine. Although he was impressed by the matters and mysteries to be developed in the Catholic religion, although he never took up a book without being amazed at the manner in which it was defended, he vaguely felt that his mind was little suited to theology. However, he did not desire to seek elsewhere than in the exercise of his ministry for the employment of the faculties that he felt within him. Thus, when M. Foisset suggested to him that he should contribute to a journal recently founded at Dijon, the "Provincial," he answered with animation: "A journal seems to me an iniquitous thing; it is the pulpit of opinions, that is to say the thing I despise most. A minister of the sole perpetual and universal truths, *never, never* shall I proclaim opinions to men, *never* shall I proclaim the truth to them from the same place in which their idleness is amused by the tricks of the intelligence." Sometimes he imagined that obscurity, a prolonged obscurity, insignificant positions, and leisure were all he desired. But in reality, in his dungeon in the Lycée Henry IV., where his mother had come to live with him, as formerly in his little lonely room in

the Rue du Dragon, he was restless about his fate, and sometimes melancholy seemed on the point of attacking him. "I can no longer either write or talk," he wrote to M. Foisset. "I metempsychose myself every day, and soon I shall only recognise myself by my attachment to you. Madness of the years! Vision of immobility! Without friendships we would be only a dream; it at least arrests life at one end. And yet how does it arrest it? We meet in spring, when we are in our blossoming time, when we perfume ourselves with youth, when we say, 'Always.' After that the wind carries us off; there is a horse ready to hasten, a boat that cares not for long farewells. There is a Providence that avenges itself on the promises that men make to each other, and that, in its own designs, scatters them to the four winds."

To these grounds for inward sadness were joined the sufferings caused by his moral isolation, and the scant sympathy he felt to exist between his colleagues in the priesthood and himself. His mother was grieved at seeing that he had no friends, and he himself explains to us why he could not have any. "I had remained a Liberal when I became a Catholic, and I had not been able to hide all that separated me in this respect from the clergy and Catholics of my time. I felt myself alone in these convictions, or at least I met no mind that shared them. The end of the Restoration was drawing near; the cause of Christianity, bound up with that of the Bourbons, was exposed to the same hazards as they were, and a priest who was not under the Bourbon flag seemed an enigma to the more moderate, and a sort of traitor to the more ardent." At that epoch, the Church of France, in truth, was abandoning herself to a species of torpor and enervation. Happy,

after so many trials, at having found a Government which was favourable to her, even if it refused her certain liberties, more confident than she ought to have been of that protection, and relying with too much security upon that alliance, the French clergy, pious, honest, and respectable as they were, contented themselves with the regular discharge of the duties of their daily ministry, but held aloof from the great movement of ideas which was stirring the new generation. Lacordaire felt this mistake and this danger. "I am weary of thinking and speaking," he wrote to M. Foisset. "I am like the theological faculty of the Paris University; I have hung up my harp on the willows of the Sorbonne. How is one to think when Catholic thought no longer exists? How is one to speak when all Israel sleeps, and one has not, like David, carried off the enemy's spear? No indeed, it is not possible. Let the Shepherd sleep to the murmur of the wind, and do not ask him what he sees in his sleep."

Nor when the clergy, rising out of this sleep, made some apostolical effort, was Lacordaire pleased with the form which those manifestations took. He had small belief in the success of what were then called "missions," and later on he spoke in rather severe terms of "those clouds of missionaries who hurl themselves from North to South through the chief towns of the kingdom, summoning the people to strange ceremonies unknown to Catholic tradition, to hymns that express the hopes of profane politics as well as those of eternity, to sermons that make up for weakness of doctrine by excess of sentiment, in which less appeal is made to the heart than to the imagination, at the risk of producing a mere passing disturbance instead of a solid



conversion." Thus, neither in the daily practice of his humble ministry as chaplain and almoner, nor in the theological labours to which he believed himself but ill adapted, nor in the exercise of an apostolate whose form did not please him, did Lacordaire find employment for the gifts which he felt fermenting within him. In this moral crisis it is not surprising that he cast his looks outside France, and thought for a moment of going into exile.

There was then a country which from afar exercised a sort of fascination upon those whose imaginations were more curious about the secrets of the future than the memories of the past. That country was America. Formerly Chateaubriand had borrowed from its forests and savannahs the metaphors and images with which he was to embellish the "Génie du Christianisme." In a very few years Tocqueville was to go to this same country to search for the solution of the democratic problem, and he drew a portrait of this rising republic, painted by a master's hand, but too flattering to be perfectly correct. Lacordaire almost anticipated him. "I was weary of the life I led," he said afterwards, "and I looked far off to see if there was not on the earth some place where a priest could live in freedom. Who has not turned his eyes towards Washington's Republic in those moments when one's own country wearies us? Who has not seated himself in thought beneath the shade of the woods and forests of America? I turned my eyes thither, weary of the spectacle they beheld in France, and I resolved to go there and seek a hospitality that has never been refused either to a priest or to a traveller."

The project to which he alluded had not been for Lacordaire merely a vague and poetical design.



The Bishop of New York, Mgr. Dubois, was then in Europe. He was looking for a distinguished priest whom he could take back with him to his diocese. Lacordaire was mentioned to him, and he offered him the double position of Vicar-General of New York and Superior of the seminary. At first the offer did not attract him much, for what he knew of American customs did not greatly please him. But six months of reflection had little by little reconciled him to this prospect.

Among the questions which at this time pre-occupied his anxious spirit, there was one which dominated all the rest, and which he put to himself in this way: "The world being what it is, what ought a priest to believe in regard to the relations of religion with philosophy and the social order?" In philosophy it seemed to him impossible that there could be variance between the universal reason and the Catholic reason, and this first problem did not disturb him. It was not so with the second, that of the relations of the spiritual society with the material society. In his view this problem could only be solved in three ways: "By the superiority of one over the other, by the absolute independence of both, or by the variable interpenetration of each by the other through reciprocal concessions." The first means seemed to him to be in theory the true method; it was the system under which the world had lived since Charlemagne; but in France this system was irreparably ruined, and it seemed to him impossible to restore it. As for the last, Lacordaire rejected it with all his might as resulting in the subordination of the Church to the State, and ultimately in the creation of a national Church: it was Gallicanism, and Lacordaire had a horror of Gallicanism, for in his eyes its liberties did not compensate for its servitude. There remained the

second, that is to say absolute independence. This, doubtless, was only a remedy, but a sublime remedy, and he did not hesitate to adopt it. "To remove the Church from the state of interpenetration, in order to put her in a state of absolute independence, in a word to free her, that is what has to be done," he wrote to M. Foisset; "the rest is but a mass of detail."

When he had reached this conviction, America no longer alarmed him. The United States was the only country in the world where the Catholic Church had no official relation with the State, and under that system she had strengthened herself with a rapidity which was of the nature of a prodigy. How could he not be tempted to go and study the application of the remedy on the spot? Lacordaire determined then to do this, but before giving Mgr. Dubois a definite answer, he wished to discuss all these questions with the only priest who had hitherto seemed to care about them, and under whose humble roof Catholic thought seemed to have taken refuge. One evening in May, 1830, preceded by a letter announcing his arrival, Lacordaire knocked at the door of La Chesnaye.

The man who lived in that old manor house, situated in front of a foggy pond whose grey waters reflected the long branches of oaks and beeches, did not hold any rank or dignity in the Church. And yet he exercised more influence and possessed more authority over the younger clergy than did bishops and cardinals. His contemporaries were more attentive to his words than to those which came from the pulpits, and, in the religious domain, he had taken possession of their imagination as well as of their thought. To-day, when nearly sixty years have passed since the death of Lamennais, he still awakens our curiosity,

and nothing that relates to him leaves us indifferent. We read with almost equal interest every appreciation of him, whatever be the differences of their points of view and of their conclusions. The publication of his correspondence was received some years ago with marked favour. When, in a short time as we are led to hope, certain letters are made public, all of them occupied with matters of spiritual direction, written by him to a pious lady, those letters, I am certain, will be read with the keenest curiosity. The fact is that the figure of Lamennais, studied and investigated as it has been, still stands before us like that of a Sphinx who has not said her last word. We feel, however conscientious our study has been, that we only half understand him. We find a difficulty in bringing what we read of him and what we know into harmony and agreement.

This priest was a pamphleteer of genius; no one has carried as far as he did the art of diatribe and insult; his eloquence is full of hatred and invective. But he has lovingly written a translation of the "Imitation" which is worthy of the original, and he has enriched it with reflections of which M. de Sacy, a good judge, could say that sometimes they seem to be postscripts dictated by the author of the book himself. In his letters there are few pages on which there is not found some insult, aimed, not merely against his direct opponents, but especially against those who did not entirely share every shade of his own opinions. The most respectable of his opponents are those most abused and in the grossest terms, and it is impossible not to conclude that this perpetual reviler must have been a singularly bilious and disagreeable man. But it is equally impossible not to be touched by the care, the good grace, the

true sensibility he displays in his correspondence with those three Breton old maiden ladies, who, from their retreat of Feuillantines, follow his career with so touching an anxiety, and one of whom, she whom he loved to call Ninette, once addressed to him this discreet warning: "You are making too much noise." Nothing is farther from his writings than grace and charm, except in some pages of "Affaires de Rome." And yet he had grace, he had charm; all who were near him felt their influence. In that Breton Port-Royal which he wished to create at La Chesnaye, he had been able to attract and to retain pure and refined souls like those of the Abbé Gerbet and Maurice de Guérin, to mention only the best known. He had captivated the spirit of Montalembert to such a degree as to make him hesitate for two years before he made his submission. Women's hearts remained faithful to him, even after his fall. I knew, towards the end of her life, a worthy nun in whose presence one could not mention the name of Lamennais without moving her, and she persisted in the touching illusion that, if he had not been imposed upon in his last hours, he would have died reconciled with the Church. Whatever judgment one passes on the rest of his life, it is impossible to refuse pity to those last years when, overwhelmed at once by the weight of material preoccupations and bodily sufferings, deriving, by a singular lesson, his whole subsistence from the sale of his translation of the "Imitation," he was growing old in illness and solitude, without affection and without support, assuredly feeling in the depths of his being the wretchedness and humiliation of his end. It is said that the man who closed his eyes wiped from his wasted cheek a tear which, while he was dying, no one had seen fall. Who knows whether that tear was not one of repentance,

and whether the good sister whom I have just mentioned was not wiser in her charitable hope than certain judges of Lamennais in their pitiless severity?

When Lacordaire arrived at La Chesnaye, Lamennais was not unknown to him. Lacordaire had already had an opportunity of seeing him once or twice before he entered the seminary, and, judging from this letter to a friend, his first impression had not been favourable. "He is a little, dried-up man, with a thin, yellow face, simple in his manner, sharp in speech, full of his book. If M. de Lamennais were placed in an assembly of ecclesiastics, with his brown frock-coat, his knee-breeches, and his black silk stockings, he would be taken for the sacristan of the church." From this fresh visit to La Chesnaye, Lacordaire did not return particularly attracted. "The conversation and deportment," he wrote afterwards, "breathed a sort of idolatry that I had never seen before. This visit, though giving me more than one surprise, did not, however, break the bond which had just attached me to the famous writer." In fact the counsels of Lamennais strengthened him in his project of going to America, a project which Lamennais approved of all the more warmly as he himself had conceived a similar design several years before. Lacordaire therefore made up his mind, and some months later he wrote to M. Foisset: "I have thought again about the New York proposal. M. de Lamennais knows it and has approved of it. We have joined on to it great designs, and several of us who are friends will start together next spring." This letter is dated July 19th, 1830. Eleven days afterwards the Revolution broke out.

At first the new events changed nothing in Lacordaire's determination. His baggage was

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packed and he had said farewell to his family, when he received a letter from the Abbé Gerbet with whom he had kept in touch. In this letter the Abbé Gerbet insistently pressed him, in his own name and in that of Lamennais, to aid in the enterprise of founding a new journal, the "Avenir," which would in future be the organ of the Catholics, and which would claim for the Church her share in the liberties henceforth acquired for the country. "This news," Lacordaire afterwards wrote, "caused me obvious joy and a sort of elation." He accepted the proposition without hesitation, and forgot that some months previously he had replied to a similar proposition from his friend Foisset, that a journal was what he despised most in the world, and that *never* would he proclaim the truth to men in a place in which their idleness was amused by tricks of the intelligence. In order to understand this sudden change of ideas and this elation, we must recall the conception Lacordaire had formed of the relations between the Catholic Church and the State. To remove the Church from her state of penetration, to put her in a state of absolute independence, seemed to him, as we have seen, the most pressing task, and it was at the moment when he was going to start for America with the design of studying this sublime remedy on the spot that he had a glimpse of the possibility of applying it in France. The man who, from the depth of his modest retreat of La Chesnaye, stirred the Catholic intelligences of France and of Europe, offered him an opportunity of becoming his fellow-labourer in the great cause of the freeing of the Church. He invited him to fight the good fight with him, and at the same time he placed the weapon in his hand. How could he refuse to answer this call, and how could he hesitate to throw himself into the conflict

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under such a chief? This is what Lacordaire did, and it is not surprising that he let loose in that campaign all the fire of an ardent nature which, since his departure from the seminary, he had had to restrain within the limits of a narrow and petty existence.



## CHAPTER III

### THE "AVENIR"

SETTING aside their social and theological doctrines, everybody knows what was, in practice, the object pursued by the writers of the "Avenir"—to give Catholics a desire for liberty; to persuade them to invoke no longer the protection of the State, definitely to renounce its favours and privileges, and henceforth only to count upon themselves for the defence of their rights; but to teach them at the same time how to use the weapons by which those rights are defended in free countries—the press and public speech—and to accustom them to confront their opponents, to fight them in the open country, without taking shelter behind crumbling entrenchments and ruined walls. The press and public speech were two arms which Lacordaire and the writers of the "Avenir" could use with equal facility, and it was he who gave the best example of their employment. Although Lamennais took up the pen but rarely, yet he always used it with singular vigour, and it was he who wrote the articles on doctrine and principle. The gentle Abbé Gerbet was ill fitted for the asperities of daily controversy. There remained Lacordaire and Montalembert, the others being only obscure assistants. It is with this meeting in the offices of the "Avenir" (for up to this they had been strangers to each other) that began the close intimacy between these two men to whom Catholics owe so much gratitude.





CHARLES DE MONTALEMBERT

*To face p. 32*



Forty years afterwards, Montalembert recalled the memory of this meeting in moving terms :

"Would that it were given me," he exclaimed, "to paint him as he appeared in all the brilliance and all the charm of youth ! He was twenty-eight. His active figure, his fine and regular features, his statue-like brow, the sovereign poise of his head, his dark and sparkling eyes, with something proud and elegant, and yet modest in his whole person,—all this was but the envelope of a soul that seemed ready to overflow. . . . His voice, already so clear and vibrant, often fell into tones of infinite sweetness. Born to fight and to love, he seemed to me both charming and terrible, like the very model of virtue armed on behalf of truth." And on his side Lacordaire wrote of Montalembert this singular phrase, which shows with what prejudices his soul was still filled : "I love him as much as if he were a Plebeian."

The self-styled Plebeian, aristocrat though he was, was then a young man of twenty-two, unknown to all ; and whatever the talent of which he already gave promise, he could but efface himself behind Lacordaire. The two "wrote the paper," as the press jargon puts it, but Lacordaire wrote more regularly than Montalembert. In the first six numbers of the journal, the principal article was furnished by him seven times.<sup>1</sup>

Entirely given up to action and combat, he applied himself at first to raise the courage of Catholics, to bring them into line, to implant in them a feeling of their strength. He did not permit them to be treated with contempt, as a conquered party, nor, above all, as the adherents of a superannuated faith which was destined to

<sup>1</sup> The articles from the "Avenir" have not been reprinted in the complete edition of Lacordaire's works. They must be sought in the collection of articles from the "Avenir."

disappear as the religions of antiquity had disappeared. Thus, in an article entitled "The Rising Movement of Catholicism," he replied proudly to an article on the decay of Catholicism that had appeared in the "Globe," the old journal of the doctrinaires, which they had left, but in which their spirit still reigned. After having shown the Church resisting all trials—not only persecution, heresy, and schism, but even the attempts that kings had made to subjugate her,—Henry VIII in England, Louis XIV in France, Joseph II in Austria—to what he called the gnawing worm of Anglicanism, Gallicanism, and Josephism; he then showed her developing herself through liberty in every country where it had been granted to her, and he invited the "Globe" to meet him "in the fiftieth year of the century of which they were the children," thus laying on the future the trouble of determining the difference between those who predicted the decay and those who predicted the rise of Catholicism. When the fiftieth year of the century came, the "Globe" did not attend the meeting, for it had long since disappeared; so, it is true, had the "Avenir"; but judging from the place occupied to-day in the world by the ideas represented by Lacordaire and those represented by the "Globe," we can decide on which side accuracy of outlook and truth were to be found.

It was rarely, however, that Lacordaire chose questions of so vague and abstract a nature as subjects for his article. He preferred to seek his themes from the ordinary facts of current politics, and he displayed in his controversy, carried on almost every day, that art of the journalist which consists in seizing on an incident, magnifying it, sometimes distorting it, and drawing arguments from it to the advantage of his own thesis. What

especially preoccupied Lacordaire at this period, what according to circumstances inspired his passion or his animation, was the relations between the clergy and the new Government, relations which every moment gave rise to difficulties and conflicts. Almost the whole of the clergy had looked upon the Revolution of July with disfavour, and it must be admitted that their feeling was natural enough. As my eminent colleague, M. Thureau-Dangin, has said in his fine history, "during the July days the Church seemed conquered by the same right as the old Royalism, and irreligion victorious by the same right as Liberalism." But conquered or not, the Church had recognised the new Government, as the other Governments of Europe had done. The Concordat had not been broken, and the same bond still united Church and State. What attitude then should the ministers of the Church adopt, and what were the rights of the Government?

The Government required that bishops and parish priests, whatever were their personal opinions, should not adopt a factious attitude towards itself (which was the case with some of them), and that towards the new sovereignty they should discharge the duties which they had discharged towards the old. Certainly there was nothing excessive in the claim, but the form in which it was expressed was not always very happy. Thus, as several priests of the Jura persevered in their refusal to pray for the King, the Prefect of the Department believed it his duty to address a proclamation to them, in which, after declaring that the law is the people's divinity, and that its power extends everywhere and over all, he urged them to remember that when a man adopts an attitude of hostility towards the State, he ought not to have recourse to its benefits. Lacor-

daire took up this language with firmness, and addressing himself, not only to the priests of the Jura, "but to all those who with the heart of a man pray to God," he said to them: "Pray for the King; pray for his family, for the peace of his reign and the tranquillity of the world, not on account of your Prefect, but on account of the God Who commands it, on account of your early ancestors who prayed thus. Moreover, have a profound feeling of the indignity of the language spoken to you, and see how much the State's millions cost you." And he went on to show the Ministers exacting prayers of which the consciences of the priests would not be judges, and answering their protests with the mere word, "You are paid." "They need not be just," he exclaimed; "you are paid. They have no accounts to render you; you are paid. . . . Have men ever been treated with more contempt? They mock your prayers and yet order you to repeat them. If you do not obey, you are seditious persons to whom the treasury will be closed; if you do obey, you become so vile in their eyes that there are no terms in their vocabularies to express what they think of you."

It often happened also that a maladroit act of some subordinate functionary offered Catholics an opportunity for legitimate protest. In the haste and disturbance that marked the morrow of the Revolution, the July Government had not chosen its agents with much discernment. It had taken some of them from that political or literary Bohemia which, as soon as opportunity presents itself, rushes towards public functions, and shows so much eagerness to wear an embroidered coat. The Sub-Prefect of Aubusson must have been one of these. Inspired, doubtless, by the remembrance of the police superintendent who, fifteen years before, had put on his sash in order to command

the parish priest of Saint Roch to proceed to the interment of a famous actress, this Sub-Prefect wished to force the parish priest of a small township in his district to receive into his church the body of a notorious free-thinker, and, as the parish priest refused, he had the doors of the church broken open, and the coffin introduced by main force into the sacred edifice. Certainly, the scandal was great, and Lacordaire was right to take up the matter. He did so in terms of excessive virulence but of singular eloquence :

"Catholics," he said, "one of your brethren has refused to a dead man the prayers and the supreme adieu of Christians. Your brother has done well. Are we the grave-diggers of the human race? Have we made a compact with it to flatter its remains? Are we more unhappy than the courtiers to whom a prince's death gives the right of treating him as his life deserved? Your brother has done well. But a shadow of a pro-Consul has believed that so much independence was unbecoming in a citizen so vile as a Catholic priest. He has ordered the corpse to be presented before the altar, even though it were necessary to employ violence to place it there, and to pick the locks of the doors of the sanctuary where, under the protection of our country's laws, rests the God of all men and of most Frenchmen. A common Sub-Prefect, a removable salaried official, has sent a corpse into the house of God. He has done that, whilst you were tranquilly relying on the pledge sworn on August 7th, whilst they were demanding from you prayers to bless in the King the head of the liberty of a great nation. He has done this in the face of a law which declares that worship is free ; and what worship is free if its temple is not free, if its altar is not free, if, with arms in their hands, men are able to drag mud into it? That



Sub-Prefect has done this to half the French people.”

Lacordaire then asked himself what Catholics ought to do in face of this affront. The church of the township ought to be abandoned, for a place which is at the mercy of the first Sub-Prefect or the first corpse that comes is no longer a sacred place. But all the churches ought similarly to be abandoned. “If you were to erect your altars,” he exclaimed, “in a barn that was your own, instead of erecting them in an edifice which belongs to the State, you would be free for ever from this orgy of power. The House of God would be inviolable, because it would be the house of a citizen. It would no longer be regarded as a communal place fit to fold sheep in by virtue of the right of common pasture, and if a Sub-Prefect were to send a corpse into it under the escort of a half-company of National Guards, all France, untouched to-day by your injuries, would rise in indignation against him, for by attacking your liberty he would be attacking the liberty of all. Far from that, what is happening? The man who has defied so many Frenchmen in their religion, who has treated with more irreverence a place in which men bow their knee than it would have been permitted him to treat a stable, that man is seated at his fireside, easy and satisfied with himself. You would have made him turn pale if, with stick in hand and hat on head, you had taken your dishonoured God and carried Him into some shed built of deal planks, swearing not to expose Him a second time to the insults of the State temples.”

Lacordaire, as we have just seen, let slip no occasion of showing to his brethren, the priests, the humiliating situation in which they were placed towards the Government by “the necessity



of going every month to the tax-collector's coffer." Yet this peril was nothing, in Lacordaire's eyes, in comparison with other and graver dangers. Should the clergy abandon the temples and proudly reject the gold offered them to pay for their servitude, on the next day the peril would be averted; the present and the future would be saved by the same stroke. It would be otherwise if the clergy, whom Lacordaire invited to independence, were sullied in the purity of their method of recruiting. This recruiting depended on the bishops who nominated the parish priests; but those bishops themselves were nominated by the State. He shuddered at the thought that the supreme pastors of the Church might be proposed to the choice of the Sovereign Pontiff and imposed on Catholics by Ministers who would not share their faith. He saw in this a certain means of humiliating the Church of France by striking first at her head, and he found words of extraordinary vehemence to express the apprehensions with which this dark design of Ministers inspired him.

"What guarantee," he exclaimed, "shall we have of their choice? Since the Catholic religion is no longer the religion of the country, the Ministers of State are, and from a legal point of view ought to be, completely impartial in regard to us; will their impartiality be our guarantee? They are laymen; they may be Protestants, Jews, atheists. Will their consciences be our guarantee? They are chosen from the ranks of a society imbued with an obstinate prejudice against us. Will their prejudice be our guarantee? They have been ruling over society for four months. Will their past be our guarantee? They have opened their mouths only to threaten us; they have stretched out their hands only to throw down our

crosses; they have signed regulations only to sanction arbitrary acts of which we were the victims; they have left untouched agents who violated our sanctuaries; they have not once protected us in any quarter of France; they have offered us as a premature holocaust to every passion; these are the grounds of security that they offer us!" Lacordaire also addressed himself to the bishops of France to beg them not to accept their future colleagues from the hands of Ministers; and he endeavoured to move them by describing in eloquent terms the state to which the Church of France would be reduced by an episcopate recruited on a lower scale. "In proportion as you decrease," he said to the bishops, "they will place on your seats men honoured with their confidence, whose presence will decimate your ranks, without, however, destroying their unity. Afterwards, what remains of decency will be wiped away from their acts, and in a subterranean manner ambition will conclude horrible bargains. . . . An episcopate that will issue from them is an episcopate already judged. Whether it desires it or not, it will be a traitor to religion. The necessary plaything of the thousand changes that transport power from hand to hand, it will mark in your ranks all the Ministerial and anti-Catholic gradations which majorities will in turn adore as their own work. In agreement on only one point, the new bishops will bend their clergy to a trembling submission before the most insensate caprices of a Minister or of a Prefect, and in this Babel the language of servility is the only one that will never vary."

The question appeared to him so grave that if the bishops remained deaf to these protests, if they accepted into their ranks, if they regarded as their brethren, colleagues whose origin was impure, Lacordaire proclaimed, in the name of the con-

ductors of the "Avenir," that they would address their protests to Rome. "We will carry them there on our bare feet if necessary," he exclaimed at the end of an article which has become famous, "to the city of the Apostles, to the steps of Saint Peter's confession, and it will be seen who will stop the pilgrims of God and of liberty on their journey."<sup>1</sup>

Lacordaire thus foretold, several months in advance (for the article dates from November, 1830), the journey which was to put an end to the controversies raised by the appearance of the "Avenir." Before that journey was finished he was destined to have more than one opportunity of breaking a lance in favour of the thesis he had adopted: that of the absolute independence of the priest, who, in France, was henceforth to be a citizen like other citizens, invoking no privilege, but admitting no subjection, paying heed only to his spiritual chiefs, and obeying only the laws. He wanted, first of all, to show by a striking example that the exercise of the priesthood had in it nothing incompatible with that of any liberal profession. With this intention, on December 30th, 1830, he addressed a letter to the President of the Order of Advocates of the Court of Paris, informing him that he intended to resume his term of probation, which had been interrupted at the end of eighteen months by his religious studies. The Council of the Order, which did not care to see a priest figuring on its list, refused after a

<sup>1</sup> At the end of his life Lacordaire loyally admitted that his complaints against the July Government were marked by some exaggeration. "The 'Avenir' had taken," he wrote, "too aggressive, not to say too violent, an attitude towards the power that issued from 1830. . . . It would have been better had our complaints been honoured by less bitter language, and had our style savoured more of Christianity than of the licence of the times."

long and stormy discussion. Lacordaire was thus unable, as he had desired, to put on the gown over the cassock, and to defend Catholic interests in the courts; but opportunity did not fail him of placing his speech and his growing eloquence at the service of the conception he had formed of the priest and of his part in society. It fell to him to argue in the courts that question which even to-day does not seem to be settled for certain minds: Is the priest a functionary or is he not?

During the last year of the Restoration, he had, as almoner of the Lycée Henry IV, published along with his colleagues a memorandum in which he drew the attention of the Minister of Public Instruction to the deplorable state of religious teaching in the Lycées and colleges. A university journal, the "Lycée," had taken sides against this memorandum in a violent manner; it denounced it as a model of spying and hypocrisy, and it demanded that the religious teaching in the colleges should be taken out of the hands of men who were so perverse, and who were the most implacable enemies of liberty. Lacordaire immediately began a prosecution for defamation against this journal in the Tribunal Correctional, that is to say, under the common-law jurisdiction. But in the course of the trial a question of jurisdiction was raised by the representative of the public ministry. Were not the almoners public functionaries? In that case it would be not before the Tribunal Correctional but before a jury that the complaint should be brought. In order to establish the want of jurisdiction of the Court, the King's Advocate (we would call him to-day the Surrogate) used an unfortunate expression. "Priests," he said, "are the ministers of a foreign Sovereign." At these words Lacordaire arose. "No, sir, that is not so," he said in vibrant tones; "we

are the ministers of One Who is a foreigner nowhere—of God." God was then in fashion, if the Pope was not. The audience burst into applause, and when the hearing was over, a man detached himself from the crowd, grasped Lacordaire by the hand, and said to him: "Priest, you are a worthy man. What is your name?"

