

The Guardian of 13th January 1916

THE CHURCH IN PORTUGAL.

SIR—I have lately received a number of letters—more than I am able to answer—from Bishops, priests, and laymen, from England, Switzerland, and America, asking for information concerning the state of the Church in Portugal, so I feel sure that the following, which I will make as short as possible, will be interesting to many of your readers.

There is a dark side and, thank God, also a bright side to the state of the Church in Portugal. It is unbappily true that the standard of morality among the Roman Catholic priests in Portugal is lower than would be tolerated in any country of Northern or Central Europe, and this has a baneful effect upon the laity and diminishes the influence of the clergy. The Portuguese peasants are generally superstitious and prone to follow idolatrous practices, to an extent hardly credible in Northern Europe, which are condemned by the Council of Trent and certainly not authorised officially by the Roman Church, yet these practices are winked at, or passed over by a large body of the clergy, and even encouraged by some of them, much to the detriment of spiritual religion. The Law of Separation of the Churches from the State has confiscated Church property, except the church edifices, impoverished the clergy, greatly curtailed their influence, and, worse than all, prohibits them from taking part in the internal management of the churches. So many priests are suffering real want, if not starvation, and a considerable number of churches in poor parishes in the country districts are closed, and the number of these is likely to increase, much to the detriment of religion.

Now for the bright side. Although the

clergy are impoverished and their influence greatly curtailed by the withdrawal of the register of births, deaths, and marriages from their hands, yet certainly the majority, we are glad to say, are more active and zealous than they used to be. Most of the Bishops are doing all they can to keep open the churches in the poor parishes, and they have instructed all the parochial clergy always to read and to explain the Gospel of the day while celebrating Mass on Sundays and Church Festivals, and this is producing good results. The vernacular and the singing of hymns are used at special services, and in the Church Offices much more than formerly, and this edifies and pleases the laity. Mass, except in Lisbon (which is largely materialistic) and to some extent in a few large towns, is better attended than it used to be. Pamphlets with the Gospel of the day and spiritual instruction are distributed gratis at the church-doors, and this tends to please, also to interest the poorer class. Classes for the instruction of the young are regularly held by most of the parochial clergy twice a week, on Sundays before or after Mass, also on Thursdays, as this is a holiday in all the Government schools.

Modernism, which we read has increased in Italy, is hardly known in Portugal, yet it cannot be disputed that many of the clergy, with whom we are on friendly terms, and a large body of the laity, while firmly maintaining the whole of the Catholic Faith, are favourably disposed towards the reform of abuses, the removal of scandals, and the abolition of indulgences, advocate the marriage of the clergy and the use of the vernacular in the services of the Church. All this meets with the approval of the laity in general. A number of the clergy, certainly many dozens, and probably several hundreds, although it is difficult to say how many, have contracted marriage before the civil Registrars, so of course are no longer acknowledged by the Bishops; yet some of them, protected by the Government and supported by the laity, continue to hold their posts, to say Mass and administer the Sacraments.

DIOGO CASSELS, Priest-in-Charge of the Church of St. Juan Evangelista; also of the Church of Salvador do Mundo.

Gaia, Portugal.

The Guardian of 18th May 1916

The LUSITANIAN CHURCH Catholic, Apostolic, Evangelical.

Father José do Nascimento Neves, who five years ago left the Church of Rome for conscientious reasons, married and remained in charge of the small and poor parish of St. Bartholomew, Lourintia, until he was literally starved out, has come to Gaia, where he expects to support his family by teaching, and, as he is a highly educated, talented, thoroughly Evangelical priest and a most eloquent orator, has preached with great acceptance to full congregations in the four Lusitanian Churches of this township, says that—A number of priests, who have married and left the Church of Rome, also several congregations (their number is certain to increase), are anxious to join the Lusitanian Church, C.A.E., but will not do so until her Catholic organisation should be completed by the consecration of a native-born Bishop; also no foreign JURISDICTION, OVERSIGHT, or CONTROL can be allowed:—

Because it saps the vitals, retards self-support, destroys independence, and is contrary to our general basis and Liturgy.

Because it is contrary to the invariable rule and practice for thirty years since our organisation. Our great friend Lord Plunket, late Archbishop of Dublin, and Dr. Stack, late Bishop of Clogher, each in all his visits to Portugal always said:—"I come here at the invitation of your Synod to perform those Episcopal functions which only a Bishop can perform, and I have no desire whatever to exercise the least jurisdiction or interference in your Church."

Because it is contrary to the laws of Portugal, which it is our duty to obey.

