Miscellaneous.

THE RELIGIOUS DANGER OF THE CONTINENT.

If the philosophers and the masses are in accord on the Continent, as Mr. Disraeli says they are in England, the priests will one day have to pass through a bad quarter of an hour. One of the most marked signs of the times in Catholic countries is the extent to which irreligion is becoming a religion, a fanaticism as fierce and as propagandist as that of any creed has ever been. The change is not so perceptible in the Protestant States, where irreligion tends to That may be the fact, probably is; but wards indifferentism, or rather to a tone of mind lower even than that, the tone of England just before Whitfield began his career, a tone under which the supernatural is neither loved, nor hated, nor feared, nor pastor under the Roman system, -because discussed, but simply ignored, as one might suppose it to be among bees. There is tax him, who resists troops in his thirst for plenty of spiritual energy left in Protestant bis cure's blood is not in love with the Germany, but in places and among certain classes of society, especially the very respectable, spiritual life seems to have been smitten with paralysis. A friend who has been residing some months in Hesse says that nothing struck him, when fresh from the controversial vivacity of English lifewhere people now discuss the First Cause in drawing-rooms and argue about the soul over their soup-so much as the apathy of the educated upon the whole subject. They seemed to feel about theology as men without ear feel about music, as something some people were interested in, possibly a something great, po sibly a something trival; but anyhow, a something of which they understood neither the laws, nor the motives, nor the pleasures, nor the pains nor even the terminology. Scripture to them was as Handel to the deaf, spiritualism as counterpoint, a great theological work as a great oratorio. It was not that they wanted none of it; their indifference went even farther than that, till it suggested a natural incapacity. This, however, is not the tone of irreligion in the Catholic countries of the continent. There the new attitude of Catholicism, its fiercely aggressive obscur-antist and persecuting tone, has irritated scepticism to passion, to a hatred of Catholicism and its ministers, which in its ferocity

The laughing sceptism of "polite society" tent without overt acts. Men write, it is among essayists and among the few remain-"sacred cause" of Materialism in the Senate, and one such correspondent signs himecclesiastical organization. Others, said to show the smallest symptom of independent thousands in number, bind themselves by dence. oath never to accept the services of the Church in life, in death, or after death; to The very best friends the clerical order can be married by civil ceremonial, to reject the last offices"—which in Catholic countries have a social as well as religious importance—and to be buried in unconsecrated to be buried in unconsecrated in the last compatible with any form of material countries and countries that the last compatible with any form of material countries and countries that countries are compatible with any form of material countries. ground. Our readers remember the as- civilization. To such men, the only men who tounding explosion of materialism among stand between them and the materialists, the students from all parts of the world who assembled at Liege to advertise their resort teach the masses that no dogma can scorn and hatred of the ideas involved in produce hunger, that freedom inconsistent the words "God," and "soul," and "revelation," and "Church," a scorn and hate to the unity of the Church does not increase

and propagandist, is the creed of all but the religious, and is accompanied by a desire not merely to quit, but to put down the Church as an evil thing, a foe to human society. The struggle is regarded as one between Civilization and the Syllabus, as a ration hostile to society, and as such, in the warfare between irreconcilable ideas, in judgment of those enemies, to be ecrasee, which every weapon is to be welcomed and | razed off the ground it cumbers. The Church quarter is disgraceful. M. de Montalembert, offers in Catholic Europe only the alternawho, if a bigot, is farthest of mankind from tives of abject obedience or hostility, and a fool, declares publicly his belief that Paa fool, declares publicly his belief that Pa-ganism is winning, that the Continent is on accepts the alternative. It is not with religion, such as even the Revolution did not produce, in which all institutions claiming is not in the right, whether, if Rome does to be divine will be overthrown, and men not change her policy, Europe may not see thoughtful men at the prospect, that Protestant statesmen like Guizot sway towards Catholicism as the only visible buttress against the wave and more than the statesment of the control o against the wave, and-most significant olicism, with its sacerdotal claims, or Ulsign of all—fervent Catholics hesitate to tramontanism, with its machine-like obe-proscribe Renan. In England we think him dience; but either is better, Hinddoism is infinitely more dangerous and thoroughinfinitely more dangerous and thorough-going assaults. In Austria we have just is sweet."—London Spectator. seen an explosion of the same spirit, a maiority of the Reichsrath exultantly proclaiming that they were all Darwinians, or, as they strangely enough misrepresent that form of speculation, all materialists, intent, as they openly avow, not on limiting or denying the pretensions of the Church, but on interfere in any way whatever in human affairs. So long as this spirit was confined to a select circle, it would have little meaning except for students of the various forms of spiritual reaction; but it is fast filtering downwards. That revolt of the Schoolmasters in Austria was a revolt of the leaders of the peasantry, and was directed against ideas as well as against priests. It is stated that the Kaiser has admitted to the Vatican that on religious matters he is