However, the Court decided for the King's Advocate, and declared that it had no jurisdiction. But the Public Prosecutor, disavowing his subordinate, appealed on the question of jurisdiction, and maintained before the Court in lofty terms that a priest was not and could not be a functionary, although he was an almoner. Lacordaire had kept silent on this matter at the first trial. Before the higher Court he accepted the debate and immediately raised it to the height of a philosophical discussion. "What is a priest?" he said. "A priest is a man who tells the word of God to men, and who blesses it in His name. . . . The priest is a man of that word; his function is to repeat it. From Whom does he hold this function? From Him alone Who is able to give it to him—from God. Now, God does not make public functionaries. He makes men. The priest derives his title only from God and his own conscience, because his faith comes only from God and his conscience. I know well that there was a time when men's faith came under the jurisdiction of the law, when liberty of conscience did not exist in the world. But that time is no more. After several centuries of struggle, the blood of the people and the Charter of France have founded religious liberty; it is imperishable. God has become free with the liberty of a citizen; we claim no more for Him; we desire only that He may be a citizen of France."

Here some murmurs came from the audience, which on this occasion was little favourable to Lacordaire, and seemed scandalised at the boldness of this speech. Without losing any of his composure, he turned towards his interrupters and launched this apostrophe at them: "Gentlemen, if I knew a finer title in the world than that of citizen of France, a better means of being free than that of bearing it, I would give it to Him Who has been willing to be the slave of men in order to gain their liberty." Then, resuming his argument, he demonstrated that neither the Concordat, nor the Penal Code, nor this or that special provision at the University, could change the character of the priest from that of being a private citizen, and he ended by saying: "I claim for myself, gentlemen, that sublime title; I shall defend it like my life, like my honour, like the honour of all those who bear it with me."

The Court of Paris did not yield either to the arguments of the Public Minister or to the burning eloquence of Lacordaire, and it persisted in declaring that an almoner is a public functionary. But some months afterwards, a decision of the Court of Cassation, re-establishing the true doctrine, reversed a decision of this same Court of Paris in a similar case, and declared that a priest is not a functionary. M. Dupin, who was then Attorney-General, had summed up clearly in this sense.

Lacordaire had yet another famous opportunity for arguing before the Courts a question from which the passage of years has taken nothing of its interest, that of the obedience which the priest owes the laws when he believes them bad, when his conscience orders him to demand their abrogation. This time it was not in the capacity of



complainant but in that of defendant that he appeared. He was cited, at the same time as Lamennais, before the Court of Assizes, for having, in several articles in the "Avenir" (among others in one of those I have quoted), committed the double misdemeanour of incitement to hatred and to contempt of the Government, and of instigation to disobedience of the law. Lamennais, who had no oratorical gifts, was defended at length by M. Janvier. Lacordaire was only able to begin his speech at half-past seven o'clock in the evening, before an impassioned and vibrant audience which interrupted him every moment by its applause.

After relating in a magnificent exordium how he had become, first a Christian, then a priest, he approached the two heads of the accusation. "If I have instigated to disobedience of the law, I have committed a grave fault, for the law is sacred. It is, after God, the safety of nations, and no one ought to respect it more than a priest, who is charged to teach the people whence comes life and whence death. Yet I confess I do not feel for the laws of my country that extreme veneration which the ancient peoples had for theirs. For the time is gone when the law was the true expression of the traditions, the customs, and the gods of a people; all that is changed; a thousand epochs, a thousand opinions, a thousand tyrannies, clash together in our complex legislation, and to die for such laws would be to worship glory and infamy at the same time. There is one of them, however, which I respect, which I love, which I will defend, and that is the Charter of France; not that I am attached with unshaken ardour to the variable forms of representative government, but because the Charter is a covenant of liberty, and because in the anarchy of the

world, there remains to men but one country—liberty.”

He then defended himself from the charge of having desired to stir up hatred and contempt of the Government. But he claimed with pride his right to expound the grievances of the Catholic Church. “Those grievances,” he said, “are numerous; crosses, churches, persons, have been insulted in many places; teaching has been impeded by new measures; a thousand subordinate despots have in the name of liberty established a tyranny over us. . . . Gentlemen, I have been moved by these wrongs of my brethren; I have raised on their behalf and on my own a voice animated by the feelings of our dignity that is common to all; for all, and you along with us, are citizens of France, of this free country in which each is accountable for his honour, bound to defend it, bound to repel insult and oppression. I have done so as far as it depended on myself. My task is accomplished. Yours is to send me forth cleared of this charge. . . . I call upon you then to acquit Jean Baptiste Henri Lacordaire, seeing that he has not transgressed, that he has acted as a good citizen, that he has defended his God and his liberty, and, gentlemen, I shall do so throughout my life.”

Lacordaire and Lamennais were, in fact, acquitted. Judgment was passed at midnight amid the applause of the audience, and Montalembert, after having accompanied the victor of the day along the quays in the darkness as far as his door, was able to hail him as the great Catholic orator of the future.

Finally, Lacordaire played his part beside Montalembert in the trial which became famous under the name of the Free School trial. Everybody knows that they were both summoned before



the Court of Peers, under whose jurisdiction Montalembert came, for having opened an infant school without permission, relying on the article in the Charter which promised to provide for liberty of teaching with the briefest possible delay. Before this imposing tribunal Montalembert spoke first. The effect of his speech was prodigious, and created a singularly difficult situation for Lacordaire, who, rightly trusting to his marvellous faculty of improvisation, had reserved himself to answer M. Persil, the Attorney-General. His exordium has remained famous. "Noble Peers," said he, "as I look around me I am amazed. I am amazed to see myself in the seat of the accused while the Attorney-General is in the seat of the Public Minister. I am amazed that the Attorney-General has dared to be my accuser—he who is guilty of the same offence as I, and who committed it within so short a space of time and in this enclosure where he is accusing me before you. For of what does he accuse me? Of having exercised a right written in the Charter and not yet regulated by process of a law. And yet he has lately asked you for the heads of four Ministers, in virtue of a right written in the Charter and not yet regulated by process of a law. If he could do this, so could I, with this difference: that he asked for blood, and that I wanted to give gratuitous instruction to the children of the people. If the Attorney-General is guilty, how does he accuse me, and if he is innocent, again how does he accuse me?"

He went on, refuting step by step the arguments of the Attorney-General, who claimed that the Imperial decrees constituting the University had the force of laws; and this return on the past gave him an opportunity of attacking the University in terms the violence of which can only be

explained by the passions of the time. Finally, in a somewhat pompous peroration, after having mentioned the trial of Socrates, "that first and famous case of the liberty of teaching," he added: "When Socrates was ready to part from his judges, he said to them, 'We are going to part—you to live, I to die.' It is not thus, my noble judges, that we shall part. Whatever your verdict may be, we shall go out of this place to live; for liberty and religion are immortal, and the sentiments of a pure heart, which you have heard from our mouths, will not perish either." The defendants were condemned to pay a fine of one hundred francs. It was an acquittal. From that day onward liberty of elementary teaching was morally won, and this time at least the service rendered was in proportion to the clamour.

All this, however, made a good deal of noise. On the part of laymen nothing would have been more legitimate. At certain moments forlorn hopes enable an army to gain more ground than crack regiments. But that two priests should lead the band, and that their efforts should conduce, not without some success, to drag the clergy in their train—this was where the danger lay, and it was natural enough that it should disturb the ecclesiastical authorities. The doctrines of the "Avenir" brought division into the Church of France. They found an echo in country presbyteries, among some young priests who were delighted by the generosity and the somewhat revolutionary boldness of these tones. But the episcopate unanimously held them in legitimate suspicion. Without counting that their origins and affections attached most of the bishops to the fallen order of things, it seemed to them, and with reason, hardly safe on the morrow of a revolution in which the explosion of anti-Catholic passions had shown itself in some

places in a fierce manner, benevolently to abandon their episcopal palaces and their cathedrals, to live in deal sheds or barns, and to trust for their daily bread to the generosity of the faithful. As for the absolute liberty of the press, of which the "Avenir" made a sort of dogma, it inspired them with more terror than sympathy. Thus it was not without uneasiness that they saw these new ideas penetrating into their seminaries and engaging the young recruits of the clergy in vehement controversies. Some of them refused Holy Orders to the seminarists who had declared themselves on the side of the "Avenir"; others dismissed those professors of theology who were guilty of having adopted its principles. Some went so far as to forbid their priests to read the journal itself.

On the other hand, outside the clergy, the "Avenir" found little support. The Royalists could not forgive its conductors for separating the cause of the Church from that of the legitimist Royalty. The Liberals had no confidence in the sincerity of their Liberalism, and it must be confessed that the memory of Lacordaire's early professions of faith in absolutism rendered their distrust excusable enough. So much hostility, and from such diverse sources, could not but injure the fortune of the "Avenir." The £3,200 collected to found the journal had long since been exhausted. The number of subscribers, which had never risen above twelve hundred, was diminishing. It was necessary to come to a decision. It was Lacordaire who suggested this. The episcopate condemned them; the Nuncio himself disavowed them publicly. What was more respectable or more conformable to the Ultramontane principles they professed than to appeal to Rome? It was necessary to suspend publication of the journal, and, as several months before Lacordaire had

proclaimed their intention, to bring the case to Rome, "to the steps of St. Peter's confession." From the point of view of human prudence, this proposal was perhaps imprudent ; but it was honest and bold, and I cannot find much justice in the reproach of having accepted it, which Lacordaire and Montalembert afterwards addressed to Lamennais.

## CHAPTER IV

### RUPTURE WITH LAMENNAIS—MONTALEMBERT AND MADAME SWETCHINE

“THE three pilgrims of God and of liberty,” that is to say Lamennais, Lacordaire, and Montalembert, set out together. Together they went along the Corniche road which Lamennais was to describe so well in his “Affaires de Rome.” “From Antibes to Genoa the road almost always skirts the sea, in whose bosom its pleasant shores reflect their sinuous and varied forms, just as our passing lives display their fragile contours in immense, eternal duration.” Together they could admire “the inexhaustible wealth of nature, in turn imposing and engaging, which seizes on the soul and soothes tumultuous thoughts, bitter memories, and restless anticipations.” Those tumultuous thoughts and those restless anticipations which already worked so strongly in the soul of Lamennais did not yet agitate that of Lacordaire. Lacordaire was performing the pilgrimage in the simplicity of his heart. Doubtless he hoped to obtain approbation for the doctrines of which, under the absolute and universal form that the “Avenir” had given them, his inexperience did not yet measure the imprudence and the audacity. But, if they should be condemned, doubt as to the conduct that ought to be followed did not even cross his mind, and, in

the course of the journey, the disagreement which was to separate the two men already showed some of its symptoms.

Their stay at Rome only accentuated it the more. This was not the first time that Lamennais had betaken himself *ad limina apostolorum*. He had gone there on the morrow of the dazzling success of the first volume of the "Essai sur l'Indifférence," and he had even stayed at the Vatican. Leo XII. had given him a most flattering welcome. He had even gone so far as, in a consistory, to describe him (so at least it has always been believed) as "an accomplished writer whose work had not only rendered a great service to religion, but had astonished and delighted Europe," and a man on whom he intended soon to confer the purple. Lamennais had returned, delighted with this welcome, and had not perceived at Rome anything of what he was destined to discover on this second journey. If "the part of humanity," to use a happy expression of Madame de Lafayette, which mingles with everything, religious or not, in this world, is more visible at Rome than elsewhere, it is perhaps because we would like it to be less so. Lamennais, badly received there, would see nothing but that part, and he was able to write thus: "It has been said that Rome is the country of those who have none other. We do not conceive that it can be a country for anybody, according to the ordinary meaning of the word. One can go there to die, but not to live; for there is scarcely a shadow of life there. No movement, if it is not the hidden movement of a crowd of petty interests which cross and crawl over one another in the bosom of the darkness, like worms in the depth of a sepulchre. Power and people seem to you like phantoms of the past. The queenly city, planted in the midst of a desert, has become the

city of death; death reigns there in all its formidable majesty and power."

Quite different was the impression of Lacordaire immediately after his arrival. He felt the charm and understood the greatness of the city of death. He had gone there, with the dust of struggle upon him, convinced that the future destiny of the Church depended on the judgment Rome was about to give, and that, humanly at least, she was lost if she did not seek salvation in the doctrines of the "Avenir." At the end of a few days he perceived that those struggles, to the din of which he believed the world was listening, had produced only a moderate impression at Rome. Interests not less grave attracted its attention, sometimes in this direction, sometimes in that, in Asia or in America, as well as in Europe. It had to watch over the whole earth, and the "Avenir" was only a small corner, in which, perhaps, a little more noise had been made than elsewhere. It was necessary to be silent and to listen. This is what Lacordaire immediately understood. But at the same time, according to Father Chocarne's expression, he understood Rome, and, on his return, he spoke of it in terms which it is interesting to place beside those which Lamennais used (not, indeed, from the point of view of form, for there the superiority is not on his side). "Oh Rome!" he exclaimed, "I have visited with infinite love the relics of thy saints, which are always young, and the relics, admirable also, of all thy grandeurs. After so many centuries I have found thee still erect. Amidst the storms of Europe there was in thee no doubt of thyself, no lassitude; thy glance, directed to the four corners of the world, followed with sublime lucidity the development of things human in their connection with things divine. The cross



shone on thy brow like a golden and immortal star ; but it was always the cross."

In spite of this divergence of views, which time was to render still deeper, it was to Lacordaire that the three friends entrusted the composition of the Memorandum in which they intended at once to expound their doctrines and to defend their general conduct, a Memorandum which was destined to pass under the eyes of the Holy Father. Neither the articles from the "Avenir" nor this Memorandum are to be found in the complete works of Lacordaire. It is in those of Lamennais that it must be sought, for the latter inserted it at full length, not without malice, in the volume "Affaires de Rome." This piece of writing, which is little known, is a curious mixture of just views on the situation of the Catholic Church in France, and of extravagant conclusions. After pointing out the inconveniences and the perils that had resulted from the too close intimacy of the Church with the Government of the Restoration, Lacordaire showed how necessary it was that the Church should abandon all alliance with parties. By taking this attitude, the Church became inviolable to all ; she chose, above passions, her true place, and she accomplished the mission of peace that she had received from Jesus Christ. But to secure this position for the Church, two sacrifices were necessary—that of political affections and that of the budget of the clergy. It was necessary to sacrifice purely political affections, not in the sense that benefits received should be effaced from the memory, that sympathy for great misfortunes should be stifled, that hostility should be entertained for those who had been loved, but in this sense, that placing religion above party interests, no Christian should use it to subserve the triumph of an earthly cause. As for the



budget of the clergy, in principle it was a debt. But the Government regarded it as a salary, and public opinion was with the Government. "You are paid by the State," it was said to the priests. "Why do you complain of serving it?" Let the Church herself give up claiming the payment of this debt, and by that act she would find herself freed from all the bonds that subjected her to the State. By means of this double sacrifice, the Catholic Church would acquire a liberty that she had never known, and the Catholic religion, compromised by false political action, would recover the empire that it had lost over the souls of men.

When we re-read this Memorandum, in which is expressed such judicious considerations on the dangers to which political alliances expose the Church, it is impossible not to ask oneself what welcome it would have received if, fifty years ago, the Holy See had been occupied as it is to-day.<sup>1</sup> Assuredly the bold thesis which made it a duty for the Church to break every attachment with the State would not have received an express approbation, for it is not customary for the Church voluntarily to enter upon adventures. But, on the other hand, there is too striking an analogy between the doctrine of the necessary sacrifice of political affections to the superior interests of religion, and the recommendations of a recent Encyclical, not to make it permissible to ask oneself if the second part of the Memorandum would not have obtained the same favour as the first. Unhappily, Gregory XVI. was not Leo XIII.; he was a pontiff more mystical than political, pious but timorous, who assumed the tiara at a moment when, through the events of July, all the thrones

<sup>1</sup> This book first appeared while Leo XIII. was still alive.

of Europe felt themselves more or less shaken. In this crisis the "Avenir" had taken the side of the peoples against the kings, and Gregory XVI. felt his solidarity with the other Sovereigns. It was therefore inevitable that the campaign of the "Avenir" should inspire him with an unconquerable alarm. Nevertheless, without the incredible insistence which Lamennais employed in urging in some fashion his own formal condemnation, it is probable that a tacit disapproval would have appeared sufficient. After the reception of their Memorandum, the Sovereign Pontiff had answered the conductors of the "Avenir," through the intermediary of Cardinal Pacca, that "whilst acknowledging their talents and their good intentions, he was displeased that certain controversies and opinions which were, to say the least, dangerous, had recently been aroused; that in accordance with their desire he would examine their doctrines, but that as this examination might be very long, they could return to France, and care would be taken to inform them when it was concluded."

It was on the line to be taken in reply to this discreet counsel that the first open disagreement between Lacordaire and Lamennais displayed itself. The Memorandum addressed to the Pope by the conductors of the "Avenir" ended with the declaration, "that they were as docile as children to his voice." Was not the first sign to be given of this docility to take the counsel as an order, and to return to France instead of continuing a stay at Rome the prolongation of which seemed a sort of coercion? This was the opinion which Lacordaire clearly and emphatically stated, an opinion which he could induce neither Lamennais nor Montalembert to share. To return to Paris without having obtained express approba-

tion for the doctrines of the "Avenir" appeared to Lamennais to be a mark not of docility but of failure; and as for Montalembert, who was completely under the yoke of Lamennais, the fact of leaving alone at Rome the man with whom they had gone there, seemed to him an act of ingratitude and desertion. Lacordaire therefore decided to break up the alliance, and he left Rome on March 15th, 1832, "with the saddest forebodings and the saddest farewells."

The situation in which Lacordaire was to find himself on reaching Paris was difficult. So close was the intimacy in which the conductors of the "Avenir" lived, that Lamennais and Lacordaire lodged together at 98 Rue de Vaugirard, in a flat of three little rooms, taken in Lacordaire's name. He could hardly go elsewhere, and, on the other hand, to take up quarters under the same roof as Lamennais was in some sort to engage himself anew in the bonds from which he was already engaged in freeing himself. Moreover, he was without occupation. He had long since resigned his modest employment as chaplain of the Visitation Convent in order to enter upon his work on the "Avenir," and this situation of an idle priest weighed heavily on his ardent nature. Circumstances did not delay to furnish a scope for his energies.

Cholera had just broken out in Paris. Since the July Revolution the almonry service had been disorganised in the hospitals, and the prejudices of the people against the ecclesiastical habit were still so great that priests could not gain admittance to them except in lay costume. It was by mixing with the students who accompanied the doctor on his visits that Lacordaire was able daily to enter a temporary hospital established at the Corn Stores, where he tried to find among the crowd of patients

those who would accept his ministry. "Is there no priest here?" asked a soldier, seated at the bedside of his wife who had been brought in dying. "I am one," answered Lacordaire, and he added in a letter in which he told the story: "One is happy to find oneself at hand to save a soul and to bring a man happiness."

Thus, in the exercise of his first duty as a priest—the ministry of souls—Lacordaire found again something of the calm that the heat of controversy had disturbed within him. At the same time he was preparing himself by theological and historical studies for the moment when those who thought as he did "could reappear, amid the applause of the immense majority of Catholics and clergy, with the strength of men who have been able to keep silent." "Silence," he added in a letter to Montalembert, "is the next greatest power in the world after speech."

Silence was not a power that Lamennais was inclined to call to his aid. A short time after he had written this letter, Lacordaire was informed that Lamennais, not being able to obtain a formal sentence from Rome, was arranging to return to Paris, there to resume the publication of the "Avenir." He had already apprised some of his former colleagues of his plan of campaign. To wait for Lamennais in the house in the Rue Vaugirard, to which he was certain to come to discuss with him this project of the resumption of the "Avenir," and to refuse to take part in it—this would give rise to a violent rupture. Lacordaire recoiled from so extreme a step. He resolved to leave Paris, and having heard that Munich was a city where living was not very costly, and where there were abundant intellectual resources, he borrowed a hundred crowns to go there, resolving to continue, at least for a time, the studies

which he had begun. A singular accident brought it about that he pursued the very man from whom he fled. Lamennais and Montalembert, returning from Rome through the Tyrol, reached Munich almost at the same time as Lacordaire, and, as everybody knows, it was as he was leaving a banquet in their honour that Lamennais heard of the famous Encyclical "Mirari Vos," in which some of the social and political doctrines of the "Avenir" were the subject of rather stern censure, without, however, there being any mention either of the name of the journal or of any of its contributors.

At first it was possible for Lacordaire to believe that there was complete agreement between himself and his old colleagues of the "Avenir" regarding the line of conduct to be adopted. "We ought not to hesitate to submit," had been the first word of Lamennais to his two companions, and next day he proposed for their signature a form of words by which they declared that they retired from the lists in which they had loyally fought, and urgently engaged their friends to follow their example of Christian submission. Lacordaire, accordingly—Montalembert having left them at Strasburg—made no difficulty about continuing the journey back to Paris along with Lamennais. As they were climbing a hill together on foot near Saverne, "Lacordaire," exclaimed Lamennais, "suppose we add to our declaration the words 'for the present.'" Those words might have opened his eyes to the projects which were already beginning to grow in that impatient soul. A man more sagacious than he would not have been deceived. Sainte-Beuve, who had taken some little part in the "Avenir" movement, as he had taken part in that of the Saint-Simonians, went, doubtless urged by

curiosity, to visit the two inhabitants of the almost unfurnished flat in the Rue Vaugirard. In a room on the ground floor he found Lamennais giving expression, with great freedom of language, to all that had displeased him at Rome, and, in particular, speaking of Gregory XVI. "as one of those men who are destined to bring on desperate remedies." He went up afterwards to the first floor, where he found Lacordaire speaking with extreme reserve and submission of the disappointments they had experienced, and comparing the doctrines of the "Avenir" with "the grain which, even supposing it to be good, needs to sleep under the earth for a whole winter." If Lacordaire had been the sort of man to ask Sainte-Beuve's advice, the latter would not have failed to predict to him all that was going to take place at La Chesnaye.

That humble dwelling, whose name has remained so famous, was in truth to be the witness of one of those silent dramas in which the destiny of souls is decided. Lamennais had taken refuge there to hide his defeat, in company with the Abbé Gerbet and some other faithful disciples whom Lacordaire did not believe he could refuse to join. "La Chesnaye," Lacordaire has written since, "had resumed its accustomed character, a mixture both of solitude and animation ; but if the woods held the same silence and the same storms, if the sky of Armorica had not changed, it was not the same with the Master's heart. The wound in it was bleeding, and each day the sword was again plunged into it by the very hand of him who ought to have snatched it out and put the balm of God in its place. Terrible images passed to and fro over that brow, from whence peace had now fled ; broken and threatening words issued from that mouth which had expressed the grace of the Gospel.



It sometimes seemed to me that I was looking at Saul. But none of us had David's harp to calm those sudden irruptions of the Evil Spirit, and terror of the most sinister forebodings daily increased in my dejected mind."

Lacordaire's stay at La Chesnaye lasted three months. It was during those three months that the laceration lasted, a slow laceration, fibre by fibre. At last, one day after a painful scene caused by a haughty and vulgar reply from Lamennais, he came to his decision. Shut up alone in his room, far from all eyes, he wrote a sad and dignified letter to the man whose guest he was, in which, not daring to face a farewell scene, he told him that he was leaving. "I leave La Chesnaye this evening," he said; "I leave it from a motive of honour, being convinced that henceforth my life would be useless to you because of the difference of our views on the Church and on society, a difference which daily only increases in spite of my sincere efforts to follow the development of your opinions. . . . Perhaps your opinions are more exact, more profound, and, having regard to your natural superiority over me, I ought to be convinced of this; but reason is not the whole man, and since I have not been able to uproot from my being the ideas that separate us, it is right for me to put an end to a common life which is all to my advantage and to your cost."<sup>(1)</sup> And he ended by saying: "You will never know, except in Heaven, how much I have suffered during the past year from the mere fear of causing you pain. . . . Whatever side I may take, you will have proofs of the respect and attachment which I shall

<sup>(1)</sup> In order to understand these words, it is necessary to know that Lacordaire had no private means, and that, while he lived at La Chesnaye, it was entirely at the expense of Lamennais.

always preserve for you, and of which I beg you to accept this expression which comes from a wounded heart."

This letter is the most eloquent answer to those who have accused Lacordaire of indifference or harshness in regard to Lamennais. The struggle between the duties prescribed by conscience and the consideration due to persons, between the claims of truth and those of affection, is one of the hardest trials which a sensitive soul can know. It was not without a cruel struggle that conscience and truth triumphed over affection in Lacordaire's soul. In order to accomplish his flight from La Chesnaye—for it was a real flight—he had chosen the moment when Lamennais was out for a walk. At the moment when he was hastily going off, he perceived him in the distance, through a hedge, in the midst of his faithful disciples, above which his head was visible. Lacordaire stopped and almost returned. If he had returned, who knows how far Lamennais might have carried him! There are in life those decisive moments when a man feels all the anguish of his freedom. But will overcame feeling, and Lacordaire continued his hurried journey as far as Paris.

The first months which followed Lacordaire's return to Paris, after his departure from La Chesnaye, formed, from a moral and material point of view, the most difficult epoch in his life. He had returned to Paris in the depth of winter, with a summer suit of clothes, and only three crowns in his pocket. By his sudden rupture with Lamennais he gave up not only intellectual leadership but daily bread. In this critical hour he formed a resolution becoming to a priest, and he placed himself under his Archbishop's orders. In mind, character, political opinions, and theological doctrines, Mgr. de Quélen was as far



removed as possible from Lacordaire. But for the young priest, whose vocation he had discerned better than had his masters at Saint-Sulpice, he felt that peculiar tenderness which we sometimes feel for natures that are farthest removed from our own. To him he was the gifted and engaging son whose errors a father may deplore but whose return he welcomes with joy. He received Lacordaire with open arms. "You have need of a baptism," he said to him, "I will give it you"; and he gave him back his chaplaincy at the Convent of the Visitation.

Thus after that brilliant campaign of the "Avenir," in which his name had made so much noise, and to which his talent had given so much brilliancy, he returned to his humble starting-point as a catechist of young ladies. He found himself once again in his modest room in the Rue Saint-Étienne du Mont, as lonely as he had been before, having broken both with his old and his new associates, without a guide and without a supporter, but having lost that robust self-confidence which animated him when, three years earlier, he thought of sailing for America. The first ages of the Church were acquainted with that melancholy of men who, vowed to the service of God, felt themselves seized with discouragement in the midst of their task, and asked themselves whether the hand that upheld them had not abandoned them. They called it *acedia*; it was that sadness of the cloisters, the gloom of which was feared by virgins and monks, and from which they asked to be delivered as from the demon that goeth in the noonday—*dæmonio meridiano*. They also called it by another name—*athumia*, lack of soul—for in no language have words ever been wanting to express all the variations of human grief. It was this lack of soul from which Lacordaire

suffered, and we still find the echo of the sufferings through which he passed in the pages which he dictated from his death-bed: "Did I then commit only faults? That public life, those impassioned contests, that journey to Rome, those friendships once so strong and to-day so broken, the convictions of my whole life as a young man and a priest, were they nothing but a foolish dream? Would it not have been better for me to have been installed as a curate in the most obscure parish, and there to have called ignorant souls to God by the performance of simple duties? There are moments when doubt seizes us, when what has seemed to us fruitful appears to be sterile, when what we have judged to be great is no longer more than a shadow without reality. I was in that state; everything around me fell into ruin; and I needed to gather together the remnants of a secret natural energy in order to save myself from despair."