Because it is against the wishes of the great majority of the lay members of our Communion, and the whole of public opinion.

Because it entirely prevents the progress and extension of essentially a National branch of the Catholic Church, and is more prejudicial to our development than the withdrawal of grants in aid.

"O Lord, in Thee have we trusted; let us never be confounded."

DIOGO CASSELS.

Gaia, Portugal

THE LUSITANIAN CHURCH, CATHOLIC, APOSTOLIC, EVANGELICAL.

At a public meeting of the members of the Churches of S. Juan Evangelista and of Salvador do Mundo, Gaia, also of the Gremio da Juventude Evangelica (a Y.M.C.A.), of Oporto, held on Sunday, February 4th, the following resolutions were unanimously voted by acclamation:—

We are grateful to our friends in England for paying the stipends of some of the priests and teachers of the Lusitanian Church, Catholic, Apostolic, Evangelical.

We are grateful to the members of our Council of Bishops for having kindly watched over the integrity and purity of our Liturgy and formulæ, and we are much obliged to them for having occasionally visited us at the invitation of our Synod to ordain and confirm. But no "foreign jurisdiction," "oversight," or "control" can be allowed, because it is contrary to our general basis and Liturgy, contrary to the invariable use and practice for more than thirty years after our organisation in 1880; because foreign superintendence or control is against the laws of Portugal, which it is our duty to obey; also against the wishes of the great majority of lay-members of our Communion and the whole of public opinion in Portugal.

ANY FOREIGN JURISDICTION, OVERSIGHT, OR CONTROL, even when exercised with good intention, greatly debars the progress and extension of a truly Catholic and essentially National Church in a country like Portugal, so jealous of any foreign oversight; also prevents priests who have left the Church of Rome for conscientious reasons, and whole congregations who are asking for a married clergy and a vernacular Liturgy from joining the Lusitanian Church C.A.E.

No new member, however eminent, can be appointed on our Council of Bishops unless he is first elected by our General Synod. Our Synod never has delegated and never can delegate its powers to nominate ministers, to license preachers, to cancel licences to any foreign Bishops or other entity. We only desire that the general basis, Liturgy and formulæ of our Church (which were welcomed by the last Lambeth Conference as "in close accord with Catholic standards," also warmly praised by several Old Catholic Bishops) shall be kept and observed.

Foreign oversight or control is more prejudicial to the development and enlargement of an independent, truly Catholic, National Church than the withdrawal of any pecuniary aid.

PROGRESS AND SELF-SUPPORT.—The Annual Report of the congregations of S. Juan Evangelista and of Salvador do Mundo show that during the last 13 months one hundred and five new members were enrolled, and after deducting all who died or removed elsewhere, there are now three hundred and five contributors on the parochial registry (the great majority being communicants). So, including the children of the members, also many adherents who are not regular contributors, there are at least ten hundred members belonging to these two congregations.

In Portugal we are suffering much more than in England or France by the rise in prices. Poverty is rampant, as we have not the advantage of the circulation of money caused by the great expenditure on Government orders, and the cost of living is a very difficult situation; yet even so, the congregation, consisting almost entirely of the working-class, contributed considerably more last year than any other previous year: altogether the amount given or collected

a duplicate

The Guardian of 22 Feb 1916

THE CHURCH ABROAD.

THE LUSITANIAN CHURCH AND THE IRISH BISHOPS.

[From a Correspondent.]

At a full meeting of the Permanent Committee of the Lusitanian Church, held recently at Lisbon, it was decided to ask the Bishop of Tuam to inform the Archbishop of Dublin that he had been unanimously elected a member of the Council of Bishops, and to request him to accept the vacant place. The Rev. André B. Cassels proposed that another memorial should be sent through the Council of Bishops of the Lusitanian Church to the Bench of Irish Bishops meeting at Armagh praying them (when the European conflagration permitted) to consecrate a native-born Bishop for the Lusitanian Church. The draft of the memorial then read was approved of and voted unanimously. It was also agreed that all the priests and lay-members of the Synod should be asked to sign this memorial.

from Guardian of 16th Nov. 1916.

THE LUSITANIAN CHURCH.

At a recent meeting of the members of this Church, which claims to be Catholic, Apostolic, and Evangelical, resolutions were passed pointing out that foreign superintendence or control is against the laws of Portugal and also against the wishes of the great majority of lay-members of the Communion and the whole of public opinion in Portugal. A satisfactory report is given relating to the progress and self-support of the congregations. Further particulars will be found on page 15.

The Guardian of 22 February 1917