it is certain that the Austrian masses never got so excited on any secular matter.

We have often reminded our readers of the fact that a city riot in Belgium always includes an attack on priests or monasteries, and the curious state of affairs in the Department of Charente is a present illustration of the state of feeling. The priests there are being protected by Lancers from the hands of their flocks, who, were the soldiers withdrawn, would tear them in pieces. The Prefect's idea is that the people are passing through one of those paroxysms of credulity which occasionally seize whole nations,—witness the wichcraft mania in so many countries,-that they are deluded with a report that tithes are to be re-established. wild outbursts of that sort always embody tor,—be it remembered, an indispensable the pastor may by possibility be going to bis cure's blood, is not in love with the priesthood. During the sixteen years of the Empire, the Ultramontane yoke has been pressed as sharply down as that of every other form of authority, and without disparaging, far less denying, the theory that France has in places become more religious, we cannot but doubt whether there is not also a general hatred of Priests as meddlesome officials of the arbitrary sort, or, as the peasants themselves phrase it with moustaches sharply drawn up under the nose, as the "the black gendarmerie." We confess that as we read of the spirit which manifests itself in France, Belgium,

and Austria whenever pressure is removed, we scattely wonder at the vehemence, or the rage, or even the cruelty of the priesthood. They must feel as the priesthood of the third century felt, impelled at once by an imperative duty and an overmastering fear, as if they were once more fighting a Paganism which, if victorious, would throw them to the lions. If their adversaries win in their present temper, their lives will scarcely be safe; and if their lives are safe, the institutions in which they trust, and to which, be it admitted, the majority of them are sincerely devoted, will be overthrown. It must not be forgotten that to scepties in Catholic countries the Church presents itself as a corporation which must either be and the concreteness of its manifestations let as a corporation which must either be recalls the days of the first French Revolugetting rid of its transcendental decime. In getting rid of its transcendental claims. In a panic which is not all or even principally selfish, the clergy are losing their acuteness is vanishing away, and in its place we have and making blunders which only serve to a propagandist spirit which cannot be con- intensify the hatred of their opponents. tent without overt acts. Men write, it is They are falling back on their center for reported, from all parts of France to consupport till their internal freedom threatens gratulate M. de Sainte Beuve, most brilliunt to disappear, and the Pope has the courage among essayists and among the few remaining masters of the lost art of conversation, lible, and they are endeavoring to reduce to congratulate him on maintaining the tary obedience. The attack is so deter mined, defeat would be so terrible, that they self a member "of the grand Diocese," thus incline to place organization above all things, making of denial not only a creed, but an to expel their own ablest friends if they

To take a single illustration of their policy.

and the only teachers who might in the last produce hunger, that freedom inconsistent with belief in the Real Presence, and that which words seemed inadequate to give the conscription, the ultramontanes conserved in phrases that smelt of blood. blood.

In Belgium, where Ultramontanism has selected its battle-ground, materialism, utter of being considered foes like the Voltarians and the Materialists. Naturally, the intellectual Catholics and the laity refuse, being unable to deny what they see that civili zation is good, and the Church is really reduced to what its enemies, call it, a corpothe eve of a burst of irreligion, or hatred to pleasure but with pain that we record a growing doubtewhether M. de:Montalembert commence the organization of a new and an explosion of irreligion, or fanatical hatred sceptical, in France men orthodox to the better, we had almost written Fetichism is backbone doubt whether his sentimental better, than the foul creed which Papal mad-Unitarianism may not be a defense against ness is establishing, the creed which has

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