In speaking of those broken friendships, Lacordaire doubtless looked back in thought to the disagreement which their different attitudes regarding Lamennais had brought about between himself and Montalembert. By his flight from La Chesnaye Lacordaire had, in fact, freed his soul. But that of Montalembert had remained enchained. In vain, even from Dinan, and before he started for Paris, had Lacordaire written to inform him of the decision he had taken. He soon had the pain of knowing that that decision had not been approved of by Montalembert, and that the latter had even expressed himself in rather harsh terms on what he called a desertion. Then the two friends engaged in a correspondence (for Montalembert left a short time after for Germany) some fragments of which have been published in an appendix to M. Foisset's work, a correspond-

ence admirable in the eagerness displayed by Lacordaire in trying to rescue a soul that was dear to him from an influence whose danger he measured better. The man who was the object of this eagerness retained a tender memory of it, which, many years afterwards, he expressed in moving terms. "I was angry with my friend," wrote Montalembert, "for having taken another course, more public and more decisive. I rashly reproached him with forgetting the liberal aspirations whose breath had kindled us both. When at last I yielded, it was but slowly, as it were regretfully, and not without having distressed that over-generous heart. The struggle had been too hard. I speak of it with confusion, with remorse, for I did not then do him all the justice he deserved, and I expiate that fault by confessing it."

The struggle had, in truth, begun immediately after the day when Lacordaire, after leaving Rome, answered Montalembert's reproaches by these prophetic words: "Charles, heed well what I am going to say to you: if M. de Lamennais carries out his new plan, remember that a great number of friends and fellow-workers will desert him, and that when he is deceived by the Liberals in an action that has no possibility of success, there are no words sad enough to express what will happen." It was this plan of which Lacordaire, in the midst of the sincere tergiversations of Lamennais, perceived the almost fatal issue. He feared that Montalembert would be carried away by the chivalrous and generous side of his nature, would be associated with it in spite of himself, and would be drawn into a path every step on which would make it more difficult to return. Accordingly he endeavoured to stop him at the outset, and in order to keep him back he displayed

all the power of an eloquence whose tones come from the heart. Those letters of Lacordaire to Montalembert show an almost incredible ardour; they deserve to be cited among the finest and most touching that the love of souls has ever inspired. "Alas!" he wrote to him, "what demon has slipped between us and prevented us from understanding one another, we who understood one another so well? Have centuries come between what we were and what we are? . . . You do not know either the immensity of my pain or that of my friendship. Alas! whom have I loved if not you? Without you and the Church, of what account would be all that happens and all that will happen? Strangers understand me and they do me justice. But you! Is it possible that my real thoughts cannot reach you? My entire life is yours. I would be happy to-day if you were happy. You alone are lacking to my happiness. It is you whom I seek and whom I ask from God. You are myself; you are my friend, my brother, my sister; I have cared too much for you to be able to be happy without you."

What Lacordaire wished to obtain was that Montalembert should pledge himself, as he himself had just done, in a public letter, to follow solely and absolutely the doctrine laid down in the Encyclical, and to do nothing or approve of nothing that was not in conformity with that doctrine. He wished this declaration to be sent by him directly to Rome, and, in order to persuade him to this, he sent him a letter written in characters of fire, in which he summed up the arguments he had already employed, but in which he endeavoured above all to move him by an appeal to his tenderness. "You know whether I love you," he said to him. "You know whether I am ashamed of any-

thing when it is a question of you. I kiss the dust of your feet ; I want no other fate than to serve you eternally as the vilest slave, but allow me, as the price of my humiliations, to tell you the entire truth. On this moment depends your life and perhaps your eternity. If you remain in the paths of revolt, the world and God will repel you for ever. Repentance alone, withdrawal, a less political and more real religion, the most explicit separation from the past—that is what can save you. . . . My heart melts as I speak to you ; I feel that I love you enough to die for you. Listen to that voice which you have despised too much, and which has so often warned you of what I saw was going to happen. Charles, my dear, my sweet friend, once more I entreat you on my knees, in the most violent transport of love that a creature can feel for a creature, in the most profound forgetfulness of myself ; I kiss your feet, I moisten them with my tears ; I bring together again all my caresses of the past three years, all my griefs for you, all my joys, all my humiliations, which latter I prefer to all else ; I hold you to my heart, intoxicated by friendship and by desire for your salvation, and I order you to obey me. If you do not obey me, there must be a great curse on your head. Adieu ; I want you to write to me at once, to write at once to the Holy Father, and to send me a copy of your letter.”

We can understand that, even after thirty years and more had passed, Montalembert could not read these letters again “without an emotion that no words can express,” and that he blamed himself for the too prolonged resistance which he had made to these pathetic entreaties. “In this persistent struggle for the salvation of a loved soul,” it was Lacordaire who won, and in the month of

December, 1834, Montalembert ended by resolving to write the letter which Lacordaire requested. The struggle had lasted for three years, three years during which Lacordaire would have felt to an extraordinary degree the cooling of so tender a friendship if he had not found unexpected help upon his path.

At the epoch when he whom the Church to-day calls Saint Jerome, but who was then still named Eusebius Hieronymus, left the desert of Chalchis to return to Rome after having, with penitence and tears, overcome the ardours of his own fiery nature, a widow, recently converted to Christianity, who bore a name illustrious in Roman annals, Marcella, the daughter of Albinus, had made her sumptuous palace on the Aventine Mount into a place of pious assembly. Personally she lived there the simplest of lives, always clothed in brown garments, and she had opened there an oratory where Christian ladies came to pray. "When the affairs of the Church constrained me to come to Rome," the saint has written, "though out of a discretion that I believed necessary for my own salvation, I avoided the company of those great ladies whose piety then caused so much noise, she showed, to make use of the apostle's expression, so persistent and at the same time so touching an importunity, that she forced me in her favour to break the rule I had prescribed for myself." In fact Jerome passed the three years of his stay at Rome under Marcella's roof, and more than once during these three years, in the course of the vehement controversies in which he found himself engaged, Marcella had an opportunity of exercising her gentle and prudent influence upon him. "Marcella," he said, "had wished to place her hand upon my mouth to prevent me from speaking"; and in another letter: "Often my



attitude towards her was changed, and from being a master, I became a disciple." But as Marcella had to a sovereign degree (it is Jerome who is still speaking) a delicate tact for the proprieties, she always put forth her ideas, even those which she owed solely to the penetration of her own mind, as having been suggested to her either by somebody else or by Jerome himself.

At the end of three years, however, Jerome left that palace on the Aventine Mount which had been transformed into a convent, as well as Rome itself, always pre-eminently the elegant and lettered city, something like the Paris of to-day, to betake himself to Jerusalem in order there to put into practice, in agreement with her who was one day to be called Saint Paula, his great design of the monastic life. But during the twenty years that Jerome and Marcella dwelt apart from one another, a pious correspondence consoled them, and "if their bodies were separated, their souls were united." Thus when Marcella died, Jerome wrote to the Virgin Principia, who had closed her eyes, one of those letters which the Christians of the primitive Church communicated to one another, and which were the equivalent of an obituary notice of our own days. In that letter he sounded the praises of her whom he called "our Marcella," because "we have both alike loved her, and we have both alike shared her affection," and he made known to others that treasure which they had had the happiness of enjoying for so long. Less known than Paula, less publicly associated than she with the life and austerities of the great propagator of the monastic idea, the pious and discreet Marcella had not held a less place in the saint's life. At once a cenobite and a great lady, having accepted most of the obligations of the monastic life, yet without having entirely withdrawn herself from

the world, she was the first type of what an irony that has little justification has sometimes called a mother of the Church.

Allowing for the difference of times and persons, there is more than one resemblance between the intimacy between Jerome and Marcella and that which, at the epoch in his life which we have reached, was about to be formed between Lacordaire and Madame Swetchine. During Lacordaire's lifetime Madame Swetchine's name was hardly known. I am tempted to say that it is a little too well known to-day. I am not, indeed, convinced that those who have her memory at heart have done her the best service by drawing her out of the friendly shadow in which she had always lived, and exposing her to the gaze of an indifferent public. I also doubt whether it was necessary to devote to her life and works the contents of two octavo volumes. In order to make her known, there would have sufficed one of those discreet publications which are intended only for friends, but which little by little make their way in the world, revealing hidden merits to those who are curious to inquire into them, but not desiring to impose them by main force on general admiration. Similarly, a severer choice of the productions to which she herself attached no importance would perhaps have given a juster idea of the delicacy and elevation of her mind. This severity would have been preferable to the somewhat rash affirmation that in her works "touches worthy of La Bruyère abound by the side of elevated passages worthy of Saint Augustine." "To write in pencil is to speak in a whisper," Madame Swetchine herself has gracefully said. Now, almost all her "works" were written in pencil, and by making them speak in loud tones, by substituting printer's ink for the pencil, her





editors do not seem to have understood the indirect advice she gave them.

It is but rarely that an excess of abundance in publications and an abuse of superlatives in eulogy do not give rise to a certain reaction. The reaction took place, in truth, in the form of an ironical and malicious article by Sainte-Beuve, from which alone many persons to-day know anything of Madame Swetchine. It would not be just, however, if Sainte-Beuve's facile malice seriously wronged that proud and original figure. Born at the end of the eighteenth century, married to a husband twenty-five years older than herself, brought up outside all practical religion, but attracted to Christianity by the purity of her nature, she had the courage, in spite of Joseph de Maistre's sarcasms (though he was to some slight extent her guide), to search out the truth for herself in a long course of theological reading and study, from which she emerged a Catholic. Attracted towards our country by a natural predilection at an epoch when mutual sympathy necessarily drew the two nations close together, she passed forty years of her life here. During those forty years she lived in the centre of a small, select band of men whom she had been able to gather around her—Cuvier, Montalembert, Father Ravignan, Alexis de Tocqueville, and others whom I could name. People have sneered at this *salon* in the Rue Saint-Dominique, by the side of which (just like Marcella in her house on the Aventine Mount) she had established a chapel to which young women in elegant costumes went furtively to ask in prayer for help against the temptations of the world. But it is none the less one of those places in which, over a long period of time, the most distinguished men have conversed on the noblest

topics. What we should recognise and greet in Madame Swetchine, rather than a rival of La Bruyère or Saint Augustine (although distinguished and touching works have come from her pen), is, as has been excellently said, "an accomplished Christian who at the same time was able with exquisite delicacy to understand the relations of her faith with the manners and sentiments of the society in which she lived." This is the finest of eulogies for a woman who never aimed at the sanctity of a Paula, and if she deserved it in anything, it is assuredly in her relations with Lacordaire, as the publication of their correspondence has made them known to us.

Lacordaire had been introduced to Madame Swetchine by Montalembert. "I approached," he has written, "to the banks of her soul as if I were a waif broken by the waves. . . . By what feeling was she thus led to give me her time and her advice? Doubtless to some extent sympathy inclined her; but, if I am not mistaken, she was upheld by the thought of a mission which she had to fulfil to my soul. She saw me surrounded with perils, guided so far by solitary aspirations, without experience of the world, with no other compass than the purity of my views, and she believed that in making herself my special Providence she fulfilled one of God's wishes." In these few lines Lacordaire has characterised with an exact touch the nature of the peculiar relation which began at this date between Madame Swetchine and himself, and which was to last for twenty-seven years. On Madame Swetchine's side this relation had something maternal and a little protecting; on Lacordaire's side something confident and frank. In more than one circumstance she was indeed his compass. With her

sure mind, her woman's tact, her knowledge of the world, she prevented him from unconsidered resolutions, from too hasty movements, and from untimely steps. Just as Marcella sometimes put her hand on Jerome's mouth so as to prevent him from uttering imprudent words, so Madame Swetchine (the image is borrowed from herself) held Lacordaire by the flap of his coat so as to moderate his too rapid or too sudden movements. It is in this spirit of gentle authority that she appears in their correspondence, and I do not think that more original letters have ever been exchanged between a woman and a priest. There is nothing in them that recalls the spiritual correspondences we know, such as that of Bossuet with Sister Cornuau, or that of Fénelon with Madame de la Maisonfort. They are not letters of piety, and still less are they letters of direction, for it was rather Madame Swetchine who was the director. One could say that they are ecclesiastical letters, for all the questions that have engaged the Catholic Church for a quarter of a century are handled in them with great elevation of view, and that at the same time they are letters of the heart, for in them the expression of personal feelings occupies a large space.

In truth Madame Swetchine surrounded Lacordaire's life with that affectionate solicitude which was all the more necessary to him as he was soon to lose his mother. At one period even, he almost went to live near her, in her house on the Aventine Mount. But if their intimacy was never carried so far, never, in all the vicissitudes of life, did Madame Swetchine's attachment fail Lacordaire; it failed neither the obscure priest nor the famous preacher, neither the melancholy hermit of Sorèze nor the martial Dominican. This constant attachment had in it nothing exalted and

nothing complaisant. There is nothing flattering, nothing excessive in the numerous letters which she wrote him. Madame Swetchine judges the man she cares for; she warns him; sometimes she blames him; but nothing succeeds in detaching her from him. "It would have been my happiness," she once wrote to him, "always to have approved of you, but my tenderness does not need that, and perhaps the violent blows to which you subject it renew a first adoption with the greater strength. Like Rachel, I have sometimes been able to call you the child of my sorrow, and you know that suffering does not discourage poor mothers."

It is, in truth, with quite a filial confidence that Lacordaire unbosoms himself to Madame Swetchine about everything that concerns him. He has nothing hidden from her, neither his troubles, nor his doubts, nor his hopes, nor his discouragements. Constantly he speaks of himself with touching humility. "I am thirty-four years of age," he writes to her, "and it is true to say that in no respect is my education finished." At the same time he is keenly aware of what in his temperament is of a nature to make others suffer, and he accuses himself of it. "I love, I am certain of it, and deeply; and nevertheless it is true that there is in me something which I cannot name that causes pain to those I love. It is not harshness, for I am gentle; it is not coldness, for I am vehement. It is something too much or too little in my whole personality, a certain difficulty of discovering what it is a friend's heart needs, a habit of silence which sometimes follows me without my suspecting it. What a torture it is to me to speak!" And he envies the gift of expressing their feelings which women possess. "Women have this admirable

quality that they can speak as much as they wish, in the way they wish, with the expression they wish. Their heart is a spring which flows naturally. A man's heart, mine above all, is like one of those volcanoes whose lava only comes forth at intervals, after a shock."

This reserve and apparent coldness was a feature in Lamennais, the contrast of which with the natural impetuosity of his character has often been remarked. In vehement characters who have early adopted the habit of governing themselves, this characteristic is often found; reserve and coldness, at first intentional, become an envelope, a veil from which they cannot succeed in disengaging themselves. But if Lacordaire, at any rate according to his own account, could not speak, at least he could write, and Madame Swetchine was to be well rewarded for the tenderness which she showed him by the receipt of letters like this. "Have therefore a little compassion on my wild nature. I would like to change it, for I feel my faults more than ever in proportion as Christianity penetrates into my soul; unhappily we desire more than we do. Let the confidence with which I have always spoken to you of myself be a proof to you, and one unceasingly renewed, of my affection. My life in its smallest details belongs entirely to you, and you will never see me take anything of it away from you. New friends are little to my taste. I sometimes feel that some passing spirit attracts me, and that formerly I could have loved it. I hardly go further than that; the time has come to love God alone, and to live with the destinies that His goodness has joined to us in former paths." But other spirits did pass who pleased him and whom he loved. With none, however, were his relations as intimate and

as constant as with Madame Swetchine. We shall find her intervening in more than one important decision in Lacordaire's life, and before resuming the narrative of that life it is necessary to explain the place in it which she will henceforth hold.

## CHAPTER V

### THE STANISLAS LECTURES AND THE FIRST SERMONS AT NOTRE-DAME

WHAT Madame Swetchine's affection could not procure for Lacordaire was an occupation for his life. He dreamed, indeed, of writing a great apologetic work which he would have called "The Church and the World in the Nineteenth Century." But the plan was as vague in his mind as the title would have been ambitious, and a just instinct warned him that he was better fitted for controversy than for doctrinal exposition. Nevertheless, he turned aside from every proposal that could have brought him back into the political arena. Thus he refused the editorship of the "Ami de la Religion" and that of the "Univers." What attracted him was the pulpit. He had even promised to preach in several churches, but before making a serious beginning he wished to make a trial. One Sunday, in May, 1833, about six o'clock in the evening, when the service was over, a small party of friends and ecclesiastics were invited to hear him at Saint Roch. He was to preach on the Finding of the Cross, which was the feast of the day. Madame Swetchine waited anxiously in her drawing-room for the return of the friends whom she had sent to hear him. They came back with long faces. "He will never be a good preacher," said one of them. In truth, Lacordaire had frozen the lava



of his eloquence by trying to confine it within the mould of the classical sermon. He himself was as much deceived as the others. "It is evident to me," he wrote to a friend, "that I have not enough physical strength nor enough flexibility of mind nor enough understanding of the world in which I have lived and shall always live a solitary life, finally, not *enough of anything* that is necessary to make a preacher in the full meaning of the word," and he excused himself from the engagements he had accepted.

Another proposal was made to him which he accepted, though without eagerness—that of giving a series of lectures on religious subjects to the pupils of the Stanislas College. To address himself to youth, to make, in order to replace the old, a generation of Catholics who would be animated by a new spirit, had always been one of his favourite thoughts. The opportunity was offered him. He seized it. The first lecture took place on January 19th, 1834. From the third of the series onwards, the outside public attended in crowds. Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Berryer (who arriving late one day was obliged to enter by the window) arranged to meet there, and what perhaps was better, so also did all the "thinking youth," to employ an expression of Maurice de Guérin, who was himself enthusiastic in his attendance at these lectures. "This eloquence, this inspiration, is unprecedented," he wrote to a friend. "Nothing else is talked of in the philosophical and religious world."

It was precisely this talk which became fatal to Lacordaire. The former contributor to the "Avenir" was still suspect to a narrow orthodoxy. Without it being possible definitely to impeach any of his doctrines, the boldness and unseemliness of his language were declared to be



a cause of scandal. He was reproached for having said, perhaps not in very good taste, "that the first tree of liberty had been planted by God in the earthly Paradise," and also of having made use of the expression, "the Christian Republic." He was denounced to the Archbishop, to Rome, and to the Government. The Government, through M. Guizot's mouth, declared that it looked upon the lectures without distrust. Rome referred the matter back to the Archbishop, but the Archbishop proved weak. Alarmed by the clamour, divided between his predilection for Lacordaire, whom he liked but did not understand, and the instinctive fright with which his own turn of mind inspired him, he wished neither to support him nor to desert him, and not being able by indirect means to induce him voluntarily to give up his lectures, which were suspended during the spring, he wished to impose the condition that he should write them out beforehand and submit them to the two Vicars-General.

Lacordaire was mortified by this distrust, and wrote a vigorous letter to Mgr. de Quélen. "Monseigneur," he began, "I am about to complain to you against yourself." He then recalled the pledges of submission and orthodoxy which he had given after his separation from Lamennais, pledges that had seemed sufficient to the Archbishop himself, for he had allowed him to resume his public preaching. He next passed in review the various complaints that had been made against his preaching, and after demonstrating their hollowness, he ended with these proud words: "I ask the Church, in the person of my bishop, to grant me her confidence, to honour my priesthood. If she will not, I shall have to look to myself. I am thirty-two years of age; if I had remained in the world I would be in a position to

make myself respected when I negotiated either on my own behalf or on behalf of others ; because I sacrificed my life to the Church, it is not just that I should be the toy of the basest intrigues and of the ill-will of a faction which does not forgive me for not giving up to itself my existence and my priestly office. Monseigneur, I ask justice from you ; I claim the priest's sole wealth, the priest's sole honour—liberty of evangelical speech, liberty to preach Jesus Christ, until it is proved that I disregard the Divine orthodoxy which is the first thing of all, and which, with God's help, I will never disregard, at any rate through self-will."

The tone of this letter was rather violent from a priest to an Archbishop, and if Madame Swetchine had not been in Russia, she would certainly have softened it. Mgr. de Quélen was, on his side, hurt by what he called a demand for surrender, and he persisted in requiring the preliminary examination which he had imposed. Rather than accept this, Lacordaire preferred not to resume his lectures. "I had counted on two men," he replied ; "the first I left because he betrayed the hopes of all ; the second failed me. Henceforward I count only on God."

Lacordaire's position again became critical. If he was not suspended as a priest, his words as a preacher were placed on the Index. His zeal was reduced to idleness, and his ardour to silence. He was passing through one of those moments of discouragement when, to use his own fine expression, he felt his soul falling under him like a horse under its rider. What was he to do? What was he to decide? In what occupation would he henceforth employ his sacerdotal life? Lacordaire was sadly asking himself this question one cold morning in January, 1835, as he was walking in the

Luxembourg Garden, when he met an ecclesiastical acquaintance. "What are you doing?" said the latter to him. "You ought to see the Archbishop, and come to an understanding with him." Lacordaire continued his walk. Some paces further on he met another priest. "You are wrong not to see the Archbishop," said the other to him. "I have reasons for thinking that it would be very easy for you to come to terms." "Being somewhat superstitious in regard to Providence," adds Lacordaire, relating this anecdote, "I turned slowly towards Saint Michael's Convent, where the Archbishop was then staying." Luckily the door was opened to him by one of the choir nuns, who, well disposed to him because "everybody was against him," took it on herself to introduce him to the Archbishop, who was at home to nobody. At the end of some minutes' conversation, the Archbishop, fixing a scrutinising eye on Lacordaire, said brusquely to him: "I am thinking of asking you to preach at Notre-Dame; would you accept?" Lacordaire asked for twenty-four hours for consideration, and at the end of the twenty-four hours he accepted.

What then had happened? Lacordaire explains this abrupt change of view by the coincidence between his unexpected visit to the Archbishop and the sending to the latter of a Memorandum in which the Abbé Liautard, the founder of the Stanislas College, sharply criticised the Archbishop's administration, and charged Mgr. de Quélen's conduct with lack of intelligence and weakness in the matter of the Stanislas lectures. Without denying that this coincidence may have had something to do with the abruptness of the Archbishop's decision, it is, however, possible to give him the credit of having been determined by considerations of another sort. Of an irresolute

character, but of lofty intellect, Mgr. de Quélen had doubtless taken thought upon the responsibilities imposed on him by his position in those difficult times. A glance at the mental and religious evolution that had taken place since the events of July will enable us better to understand the effect which those reflections might have had upon him.

It is the quality of revolutions to bring to the surface of society things which, whilst they are hidden, sleep in the depths of its waters—evil instincts, coarse appetites, blind hatreds—but along with these, generous enthusiasms, lofty devotions, heroic illusions. Thus there has been no revolution which has not been followed by a religious crisis, that is to say, unless such a crisis had preceded it. This was precisely what took place during the first years of the July Government. For a moment it was possible to believe that the Catholic religion had succumbed, less under the blows of popular hatred, than beneath the weight of philosophical indifference. A man occupying a position at the university, who has had his hour of notoriety, M. Dubois (of the Loire-Inférieure), had indeed declared, during one of his tours of inspection, that “they had been present at the funeral of a great cult.” But if that cult seemed to be buried, a wiser intellect than that of M. Dubois, of the Loire-Inférieure, would not have failed to perceive already the symptoms of an early resurrection. For the religious sentiment remained alive. It had not to wait long before it expressed itself anew in some singularly strange manifestations. Not to mention the French church of the Abbé Châtel, the addresses at the Taitbout Hall, of some disciples of Saint-Simon, among others Barrault and Enfantin, gave what was but a new modulation to the eternal sigh of humanity. That “torment for divine things”

also inspired voices that had hitherto uttered very different words. There was Joseph Delorme, expressing in certain pages of "Volupté" (pages more sincere than the author was afterwards willing to admit), first, the sufferings of doubt, then the ecstasies of faith. There was Lélia, a former abbess of Camaldolese nuns, who died some years before with blasphemy on her lips, who rose from the dead under the name of Marcia, and who lent a like eloquence to the expression of her pious resignation. There were also, in a quite different world, politicians who stated, as Tocqueville did in his letters, the new fact "that most Liberals recognised the political utility of a religion, and deplored the weakness of the religious spirit among the populace," or who, like M. Guizot, courageously declared in the tribune, and before a hostile majority, "that, independently of all political power, religion is an eminently social principle, the natural ally and the necessary prop of all regular government, and the first moral force of the country." Thus popular hatred had declined, philosophical indifference passed out of fashion, and thinking men began, in Michelet's fine expression, to ask, "Where is God?"

It was young people especially who were asking this question. For some years there had arisen in the colleges and schools a new generation, unacquainted with the prejudices which had been excited against the Church by her too close alliance with the Restoration, still charmed with liberty, but already eager for faith. For a moment they had listened to the voice of the "Avenir," but that voice had been stilled, and since that moment there had been a great silence which left them anxious. Where, then, was Catholic truth if it must not be sought in that ancient union between Church and Royalty which experience seemed to have

condemned, and if it was not permissible, either, to ask it from this new conception of a bold alliance with the people? To this question no voice gave them an answer. Yet they asked it persistently, and, on two occasions, in 1833 and in 1834, a deputation of the Catholic young men had gone, under the lead of Frédéric Ozanam, to solicit from Mgr. de Quélen the opening of a Catholic teaching, new at least in form, in which sermons would be replaced by lectures on the questions which then agitated and roused people's minds. Ozanam had even designated the Abbé Lacordaire as being, along with the Abbé Bautain, the man, of all the priests known at least by name to young people, who best could inaugurate that teaching. The Archbishop believed that he would satisfy their desires by appointing seven different preachers to expound, each Sunday in Lent, the fundamental truths of the faith from the pulpit of Notre-Dame. But during the six weeks that this new form of preaching had lasted, the vast nave of the cathedral had remained empty, whilst, on the other hand, the chapel of the Stanislas College was too small to hold the crowd whom Lacordaire had attracted. It was impossible for Mgr. de Quélen not to have been struck by this contrast, and as he was not without a clear insight into the state of mind of his time, and also as at the very moment when Lacordaire unexpectedly presented himself before him he was actually considering the best means of satisfying those young people, it is permissible to think that a clearer view of their needs, the memory of Ozanam's choice, perhaps even the singular coincidence of this unexpected visit, had more influence on his decision than the Abbé Liautard's attacks.

Whatever be the case in this respect, it was,



to use Lacordaire's own words, a solemn adventure on which he was going to set forth. It was a question, in truth, of something far more than knowing whether his talent would rise to the level of the place and the audience, and whether he was going to recapture beneath the sonorous vaults of Notre-Dame the success that he had gained in the crowded little chapel of the Stanislas College. Prohibited in a sense from public speaking, was this prohibition to be removed, and would he henceforth be allowed to pursue without any obstacles the great plan of reconciling the Church and the age which had agitated his thoughts since his entrance into the priesthood? Such was the far graver question by which he was confronted, and he was about to be judged, not only by the unknown congregation of Notre-Dame, but by his direct superior, his own Archbishop, who would perhaps be all the more difficult and cautious as he was himself interested in the success of the attempt. Let Lacordaire himself relate how he emerged from this formidable ordeal.

"I mounted the pulpit, not without emotion, but yet with firmness, and I began my discourse with my eyes fixed on the Archbishop, who was for me, after God, but before the public, the chief personage present. He listened to me, his head a little lowered, in a state of absolute impassibility, like a man who was not merely neither judge nor spectator, but like one who ran personal risks in this solemn adventure. When I had embarked on my subject, and my breast expanded with the necessity of gaining hold of so vast an assembly of men, there escaped me one of those cries whose accent when it is sincere and profound never fails to move. The Archbishop visibly trembled. A paleness which even I could see

covered his face ; he raised his head, and cast an astonished glance on me. I understood that the battle was won in his mind. It was won, too, in the congregation."

This cry of which Lacordaire speaks is doubtless the famous apostrophe: "Assembly, assembly, tell me ; what do you ask of me? What do you want from me? The truth? Then you yourselves have it not. You seek it then. You wish to receive it. You have come here to be taught." But though an eloquent exclamation can rouse an audience, it requires something more to keep it. That which Lacordaire had assembled, perhaps the most considerable that a priest had addressed since the times of open-air preaching, was to remain faithful to him during the whole of Lent, and to be still more numerous in the following year. When, in a few years, we shall find Lacordaire in full possession of the pulpit of Notre-Dame which he was destined to occupy for seven successive years, it will be the place to show what was new in his method of apologetics, and, above all, what a revolution, from the purely literary point of view, he brought into pulpit eloquence. But it is necessary to note here the prodigious success that his first sermons had, and to inquire into the cause of that success.

"The orator and the audience," Lacordaire has written, "are two brothers who are born and die on the same day." And he added with melancholy, "That is the orator's fate. This man, who has delighted multitudes, descends with them into the same silence. In vain does posterity try to hear his voice and that of the people who applauded him ; both are dispelled in time as sound is dispelled in space." This audience at Notre-Dame was indeed Lacordaire's brother, or rather his child, for it was he who created it, and if, with the



changes of age and time, it still exists to-day, the reason is because it has received from him some sparks of an imperishable life.

It was, in the first place, curiosity that brought it together. When people learned that the condemned contributor to the "Avenir," the suspended preacher of the Stanislas College, was going to preach from the pulpit of Notre-Dame, it became a Parisian event. At eight o'clock in the morning the nave had been invaded, and some worthy ladies who, according to their custom, had arrived at nine o'clock to hear the Canons' Mass, saw with bewilderment their usual places occupied by men, a majority of them young, whose behaviour was hardly reverent. To while away the leisure of waiting, some unrolled the "Débats," others the "National" or the "Constitutionnel." One auditor who displayed himself in top-boots, had dismounted from a horse in the cathedral place, and had entered carrying a stick surrounded with a whip-lash. If, at the first words, this audience were not won over, some irreverence was to be feared. But it was won over to such a degree that it thronged to each sermon, with greater attention and in greater numbers. It was necessary to erect barriers and to establish a service of order. The curious had become attentive, and the indifferent respectful. This concourse of hearers never failed Lacordaire, and, up to the end of his career as a preacher, no one has had in the same degree the gift of attracting and moving crowds. For he at once divined the language it was necessary to speak to the children of a proud and anxious age. He thoroughly understood that the time had passed in which, as it has been said, "the Church, catechising a childish society, laid down both the question and the answer," and that he must not take a

tone of authority with those hearers at Notre-Dame who arrived with their minds full of a crowd of objections. Thus, he did not say to them, "My brethren," but "Gentlemen." He spoke to them as an equal to equals, or, if he raised himself at moments above them, it was not as a priest, but as a man, imitating the noble pride of a movement known to Saint Paul, and showing them that there was nothing in them which he had not a right to claim to a similar or even to a higher degree. "You are Frenchmen," he said to them, "I am one like you. Philosophers, I am one like you. Free and proud, I am more so than you." He did not treat them with any skilful reserve, and sometimes he reprimanded them "for coming to a cathedral to hear the Divine word, with their hearts puffed up, and as judges." Sometimes, on the contrary, he praised those sons of the eighteenth century, educated in the arrogant thought of their age, for the marks of involuntary respect which the sanctity of the place forced from them, and for the instinct which made them bow their heads at the moment when priestly hands elevated the Sacred Host. Or he penetrated with tender clear-sightedness into the depths of young hearts which evil and melancholy had invaded, and he knew how to point out to them the charm of that indefinable sadness of which our soul is the profound and mysterious source.

But what, after astonishing his hearers, conquered and captivated them, was that they did not feel in this priest either blame or contempt for the age to which they were proud to belong, and the great destiny of which was one of their dogmas. He loved it as much as they did; like them he rejoiced in being its child, and far from pouring out sterile regrets for the past, or funereal predictions about the future, his filial pride congratulated

itself in advance on the progress of every sort of which their age would be the witness. He even extolled, with singular precision, those discoveries of science which were to shorten distances, suppress space, and give the easiest possible means of communication between nation and nation. In his eyes all these discoveries could have but a single result—to permit the truth to advance easily and quickly. “And it is you,” he added, “you, men of the time, princes of industrial civilisation, it is you who in this great work are, without knowing it, the pioneers of Providence. . . . So it was with the ancient Romans, your predecessors. They spent seven hundred years in bringing the nations together by their arms, in cutting up the three continents of the old world with their great military roads. They believed that their legions would pass over them eternally, carrying their orders through the universe. They did not know that they were preparing the triumphal routes of the Consul Jesus. Oh! then, you, their heirs, and as blind as they, you, Romans of the second race, continue the work of which you are instruments . . . in order that there may be no more haunts where tyranny, protected in its isolation, shall be able to shut out the truth by fire and water. How fair will then be the feet of those who carry the gospel of peace! The apostles of that future time will praise you! They will say as they pass in their eagle’s flight: How powerful and bold our fathers were! How fruitful their genius has been! How good it is for us, poor missionaries, to be borne so rapidly to the aid of souls! May they be blessed who have assisted God’s mind with their own, and may they receive in another land some of that dew of Heaven whose effusion they have helped, although they did not know it.”

One understands how such tones, so new in the Christian pulpit, moved profoundly the crowd of hearers who thronged even the dim corners of the chapels in order that they might hear some echoes of his voice. That crowd did not disperse immediately after the sermon. It delayed at the peristyle and in the square to exchange enthusiastic expressions. Or even, an eye-witness relates, they went to the sacristy door by which he was to leave, and to the streets through which he was to pass. "How handsome he is!" said the men on the route. "How good he is!" said the women. Perhaps the latter also said "How handsome he is!" for in truth so he was, as he is represented in the miniature reproduced at the beginning of this volume, with his black and abundant hair, his pale face, and his large black eyes whose glance had so much fire and so much gentleness. "He speaks little, but he says so much with a look," wrote Eugénie de Guérin, after seeing him for a few moments.

At no moment in his life was Lacordaire surrounded with such popularity.<sup>1</sup> Since the Middle Ages, the old cathedral had not seen such a crowd filling its five-fold nave. It is intelligible that Mgr. de Quélen, who some years before had been present at the sacking of his episcopal palace, congratulated himself on a change in the state of men's minds, in which he himself could claim his share, and that at the closing of the Lent course of sermons he should get up and speak of him as a "new prophet." It is intelligible, too, that as he accompanied him one day to Madame Swetchine's, he should call him "our giant." But this reward was not the one that Lacordaire enjoyed most. "Another sort of joy," he has written, "appealed

<sup>1</sup> A certain shade of green, which was all the rage at the promenade of Longchamp, received the name of "Lacordaire green."

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to my soul and raised it to regions purer than those of fame. The communion of souls was revealed to me, a communion which is the priest's true happiness when he is worthy of his mission, and which takes away from him all regret for having given up for Jesus Christ the ties, the friendships, and the hopes of the world. It is in Notre-Dame, at the foot of my pulpit, that I have seen the birth of those affections and those recognitions that attach the man to the apostle by bonds whose sweetness is as divine as their strength. When one has once been initiated into these joys, which are like a foretaste of the aroma of the other life, all else vanishes, and pride no longer mounts into the mind save as an impure breath whose bitter taste cannot deceive it." This communion of souls is the reward of the priest's sacrifices. Happy among men must be he who has known and felt it !

## CHAPTER VI

### THE RESTORATION OF THE ORDER OF SAINT DOMINIC

NEVER had Lacordaire's success been greater, and never had his hearers been more attentive or more numerous than at his last sermon in the Lent of 1836. It was therefore with a sort of stupor that they heard these solemn words fall from his lips: "May it be granted, gentlemen, that I have been able to inspire you at least with the good thought of turning towards God in prayer and of renewing your relations with Him, not only in your minds, but in your hearts. That is the hope I take away with me. It is the prayer I make as I leave you. I leave in my bishop's hands this pulpit of Notre-Dame, a thing henceforth established, established by him and by you—by the pastor and the people. For a moment this double commission has been granted to me. Allow me to lay it down and for a time to retire into solitude with my own weakness and with God." A long murmur ran through the crowded ranks, and this murmur was not yet stilled when the Archbishop, rising with visible sadness, confirmed this news, adding that Lacordaire was going to the Eternal City, to the feet of the Common Father of the Faithful, to render him an account of what he had seen and what he had done.

What motives inspired the fashionable preacher

to a determination so adverse to his reputation? Doubtless there should be added to the feeling of what he called his weakness, and to what he regarded as the necessity of continuing his theological education and of adding to his secular knowledge, the sadness of knowing that the brilliant success of his preaching had neither silenced the suspicions nor disarmed the hostility of which he was the object. He could not be ignorant of the fact that twenty-seven propositions had been extracted from the sermons he had preached in 1835, and submitted to Rome as heterodox by a Vicar-General of Lyon; that the Bishop of Caryste *in partibus* was preparing two volumes against him, and that his sermons were described by his detractors as "the greatest degradation of speech and the fullest anarchy not only of theological but of philosophical thought." But Lacordaire was a man to face the storm should one arise. There was nothing timid in his nature, and his pride caused him to be but little sensitive to attacks. We must therefore look for the motives of this singular determination in a secret design, perhaps as yet imperfectly known to himself.

The success of Lacordaire's preaching had certainly been great. But what after all were sermons addressed, during a limited time, in a single city, to a restricted public? What could their influence be, when it was a question of nothing less than bringing back to the Catholic Church a whole nation that had been rendered suspicious by a long series of faults and misunderstandings? It was to the whole of France that it was necessary to speak. Who could do it? Who had the right of speaking in every town and every church? The parochial clergy. But Lacordaire felt that the parochial clergy were still unfitted for the great



design he had conceived. He knew them to be too dependent on the Government through their salaries, and on the Manor House through their habits, to adopt the bold attitude and to use the popular language that, according to him, were suited to so new a situation. If the former conductor of the "Avenir" had abandoned his dream of a secular clergy that had burst every bond with the State and lived only on its own resources, he must have been all the more inclined to seek whether the very constitution of the Church could not furnish the instruments necessary for a transformation which he still judged to be indispensable. In the French Church of former ages, at first intimately united to a feudal society, afterwards and above all to an aristocratic society, one power had never ceased to stand for independence, liberty, democracy—the Monastic Orders. Those Orders had remained closely associated with the life of the people, for they came forth from its body. It has been possible to say with truth that the true monk is the people. Doubtless, corruption had in part prevailed within those Orders, as it had more or less prevailed within the whole Church of France. Their popularity had been lost; the Revolution had proscribed them; their garb had become odious or ridiculous. But would it not be possible to find again in those regenerated Orders precisely that independent militia of which the Church had need in order to engage in the struggle at every point—a militia ready to dare all because it had nothing to risk, free in all its movements because it would have no ties, able to proceed everywhere, to penetrate everywhere, and owing no account for its actions save to the Pope and to God?

With these general views there were joined in Lacordaire's mind other thoughts, more personal

and more intimate. The monastic life, which seems so contrary to the instincts of our nature, nevertheless satisfies, one cannot doubt it, other and no less powerful instincts, since in every country where legislation is not a barrier, and often even in spite of that legislation, we see cloisters opened and filled. That life, in which activity is mingled with contemplation, is indeed necessary to some souls, who need solitude just as a plant needs water. It is not that these souls are insensitive or indifferent; quite the contrary. It is rather that the too intense life of their minds, the too incessant vibrations of their hearts, make it indispensable for them to have certain intervals when they can seek refuge within themselves. The finest instrument sometimes requires to have its strings slackened if it is to give forth all the sound of which it is capable. Lacordaire's was one of those natures whom their very sensibility fatigues, and this inclination towards retirement was developed early in him. "I feel with joy," he wrote to Montalembert, "solitude growing around me, it is my element, it is my life"; and in another letter: "Nothing can be done without solitude; that is my great axiom. A man is made from within himself and not from without."

By seeking solitude in the common life, and by submitting a nature as yet impetuous, and a disposition as yet impatient, and which smacked more of the man than of the Christian, to a stricter rule than that of the priesthood, Lacordaire, therefore, did no more than give effect to a design which he had long conceived, and which he had even made public when he left the seminary. At the moment when he determined to leave the pulpit of Notre-Dame and to make a long stay in Rome, his views of the future and his inner resolu-

tions were, however, far from having reached the precision that I have just given them. Thus, often in our most important decisions, we obey some inward force the secret influence of which we do not recognise until afterwards :

J'ignore où mon dessein qui surpassa ma vue  
Si vite me conduit.

Mais, comme un astre ardent qui brille dans la nue  
Il me guide en la nuit.

These are the words used, some two hundred years ago, by Father Joseph, a Capuchin monk who has played a certain part in history, and it was in the same sense that Lacordaire could say, in less poetical language, "that his retirement to Rome had a hidden end which was only to be revealed to him later on." In order for it to be revealed to him, a serious incident was necessary—his almost complete rupture with Mgr. de Quélen.

That rupture arose out of the "Letter on the Holy See," by which Lacordaire wished to reply to the book by Lamennais on "Affaires de Rome." For reasons that seem to us to-day rather difficult to understand, the Archbishop showed himself opposed to its publication. Lacordaire was hurt by this opposition. Rightly or wrongly, he imagined that Mgr. de Quélen had again allowed himself to be imposed upon by influences that were hostile to him, and all Madame Swetchine's diplomacy did not succeed in preventing a conflict. Lacordaire wrote several letters to Mgr. de Quélen in a tone of haughty equality, and it was impossible for the latter in his turn not to have been wounded by these. This conflict made Lacordaire's return to Paris almost impossible, and in particular his resumption of the sermons at Notre-Dame, where, moreover, Father de Ravignan had just successfully inaugurated a form of preaching

different from his. It was necessary for him to come to some decision. At that moment, that is to say in the month of March, 1837, he withdrew into the House of Saint Eusebius, which belonged to the Jesuits. As far as it is possible to penetrate into the secrets of the soul, it was in the course of this retirement that he formed his final resolution. It is a strange thing, but this resolution was harder for him than his first vows had been. "The sacrifice was bitter," he has written. "While it had cost me nothing to leave the world for the priesthood, it cost me everything to add to the priesthood the weight of the religious life. Nevertheless, in the second case as in the first, once my mind was made up, I had neither weakness nor regret, and I marched courageously towards the trials that awaited me."

As to the choice of the Order which he was to enter, Lacordaire explained it thus: "History," he has written, "showed me only two great institutions, one arising in the thirteenth century for the defence of orthodoxy against the first invasion of the Latin heresies, the other called forth in the sixteenth century to be a barrier against Protestantism, the supreme form of error in the West. I had, therefore, to choose between the Society of Jesus and the Order of the Friars Preachers, or rather, I had no choice to make, since, as the Jesuits existed in France, there was no need to re-establish them there." The alternative was not, however, so definite, nor the choice so restrained as Lacordaire has represented it. More than one Order, indeed, which had been abolished in France by the Revolution had not yet been re-established, and, in particular, it seems that the essentially French Order of the Oratory, with its great memories of Bérulle and of Malebranche, might have tempted him, as later it tempted men like Perraud

and Gratry. Something, therefore, attracted him towards the Order of Saint Dominic which must have especially corresponded to his tastes and his designs.

And, first of all, there was the very name which the famous institution bore, the Order of Friars Preachers. It was, in truth, as in former times, on the powerful instrument of speech that he relied to restore the Church's influence, much more than on writings and theological controversy. As for the unpopularity of the Order, which had been unjustly compromised by memories of the Inquisition (this was a point which he was anxious to establish later on), it was, on the contrary, an objection which perhaps helped to determine him, through a characteristic of his mind to which it is necessary to draw attention.

In his style of oratory, Lacordaire never hesitated to use an unexpected, new, or daring expression, that would strike the ear of his hearers, even should it astonish them or scandalise them a little; in a word, he sought for an effect, and he often found it. Similarly, in his conduct, he never shrank from those striking acts which force attention and provoke discussion; not only had he courage, he had audacity, and he was not afraid of its effect. For him, a Liberal priest, to attempt to re-establish in France the Order to which Torquemada had belonged, this was a difficulty that would have frightened anyone less venturesome, but for him, on the contrary, it became an incitement. There was nothing, even to the strange costume, the white frock, the black cloak, and the shaven head, which did not serve his secret design. It was not possible with this costume to introduce the members one by one, as the Jesuits had done, following their familiar tactics, which had allowed them to es-

tablish a novitiate at Montrouge. The day when a Dominican, clothed in the costume of his Order, would again enter France, it would be a challenge. But if the challenge was not accepted, it would be a victory, and to hide cleverness under boldness in this way was a tactic that suited him better than the silent method of the Jesuits. From different tactics each chooses that which best suits his own temperament, and in all things Lacordaire had always a taste for what was resounding.

His resolution taken, it was necessary to inform, first his friends and then France, of his project. He began to do this on his return from a Lenten course which he had preached in Metz Cathedral, where he again found all the success he had had at Notre-Dame. It was in the spring of 1838. At first he met only with coldness and objections. "These things are in God's hand," Mgr. de Quélen had said, "but His will has not yet shown itself." Madame Swetchine rather allowed him to act than encouraged him. A very tender and devoted affection—later on I shall have to point out the almost unknown place it held in his life—tried to restrain him. Not without sorrow did its possessor see him sacrifice (at least so she believed) both his fame and his talent to vain projects of austerity and renunciation. But nothing shook him.

It was necessary in the next place to win over public opinion. With this thought he drew up a "Memorial for the Re-establishment of the Friars Preachers," which has remained one of the most famous of the works that left his pen. It was to France that he addressed it: "My country," said he to her, "whilst you with joy and pain are pursuing the formation of modern society, one of your children, a Christian by faith, a priest by the traditional anointing of the Catholic Church,



comes to claim from you his share in the liberties which you have conquered and for which he himself has paid. He prays you to read the 'Memorial' which he addresses to you here. . . ."

He appealed, then, to an authority which, like Pascal, he called the queen of the world—to public opinion—to ask from it protection against itself, if he needed it, and he endeavoured in some eloquent and able pages that deserve to be read again (for the question he raised has not yet been legally decided) to show how strange it was that in a country devoted to liberty some of its citizens should not be permitted to live in the same house, to get up and go to bed at the same hour, to eat at the same table, and to wear the same clothing. He went on with a panegyric of the Order of Friars Preachers, whose work as preachers, as doctors, as missionaries he extolled, and in tones full of eloquence and charm he painted the life of the Preaching Friars as they were called, very few of whom returned to die in the mother convent, but the greater part of whom, on the contrary, worn out by fatigue, rested far away from their brethren and their country. With singular clear-sightedness he foretold the troubles which the double principle of the equality of political rights and freedom of industrial competition could not fail to engender in modern society, and he added these prophetic words: "Associations—religious, agricultural, and industrial—are the only resources of the future against the continuance of revolutions. Never will the human race return to the past; never will it ask help from the old aristocratic societies, whatever be the weight of its ills; but it will seek in voluntary associations, founded on labour and on religion, for the remedy for the plague of civilisation." Lastly, he ended, as he had begun, by an appeal to France, declaring,



moreover, that, whatever should be the treatment his country reserved for him, he would never complain of her, and that he would hope in her to his last breath.

Some days after the publication of this "Memorial," Lacordaire again took the road to Rome with two companions, and on April 9th, 1839, the three Frenchmen received the habit of Saint Dominic at the Minerva Convent. The next day they set out for the convent of La Quercia, near Viterbo, where they were to pass the year of their novitiate. "It was cold on the day of our arrival," he wrote three days afterwards to Madame Swetchine. "The wind had changed to the north, and we had only a summer habit, and were in a room without a fire. We knew nobody; all the prestige, all the excitement, had departed; friendship was no longer beside us, though it remembered us; we were alone with God, face to face with a life that was unknown to us. . . . I had a moment of weakness. I turned my eyes towards all that I had left, that regular life, those sure advantages, my tenderly loved friends, my days so full of profitable intercourse, to the warm hearths, to the thousand joys of an existence that God had filled with so much outward and inner happiness. To renounce all that for ever was to pay dearly for the pride of a forceful action. I humiliated myself before God and asked from Him the strength I needed. From the end of the first day I felt that He had heard me, and during the past three days comfort has been growing in my soul as gently as the waves of the sea that caress its shores as it covers them."

Lacordaire underwent the ordeal of the novitiate in all its rigour. The Master-General had proposed to shorten its duration for him by six months, but he refused, just as he did not wish to

be exempt from any of the exercises that the rule imposes on novices. In his turn he drew the water, swept the corridors, and trimmed the lamps. These modest occupations and the psalmody of the offices did not, however, employ all his hours, and (I speak from a purely human point of view) there remained to him time for employments of a more elevated order. He employed this time in writing a life of Saint Dominic, which appeared the following year. "It is immense, like beauty," said Chateaubriand after reading it; "I do not know a finer style." Madame Swetchine said: "It is not only a masterpiece, it is a miracle because it is destined to work miracles."

It is difficult to-day to rise to this height of enthusiasm. Not that the work itself is to be despised. It is written with warmth and movement, in language vigorous and picturesque, perhaps a little too picturesque. But the revolution that has taken place in historical method makes us to-day less indulgent towards biographies that have been composed without any recourse to primitive documents, and with a total and intentional absence of criticism. Lacordaire was always less of a writer than of an orator. If he sometimes employed striking expressions and felicitous words, the common fault of his style, namely, the vagueness and unfitness of his expressions, became more evident when the form ceased to be elevated and sustained by the movement. Thus this little book has not had the destiny that Madame Swetchine predicted, and I do not believe that it has performed a great miracle.

However, the end of his novitiate was approaching, and on April 12, 1840, he definitely made his vows in the presence of a small congregation which numbered, among others, the touching heroine of the "Récit d'une Sœur," the Countess Albert



LACORDAIRE

From the painting by Théodore Chassériau (1840) in the  
Musée du Louvre

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de la Ferronnays. Some days afterwards she heard him preach at Saint-Louis des Français. "It has surpassed anything I had imagined," she wrote, "although my imagination went far. How I should like to hear him again!" But Lacordaire (whose sermon had aroused lively opposition) had no intention of again starting on a preacher's career abroad, and in a letter which he wrote to the Master-General to ask permission to remain in Rome for three months, he affirmed his wish to remain faithful to France. "We belong to her," he said, "by our baptism, by her misfortunes and her needs, by our profound faith in her destiny, by our whole souls; we wish to live and to die her children and her servants." Thus, hardly was the permission given, and the establishment of a French novitiate at the Convent of Santa Sabina decided in principle, than Lacordaire left for Paris with the thought of seeking new companions there, but above all of displaying the habit of Saint Dominic in public.

For a long time the thought of reappearing in France in this forgotten costume had haunted Lacordaire. "You will see me in the flesh, in the black and white habit," he wrote to a friend in the first months of his novitiate. Thus when Mgr. de Quélen complimented him on his "Memorial in Favour of the Re-establishment of the Friars Preachers," he had not hesitated to lay aside his grievances, well founded or not, and to write to him to ask if he would consent to allow him to appear in the pulpit of Notre-Dame. Since that time Mgr. de Quélen had died, and Mgr. Affre had succeeded him. Lacordaire renewed his demand, and Mgr. Affre did not hesitate to accede to it. To go through France in the Dominican costume was a first test. Lacordaire attempted it. He had, however, taken the precaution of bring-

ing with him an old soutane, in order to be able to put it on in case of pressing necessity ; but at the end of some days he found that such a precaution was unworthy of a Preaching Friar of Saint Dominic, and meeting a Spanish priest in rags, he gave it to him. In the course of this journey he caused some astonishment, and was made the recipient of some jests, but of no insult, and he could walk as a monk without inconvenience in the streets of Paris, where, ten years before, he could not show himself as a priest. Difficulties seemed to smooth themselves out on his path. A rumour had been spread that the Government was hostile. The Keeper of the Seals, M. Martin du Nord, invited him to dine with him, and a former Keeper of the Seals under Charles X., who was present at the dinner, could say with melancholy irony to his neighbour, that if he had done as much formerly, his office would have been set on fire the next day.

Hitherto all went well, but in obscurity. The definite test would be the open appearance in the pulpit of Notre-Dame. On the fixed date, February 12th, 1841, Lacordaire ascended it, under the excuse of preaching a sermon in favour of the Saint Vincent de Paul lectures. The congregation was immense ; not a place was empty either in the nave or in the side chapels. Curiosity was greatly excited. The greater number of hearers remembered that they had seen in that pulpit a young priest with an abundance of curling hair, with large earnest eyes lighting up a pale but rather full face. They now saw a friar with shaven head and only a fringe of hair, with emaciated features, but with eyes still large, a man such as they had seen in a portrait by Chassériau that had been exhibited some time before at the Salon. "Exhibit it," Lacordaire had said to the painter ;

“it, too, is a way of making my habit known.” The subject he had chosen was “The Vocation of the French Nation,” wishing, as he himself said, to cover the audacity of the attempt by the popularity of his subject. To say to France that she has received a mission from Providence even while reproaching her for having failed in it, is, indeed, still to flatter her. The sermon outstripped the usual limits. As he perceived a little fatigue among his hearers, he made a happy digression: “Perhaps, gentlemen, I am too long, but it is your own fault. It is your own history that I am relating; you will pardon me if I have made you drink to the very lees this chalice of glory.”

This sermon, which is not one of his best, caused him to be attacked by the Legitimist journals, because he seemed to admit that the accession to power of the middle-classes was part of the general plan of Providence. For this reason he was called a revolutionary and a demagogue. But the value of the sermon mattered little. The day on which, in the heart of Paris, Lacordaire had mounted the pulpit in a white frock and black cloak, and on which he had been able to descend again without arousing protest or tumult, on that day he had conquered the right of citizenship in France for the Order of Saint Dominic, and assuredly no more complete victory over the prejudices of time and country has ever been won by a single man.

In an especially literary study like this, I cannot stop to mark the successive stages of that victory—the creation of a first house at Nancy in 1843 and of a second at Chalais in 1844; the foundation of a novitiate at Flavigny in 1848; lastly, the erection of the Dominican Province of France, of which Lacordaire was the first Provincial. But



the place gained later by the Order of Saint Dominic with its three provinces of France, of Toulouse, and of Occitanie, with its eighteen houses of the First Order, and its six houses of the Third Order, with its six hundred professed brethren or novices, and, above all, with its preachers whose renown and popularity fill the French pulpit—all this is too narrow a measure of the success that Lacordaire obtained. His work has been greater, for he has been the real restorer of the Monastic Orders in France. Doubtless if we concern ourselves only with dates, we could say that the novitiate of the Jesuits at Montrouge or the Abbey of the Benedictines at Solesmes had come into existence earlier than the first house of the Dominicans at Nancy. But if the Monastic Orders were, until recently, closely associated with the religious life, and even, through education, with the general life of France, if not only Dominicans, but Capuchins, Premonstratensians, Oblates, Eudists, and many others that one could name, walked freely in France, if they could live there openly, it was to Lacordaire that they owed it, because he communicated to them some of his own tranquil audacity, of his own bold perseverance, and because he was the first to teach them to claim the liberty of the monk in the name of the rights of the citizen.

A few years ago the author of these lines had a very clear vision of the roots which that old grain, sown anew by Lacordaire's hand, has buried in that soil of France which has been so deeply dug. It was at Fontaine-lez-Dijon, the little village that has had the glory of giving birth to Saint Bernard. Nearly thirty thousand pilgrims and sightseers had gathered there to celebrate the eight hundredth anniversary of the saint's birth as well as the restoration of the house in which he was born.

Just as in the Middle Ages, a Mass was to be celebrated and a sermon preached in the open air, and it required only a feeble effort of the imagination to believe oneself transported into a very distant past. The procession arrived. Seventeen bishops marched at its head, with their silken mitres, and their golden crosses and crosiers. Certainly the appearance of those pious functionaries of the Church, for the most part marked out for her choice by an unbelieving State, commanded respect and betokened dignity. But at the same time, one read, except on two or three countenances that I could mention, a certain sad submission and an anticipatory resignation. The crowd saw them pass by with indifference. Afterwards came the abbots and the priors. There were forty-seven of them, most of them wearing linen mitres, with wooden crosses and crosiers. Little accustomed to see abbots with crosiers and mitres, the crowd looked at these, on the contrary, with friendly curiosity. Young for the most part, their sharpened features and their firm glances betokened ardour, confidence, and, at need, the resolution of an invincible resistance. One felt that the life and the sap were here. Thinking then of all the vicissitudes through which the Monastic Orders have passed in France during the past hundred years—violent and bloody proscription, contemptuous unpopularity, foolishly vexatious measures—and gazing in the open air at this public display of long-forgotten costumes and insignia, I felt the profound truth of that saying of Lacordaire, which formerly seemed a paradox: “The oaks and the monks are eternal.”

## CHAPTER VII

### THE SERMONS AT NOTRE-DAME AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON CONTEMPORARY PREACHING

It was in the month of December, 1843, that, after seven years of voluntary interruption, Lacordaire again entered the pulpit of Notre-Dame, which he was not to relinquish until 1852. Those seven years had not been silent years for him. He had preached in succession at Nancy, at Bordeaux, at Lyons, and at Marseilles, and he had been able to prove to himself that he had lost none of his power of oratory. Mgr. de Quélen had died, and Mgr. Affre was calling him to Paris. There were no reasons why he should refuse that summons. But his return to Notre-Dame was destined to be preceded by a veritable battle. Mgr. Affre was certainly not a timid man; his end has proved that. But, in the face of the prejudices that had been aroused to such an extraordinary degree in the public mind during the previous two years, he feared the trouble and disorder that might be produced by the official and regular instalment in the pulpit of Notre-Dame of a preacher with the shaven head and wearing the white frock and black mantle of a Dominican. The King, who did not wish to see a renewal of the scenes of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, shared this fear. He sent for Mgr. Affre, and attempted to intimidate him and to induce him to silence Lacordaire. The Archbishop remained

firm, but at the same time he had recourse to Madame Swetchine's diplomacy in order to obtain a concession from Lacordaire. If the latter would consent not to wear his Dominican costume and to appear in the pulpit in the dress of a secular priest, all would be arranged. It was not without repugnance that Madame Swetchine undertook to deliver this message. Her hand, she said, trembled as she wrote to Lacordaire and asked him "if the man in him would be willing to be completely conquered and effaced, and if he would go so far as to sacrifice a sort of point of honour and a purely personal gratification in order that the word of God might be nobly, liberally, and gloriously proclaimed." To this diplomatic mis-sive Lacordaire replied by a proud letter that I should like to be able to quote in full, so much does it breathe forth the tones of honour.

"I should," he said, "present in Notre-Dame to our enemies the spectacle of a monk who is afraid after having paraded his courage, who hides himself after having made a display, who asks for pardon and mercy in consideration of his voluntary disguise. That is not possible. The graver the situation is, and the more complete the revenge which Catholics look for in the fact of my speaking in public, the less ought I to prepare for them so painful a surprise. It would be a hundred times better to be silent than to betray their hopes. Religion does not need a triumph; it can dispense with my words at Notre-Dame. God is there to maintain it and to honour it even in its opprobrium; but it does need that its children should not humiliate themselves and should refuse to dishonour its ordeals." And he ended by saying: "Character is what we must always save before everything, for it is character that makes the moral power of man."

Let us add, in order to end this episode, that Lacordaire kept firm to the end, that an order came to him from the Master-General of the Dominicans to yield, that he still refused, and that the only concession that could be obtained from him was that he would wear a canon's rochet and mozetta over his Dominican costume. It was in this strange garb that he was compelled for a time to appear in the pulpit of Notre-Dame. We may smile at these trifles, but we should not forget to note the progress which, in the course of time and in spite of certain attempts, the spirit of tolerance and of liberty has made in our land.

Lacordaire was destined to occupy the pulpit of Notre-Dame for nine consecutive years. He preached from it seventy-three sermons, to which must be added the six sermons preached at Toulouse in 1854, if we are to take into account the sum of his apologetic work, his other discourses and sermons being of a different character. The time has come to study his oratorical manner, to show what pulpit eloquence was before his time, and what he made of it.

From the most distant times down to our own days, preaching has always been closely mingled with the moral and social life of our country. Formerly, those who handled the sacred word—apostles, bishops, or simple monks—were the only persons who had the privilege of addressing the people—the crowd. Before printing, before the press, they were the medium by which elevated ideas reached the vulgar understanding. It is preaching that has lifted France out of barbarism by moulding her to the morals of Christianity. In the work of civilisation which he undertook, Charlemagne counted so much on preaching that he caused to be circulated in all the dioceses of his empire, and distributed to the readers of his

churches, a *homiliarium*, that is to say a compilation of sermons, in two volumes, collected by Alcuin. Three centuries later, it is preaching that sends France on the Crusades, and the sacred orators then play the same part as the popular tribunes did at the time of the Revolution. Later still, at the moment when the Reformation divided Christian Europe in two, it is thanks to the preachers of the League and to their fervour that Catholicism has remained in France the religion of the people, and that the Church has conquered the meeting-house. It is true that from the League onwards, preaching loses its popular character, and becomes a form of literature. But, at a time when the example of the greatest scandals was given in the highest quarters, it had at least the honour, in the mouths of Bossuet, of Bourdaloue, of Massillon, of placing eloquence at the service of a purer morality. Then there took place a phenomenon unique in the history of the evolution of literary forms, to use Brunetière's term. With these three great names, the sermon form reached its apotheosis at a bound. When they disappeared, the form declined. Of all the preachers who occupied the Christian pulpit in the second half of the eighteenth century, there is only one whose name has survived; it is Father Bridaine, and that thanks to the famous sermon preached by him in 1751 in the Church of Saint-Sulpice, before the most worldly of congregations; a sermon in which he accused himself of having preached the rigours of penance to unfortunate beings most of whom wanted bread, and of having thus saddened the poor, the best friends of his God. But the other preachers, his contemporaries, the Élysées, the Poulles, have passed into profound oblivion.

The Revolution closed the French pulpit for

many years, and when the Concordat opened it again, it did not remain less empty. It would, however, be unjust not to mention the name of Mgr. Frayssinous, and his "Sermons on the Defence of Christianity," preached in the Church of Saint-Sulpice "before a congregation chiefly composed of young people belonging to the intelligent classes," as says the preface of the three volumes published by him in 1825. Those Conferences, as it has become usual to call them, inaugurated, indeed, a new form of preaching. But the orator's voice was not strong enough to reach the ears of crowds, and the attempt remained without any echo. From the time of Massillon's retirement, or if you will, from that of Father Bridaine, down to the day when Lacordaire first began to preach, we can say that the Christian pulpit remained silent.<sup>1</sup>

What has been the cause of the decadence of this form of oratorical art which two centuries earlier had shone with so vivid a splendour? Doubtless one can find it in the weakening of religious belief and in the influence of the philo-

<sup>1</sup> It is rather noteworthy that in the Reformed Church the history of the sermon is exactly similar. At the period of the greatest expansion of Protestantism, no preacher is remarkable for his eloquence, even for his popular eloquence. The Protestant sermon rivals the Catholic, if not in triviality, at least in dulness. It is, similarly, under Louis XIV., that Protestant eloquence rises to its highest point, with Dubosc, with Drelincourt, and above all, with Saurin, who, it is true, never preached in France. It sinks immediately afterwards. In the eighteenth century, the sermons of those who have been called the "shepherds of the desert" are monuments of ardent faith but have little literary value. During all the end of last century and the beginning of this, Protestant eloquence languished, to revive only about 1830, at the epoch that has been called the *awakening*. One of the glories of the Protestant pulpit, M. Adolphe Monod, began to preach in Paris in 1840, that is to say almost at the same time as Father Lacordaire. Later by some twenty years, M. Eugène Bersier's sermons equally deserve to be read by all those who like to see Christian thought clothed in beauty of form.



sophical doctrines of the eighteenth century. But, looking at the thing only from a purely literary point of view, we can say that the sermon had been ruined, as classical tragedy had been ruined, by remaining obstinately bound to an unalterable form. "The sermon is a false form of literature," Schérer said, in an article that formerly made a good deal of stir, and in learned fashion he laid down the reasons for this, which, according to him, were three in number. First, the text, which is only a pretext, for the preacher does not explain it, does not comment upon it, and only draws from it, more or less arbitrarily, a *motif* on which he will play variations. Then the division, always pedantic, almost always, also, forced and smacking of the schools. Lastly, the necessity in which the preacher finds himself of preaching always on dogma or morals, and the impossibility of forcing a portion of human truth into this narrow frame. He concluded by saying: "The sermon is a false literary type, especially so because it has aged, and because it is difficult to be interested in it, even retrospectively."

Although it smacks of the prejudice and rancour of one who had been a preacher too long for his own liking, this criticism of Schérer is not altogether devoid of truth. Its fault is that it is general and absolute; for, in the first place, it is not necessary for a sermon to have a text (and, moreover, a text can also have its beauty). Then it is still less necessary for the division to be pedantic and of the schools. Finally, it is perfectly easy for a sermon not to turn upon dogma or morals, and, above all, it can contain a portion of human or general truth. This is precisely the case with Lacordaire's sermons, not a single one of which, to judge from the contempt with which he spoke of them, can we believe that Schérer had

ever read. And if this aged form has been radically transformed, if it is possible to be interested in it, and that not only in a retrospective fashion, it is to Lacordaire that the honour belongs. He has, in truth, given the form a new lease of youth by the novelty of his apologetic methods, by the mould of his sermons, and by the nature of the subjects he has treated. It is from this triple point of view that his work as an orator deserves to be studied.

It is the property of apologetic to renew its arguments with time, for, from Arius to Luther, and from Luther to our own days, Catholic orthodoxy has had to struggle against many different objections. But those with which it was struggling at the moment when Lacordaire broke into the controversy with so much distinction, were of a quite special nature. Those objections were neither inspired by the mocking scepticism of the last century nor by the scientific dogmatism of the present. The philosophy which was then dominant was deist and spiritualist. It was not only the Sorbonne and the University that were pervaded with this philosophy; it extended to the drama, to literature, and to politics. From Cousin or Jouffroy to Lamartine or Victor Hugo, from Cuvier or Ampère to M. Thiers or M. Guizot, no eminent intelligence refused it its adherence. It had thus a common ground with the Catholic Church. But the Church had to struggle against an enemy more formidable perhaps than materialism or science—against a respectful disdain. It was not without warrant, that at the time when he was protesting against this disdain, Lamennais had given as a motto to his famous “*Essay on Indifference in Matters of Religion*” this verse from the Psalmist: “*Impius, quum in profundum venerit, contemnit*”—“The wicked man speaketh

disdainfully." The contempt of the wicked man was all the more difficult to combat, as he clothed it in an almost affectionate form. Philosophers, historians, scholars, were agreed in speaking with gratitude of the services the Church had done when her task had been to lead humanity from barbarism to civilisation. But her task was ended. Humanity, supported by reason, was henceforth in a state to determine for itself the creed of its beliefs and the catechism of its duties. It no longer needed to be held by the hand in order to advance with a firm step along the roads of the future, and the emancipated child could walk without his mother's assistance. Far more! The leading-strings that had surrounded his early years could henceforth only shackle his growth. Catholic doctrine was incompatible with popular liberty; people did not yet say with democracy, because the word had a bad sound in the ears of the reigning middle-classes, but they said with progress and with the principles of '89; a new society required an equally new religion, whose formula had still to be found, but one which seemed destined to occupy the middle place between a vague Christianity and an emotional deism.

How did Lacordaire attempt to answer this class of objections? Instead of seeking, according to the usual procedure of apologetics, a point common to him and his opponent in order to lead him by a series of deductions to different conclusions; instead, for example, of taking as the starting-point of his argument the existence of a personal God, which no philosophical mind held in doubt, so as from that fact to deduce revelation, then from revelation to deduce Christianity, and, lastly, from Christianity to deduce Catholic doctrine, he proceeded by the opposite method. He looked upon the Church (and no

one could dispute these premisses) as a great historical fact which it was necessary to explain, and it was from this very fact, from the Church's continuance, from her moral and social action, that he thought proper to draw the proof of her justifiableness. He applied, in some respects, the experimental method to the search for truth, and he began his apologetic at the point where his predecessors usually ended. The Church was his starting-point instead of his goal.

Thus he began his first sermons in 1835 by directing the attention of his hearers to the Church, to her constitution, and her social character. He demonstrated to them the necessity of a teaching authority amidst the uncertainties and contradictions of the human mind. To the variations of philosophies, to the novelty of other religions, which always date from a day and from a man, he opposed that long tradition which is continued through the Bible and the Gospel, without interruption since the beginning of the world, and which was always able to summon living testimony to its support. "He is everywhere," he added, "that man whom popular language has so well named the Wandering Jew. The priest can speak nowhere without summoning forth an eternal man, a Jew, who stands forth and says, 'It is true; I was there.'" But for this Church, which for so long had been maintained by privileges, he no longer claimed more than one thing—liberty; the liberty which was hers by Divine right, for it was not the Cæsars, it was Jesus Christ Who had said to the Apostles: "Go teach all nations," and Who had also said to them, "Crucify your flesh with its affections and lusts." "Consequently," he continued, "we do not hold our liberty from the Cæsars; we hold it from God, and we will keep it because it comes from Him. Princes can unite to

fight against the prerogatives of the Church, to load them with dishonouring names in order to make them appear odious, to say that they are an exorbitant power that ruins States. We will let them speak on, and we will continue to preach the truth, to remit sins, to combat vices, to communicate the Spirit of God."

It was with this proud declaration that he ended his first year's course of sermons. In the second, he began to expound the doctrine of the Catholic Church, not demonstrating its truth by means of argument, but defining its nature. He showed it in a double aspect, at once precise and mystic, giving formal and definite solutions on some points, on others, on the contrary, answering by mystery, and hiding the truth beneath the symbol. In order to sum up this double character of Catholic doctrine, he employed a somewhat pompous eloquence, which, none the less, profoundly moved his hearers. "Catholic doctrine has, therefore," he said, "a double form, the form of science and the form of faith. It is neither an absolute science nor a pure and simple faith; it sees and it does not see; it demonstrates and it complies, it is light and shade, like the miraculous cloud which gave light to the Children of Israel while it blinded their enemies. Do you ask it for facts? It will give you the greatest facts in the world. Do you ask it for principles? It will lay down principles that will flash into the lowest depth of the understanding, and will open large tracts before it. Do you ask it for feelings? It will fill your empty heart. Do you ask it for the sign of antiquity? It possesses it. For the strength of novelty? It has risen earlier than you, and will surprise you by its youth. But illumined, touched, enraptured by it, do you wish to tear away the veil that hides from you a part of its

majesty? It will throw you to the ground, saying: 'Worship and be silent.'"

When, after an interval of seven years, he resumed his sermons, his plan was the same, and, with remarkable strength of mind, he never deviated a hair's breadth from it during his whole career as a preacher. He had set himself to seek the proofs of Christian doctrine in experience. He went on to show the influence of that doctrine on man, and, as a consequence, on society. After devoting some eloquent passages to explaining what he called the three reserved virtues—humility, chastity, charity—which formed in his eyes the great proof of Christianity, its popular proof, the daily bread of its demonstration, he proceeded in a series of sermons, to which he devoted no less than a year, to insist upon the effects of Catholic doctrine from a social point of view, for it was to the reconciliation of the Church with society that he aspired. He showed the Church, in the whole course of her history, refusing to come to terms with despotism, but necessary to authority, and protecting liberty. This backward glance gave him an opportunity of painting a picture, a little idealised perhaps, of Christian monarchy as it formerly existed in France; but there was, on his part, all the more courage in showing this picture to his hearers, since he risked offending the prejudices against the France of the Middle Ages with which they were imbued. "I have not been such a coward," he told them, "as to flatter your passions and your prejudices, and to sacrifice to them fourteen centuries of our country's history, because those fourteen centuries do not resemble the fifty years of which you are the sons." And he added: "Now what will happen? Will the Christian monarchy be reformed? Will it be under some other form





LACORDAIRE IN 1840

From a drawing by Hippolyte Flandrin

*To face p. 118*





that evangelical law will resume its empire in the world? I know not. But well I know that I do not give up hope in Providence. Having found God in what has preceded me, I hope to find Him in what will follow me; and, to use an expression of a great German poet, I am a citizen of the times to come."

In this history of the Church and of humanity, as he conceived it, it was in truth God Whom he found at every step. But before reaching this first and fundamental notion, there was still a stage on the ladder to be climbed. This stage was the Christ, the Founder of the Church. A whole series of sermons were devoted by him to speaking of Jesus, and these sermons are perhaps, from one point of view, his finest. It would, in truth, be a great error to regard Lacordaire as a politician, solely occupied with finding a tolerable reconciliation between the claims of the Church and those of the State. If that project seemed to occupy him so much, it was because this misunderstanding between the Church and society helped to lead souls astray; and his ardent pre-occupation was to bring them back to God. There was in him a good deal of the mystic, and sometimes one finds in his sermons cries of love that came from the depths of his heart. "Lord Jesus!" he exclaimed, "during the ten years I have spoken of Thy Church to this congregation, it is, in truth, always of Thee that I have spoken; but at length, to-day, more directly do I come to Thyself, Thy Divine countenance which is the object of my daily contemplation, Thy sacred feet which so often I have kissed, Thy loving hands which have so often blessed me, Thy head crowned with glory and thorns, Thy life whose savour I have breathed since my birth, which my boyhood disregarded, which my youth regained,

which my manhood worships and proclaims to everycreature. O Father! O Master! O Friend! O Jesus! help me more than ever, since being nearer Thee, it is fitting that men should perceive Thy presence in me, and that my mouth may utter words that savour of Thy wonderful nearness."

Lastly, from the Son, he passed to the Father, from Christ to God, Who was thus his goal, instead of, as in the ordinary apologetics, his starting-point. A full year's sermons were devoted, less to proving His existence than to defining the nature of His being. As a rule, Lacordaire's sermons were of no great philosophical capacity. He was but little of a metaphysician. By exception, however, and according to good judges, this was not the case with his sermons on God, and some passages in them are not without depth, especially those in which he scrutinises with boldness of thought the mysteries of the Divine ontology. But he did not stop at this goal, and he descended again from God to man. The necessary intercourse of man with Divinity, the doctrine of the fall and of redemption, the economy of the Divine government, formed the conclusion of this long exposition which lasted for seven years. Moreover, he had not finished when, as we shall see, after the *coup d'état*, he gave up the pulpit. The famous sermons "On Life," which he preached at Toulouse in 1854, belonged also to this general plan, and formed the logical conclusion to these long premisses, for in them he demonstrated the influence of the religious idea on the inner life of man. He thus closed the circle and returned to his starting-point. He had begun by showing the social necessity of the Church; he ended by showing her moral necessity.

This new plan of apologetics gave a remarkable extension to the framework of the old sermon. Everything entered into it. Its foundation was no longer borrowed solely from dogma or morals. Philosophical, social, even political considerations could all find a place in it. This was a gain, for, by speaking to the men of his time on questions that interested them, Lacordaire made many of them learn again the Church's path which they had forgotten, and he taught that path to fresh generations. It was a danger, for there are no subjects upon which the eloquence of the pulpit, thus understood, could not seize. Lacordaire escaped this danger, for in spite of errors of taste, he had sureness of intellect. One could not say as much of all his imitators; he is perhaps in a slight degree responsible for certain errors of modern preaching. But there remains to him the honour of having taken it out of the beaten tracks on which it had crept for a century, and of having led it into new paths. Thanks to him, it has again become a living thing, associated with all the movements of mind, instead of being congealed in a solemn immobility. The sermon is no longer what it was in the seventeenth century, "a majestic stole of purple and silk," as Taine defined it. It has become a garment, less rich perhaps, but more supple and more popular, or at least one which adapts itself better to all conditions. For two centuries it had been the preacher's dream to preach before the King. Lacordaire's dream had been to preach in a public square. He had been the first to understand where the King henceforth was. This new King has to-day his courtiers even among the preachers; but Lacordaire was never of their number; never did he pay him court by flattering his passions or borrowing his language.

With him the sermon is no longer purple or silk, but neither does it ever become rags or tinsel.

Not less profound from a purely literary point of view is the transformation which he accomplished in preaching. Before his time, the rules of the sermon were as unalterably fixed as those of classical tragedy. The sermon had to begin with the enunciation of the text. This text had to be developed briefly in the exordium, which should at the same time indicate the divisions of the sermon—what were called its points—and end with an invocation to the Holy Virgin. This was what Fénelon, with a touch of irony, called the fall of the “Hail, Mary!” Afterwards came the points; two or three, generally three, but often themselves subdivided, so that a sermon ended by containing seven or eight divisions. Then came the peroration, which usually recalled the text of the exordium. Such was the rigid, immutable mould into which, for two generations, preachers cast their sermons. Out of eighty-two in the collection known under the name of “Select Instructions from the Great Preachers” there is not one that departs from this model. Doubtless the genius of a Bossuet, of a Bourdaloue, of a Massillon, had no more been stifled by these artificial rules than that of a Racine or of a Corneille by the rule of the three unities. Genius extricates itself from anything. But, like the tragic drama, the sermon languished, imprisoned in a narrow and conventional form.

Victor Hugo had broken the mould of tragic drama; Lacordaire broke the mould of the sermon. No longer a text, no longer a “Hail, Mary!” no longer a first, second, and third point. An exordium, usually fairly simple unless some special consideration led him to strike his hearers' imagination at once; a rather summary indication

of the subject he proposed to treat—and that was all. No artificial divisions that shackle the thought. None of those intermissions that compel it to advance at a slow pace. On the contrary, a great liberty of procedure, and, above all, a continuous movement that sweeps it along from the first words to the end. One is seized and hurried on by the torrent of language, and the critical sense, which might have found a piece of reasoning feeble, a metaphor incorrect, or a phrase unsuitable, remains subjugated and conquered. For movement will always remain the orator's ruling quality.

This similarity between the revolution brought about by Lacordaire in the pulpit and by Victor Hugo in the theatre is so striking that Lacordaire has often been called a "romantic" preacher. Nothing could be less correct than this definition if by it we mean to attach Lacordaire to the literary school which was then new, and which appears so old to us to-day, and to enrol him under the banner of the Romantics. In certain respects, on the contrary, he remained absolutely classic. It is one of the singular things about that mind which so readily opened to the ideas of its age, and whose glance was always turned towards the future, that he seems to have ignored the literature of his own time. We could believe, and it is perhaps true, that from the time he left college he did not read a volume either of history or of poetry. All his historical learning is taken from Plutarch or from Cornelius Nepos, and all his poetical quotations from Voltaire, whose dramas seem to have inspired him with a truly excessive admiration. He borrows from them continually, and the verses he chooses for quotation are not always the best. A panegyric of Chateaubriand, a quotation from Lamartine, are

the only concessions he makes to the moderns. His literary predilections remained faithful to antiquity, to the classics, and in this respect it is impossible to show oneself less of a Romantic than he did.

However personal and independent a man is, yet he never thinks and writes in entire independence of the conditions of his time. Romanticism has been defined with exactness as "the invasion of personality into literature." In this respect Lacordaire has indeed truly been something of a Romantic. It is not that he had the bad taste to place himself on the stage and to make his hearers his confidants, as the lyric poets made their readers their confidants. Sometimes an allusion to the troubles through which he had passed, the temptations he had known, an allusion which certainly would not have been permitted to a preacher of the classic epoch, and that is all. But the human personality holds a large place in his sermons, and in this respect he renewed the substance as much as the form of preaching.

Certainly, among those who have occupied the Christian pulpit, he is not the first who has given proof of a marvellous knowledge of the soul. In this, perhaps, no one has carried perspicacity as far as Bourdaloue. More than one novelist who takes pleasure in the study of the weaknesses and failures of human nature could draw lessons in psychology from his sermons. This is carried to such a point that the reader experiences a certain discomfort from it, and asks himself how a man whom he does not know can know him so well. But one feels in Bourdaloue that it is the director who is speaking ; his experience is taken from the confessional ; his field of observation is sin. Lacordaire's is larger : it is life itself. He understood the hopes, the anxieties, the melancholies,



the passions of that vibrant and tumultuous generation which he addressed. His voice was an echo, and that echo returned to each the words that he had spoken to himself in the secret of his heart. The man who had faith in liberty was obliged to admit that Lacordaire spoke of it as proudly as did anyone else. The man who was sad took pleasure in hearing him say that melancholy is the great queen of souls who feel keenly. The man who had loved found again, even in the way in which he spoke of the love of God, some throbbings of human love. "Could we," he exclaimed, "love God, person to person, like a living being whom we hold in our arms, who speaks to us, who answers us, who says to us, 'I love you!' Ah! doubtless that word is deceptive in man's mouth; it is often betrayed, more often forgotten, but yet it is spoken; it is spoken sincerely, it is spoken with the thought that it will never be retracted. It fills with its immensity one day in our existence, and when it falls to the ground, like a flower that has faded, we find for it a sweet and sacred tomb somewhere in the depths of our hearts."

There is not a human feeling that does not find its eloquent expression in Lacordaire, even that which it might seem would be most removed from a priest's experience, the paternal feeling, the strength, the sweetness, and the melancholy of which no one has painted so well as he. "With the first shadows of age the feeling of paternity sinks into our hearts and takes possession of the void there that the affections which preceded it have left. This is not decay, do not believe that it is; for, after God's glance upon the world, there is nothing finer than an old man's glance upon his child, a glance so pure, so tender, so disinterested, and marking in our life the very point

of perfection and of likeness to God. The body decays with age, perhaps the mind decays also, but the soul by which we love does not. Fatherhood is as much above love as love itself is above friendship. Fatherhood consecrates life. That would be a spotless and complete love in which from child to father there was the same equal reciprocity as from friend to friend and from wife to husband. But nothing of the sort exists. When we were children we were loved more than we loved, and when we have become old, we, in our turn, love more than we are loved. We must not complain of this. Your children begin again the road that you yourselves have trod—the road of friendship, the road of love, ardent paths which do not allow them to recompense that white-haired passion which we call fatherhood. It is the honour of man to find again in his children the ingratitude he had for his father, and thus to end, like God, with a disinterested feeling.”

We can understand that such language profoundly moved congregations which were not accustomed to hearing such human words fall from the height of the pulpit. Add to this that Lacordaire possessed in the highest degree those external gifts of the orator to which the ancients attached so much importance, and which they summed up in one word—action. In the first place, he had a marvellous voice. A little weak and muffled in the beginning, it rose and expanded by degrees. It became full and sonorous while remaining measured and supple, and it lent itself to every shade of the thought, to magnificence as well as to sweetness, to irony as well as to tenderness. It vibrated to the furthest corners of the churches in which it made itself heard. It went to the very heart and stirred it to those sacred throbs which the tones of a man who abandons himself completely

can always arouse in man. Then there was his gesture, always ample and yet restrained, which sometimes accentuated the language and sometimes moderated it, bending, like the voice, by its infinite variety to every shade of the thought, yet never extended to that exaggeration and disorder which destroy majesty and are incompatible with the dignity of the pulpit. But the great secret of his influence was above all else the passion, at once overflowing and repressed, which one felt in him, the ardour of the man who does not pursue his own personal success but that of his cause, and whose transport is not held in by the shackles and artifices of preparation.

Lacordaire was, in fact, in the highest degree an improvisator. Not that he had the intellectual presumption, when he had to speak of the gravest matters to the first audience in the world, of going into the pulpit without having prepared his discourse. But this preparation was, in his case, very internal and abstract. It was the fruit of his meditations of the evening before, sometimes of that very morning; meditations which he mingled with ardent prayers, and which were more mystic than literary. From these meditations nothing written ever resulted, except a very short sketch. On a single occasion, on account of the difficulty of the subject, he wrote out a funeral sermon, that of Mgr. de Forbin Janson, before preaching it; the result was almost a failure. His plan alone was determined upon in advance, but only in its broad lines, never in its details. Sometimes one does not even perceive this, for the progress of the discourse is a little undecided. As far as the form was concerned, he trusted to the inspiration of the moment. Doubtless in a man who possesses the gift of eloquence (and it is precisely in this that the gift consists) the abstract idea

naturally takes an oratorical form, and, when the thought comes in its logical order, the expression by which it is translated to the mind comes at the same time. This was Lacordaire's method. But he often also obtained his most powerful effects from some movement which he felt in his congregation and of which he made himself the interpreter, or from some inner emotion which moved himself and of which his voice transmitted the vibration. Thus once, after an admirable passage, perhaps a little premeditated, on the Man Whose tomb is guarded by love and Whose sepulchre is loved, on the Man Whose ashes are not cold after eighteen centuries and Whose every word still sounds, Whom an unutterable passion raises from death in order to place Him in the glory of a love that never fails, and Who finds apostles and martyrs in every generation, he ended by saying: "Thou art that Man, O Jesus, Who hast been willing to baptise me, to anoint me, to consecrate me in Thy love, and Whose name alone at this moment opens out my heart and brings from it those tones which overwhelm me and which I myself knew not to be in me." And he stopped, troubled more, indeed, by his own emotion than by that of his congregation, which interrupted him by a prolonged tremor of feeling.

This simultaneous creation of thought and form is one of the most complete efforts that can be exacted from the mind. When that effort is frequently renewed, when there is joined to it an expenditure of physical strength, and, above all, when the orator only communicates a part of the fire by which he is animated, he must be quickly worn out by this sublime game. One can understand the state of prostration into which Lacordaire sometimes fell when his sermon was over, and one can reckon the extent to which what he himself

called the torments of public speaking must have shortened his life.

This eloquence was not, however, without its faults, and these faults are those which displease us most to-day. Our epoch is charmed by truth and sobriety to such a degree that it has not always a sufficient horror of what is dull and common. It smiles at everything that is turgid, redundant, or declamatory. Now turgidness, redundancy, declamation, were familiar to the poets and novelists of the time in which Lacordaire lived. It is not certain that the "Orientales" and "Notre-Dame de Paris," or indeed even "Jocelyn" or "Raphaël" would be welcomed with the same favour to-day as they were sixty years ago. It would be surprising if Lacordaire had completely escaped the faults of the poets and novelists which in those days seemed to be merits. A little rhetoric is sometimes mingled with his eloquence. He had a taste for metaphors, and if he often finds good ones, he sometimes ventures on those that are incoherent. He compares the sacred word, sometimes with "a sword whose sole hilt is in God and its double edge everywhere," sometimes with those "pebbles flung on the surface of the sea, which are carried over the waves from summit to summit to reach their end at last." He will say that "the clouds carry the sun whilst they hide it," or even that "the Divine unction raises the waves that it calms." There are also paradoxes in his method of arguing. He takes a pleasure in insisting on doubtful or dangerous arguments. Thus he will rely upon "the repulsion produced in the mind by Catholic doctrine," or even upon "the passion of statesmen and men of genius against Catholic doctrine" in order to demonstrate its truth. Or the thread of his reasoning becomes so subtle and tenuous that

he can no longer guide, or, *a fortiori*, win over his hearers. In a word, his eloquence is unequal. Often it rises to the heights; sometimes it sinks into depths from which it, it is true, suddenly ascends in vigorous flights. But it is rare for one of his sermons to leave a complete impression, and too often taste or logic suffers in some passage or other.

To a man who had reperused these sermons of Lacordaire twenty years ago, they would have seemed a little out of date. To one who takes them up again to-day, they offer what is, perhaps, a new interest. He has raised or anticipated certain questions which still confront us with a poignant interest. In particular, the dangers of the contrast between the growth of wealth and the continuance of want did not escape him. At the moment when the middle-classes were confidently reposing in the appearance of their triumph, he invited them to listen to the cry that was raised from Manchester, from Birmingham, from Flanders, "a cry not of poverty and want—these are words and things of former days—but a cry of pauperism, that is to say, of distress that has reached the condition of a system and a power, issuing, as an unexpected curse, from the very growth of wealth." Thus, on the morrow of the commotion of February, the shock of which he himself had felt, and after the blood-stained failure of the attempts of the Socialists, he had a special warrant for saying to his hearers, once more assembled beneath the vaults of Notre-Dame :

"The world has reached a remarkable hour in its destiny. For a century it has endeavoured to found all human things on nature and reason; it believed that it was capable of ruling by itself, without the intervention of any mysterious



idea, of any indefinite power. You have under your eyes the result of that great attempt. Social discipline has broken in your hands; the ingenious means by which you expected to bring it under subjection have been found too weak to withstand resistance and aggression. What was generous in your plans of reform has had no better fate than what was chimerical, and justice is amazed to see that she is unable to give her efforts either permanence or majesty." Could not Lacordaire repeat to-day what he said then? Has not the world, or rather France, attempted, is it not still attempting, to found all human things on nature and reason? Have we not under our eyes the result of that great attempt? Has not social discipline broken in our hands, and have not its means been found too weak to withstand resistance and aggression? Who would dare to say the contrary? And if there is still hesitation as to the remedy, how many are there to-day who would deliberately reject that which Lacordaire advised when he added: "Let us call God to our help; let us recognise that we have closer bonds with Him than we have with nature, and that to abandon them out of weakness or pride is to rob the human race of its greatest duties as well as of its highest virtues and its most necessary faculties?" The social question, it has lately been said, is a moral question. The phrase is new and striking, but the thought is old, for it is Lacordaire's.



## CHAPTER VIII

### LACORDAIRE IN PRIVATE LIFE—THE FRIEND AND THE PRIEST

“IF thy affections incline towards souls, love them, O my soul! but love them in God. Lead back with thee all those whom thou canst lead; thou wilt gain them, because the Spirit of God will speak by thy mouth.” Many centuries have passed since Saint Augustine let slip these words in those burning “Confessions” in which he uttered before God his ardour and his remorse; and yet is it not of Lacordaire that they make us think? If, among the sacred orators that our age has known, there is one who has reclaimed souls, it is assuredly he whose eloquence gathered beneath the long-deserted vaults of Notre-Dame a crowd such as the old basilica had not seen since the Middle Ages. But if he gained them over, it is not only because the Spirit of God spoke by his mouth, it is also, and above all, because he loved them.

This love of the priest for souls is the great secret of the influence that he exercises. One can say that his strength is in proportion to his love. But what is the origin of this love, so peculiar in its nature, a love that has not engaged the observations of psychologists, and that has escaped the observations of a Stendhal, because he was incapable even of conceiving the idea of it? Is it a special feeling of a special nature, one

of the supernatural fruits of the priestly vocation, which is developed by ministry, and is blended with the other duties of the priesthood? Is it, in a word, what is called in the language of religion a grace of condition? Is it not, on the contrary, a feeling, doubtless purer, more noble, more elevated, but yet of the same order as human love? Assuredly, a true priest will, in order to save a soul, never shrink from any step, any peril; he will bring the sacraments to a patient in a plague-stricken hospital, and absolution to a man dying on the field of battle. That is duty. But understanding of the needs of a heart, participation in the sufferings it experiences, divination of the remedies it needs, close association with all the struggles in which it engages, the joy of its triumphs, the gloom and almost the humiliation of its defeats,—that is something else. It is love, and Lacordaire himself has written: “There are not two loves; the love of heaven and that of earth are the same, save that the love of heaven is infinite.”

I do not think I advance anything profane or disrespectful when I say that all the great shepherds of souls of whom the Catholic Church boasts have brought so many hearts after them to God only by their powerful faculty for love. It is a mistake to believe that the austere obligations of the priesthood destroy this faculty in the priest. They only transform it by extricating it from the less pure feelings that disturb the ordinary run of men; but, perhaps, by this very fact, they strengthen it and render it more permanent, as the cutting off of parasite branches adds to the vigour of the trunk. It is Lacordaire also who is going to tell us, in terms full of delicacy, how this transformation takes place. “It would be strange if Christianity, founded at once on the love of God and of men, should only



result in barrenness of soul in regard to everything that is not God. Only there is often passion in friendships, and it is this which makes them dangerous and hurtful. Passion disturbs at once the senses and the reason, and too often it even ends in evil, in sin. What ruins love is egotism, not the love of God; and there never have been on earth more permanent, more pure, or more tender ardours than those to which the saints gave up their hearts, hearts at once emptied and filled, emptied of themselves and filled with God."

Doubtless without thinking of it, Lacordaire has traced in these lines the history of his moral life. His emptied heart was filled with holy friendships; but before filling it, he began by emptying it. We have seen how pure and severe his youth had been. It is superfluous to add that the emotions it escaped were unknown to his priesthood. "I am always astonished," he wrote to a young man, "at the power which the sight of external beauty has over you, and at the little strength you have to shut your eyes. I truly pity you for your weakness, and I am astonished by it as by a great phenomenon that I do not understand. Never since I have known Jesus Christ has anything seemed to me beautiful enough to make me look at it with concupiscence. It is such a little thing to a soul that has once seen God and felt Him." But this vision of God did not prevent him from seeing souls also, and from becoming attached to them. Only those who felt its worth and its beauty within their hearts were, according to him, called to the priesthood, which he defined as a sacrifice of man added to that of God. In this very sacrifice of every feeling of selfishness and desire he found the necessary security that enabled him to surrender himself to those attachments which the natural tenderness

of his heart made necessary to him. We should only half know him if we did not observe the place that these attachments have held in his heart. When a young man, he had an affection for Montalembert; at a later age, for the Abbé Perreyve. He had a like affection for Madame Swetchine, Countess Eudoxie de la Tour-du-Pin, and a person less known, whose name, however, comes sometimes into his letters to Madame Swetchine.

We have already seen how close was his intimacy with Madame Swetchine. To the Countess de la Tour-du-Pin he paid a rare tribute at the time of her death. "She had been for twenty years," he said, "one of the forces of my life." Lacordaire's correspondence with Madame Swetchine and with Madame de la Tour-du-Pin has been published in full. A communication to which I am indebted has permitted me to see his letters to Madame de V—, and I shall borrow largely from that correspondence.

Lacordaire's correspondence with Madame de V— opens with a note he wrote to her on April 18th, 1836. It ends on October 29th, 1861, with a letter which he had not even strength to write with his own hand, and which he merely signs. On November 21st following he died; four years later she too died. They were almost of the same age. Both their lives thus flowed along, side by side, and the bond that united them was never broken.

Whence arose the first link between them? This is rather difficult to conjecture, for they were born far apart. Madame de V— belonged, by birth as well as by marriage, to the Legitimist world. Her husband, a man of position, whose name often comes into the correspondence, subscribed to the "Quotidienne," and

this divergence of opinions gives rise to frequent jests in their letters. Madame de V—— does not seem, however, to have taken as keen an interest as her husband in political affairs. As far as one can divine her character through the letters Lacordaire writes to her (for her own have been destroyed), she was less a woman of commanding intellect than of a noble and tender nature, passionately devoted to those whom she loved, and taking pains to serve them with discreet generosity and delicacy. One can judge of her from the following incident.

Lacordaire had always been poor. His mother's death had placed him in possession of an income of forty-eight pounds a year, which formed his whole property, but the capital from which this income was derived was being quickly dissipated by his improvident hands. The two or three people acquainted with this state of affairs were uneasy about him. How was Madame de V—— informed of this? Probably by Madame Swetchine, whom she also knew. She believed that she could furnish a remedy by making the Archbishop of Paris the intermediary for a generous proposal. Lacordaire refused it in a letter full of dignity and good grace. "Thank God," he answered, "I need nothing, I am free and I am content. If Providence had failed me in the natural course of things, I should have found it very pleasant for my affairs to be restored through your heart; but things are not in this state. I will keep the memory of this most intimate mark of attachment which you have given me, and I pray you also to keep for me those feelings which I have enjoyed for several years, and of which you have given me this last proof."

From that time forward the ice is broken. Lacordaire no longer writes to her as "Countess,"

but as "Dear friend," and intimacy begins. Thus she is one of the first persons to whom he discloses his great design—to restore the Order of Saint Dominic in France, and to begin by going to Rome to assume the habit. This design met with a most emphatic opposition from Madame de V——, and during a short visit that he paid her in the country, warm discussions took place between them. That was not the career she desired for him. She had dreamed of fame, of high offices in the church, first a canonry, and then a bishopric, and he was going to sacrifice all this for distant and chimerical projects. Lacordaire remained firm. He was one of those men who come to an inner decision after thorough reflection, and whom no influence afterwards shakes. But he feared lest this obstinacy on her part might throw a shadow over a very sensitive friendship, and he explained himself to her in a letter which he wrote some days afterwards, when he was already on his way to Rome :

"Here I am already very far from you," he said to her, "in spite of all your good advice, and next Monday I shall be in Rome. It is not that I have not thought a good deal of the reasons you have given me, and these, strong in themselves, were still stronger by the disinterested affection that dictated them. But you know it is difficult to uproot an idea that has taken its place in our minds, and towards the accomplishment of which a force that is in things urges us. . . . Let me trust myself to God Who has protected me so much since my childhood, and Who has given me such a friend as you. I count entirely on your friendship. Do not be discouraged because I have not yet yielded to your influence in a matter of capital importance. We shall not have matters as impossible as this to deal with every day."



Nearly eighteen months were still to pass before Lacordaire could put his design into execution, and during those eighteen months, divided, moreover, by a long stay in France, he lost no opportunity of gradually familiarising Madame de V—— with his project. "You must accustom yourself," he wrote to her, "to my robe of white wool. We shall have only this winter in which to laugh a little. Or rather be persuaded that, if the frock does not make the monk, neither does the monk lose anything that is true and simple, good and worth envying. We shall thus be the best friends in the world, and nothing will prevent us from going for walks with your husband at Ch——, or at B——."

Lacordaire's return to Paris interrupted the correspondence, which at this period consists only of some insignificant little notes. Madame de V—— had not yet reconciled herself to the idea of the white robe. But, opposed as she remained to Lacordaire's projects, her natural generosity did not allow her to refuse all interest whatever in them. The envelope which she had tried to make him accept, by using Mgr. de Quélen as an intermediary, had still remained in the latter's hands. She thought that perhaps she could now renew her offer with more success. However, she consulted the Abbé Affre, then Vicar-General. "M. Lacordaire has refused personal assistance, but he will not refuse help intended to advance his future establishment," replied the latter. And some days afterwards Lacordaire thanked her simply. "I need not tell you that I am thankful for all the fresh proofs of attachment you have given me during the past week. That memory will always accompany me, and will relieve the pains which, doubtless, God reserves for me in the course of my life." And as he was



about to leave Paris a few days later, he ended a last letter with the word "Courage."

In the first days of May, 1839, Lacordaire went away a second time, taking with him two companions. All three were to assume the Dominican habit at Rome in the beginning of June. He stopped for some days at Milan, and from there he wrote two long letters, one to Madame Swetchine, which has been published in the volume that contains their correspondence, and the other to Madame de V——.

"If I had written to you every time my thoughts turned to you, you would already have received many letters from me," he begins; and, after giving some details about his journey, he goes on, "I am writing to you at a very pleasant moment, because I am delighted with my two travelling companions of the past week, and because I have brought from Paris memories that accompany me everywhere. You are perhaps thinking that these memories ought to be changed into regrets, and that my joy is not unlike ingratitude. If so you are wrong; there are regrets which console. Can one think of what is good, lovable, sincere, without a certain joy coming into the soul, even with tears? . . . The thought of you, then, consoles me, and does not sadden me, in spite of absence. I think that God has prepared for me in you a true and sure friend, at a moment when my life had to undergo a decisive test. I think with grateful joy of all that you have done for me, which older friends could not have done. I see in you God and yourself, and through this mingling you are not entirely absent, since God is never absent. . . . I tell you this from the bottom of my heart. I look back to you with a feeling which is pleasant, which is pure, which is full. That is rare here below, because something is

almost always lacking in our affections, and the presence of that void causes much suffering. I have met very few souls who do not cause suffering. My friends are at Vespers in the cathedral. I am alone whilst I write to you, but they are going to return, happily for me, so that I may not write what I want to say to you with too much emotion. Tell your husband that I look on him as a friend in spite of the difference in our ages, and that, whatever Providence may do with me, the days I have passed in his house will always be in my thoughts."

During the whole year that Lacordaire's novitiate lasted, the correspondence between him and Madame de V—— was very regular, a letter about every three weeks. In all those letters Lacordaire takes an evident care to dissipate his friend's prejudices and apprehensions. "I hope," he wrote to her, "that the Dominican habit will make me holier, but not less attached to you." In another letter he stated in detail the obligations of the monastic life, and he sought to reconcile her to the rigours of the Dominican rule. "It is the life of a canon," he wrote. "You wished with all your might that I should be a canon; you see I have fulfilled your wishes exactly."

We feel strongly, however, through all these letters, that Madame de V—— remains rebellious. One fear dominates her: it is that the Order of Saint Dominic might absorb Lacordaire and keep him in Italy. She has only one thought, his return to Paris. Thus she finds herself led on to work, in some sort against herself, for the restoration of the Order in France. She occupies herself with the purchase of a house at Charonne, which might become the seat of the first convent of the Order. When this project failed, she wanted Lacordaire to accept a chair at the Sorbonne which

it seems that M. Cousin would have been disposed to offer him. Lacordaire has to explain at length that, as he has vigorously attacked the university monopoly, it would be little to his honour to profit by that monopoly. She then attaches herself to another idea. The Archbishop of Paris being at the point of death, she presses Lacordaire to come forward as a candidate to succeed him. And the future Dominican answers her in this rather sharp letter: "The wish you have of seeing me among the candidates is, with all due deference to your intelligent friendship, a wish that would cost me very dearly if it were realised. Do you imagine the hell there must be in the hearts of all those worthy people who preach evangelical abnegation, and who rule their lives in order to have a bishopric; who do not say a word and do not make a gesture that can place an obstacle in the way of their dream? The lowest Dominican lay brother is a hundred times happier and more respectable than any of them. Do you think, besides, that a bishopric suits my nature, and that I should be comfortable under the heap of papers and administrative notes that to-day constitute a bishop's life? Pray, then, let us leave bishoprics alone, and let us be satisfied with the choice that is made for them, with the sincere desire that they may go to good priests. Neither you nor I, dear friend, shall see the new Church which God is preparing for France. It will need more than a century to form it; but, at least, unless our country perishes, it will be formed eventually. Now this is all in the future, and the man who only wants to conquer in his own imperceptible moment is like the man who would prefer to eat a pip rather than to plant it and make a tree for posterity. Those who like pips are innumerable, from humming-birds to parish priests and others

who aspire to the mitre. Do not be one of the number, I beg you, and may friendship never cause you to lose the natural greatness of your spirit."

However, Lacordaire's novitiate was reaching its end. His assumption of the habit was about to take place, and it was necessary for him to leave La Quercia. Where would he go afterwards? After a long hesitation he wrote, as we have seen, to the Master-General of the Dominicans, a letter in which he asked, in his own name and that of his companion, for permission to remain three years in Rome, in the centre of the Order, in order to become initiated into its traditions. But it was not without apprehension that Lacordaire communicated this letter to Madame de V——. He felt himself so far away now, so obscure, so much of a monk! And he feared an outburst from her friendship. At first she resigned herself to it. It is, therefore, rather difficult to understand what took place between them some months afterwards, and why Lacordaire, after having left two consecutive letters unanswered, ended by addressing her these stern lines: "Confidence enters with difficulty into a man's heart and leaves it quickly. Let us allow time to pass over the ruins you have made. I shall bless God if ever He renews the time that has been broken off, and places balm on a wound that I would like to cure."

The wound was, however, to be cured more quickly than he thought. A fresh letter, in which Madame de V—— probably implored his pardon, reached him at a painful moment. Lacordaire had become passionately devoted to a young man whom he had brought from France, and with whom he had assumed the Dominican habit. This young man was on his death-bed when Lacordaire received Madame de V——'s letter. How

could he have the courage to cut the bonds of an old affection with his own hands at the very moment when death was severing those of a new one? From the bedside of his dying friend Lacordaire accordingly wrote some affectionate lines to his repentant friend. But he did not wish, however, to resume a regular correspondence before he came to an explanation with her on the misunderstanding that divided them. "You tell me yourself in the letter of the twenty-fourth," he wrote, "that 'it is not in you to associate yourself with great ideas.' I do not take this phrase literally, but it is a fact that you have never appeared to me to interest yourself in the destiny of the Church, in the future of the world. You made a happy life for me in your heart, a well-rounded life, embellished with a glory that ran no risk; I seemed to you to be almost mad and ungrateful because I rejected so promising a destiny. That is what you have continually called 'not understanding you.' Well, yes, I do understand you; nothing is easier than to understand you. Who does not understand the joy of comfort, of a safe and restricted life, of the satisfactions of friendship? Who does not understand that, 'humanly speaking,' such a life is better than to revive an Order, to live in a cloister, to sacrifice one's life to a thousand obscure duties and a thousand chances of ruin? But have such hopes ever made a strong and talented man hesitate as to how he would act for God or for himself? If I had listened to you, I should be in appearance the happiest man in the world, while in reality I should have to struggle against all the instincts of my nature as well as against the remorse of a conscience that had erred from its right course. I should have had, you say, the fame of speaking and writing; and is that nothing? It is much

when one has received that single vocation from God; it is nothing to him who has received another. What would you have said if I had received a vocation to be a missionary in China, and if I had left Paris for the pleasure of running the risk of dying of hunger or of having my head cut off, not to mention other things? What would you have said of the martyrs of the primitive Church, who doubtless were worth quite as much as I am? Do you not see, whether you are or are not a Christian, that the greatest men have never chosen the easiest path? I could easily accuse you, if I wished, of 'not understanding.' But what is the good of accusations? It is a misfortune for me to know that you are opposed to the designs to which I have dedicated my life; but that misfortune does not entail that all ought to be ended and impossible between you and me. I have been the first to think that 'poor friendship' could find its place everywhere. You alone have appeared for a moment to believe the contrary. That is what has hurt me horribly. . . ."

After this storm, relations resume their course, but "poor friendship" continued to endure many trials. Madame de V—— could not put an end to her anxiety. She was continually indulging in fancies. After a fresh stay in France, Lacordaire had returned to Rome, bringing back with him nine novices. The Convent of San Clemente had been conceded to them, and it was Lacordaire's hope that this convent would become the cradle of the Dominican province of France. Suddenly, without anything to enable them to anticipate so severe a blow, an order to disperse reached the novices. Half of the little band were sent to the convent of Bosco in Piedmont, the other to La Quercia, and Lacordaire was forbidden to occupy himself henceforth with the novices whom he had



brought with him. A less resolute man would have bent before the storm, and abandoned his enterprise. Lacordaire stood firm, and he remained in Rome alone but immovable in his design and in his hope. But Madame de V—— was a prey to mortal terror. She already saw Lacordaire plunged in the cells of the Inquisition, and she wanted him to escape by flight from the perils with which she saw him surrounded. Lacordaire had to reassure her, first by gentle raillery, then by again opposing the vocation of a servant of God, as he understood it, to the ideal of a pleasant and peaceful life which she dreamed of for him.

“Dear friend,” he wrote to her, “you always astonish me by the charm of your mind and the weakness of your counsel. You are like a passenger on a ship, who, at the first breath of wind, always asks to be put ashore, and who cannot imagine that the wind helps us to travel all the more quickly. Be calm then, once more.

“You will have to see many things before they put me in prison. It may happen in time, for only God knows what is laid up for our lives; but the events that could compromise my liberty would have done so if I were in the habit of a secular priest as much as if I were in a monk’s frock. No, my friend, you will see me again. You will see me as often as I like, and I shall like as often as the interests of the Church will allow me. Is the tranquil lot you desire for me suited to a man? Does one arrange one’s life in the shade or in the sun according to one’s pleasure? Oh, how I should like to see you having a soul no less affectionate, but able, in spite of affection, to encourage vigorous action! You said to me the other day that men live by ideas and women by feelings. I do not admit that distinction. Men live also by



feelings, but by feelings sometimes more exalted than yours, and those are what you call ideas, because those ideas embrace a more universal order than that to which you attach yourself oftenest. Dear friend, we can do nothing without love here below, and be certain that if we had only ideas, we would be the most powerless beings in the world."

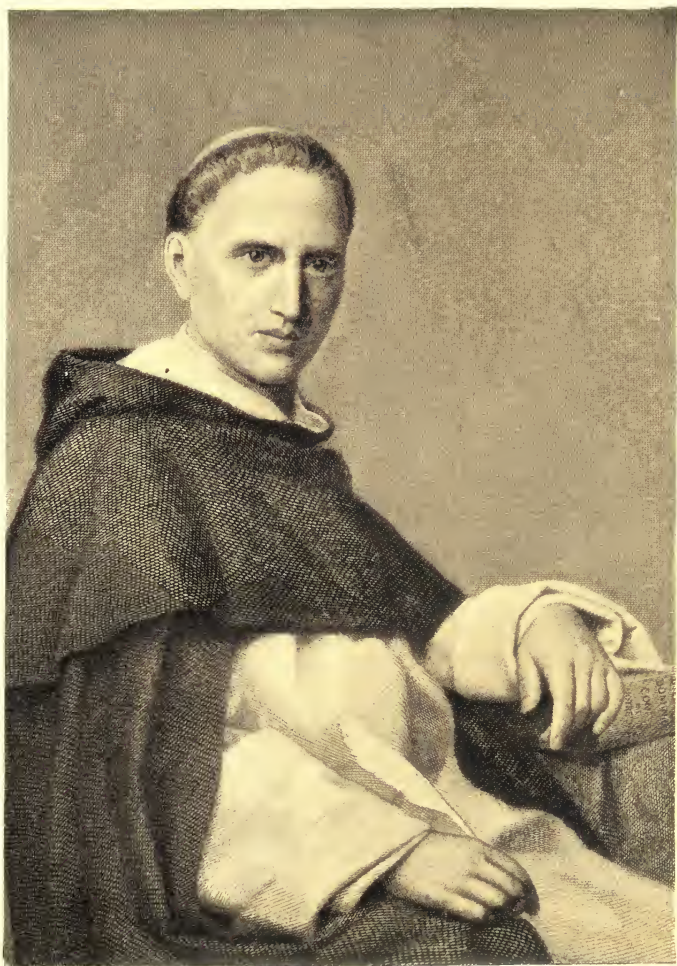
The regularity and frequency of this correspondence were, however, to diminish with Lacordaire's return to France, though it never entirely ceased. From the moment when he came back to France in a Dominican habit to that in which he was definitely established at Sorèze, Lacordaire did not cease to lead the life of a "wandering friar," preaching from town to town—at Bordeaux, at Strasburg, at Nancy—or visiting the different houses of his Order, which developed rapidly. By her inexhaustible generosity, Madame de V—— counted for a great deal in the rapidity of that development, and the Dominicans of to-day are not perhaps aware of all they owe to this unknown benefactress. There had been on her side a continual, discreet intervention, unknown to everybody, and all the more meritorious, as at the beginning she had been most opposed to the enterprise. She had, however, familiarised herself with this new existence, whose rigours she had exaggerated, and the monk's robe had ceased to frighten her. She had even persuaded Lacordaire to allow himself to be painted as a Dominican by Chassériau. It is this portrait which was exhibited in the Salon of 1840. But when the Salon closed, the portrait went to B——, where it was hung in an excellent position. Lacordaire used to joke about it. "I am delighted to know that my portrait is so well placed in your dining-room, and offered to

the admiration of all who come to see you—bishops, priests, gentlemen. There is matter for conversation for a long time in that, and who knows whether one day, when you and I are dead, I shall not become to your descendants an old relative of the time before the Revolution, and all that can be connected with a portrait when Providence so wills it?”

However, Madame de V——’s affection always remained a little restless and stormy. If, during his frequent absences, Lacordaire remained three weeks or a month without writing to her, she believed herself forgotten and sacrificed to new interests. She complained, and Lacordaire, in turn, showed himself a little offended by her complaints. “Your letter of January 30th, dear, good friend,” he wrote to her from Bordeaux, “has caused me some pain. It seems that our friendship does not grow old with the years, and that it is still subject to the doubt which surrounds everything that is new. Because I do not write to you at the end of every three weeks, because I am given a warm welcome here, you accuse me in your heart of forgetting you, of sacrificing the old to the new, of being a leaf that blows with the first breath of wind that comes. Is there anything more unjust? . . . I would thus have a right to recriminate against you; but I prefer to assure you anew of the reality of my attachment, created not only by gratitude, but by a sincere fondness for your affection, by a very high esteem for your faculties, and by general sympathy. I have, besides, been on many occasions too unhappy ever to forget those who then cared for me. You have been one of the three or four persons who have encouraged and saved me in difficult times; the more firmly established my existence becomes, if ever it should become firmly

established, the more I shall remember with tenderness those who, by holding out their hands to me in evil days, have contributed to bring about stability at last. I am assuredly lacking in certain qualities ; but I believe I possess, even to a superstitious degree, faithful affection, regard for the past, and the melancholy of remembrance. Only, my duties prevent me from giving as much to nature as another could, and I will also confess that I have a grievance against you, and that is that I see you remaining so aloof in mind from the activities of my life. The activities of a man are his whole being, his whole energy, his whole history. They may be hazardous ; they ought on that account to inspire all the more interest. I suffer, therefore, from seeing a soul with which I am so intimate holding itself aloof from my designs ; I suffer from this, but as it were from a strange anomaly which I respect, pitying myself for having so little power of persuading a person whom I love so much. The day when God will permit this cloud to disappear will be one of the happiest days in my life ; I hasten it with all my prayers, and, were it to delay for ever, yet I should not doubt you ; I shall always believe in your heart, in your understanding, in your devotion, which lack nothing but the gift of conferring on me one pleasure more."

However, these agitations grow calm with years, but at the same time the correspondence becomes less active and less familiar. Had their feelings changed? No. But the intensity of his life and of his duties absorbed Lacordaire more and more, and left him less time for friendship. And then expansion is a gift of youth. In proportion as he advances along the way of which Dante speaks, a man shuts himself up more in himself, and when he has passed its middle point,



LACORDAIRE

From an engraving by Martinet of Bonnassieux's portrait (1841)

*To face p. 148*



he lives a life more and more internal and solitary, down to the day when, the last witness of a past that has disappeared, he is no longer known or understood save by himself. It is known that Lacordaire's last years were passed in semi-retirement at Sorèze. Formerly Madame de V—— had desired fame and peace for him. He now had peace, but he no longer had fame. During this time she herself continued, in Paris or at B——, to live the tranquil life of a woman who is no longer young, and who devotes herself entirely to the duties of her family and of society. Their preoccupations had become different. One perceives this from the tone of the letters, which become fewer and fewer. The word "madame" comes often into them. Sometimes Lacordaire adds to it that of "old friend." Thus do almost all human feelings die with years. However, one still sometimes finds in the letters as it were a feeble echo of the former affection. "Often it happens," Lacordaire writes to her, "that I miss the times when I used to go to visit you at B——. Shall I ever see you there again? God alone knows, but, whatever happens, time does not efface the memories you have left me."

He was, however, to see her again at B——, but in extremely sad circumstances. Lacordaire's death was at once premature and slow in coming: premature, because he died at the age of fifty-nine; slow, because the struggle was a long one between the disease that carried him off and an originally robust constitution that fatigue and perhaps excessive austerities had undermined. When illusion as to his state was no longer possible, the affection that was but sleeping awoke, and expressed itself on Madame de V——'s part by ardent tokens. There is hardly a letter of Lacordaire's during the last year of his life that



does not contain the expression of his gratitude for some mark of devotion. Too weak to write, he could no longer do more than sign his name. Twice Madame de V—— made the journey to Sorèze to see him. At last she procured that after an unavailing course of waters, Lacordaire went to spend a fortnight at B——. Twenty-two years had passed since Lacordaire, still a young priest, had made his first visit to this same place before starting for Rome, and that, immovable in his design of assuming the Dominican habit, he had firmly repelled the objections of a despairing friendship. Many events had succeeded one another since that time ; many changes had taken place in them and about them ; but both their hearts had remained the same, and as Madame de V—— accompanied his failing steps in those shaded walks which Lacordaire mentions so often in his letters, he could feel, in the depths of his heart, how true were his words in his "Life of Mary Magdalene": "We must have lived in order to be sure of being loved."

As she noticed his extreme difficulty in walking, Madame de V—— sent him a carriage as soon as he had returned to Sorèze. Lacordaire thanked her for it: "Yesterday I made use for the first time of the brougham, which has taken longer to reach here than you thought. It is very comfortable, and painted a sober hue. Nevertheless, I am very confused when I get into this carriage and see all that you have done. If I get better, you will certainly have contributed a great deal to my health, and at the same time to my consolation. But God alone knows what will happen, and the weakness, if possible, increases every day." Feeling that he was lost, she wanted to go to Sorèze so as to see him a last time. He had to dissuade her. "Conversation fatigues me greatly,



and it would pain me not to be able to give you a good welcome. You will oblige me by giving up this project from which I could derive no consolation, only embarrassment of heart and mind and physical fatigue." The last letter is to prevent Madame de V—— from sending the then celebrated Dr. Rayner from Paris to Sorèze. Some days afterwards there came a first telegram, sent by a faithful servant, "Father Lacordaire is very ill and has received the last sacraments." Then, the next day, a second, "Father Lacordaire is dead." These telegrams, still in their envelopes, were locked up by Madame de V—— herself in a wooden coffer which contained all the Father's letters. From her death, which took place four years afterwards, these letters were never taken out of it. I am the only person to whom they have been entrusted. When I opened that coffer it seemed to me a delicate perfume arose from it, and it was not without reverent emotion that my hand disturbed those relics of two souls that loved each other.

I have just shown what Lacordaire was as a friend. I should like also to say what he was as a priest; I shall not add, and as a monk. I could not, in truth, take it upon me to answer the question raised by Father Chocarne, when, after having revealed the secret, unknown by all, of the incredible penances which Lacordaire imposed on himself, he asked if he was right or wrong in lifting the veil that hid the mysteries of his monastic life. Some souls, indeed, may have been edified by learning that this popular preacher, this member of the French Academy, had actually in the nineteenth century, in the privacy of his cell, renewed those macerations the story of which astonishes us and leaves us almost incredulous when we meet them in the

lives of the saints of the primitive Church. But others, too weak perhaps, have asked themselves if the Dominican rule ought not in itself to have seemed sufficient to him, and if he would not have better served the great cause to which he had devoted his life by preserving his strength for it rather than by exhausting his body and assuredly shortening his days. These are questions too lofty to be handled by the profane, and as such I shall abstain from doing so. I shall merely limit myself to telling those who have smiled or been indignant at Father Chocarne's rather over-detailed account, that one, before smiling or being indignant, ought to understand, and that there are certain states of soul the secret of which it is necessary to know before we judge them. In 1845 Lacordaire had been Lent preacher at Lyons. In that town, where religious ardour has always shown itself so keen, his success outstripped anything he had obtained before. It was a regular delirium. One evening, when his sermon had called forth particular enthusiasm, he was waited for at dinner. He did not come. Someone went to look for him. He found him pale and in tears at the foot of a crucifix. "What is the matter, Father?" he said. "I am afraid." "Afraid of what?" "Of this success." When a soul has reached this degree of scruple, it is not surprising if it seeks by penance to correct those inward movements that appear to us to be pardonable weaknesses; and penance, above all when it is unknown, silent, and hidden, is always deserving of respect.

The man who was so harsh to himself was gentle to others. He knew how to show weak souls the consideration which they needed, and to lead them along paths that were not too rough. It is not, however, direction, properly so called,

that held the principal place in Lacordaire's life. His life, always militant, and for a long time wandering, did not allow him to exercise it under its most habitual form, that of interviews and of confession. But those who have pursued him with constant ill-will have been guilty of extreme exaggeration when they say that he never converted anybody. On the contrary, many souls appealed to him, and he enjoyed in their communion the best reward of a life dedicated to the hard labours of apostleship.

In order to preserve his influence over those who appealed to him, he had recourse especially to correspondence. Accordingly, correspondence held a large place in his life. Every day he devoted several hours to it. A thing that one could hardly believe, if those who have lived with him were not agreed in confirming it, is that he was very methodical in his habits. Not his room or his cell only, but even his table, was always in excellent order. Papers, pens, pencils, and penknife were always arranged in the same place. He sat down at this table always at the same time, and began to write rapidly in a small, fine, close hand, without erasures, a great number of letters that were afterwards placed in a pile always on the same corner of his desk. With the same regularity, when he was in Paris, he went to the confessional on certain days and at certain fixed hours. He waited in the sacristy until the hour struck, and at the first sound of the clock he was seen to open the door and to appear with the regularity of an automaton, a fact which sometimes brought a smile to the lips of the penitents. Direction has accordingly occupied a larger place in Lacordaire's life than has been attributed to him, especially in the second half of his life. However, we only possess a

single one of his spiritual correspondences, his letters to the Baroness de Prailly.

These letters were published twenty-three years after Lacordaire's death, and only four after that of Madame de Prailly, but by an express act of her will, and as a token of gratitude towards him whom she called "her first and only real priest." It was a chance meeting with Lacordaire, coinciding with a grave illness, that determined her to unbosom herself to him. At the beginning of their relations, he wrote to her: "Whoever attains to knowing God and loving Him has nothing to desire, nothing to regret. He has received the supreme gift that ought to make us forget everything else," and this short fragment is enough to sum up the spirit which inspired his direction. The love of God is the supreme gift which he endeavours to communicate to a soul that is still worldly; but in order to attain his end he applies himself to develop her faculties and to elevate her mind whilst he gladdens her heart. He leads her straight to Jesus Christ, by broad and direct paths, without delaying her with minor observances. When he receives her first confidences, he finds her a prey to inner griefs in which he sees the characteristics of an ardent and noble nature. "Souls that are feeble and rather sunken," he wrote to her, "find here below an element that suffices for their understanding and that satiates their love. They do not discover the emptiness of visible things because they are incapable of plumbing them very deeply. But a soul whom God, by the way He has created it, has drawn closer to the infinite, soon feels the narrow limits that encompass it. It has an unknown sadness, and for a long time it is ignorant of the cause of this; it readily believes that such and such a concurrence of circumstances has troubled its life, while its

trouble comes from a higher source. It is remarkable, in the lives of the saints, that almost all have felt that melancholy of which the ancients said that there was no genius without it. In truth, melancholy is inseparable from every far-reaching mind and from every heart that has depth. This is not to say that we ought to take pleasure in melancholy, for it is a malady that enervates us when we do not throw it off, and it has only two remedies—death or God.”

Thus the first thing with which he occupies himself in order to cure this melancholy is to order and to fill the life of her who has entrusted herself to him. He rejoices that she has not waited until the decline of age to renounce the world and its gorgeous frivolities, and that she brings to God a heart still young, still capable of illusions, and not empty and worn out. But he wants to nurture this soul. Ignorance is a great enemy. What is there to believe when one has not knowledge? What is there to love when one has not seen? Daily reading nurtures the mind and disgusts it with vain things. He will not, however, have frivolous or affected reading. It is necessary to go to the great things. When we can read Homer, Plutarch, Cicero, Plato, David, Saint Paul, Saint Augustine, Saint Theresa, Bossuet, Pascal, and others like them, we are very guilty if we waste our time on drawing-room trifles.

This drawing-room life, this frivolous and easy existence to which Madame de Prailly had been accustomed by her education, appeared to him in the first place to be the great enemy. “If a drop of the faith of the saints fell on you,” he wrote to her, “you would not have enough tears to weep for yourself, to weep for your slothful, soft, insignificant life, so full of pride and of the

satisfaction of the senses." Under Lacordaire's influence, she detaches herself little by little from that life. Her health, always precarious, helps him in separating her from the world. She spends long months in the South, in the solitude of her Costebelle villa. But then another anxiety takes possession of her director, lest she should come to detach herself too much from life itself, and lest she should fall into a sort of indifference. "When the soul has attained a certain degree of elevation towards God," he writes to her, "it easily despises life, and then God attaches it to life by the idea of duty. Life is an important function, although very often we do not see its utility. Mere drops of water, we ask ourselves what need the ocean has of us. The ocean could answer us that it is only composed of drops of water. Do not hate life then, even while you are detaching yourself from it."

After having thus drawn this soul away from the life of the world, and having attached it to the life of duty, Lacordaire next endeavours to procure it peace. He had evidently to deal with an ardent, uneasy nature, never satisfied with itself, always sighing after a state in which it does not yet find itself. He reproves her with gentleness. "You must not abandon yourself to sadness and despondency. Nothing is more injurious to the health of the body and of the soul. Saint Paul says that joy and peace are the fruits of the Spirit of God. There is in Him a fulness which drives away melancholy, as the rising sun drives away the shadows. Reach joy then. It is the great sign of God, I desire it for you with all my heart, now that I am going away. You are still too human and not divine enough. That is the reproach that follows the prayer."

I should not like to multiply these quotations



indefinitely. Spiritual correspondences are always a little monotonous, and it is not everybody who cares for this special form of literature. What, however, gives an interest to those letters of Lacordaire to Madame de Prailly is that he does not appear in them solely in the part of director, sometimes consoling and sometimes reprimanding. With the perfect simplicity that was in him, he lets us see himself as he was, with his alternations of ardour and dejection, subject to sadness, to discouragement, to inward exhaustion. Sometimes, with touching humility, he compares the state of his own soul with that of his penitent, sometimes he goes little short of placing himself beneath her, "I am very glad you feel that you have reached peace. It is the great sign and the great good. I do not know whether I possess it, or whether I have ever had it. Troubles, sadnesses, often ascend into my soul, for I have seen and I continually hear of sad things. But it is true that a certain strength brings me back to rest in God. The soul, at the end of its mortal career, ought to fall from this world like a ripe fruit. Doubtless this is what God intends by all the miseries He sends us. But suffering does not always detach, and it does not always give peace. Happy are they who do not suffer in vain!"

This is how Lacordaire appears to us, as friend and as priest, in the intimacy of his correspondence. Madame Swetchine rightly said, "He will only be known by his letters." I should like to see a discreet and judicious selection made from those letters, which to-day are scattered through nine different volumes, and have not all the same interest. That selection would make them easier to read, and would be a gain to his memory. So profound, in truth, has been the change in our literary tastes during half a century, that, to some



persons of severe taste, his eloquence seems a little antiquated to-day. But the man still lives in his letters, at once simple and eloquent, and written without the shadow of preoccupation about thought and style. "The more I like anyone," he wrote to Madame de Prailly, "the simpler I am in my relations with them, whether I am speaking or writing, except on the natural occasions that oblige me to take a more elevated tone. I write quickly and without art, and I have an invincible aversion for style when it does not come of itself from the very nature of the subject. Believe then that I show you my soul when I tell you what I think, and do not ask more of me." It is, in truth, Lacordaire's soul that one finds in his letters, and that soul was one of the noblest, one of the most open to delicate, proud, and generous feelings that have ever throbbed in a human breast. It was Vauvenargues who said, but Lacordaire loved to repeat the saying that "sooner or later one takes pleasure only in souls."

## CHAPTER IX

### THE REPUBLIC AND THE EMPIRE—LAST YEARS

DURING the whole duration of the July Government, Lacordaire did not, upon the whole, live badly with the public authorities. Doubtless when he undertook to restore the Order of Friars Preachers in France he had gone counter to certain illiberal prejudices that existed in the mind of the time, but he ended by conquering them. He even found a good deal of favour from some politicians, among others from M. Guizot. Therefore, while carefully preserving his independence, he had not carried opposition so far as some Catholics had done. He had not disapproved of the arrangement which, after the famous campaign that M. Thiers undertook against the Jesuits, had been brought about between the Court of Rome and the King's Government. The Jesuits seemed to him to have been a little compromising and the Government to have been fairly cautious. Moreover, he did not believe that any system other than the Constitutional Monarchy was possible in France. "I believe," he had written to Lamennais at the time of their separation, "that during my lifetime, and even after it, a republic cannot be established in France or in any other place in Europe." Thus he was in no way bound to the Republican party, and, in his "Letter on the Holy See," published in 1836, he even judged it with excessive severity. "One might say that

there exists in France no other parties than the party of the ruling monarchy and that of the candidate monarchy, if one did not discover in the very lowest section of society a certain faction which believes itself to be republican, and of which people have not the courage to speak ill solely because it has opportunities of cutting off your head in the interval between two monarchies. . . ." He even added, after showing that France owed its moral unity to monarchy, "that in politics, France can only be a monarchy or a chaos, because there exists no real mean between general submission to a single head and the radical independence of all citizens."

It is, therefore, difficult to explain the sudden enthusiasm which the events of 1848 inspired in Lacordaire. People have sometimes spoken of the July sunstroke. It seems that he had his sunstroke in February, and yet there was then a very pale sun. In order to understand the feelings on which he acted, we must recall certain incidents that marked the foundation of the Second Republic in France. Just as after the events that brought about the fall of the Restoration the Catholic clergy had to suffer from their too close alliance with a form of government that had become unpopular, so they benefited by the silent but constant hostility that they had displayed towards the July Government. In more than one locality the parish priests threw themselves with ardour into the republican movement, and they were soon to be seen blessing the trees of liberty. But of all these incidents there was one which must have especially impressed Lacordaire, and which has often been told. At the time of the sack of the Tuileries, some of the insurgents who had penetrated into Queen Marie Amélie's chapel took possession of a crucifix that they found there.

Instead of appropriating it, as they did many objects belonging to the royal family, they carried it solemnly to the church of Saint Roch, and as this singular procession passed by, heads were respectfully uncovered. This unexpected manifestation could not fail to strike vividly an imagination as impressionable as Lacordaire's, and doubtless it contributed to give birth in him to the illusion that he was going to see the dream of his youth realised, the alliance of Church and State in freedom, or rather the State freely accepting the moral direction of the Church. Let us not, indeed, forget that if interpenetration (to use his own expression) was, in his eyes, odious and intolerable, separation seemed to him only a desperate remedy, and the superiority of the spiritual society over the material society remained the ideal. "That system," he added in a letter to M. Foisset, from which I have already quoted, "is so great a moderating influence on the people and on the ruling power that a truly Christian nation has never understood any other, and that it throws itself into it of its own impulse and without thinking." But that system seemed to him to be applicable only on the day when kings and peoples would ask for it on bended knees. Had that day come? Was the Church going to govern the peoples as in the Middle Ages she had ruled the kings? Was she going to play the magnificent part of a moderator of liberty in a Catholic republic? Lacordaire believed that this was so, and that hope is the only thing that can explain the impetuosity with which he threw himself into the thick of the fray.

On the morrow of the catastrophe he gave a striking pledge of his adhesion to the new form of government. He was for the first time to have preached a Lenten course of sermons in Paris, his

sermons having previously been in Advent. In agreement with the Archbishop, Mgr. Affre, he spontaneously advanced the opening of the course, which he fixed for Septuagesima Sunday, that is to say, precisely on the 27th of February. On the appointed day, with the barricades by which Paris had been covered still standing, Lacordaire ascended the pulpit. The congregation was huge. It was thought that some allusion to recent events might escape from the orator's lips, and accordingly the audience was attentive and alert. This expectation was not falsified. He began by thanking the Archbishop for the example he had given to all in those days of great and memorable emotion. "You have summoned us," he said, "into this cathedral on the morrow of a revolution in which everything seemed to have perished; we have come; here we are, tranquil under these secular vaults; we shall learn from them to fear nothing for religion and for France; both will pursue their career under the hand of the God Who protects them; both thank you for having believed in their indissoluble alliance, and for having discriminated between the things that pass and those that remain and grow stronger from the very changefulness of events." Then he entered upon his subject, which was the existence of God, and after pointing out the universality of the belief in God, after showing that God is *popular*, he exclaimed: "Thanks be to God, we believe in God, and, if I doubted your faith, you would rise up and repel me from your midst; the doors of this Metropolitan church would open of their own accord against me; and the people would need but one look to confound me; the people that, a moment ago, in the very midst of the intoxication of their strength, after having overthrown several generations of kings, bore in their submissive hands, and asso-

ciated, as it were, with their triumph, the image of the Son of God Who was made man." These words called forth applause which it was necessary for Lacordaire to silence, and outside they caused an immense sensation. People saw in them a consecration given by the Church to the Revolution, and for some time Lacordaire, like God, was popular.

If Lacordaire needed encouragement in the attitude which he believed he ought to take, he would have found it in that of the exalted dignitaries of the Church. Mgr. Affre was not alone in praising the people of Paris for the moderation they had shown in the day of victory. A great number of his episcopal colleagues seemed, in their "Charges," if not to rejoice at, at least to console themselves easily for, the fall of a Government to which many of them owed their elevation. The Nuncio expressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs the keen and profound pleasure with which he had been inspired by the respect the people of Paris had shown for religion. Finally, the Holy Father himself, in a letter to M. de Montalembert, congratulated himself on the fact that in this great change no injury had been done to religion or to its ministers, and took pleasure in the thought that this moderation was due in part to the eloquence of the Catholic orators "who had made its name beloved by that generous people." All this was more than was needed to make Lacordaire throw himself into the thick of the fray with the generous impetuosity of his nature. Accordingly, he neglected nothing in order to realise the hope he had conceived of placing the Catholics at the head of the Republican movement, and of conferring on the Church the government of the democracy.

The first means to be employed was the influence of the Press. With this thought he associated him-

self with two men, one of whom was his friend, and the other a man who by his scholarship already held a considerable position in the Church—Ozanam and the Abbé Maret. "We are democrats," the Abbé Maret had written in a note which served as a preamble to their understanding; "that is to say, we believe that the era of the government of the people by the people themselves has arrived. Consequently, the extension of political rights and of general liberty seems to us a necessity of the times and conformable with the needs of civilisation." This understanding resulted in the opening of a subscription which, on the first day, brought four hundred and forty pounds into Lacordaire's hands, and the publication of a journal, the "Ère Nouvelle," the first number of which appeared on April 5th. This number began with a long prospectus, on which, besides the signatures of the Abbé Maret and Ozanam, were those of MM. de Coux and de Sainte-Foi, both former contributors to the "Avenir." If those of Lamennais, who had become a complete demagogue, and of Montalembert, who was now a thorough reactionary, had not been absent, one might have thought that the same campaign was beginning over again. Lacordaire had accepted the position of editor of the journal, but he only wrote in it rarely. Whatever journalistic talent he had formerly shown in the controversies of the "Avenir," another method of action was still better suited to his temperament, viz. oratory. He had hitherto spoken before silent audiences. Doubtless, even in the pulpit, he had more than once felt between his hearers and himself those communications, in some way or other magnetic, that reveal to the true orator the state of mind of those who listen to him, and that encourage



or warn him. But to speak before an alert and animated audience which, expressing its impressions by external manifestations, can freely applaud or interrupt, which follows you or resists you—what a dream for a man whose greatest talent is the gift of speech, and who, like Lacordaire, is an orator even when he writes! It is not surprising that this dream tempted him.

Yet it would be calumniating that noble nature to believe that he obeyed a merely personal feeling in presenting himself as a candidate for the National Assembly. He felt that, in times of trouble and liberty, all influence that one endeavours to exercise outside of assemblies is of no avail, at any rate unless it is a revolutionary influence. He therefore accepted, if he did not solicit, candidature for the National Assembly on the lists of several Departments. Appearing in particular on the Paris list, it was necessary for him to go and defend his candidature at public meetings. He went to these, not without repugnance, but as a point of honour, in order to give an example of courage. "Above all," he said, "we must fight fear."

Election meetings had not then entered into our life as they have to-day, and the presence of a monk must have still further added to the general curiosity. Accordingly, there was a great concourse at the two meetings which he attended. The newspapers have preserved for us an account of that which was held in the Sorbonne. All the time that he was there, Lacordaire occupied the position of an accused man at the bar. Citizen Guillemin asked him what was his opinion in regard to the direct and, in particular, the indirect jurisdiction of the Pope in temporal matters. Lacordaire replied that in his opinion the Sovereign Pontiff had not the right of deposing any

sovereigns or chief magistrates whatsoever, nor that of giving a constitution to France, nor of ruling in what his questioner called temporal affairs. Citizen Barnabé asked him what he thought of Montalembert's last speech on the events of the Sonderbund, "a speech which was one long, envenomed satire against our fathers of 1793." "I recognise no father of 1793," replied Lacordaire courageously. "I know that in 1789 there were men who wanted to destroy a great many abuses, men who fought for that destruction. Those men, resolute in their wills and in their struggles, those are they whom I call my fathers."

Finally, Citizen Clémencey directly challenged him on the passage in his letter on the Holy See in which he called the republican party "a faction of which one is not right in speaking ill, because it has opportunities for cutting off your head in the interval between two monarchies." The attack was embarrassing, but Lacordaire extricated himself cleverly. He admitted that before the 24th of February there was not an atom of republicanism in his whole person, but he pleaded as "a valid excuse" that at the period when he entered life "the liberal spirit was at its height, and had approved of the charter and the constitution." He could not therefore have alone opposed the magnanimous wish of the nation. If he had spoken in a hard manner of the Republic, it was because it had always presented itself to his mind as a dark and blood-stained scaffold. But to-day he was proud and satisfied that though he had thought ill of it, yet he had not seen his gloomy forecasts realised. And when Citizen Clémencey, dissatisfied with this answer, asked Lacordaire what the Church, which was in a false position towards the Republic, intended to do in

order to reconcile herself definitely with the age, and in what manner she meant to rejuvenate herself so as to become the creed of the young Republic, he gave Lacordaire an opportunity for a fine burst of eloquence on the reconciliation of the new generation with that antique generation of truth which is called the Church. "I do not easily comprehend," he exclaimed, "what opposition there can be between two things so admirable as the liberty of the people and the old Catholic doctrine which created the people, for before Jesus Christ, before the Gospel, there was no people, there were only masters and slaves. . . . Equality! Liberty! How can the Republic which inscribes that device on the portals of its temples be in opposition with the Church? I do not believe that the reconciliation still remains to be made; I believe on the contrary, that it is made, and if that people which we ourselves have placed in the world would abandon its ancient prejudices, if they and we, I say, wish to be reconciled, I do not see who can prevent us."

This eloquent peroration was covered with applause, and Lacordaire left the meeting without, on the whole, having torn his monk's robe. He seems, however, to have entertained some scruples on the eve of the election, for he wrote a signed article in the "Ere Nouvelle" in which he declared that the political *rôle* of the clergy seemed to him only a transitory accident. The people of Paris had, in his view, consecrated the priest. The priest was therefore a Frenchman, a citizen, a republican; he could come forward as a candidate, and he ought to do so, for to retire at such a moment was to give up military service in the hour of battle. But once the Republic was constituted, the priest would again find himself in the presence of a nation extremely jealous of the dis-

inction between the two powers, and endowed with an exquisite taste that is keenly wounded by the least discord. "The clergy of France," he added, "will never without damage expose themselves to the influence of political passions. However eloquent they may be, however devoted, they will appear less great in the tribune than in the humble pulpit where the country parish priest brings forward the glory of his age and the simplicity of his virtue."

Closely allied as Lacordaire was with them, the Republicans opposed him vehemently at Paris. Even a section of the clergy declared against him, and whilst the Abbé de Guerry, the parish priest of Saint-Eustache, was elected, Lacordaire only obtained a quite insufficient number of votes. It was the same in the other Departments where he was a candidate. He had therefore grounds for believing that he had failed in his legitimate ambition, when he learned that, having been placed at the last moment and without his knowledge on the list for Bouches-du-Rhone, he was one of those elected. Three bishops and twenty priests were elected along with him.

This unexpected result could only encourage Lacordaire in the hope he had conceived of witnessing the foundation of a truly Catholic republic. His letters at the time show his exaltation. "Everything we see is a miracle," he wrote to Madame de Prailly; and in a letter to M. Foisset he said, "I am not Saint Bernard; and Saint Bernard, a man of penitence and solitude, never resisted the call that kings or peoples made to him." There was one last occasion on which he could still compare himself with Saint Bernard acclaimed by the people. That was the 4th of May, the date of the opening of the National Assembly. On that day, on the proposal of one



LACORDAIRE

From a lithograph by Llanta, 1848

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of its members, the National Assembly decided to proceed to the peristyle of the Legislative Palace and to proclaim the Republic there. Lacordaire's white and black costume marked him out among his colleagues. He was recognised and cheered by name, and he walked down as far as the railings. Hands were stretched through the bars to grasp his, and as the Assembly went round the Palace to return by another door, Lacordaire was followed during this procession by an applauding crowd. For a last time he could believe that the people consecrated him as priest, as citizen, and as republican. But his illusions as to the people's real feelings were destined to be of short duration.

"Persons of importance" had advised Lacordaire to take his seat at the Assembly either in a short cassock or dressed as a Frenchman. At the last moment he refused, and it was in his Dominican habit that he took his seat on the highest bench of the recess to the extreme left, at the top of what was called the "Mountain." He believed that by this he gave a pledge of his adhesion. "It was an error," he has himself written, an error of which he ought to have been warned when he saw Lamennais take his seat on the same benches some rows beneath him. What glances, what words, were exchanged between them, no one knows. It has been related that, Lamennais having said in his first speech, "When I was a priest," an interrupter answered, "Sir, one is always a priest," and that the interrupter was Lacordaire. But none of his serious biographers mentions the affair, and it is a mere legend.

Lacordaire only spoke twice from the tribune. On the first occasion it was to resist the direct nomination of Ministers by the Assembly; on



the second, in reference to an allusion made by Portalis, the Attorney-General, to the costume he wore, "a costume prohibited by the law." Lacordaire took up this unseemly remark with dignity, and explained that what his habit represented at the Assembly was "the Republic itself, triumphant, generous, just, consistent with herself." On both occasions his oratory produced little effect. Would he have been able to transform it by condensing it and giving it the sober, vivid, and sometimes sharpened form that political eloquence ought to take? It is impossible to say. Events left him no time for this.

On May 15th the National Assembly was invaded by those very people of Paris who, eleven days before, were acclaiming the Republic and Lacordaire. Let us allow Lacordaire himself to relate the impression this made upon him. "We remained for three hours defenceless against the opprobrium of a spectacle in which blood was not shed, in which perhaps the danger was not very great, but in which honour had all the more to suffer. The people, if it was the people, had insulted its representatives without any other end than to make them understand that they were at its mercy. It had not covered the Assembly with a red cap, as the consecrated head of Louis XVI had been covered; but it had taken away its crown from it, and it had taken its own dignity from itself, whether it was the people or whether it was not. During those long hours I had only one thought, which continually recurred under this monotonous and implacable formula—the 'Republic is lost.'"

For Lacordaire himself, the danger was at one moment greater than he ever knew. "Do you see that vulture there?" said a man of the people to one of his comrades; "I should like very much

to go and twist his neck." "The comparison seemed to me admirable," adds Tocqueville, who relates the anecdote in his "Reminiscences." "The long and bony neck of the Father coming out of his white cowl, his bald head surrounded by only a circle of hair, his narrow face, his hooked nose, his fixed and brilliant eyes set closely together, gave him, in truth, a resemblance, that impressed me, to the bird of prey which the man mentioned."

The blow was a rough one, and the disillusion was as complete as it was rapid. With a single glance he measured the depth of the error into which he had fallen. He understood that the people, whom he had dreamed of reconciling with the Church, were not disposed to allow themselves to be governed by her; he understood that if, in part thanks to his own efforts, the number of Catholics was much greater in France than it had been immediately after 1830, yet it was an idle fancy to count on a purely Catholic majority; lastly, he understood that his generous dreams of social fraternity were threatened by passions against which it would be impossible not to oppose force, that an era of violent struggles was going to begin, and that the cruel necessities of those struggles would put the representative of a God of mercy to too rough a trial. As he had recognised and proclaimed his error of 1830, with the same frankness, with the same honesty, he recognised and proclaimed his error of 1848. Three days after the events of May 15th, he sent letters in which he announced his resignation both to the President of the National Assembly and to the electors of Bouches-du-Rhone. Experience had shown him, he said in his letter to the President, "that he would be unable in his person to reconcile the pacific duties of the re-

ligious life with the difficult and severe duties of a representative of the people." And he added in his letter to the electors: "I understood that in a political assembly impartiality led to powerlessness and isolation, that it was necessary to choose one's camp and throw oneself into it without any reserve. I could not decide to do this. My retirement was thenceforward inevitable, and I have effected it."

At a distance of time, the confession of an error makes a man greater. At the time itself, it lessens him. Lacordaire had the feeling of this lessening. He came to his decision not without pain, but with touching humility. "It is very hard," he wrote, "to seem to lack consistency and energy, but it is far harder still to resist the instincts of one's conscience. I would never have believed that I could have so much horror of political life. I have found myself to be a little monk, and not at all a Richelieu, a little monk loving retirement and peace."

The days of June finished the overthrow of his political faith, which he himself admitted "had never been likely to live." Accordingly, some months afterwards he came to a determination which was the natural consequence of his new state of mind: that of giving up the "Ère Nouvelle," the programme of which, growing more and more audacious, had ceased to be his. He came to an understanding on the matter with the Abbé Maret in a very noble letter which the Abbé Bazin has published in his very interesting life of the late Dean of the Faculty of Theology. "It was my duty," he said, "to foresee whether I was not going beyond my strength in taking up a course hitherto foreign to my habits of mind. It was my duty to recognise, to know, that I was very much of a novice as a democrat, and that I

would be incapable, without an energetic conviction, of bringing to an end the work I was beginning with you. I confess this. God will judge it. He will judge if the need of devoting myself to His cause can excuse the temerity there was in engaging myself in a course of which I was not sure."

His democratic convictions, which had never been very solid, were in truth singularly shaken, for some months afterwards he wrote to a friend: "Doubtless it is the Gospel that has founded liberty in the world, that has declared men equal before God, that has preached the ideas and the deeds of fraternity; and, if you wish, you can call this *democracy*. But that word, according to its etymology, rather expresses the meaning of government by the people. Now I do not clearly see that there is necessarily more liberty, equality, or fraternity in a democracy taken in that sense than under a monarchy. That may or may not be the case. It is a question, and for my own part, I believe it is, to say the least, an open question."

As the question seemed to him an open one, he willingly remained aloof from the eager struggles of parties that marked the whole duration of the National Assembly and the Legislative Assembly. He did not wish to join himself with the action of those of his friends who already looked to the reconciliation of the two branches of the House of Bourbon—to what was then called the *fusion*—for a remedy for the dangers which everybody foresaw. The Catholics in a first moment of enthusiasm had accepted the Republic. He regarded them as pledged; in his eyes a recantation would have dishonoured them and would have allowed them to be no longer regarded as anything more than "the humble flunkeys of any events that fortune favoured."

Neither did he approve of the alliance contracted between the Catholics, represented by M. de Falloux and M. de Montalembert, and the Liberals, represented by M. Cousin and M. Thiers. It seemed to him to be inspired by reactionary and middle-class feeling. "The separation," he wrote, referring to some of his most intimate friends, "is complete and irremediable. . . . It was a question of knowing if to the fear of revolutions we should sacrifice oppressed nationalities, civil and religious liberties, the interests of the poor ; if Europe should fall back into the arms of Austria and Russia, to secure anew in that Holy Alliance the restored reign of a selfish, rationalist, and Voltairian middle-class ; if, in a word, we should choose M. Thiers instead of Providence." Thus he took no part in the campaign, which resulted in the law of 1850 on liberty of teaching, and it was not many years before, that, in doing justice to that law, he called it by the happy name of "the nineteenth-century Edict of Nantes." But in the voluntary isolation to which he restricted himself, he had no illusion in regard to the final issue. "The branches of absolutism," he wrote, "will shoot forth as the sole counterpoise to the furies of demagoguery ; the middle-class will applaud through fear, the clergy through hope, and the cannon of the Invalides will be fired to proclaim an era of order, of peace, and of religion." And in another letter : "I see all over Europe a hurrying towards despotism which forebodes frightful revolutions for the rest of my days, and as I shall not deviate one line from the course on which my mind has entered, I may expect persecution which will be all the sharper, as I shall be alone in my sentiments. Europe will pass into despotism ; she will not remain in it, and even should she

remain in it, I shall live and die protesting for the civilisation of the Gospel against the civilisation of the sabre and the knout."

Such was his disposition of mind in the last months of the year 1851; and if he lacked clearness of view on the morrow of 1848, he had certainly profited by experience, for it was impossible to throw a more prophetic glance on the future of France and of Europe. On March 9th, 1851, he had begun a Lenten course of sermons at Notre-Dame before a congregation more eager than ever to listen to his oratory. Nothing could have led to the anticipation that this course was to be the last he would preach, and yet in the closing sermon he could not prevent himself from speaking to his hearers as if he were addressing them his farewell. "I have reached," he said to them, "that middle stage in life's journey in which man strips off his youth and descends along a rapid incline to helplessness and oblivion. I ask no better, since this is the fate which a just Providence assigns to us; but, at least, at this parting of the ways, whence I can yet once more behold the times that are almost ended, you will not envy me the pleasure of throwing one glance backward, of calling to mind with you, who were my companions on the road, some of the memories which make this cathedral and yourselves so dear to me." He then addressed a magnificent invocation to those vaults of Notre-Dame, under whose shadow the greatest events of his life had taken place. It was there, when his soul had opened again to the light, that pardon had descended on his faults, and that he had received God for the second time. It was there that, after long wanderings, he had found the secret of his predestination in that pulpit, which for fifteen years had been surrounded by respect and by honour. It was



there that, on his return from voluntary exile, he had brought back the religious habit, and obtained for it the triumph of unanimous respect. It was there, lastly, that all the affections which consoled his life had been born, and that, as a lonely man, unknown to the great, removed from parties, aloof from the places where crowds assemble and connections are formed, he had met the souls that had loved him. And in a last outburst, he exclaimed: "And you, gentlemen, already a numerous generation, in whom I have perhaps sown the seeds of some truths and some virtues, I shall remain united with you in the future as I have been in the past; but if the day comes when my strength proves too weak for my will, if you should come to despise what will then be left of a voice that once was dear to you, know that you will never be ungrateful, for nothing henceforth can prevent you from having been the glory of my life, and the crown of my eternity." And then, leaving his hearers under the emotion of these unexpected words, he slowly descended the steps of the pulpit of Notre-Dame which he was never to mount again.

Nine months afterwards came the *coup d'état* of December 2nd. The event was so much anticipated that it does not appear (so far, it is true, as one can judge by letters transmitted through the post) to have caused Lacordaire any very keen emotion. However, he at once perceived the dangers of a military intervention in the legal life of a country. Nor did he share the illusions of those of his friends who believed that the Socialists alone would have to smart for the *coup d'état*, and that Catholics and Liberals would not have to suffer through it. "The violation of the constitution of a country by military force," he wrote, "is always a great public calamity which prepares



new blows of fortune for the future, as well as the progressive degradation of the social order. Nothing counterbalances the violation of the moral order on a great scale. Even success forms part of the evil ; it gives birth to imitators who are no longer discouraged. Political scepticism seizes on souls, and they are always ready to deliver up the world to the first comer who promises them gold and tranquillity."

What then was the attitude which Lacordaire desired to see the Church taking towards this new Government, the third whose accession he had witnessed? There could no longer be any question of the absolute separation of which he had dreamed in 1830, or of the freely accepted domination of which he had thought in 1848. What he would have liked was that, while recognising the Government which had incontestably been acclaimed by a majority of the country, while correctly discharging the duties that the Concordat imposed on them, the French clergy should not make the cause of that Government their own, and that they should adopt towards it an attitude of respectful independence, so that the Church would neither be compromised by its faults nor shaken by its fall. He would have liked, above all, that nothing should be done which savoured of servility or recantation, and that the Church should not seem to take sides against the conquered. One can judge of the attitude he would have liked to see taken from that which he prescribed for his own Order. In regard to an official ceremony which had been fixed to take place a short time after the *coup d'état*, this is what he wrote to the Superior of one of the houses he had founded : "In such circumstances as these we ought to do what is strictly necessary and nothing more : what is necessary, because neutrality is our principle in

politics ; nothing more, because the dignity of all honest convictions and respect for them are another principle which guides us and ought always to guide us."

For some months he could hope that this attitude would be that of the French episcopate. Doubtless, in a religious journal which thenceforward began to exercise a considerable influence, an eloquent voice had addressed a pressing appeal to Catholics, asking them to give the co-operation of their votes to the Prince-President in the plebiscite of December 20th. But that was merely political advice given by a layman to laymen. The bishops kept themselves in strict reserve. Only five of them had pronounced in this same sense, though with great moderation. It was not the same when seven millions of votes had shown the strength of the new power and given a presentiment of its continuance. The episcopate no longer held back. A journey which the Prince-President made to the south of France provided them with an opportunity for making public their feelings. The exercise of their functions obliged the bishops to present their clergy to the President in the towns at which he stopped. This gave a great many of them an opportunity for addressing speeches to him, whose tone recalled those of the bishops of the First Empire. Others, who had no opportunity of approaching the new Cæsar, consoled themselves by the fervency of their Charges. Among the bishops who distinguished themselves in this rivalry, one could have found some of those who had acknowledged the Republic with most alacrity. Thus the bishop of Amiens, Mgr. de Salinis, had written in 1848: "The people has had the Divine understanding of the natural alliance between Catholicism and liberty." But in a pastoral letter addressed to his diocese on

the occasion of the restoration of the Empire, he developed the theory that when the Church encounters Cæsar her duty is to go to him and offer him not only peace but an alliance. "We are therefore resolved," wrote Mgr. de Salinis, "to give the Emperor our most loyal co-operation, and we engage ourselves to aid him in accomplishing the providential mission with which he has been entrusted."

As a simple monk, Lacordaire had merely to keep silence, but on the morrow of the *coup d'état* an important question presented itself to him—that of the resumption of his sermons at Notre-Dame. Mgr. Sibour pressed him to resume them. He refused. "I understood," he wrote later, "that in my thought, in my language, in my past, I myself was also a liberty, and that it was my part to disappear like other liberties." Moreover, he only deferred to the wishes of his direct superior, Father Jaudel, and in a letter to Madame de Prailly, after indicating this reason for his refusal, he added: "I thought that I could not preach my sermons this winter, amidst the silence of the Press and of public opinion, without exposing the pulpit of Notre-Dame to the risk of becoming a dangerous meeting-place for the friends and the enemies of the new power. The oppression of the time would have been an increasing inducement for me to make some attacks upon despotism, and these would have been made out to be greater than I intended them. I have preferred to be silent; I have found that silence is prudent and dignified, and in its own way is a form of mourning for our vanished liberties."

It was the misfortune of the Empire, and it suffered the penalty for this until its end, that it had thus closed the mouths of the men who had most generosity of character and independence

of spirit. When, later, the forces of repression were worn out, and it wished to give play to those of liberty, it did not find among those who were devoted to it anyone who was able to set these in motion. Lacordaire was, however, to make himself heard once more in Paris, in 1853. This was in Saint Roch, in that very church in which, twenty years before, his first attempt had led his friends to say that he would never be a preacher. He had accepted an invitation to preach a sermon there on behalf of the free Christian schools. Did he fear that his silence might seem to be acquiescence? Did he simply wish, at a time of which M. Guizot could say that its "servility was greater than its servitude," to give an example of boldness? However that may be, he chose as the text for his sermon these words from the Bible, "Esto vir"—"Be a man," and as his subject, the greatness of character. He put the question whether greatness of character is a virtue and a duty for the Christian. One can imagine what his answer was. "Every time," he exclaimed, "that we wish to have great, strong, generous impulses, then, in spite of ourselves, we turn away our heads from this abject soil that we trample beneath our feet and we raise them towards heaven to seek sublime inspiration there; we ask from that Creator of Whom our conscience is the glorious reflection, not for what will succeed, or for what will assist us in the opinion of men and in the favour of princes, but for what is written in the soul, because what is written in the soul is written in God. We look at heaven which is our country, and thence we derive strength to despise all events, whatever they may be—strength to perform in the face of God, of men, and of our conscience, acts inspired by duty and for the good of others."

He went on to show the resistance that character has always been able to oppose to force. "God took a man," he said, "whom He invested with a formidable power, a man who was called great, but who was not great enough not to abuse his power. He plunged him into a contest, for a number of years, with the old man of the Vatican, and at the height of his triumphs it was the old man who was the conqueror." He then showed this same man struggling with Spain, "that nation made by monks," and he added: "Spain had the signal honour of being the first cause of the ruin of that man and of the deliverance of the world." It was before an immense congregation which filled not only the whole nave but also the side chapels, that, in a vibrant voice, with outstretched arm and menacing forefinger, he uttered these words. "There passed," says an eye-witness, "a tremor through the crowd like that caused by the wind in a forest." Lacordaire saw the impression his words produced. "I know," he said, interrupting himself, "that it does not need an army to stop me from speaking here, it only needs a soldier; but in order to defend my speech and the truth that is in it, God has given me something that is able to withstand all the empires in the world." His audacity appeared so great that some of his hearers asked themselves whether, on the morrow, some exceptional measure would not be put in force against him. The result showed the eternal truth of M. Guizot's saying. The sermon, indeed, received no publicity; but the "Moniteur Officiel" had the good taste to praise it, and Lacordaire was able to leave Paris a few days later.

He went to Toulouse. The interests of his Order summoned him thither. He preached there, in 1854, his famous sermons "On Life," of which

I have already spoken. For the last time his words sounded forth in public, in the old church of Saint-Étienne, and with a renown the echoes of which still reached me after an interval of forty years. More modest occupations were to absorb the last years of his life.

The management of the old Royal Military School, which the Benedictines had founded at Sorèze, was offered him by the new administration. He accepted, not without some sadness, measuring the sacrifice, and submitting to it out of a spirit of humility and obedience to his superiors. "*Viventi hospitium, morienti sepulchrum, utrique beneficium*"—"A refuge for the living, a tomb for the dying, a benefit for both," he said, speaking of the place where in truth he was going to bury himself, and which he was hardly ever to leave again. However, he had always been fond of young people. He accordingly devoted himself with the passion that he brought to everything to the education of a new generation of Catholics. There was in the heart of this monk as it were the tardy dawning of a last feeling, paternal love. Sometimes he went so far as to regret that he had not adopted a child who would have been the son of his soul and to whom he would have made the gift of himself. "But I have feared ingratitude," he added, "and that fear makes me still hesitate to-day. I would have loved him so much that if he had slighted my love in God he would have done a deep hurt to the weakness of my human nature. He would have killed it." If he had no adopted son, we can, however, say that all the pupils of Sorèze became his children. Up to his death they absorbed his whole time and care. He prepared the addresses he delivered to them every Sunday with as much application as he formerly did his sermons in



Notre-Dame, and in them he exhausted all that was left of his strength. His voice failed him in one of the last instructions which he gave. "My sword has rusted, gentlemen," said he, interrupting himself, "but I can say that it is at your service." Another incident will show the solicitude with which the direction of those young souls inspired him. At the time of his candidature for the French Academy, Lacordaire had to spend some days in Paris. He had promised that he would return to Sorèze on a certain Saturday. It was desired to retain him that day for an important interview. "No," he answered; "that is the day on which I hear confessions, and one cannot know what trouble a delayed confession may cause in the life of a soul."

His educational methods would be equally interesting to study. The small size of this volume does not allow me to speak of them as I should have desired. I should have liked to draw a parallel between these methods and those of our university establishments, and also with those usually followed in ecclesiastical establishments. I should have liked to show how, in order to maintain discipline, he depended less on supervision than on confidence, on punishment than on honour, and how he occupied himself with forming Catholics who would also be men and Frenchmen. He endeavoured to exalt two things in his pupils—character, and love of country; character, which he called "the secret and constant energy of the will, a something which is immovable in its designs, more immovable still in its fidelity to itself, to its convictions, to its friendships, to its virtues; an inward force which springs out of the person and inspires in everyone that certainty which we call security"; and love of country, which, in one of his "Letters to a Young



Man on the Christian Life," inspired him with this fine passage: "Our country is our Church in time just as the Church is our country in eternity. . . . It is the soil that has seen our birth, the blood and the home of our fathers, the love of our parents, the memories of our childhood, our traditions, our laws, our customs, our liberties, our history, and our religion: it is everything that we believe and everything that we love." Thus he endeavoured to interest these young people in the destinies of France. If politics were naturally banished from the lessons at Sorèze, he did not, however, teach them that they should belong to no party, or that they should change their party according to circumstances. He did not say to them: "Be Catholics, and be nothing else." He said to them, on the contrary, in a familiar discourse: "Have an opinion. Provided it is not an exaggerated one, it will always be honourable; but, and this I beg of you, count for something; know how to will and to will seriously. It is not a question of pride but of dignity. In our age hardly anybody knows how to will. Do you, then, the first of the young people whom I lead into the world (he was addressing some pupils who were going to leave Sorèze), although God did not place you for long in my hands, do you, I beg, act on these words, *Have an opinion*. If you do, you will be great citizens; if not, you will dishonour your country—perhaps you will sell it."

The schoolmaster had condemned the preacher to silence; he left, however, some leisure to the writer. Lacordaire profited by this to write a "Life of Saint Mary Magdalene." I am a little embarrassed about speaking of this "Life." It is one of his most popular works. I cannot say that it is one of those which please me most. On the



LACORDAIRE

From the bust by Bonnassieux

*To face p. 184*



morning of its publication, Barbey d'Aureville said : " This book has all the corruptions of the time—its unwholesome sentimentality, its individualism, its false mysticism, its involuntary rationalism." I cannot subscribe to this severe judgment by the author of the " Diaboliques " and " Une Vieille Maîtresse," but I must confess that in some passages, and perhaps in the very conception of the book, a certain exquisite measure seems to me to be sometimes a little exceeded. However, I shall not be so rigorous as to wish that this book was never written, for we should have lost the delightful pages on friendship that open the volume, and, here and there, some piercing touches that reach the heart. For instance, the meeting of Christ with Mary Magdalene after His resurrection : " ' Jesus said unto her, Mary. She turneth herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni ; which is to say, Master.' Mary ! Oh ! what an accent that word had ! Alas ! even here below how sweet our name is in the mouth of a friend, and how far it penetrates into the painful depths of our being ! And if it was God Who uttered it in a low voice ! If it was God, dead for us, raised from the dead for us, Who called us by our name, what echo would it not stir in the infinite depths of our wretchedness ! Mary Magdalene heard everything in her name ; she heard the mystery of the resurrection which she did not understand ; she heard in it the love of her Saviour, and in that love she recognised Him. ' Master,' she answered ; a word sufficed for her, as a word had sufficed for the Son of God. The greater the love of souls for one another, the briefer is their language."

Lacordaire's last years were sad. If, in truth, there be an ordeal which is cruel to a generous and sometimes rather visionary spirit such as his, it is to see events giving the lie to anticipations

and hopes that have long been cherished. He had dreamed of an alliance in France between the Church and liberty; he saw the Church seeking an alliance with power. He had preached independence and dignity to her; he saw her seeking to purchase favours by services. He had undertaken to mould Catholics for the exercise of liberty, to teach them to employ the weapons of common right; he saw them for the most part loudly denying liberty, insulting those who remained faithful to it, and "saluting Cæsar with an acclamation that would have excited the contempt of a Tiberius." This was his great sorrow, and the fidelity of a few friends could not succeed in assuaging it. In the pages which he dictated from his death-bed he recalled the memory of this trial in measured terms. "Many Catholics, repenting of what they had said and what they had done, threw themselves eagerly into the arms of absolute power. This schism, which I do not wish here to call an apostasy, has always been a great mystery and a great grief to me. History will tell what its reward was."

The danger to the Church of lending herself to a campaign of reaction haunted his mind to such a degree that, thirteen years before, he had already written: "The 'Ami de la Religion' and the 'Univers' will bring it about that, in the next rising, people will fall upon the churches and the priests; I do not want to have my share in this frightful result." His correspondence with Madame Swetchine is full of eloquent cries, torn from him by the attitude of certain Catholics. Sometimes he could not restrain himself, and he directly challenged those whose notorious changes revolted his feeling of honour. Thus he wrote to Mgr. de Salinis, the old friend of Lamennais and the author of the strange "Charge"

of which I have spoken, a letter that I should like to be able to quote in its entirety, so proud is its tone. It ends thus: "For myself, my consolation, in the midst of such moral wretchedness, is to live alone, engaged in a work that God blesses, protesting by my silence, and from time to time by my words, against the greatest insolence that has ever been authorised in the name of Jesus Christ." Almost at the same date he wrote to a friend: "I think like you about all that we see. But such are men. We must keep erect in the middle of their abasement, and thank God for having given us a soul capable of not bending before the wretchedness that success crowns." To keep erect is the example that Lacordaire has always given, and it is a counsel that is always good.

With this generous sadness there was mingled a still closer feeling. The man who had loved his age so much, who believed he understood it and was understood by it, suffered from feeling himself so isolated at that period, so far apart from the new movement that urged it forward and that caused it to prefer industrial progress to liberal ideas. "I am," he said, "like an old lion who has travelled in the deserts, and who, seated on his four noble paws, looks before him, with a rather melancholy air, at the sea and its waves." Melancholy in truth was gaining upon the old lion, and he could not prevent himself from ending one of his letters to Madame Swetchine with these words: "Farewell, dear friend, life is sad and bitter! God alone puts a little joy into it. It is He Who is going to give me that of seeing you again, and again telling you how much I love you in your old age, you who have experienced so much, and of saying how every day I remember all the good that you have done me."

When I visited Sorèze, I was shown the little cell in which his last days were passed. It is approached by a staircase surmounted by a little landing; in front extends a long walk bordered by plane-trees. It was here he used to walk as he read his Breviary, and, in the distance, his white frock and black mantle used to be seen coming and going between the double line of trees. Sometimes, when the evening was fine, he sat on the landing, and plunged into reflections the subject of which no one dared to ask him. It must have been on one of those evenings that, when he went back into his cell, he wrote these lines which date from some years before his death: "When a man has spent his life in disinterested work, and when at the end of a long career he sees the difficulty of things gaining on desires and efforts, the soul, without detaching itself from what is good, experiences the bitterness of unrewarded sacrifice, and it turns toward God with a melancholy which virtue condemns, but which Divine goodness pardons."

A last trial still remained for him. At fifty-eight years of age he felt his body failing his soul. In the month of May, 1860, already very much weakened, he had wished to go to Saint-Maximin, in the Department of the Var, in order to be present at the translation of the relics of Saint Mary Magdalene. He had to stop on the way, and then to return to Sorèze. "It is the first time," he wrote, "that my body has conquered my will." When, in the month of January following, he went to Paris to deliver his reception address at the French Academy, his paleness was attributed to the emotion caused by that solemn session. But that paleness was already the pallor of death. Youth, health, and vigour were entirely on the side of M. Guizot who received him, and



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it was a curious spectacle to see the Protestant welcoming the Dominican. The Order of Friars Preachers gained there its last triumph. Lacordaire returned to Sorèze, where he still lingered for several months, without illusion and without hope, but at least surrounded, from near and far, by the passionate solicitude and affection of all the souls he had loved, and all the lives he had influenced for good. His death was slow and painful. It lasted three days. He had lost the power of speech, but his intellect was still alive. Suddenly, in a supreme convulsion, he drew himself up in his bed, and cried out: "My God! my God! open unto me! open unto me!" This cry of anguish and of hope was the last which that eloquent mouth uttered. On the next day, November 21st, 1861, he died. "More light," Goethe said, at the moment when death began to dim his eyes. Lacordaire had not to ask for more light, for his faith believed that it had received light in fulness, and on the terrible threshold his humility doubted of nothing but himself.

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