

French War Orphans

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FOR some time Catholics have been disturbed by doubts as to the propriety of contributing to the association called "The Fatherless Children of France." Priests and editors have been consulted on the subject and numerous inquiries have been sent to AMERICA. A categorical answer is difficult to give, but the following facts may aid those who are interested to form their own judgment on the matter.

The alleviation of the pitiful lot of the French orphans whose fathers have so heroically died for the sake of freedom is a work which in itself is beyond criticism. The sincerity of those Americans who have realized the crying need and have opened their purses and given without stint to the noble cause, cannot be questioned. No suspicion whatever attaches to the American men and women who are soliciting funds for the French orphans. Nevertheless well-informed persons in France and elsewhere, about whose love for the French children there can be no doubt, have repeatedly expressed their fear that American money, and in particular that collected by "The Fatherless Children of France," is being used, contrary to declared wishes of its contributors and collectors, to subserve the purposes of anti-clericalism and anti-Christian hatred and to further a deliberate political scheme to rob French children of their faith.

The principal spokesman for this fear is M. Jean Guiraud, the editor of *La Croix*, the well-known Catholic daily of Paris, a newspaper that voices Catholic opinion so authoritatively that Mgr. Martel, the Bishop of Digne, recently spoke of it in the following terms of high commendation: "Never have the Catholics and the clergy had at their disposal an organ so well adapted to their needs and of such value." M. Guiraud is in Paris and has shown the deepest interest in the entire movement in favor of the French orphans, not merely in its broad outlines but also in all its ramifications. His broad-mindedness, accurate information, sterling Catholicism, and interest in the children is unquestioned. His opinion, therefore, especially as reinforced by the attitude of the educated Catholic body, has great weight. It has been expressed fearlessly, repeatedly and in the face of a rigid censorship, in many issues of *La Croix*, the files of which may be consulted by those who are interested.

One of the grounds of his anxiety is the concord which exists between the dominant political party of France and "The Fatherless Children of France." This association, according to Miss F. M. Schofield who has been perhaps the most actively interested person in its organization, is "merely a development of the *Orphelinat des Armées*." The latter association, as appears from a telegram sent to a delegate of "The Fatherless Children of France," on April 18, 1916, by M. Alfred Croiset, the President

of the *Orphelinat* and at the same time the General Correspondent of "The Fatherless Children of France," is in entire agreement with the French Minister of Education. And it appears needless to remark that any society which is in entire agreement with the French Minister of Education must be regarded by Catholics if not with suspicion, at least with misgivings.

Twenty years and more of bitter experience with this branch of the French Government has made Catholics the world over very suspicious of any move made by it with regard to school-children. Its character and purposes are sufficiently clear from the Associations law, the expulsion of the religious, the confiscation of ecclesiastical property, and the removal of the crucifix from the schools. Recent events have only intensified deep-seated mistrust.

In the spring of 1916 M. Viviani fathered a project introduced in the Senate, which was to give the *Préfet*, that usually anti-clerical person, practical control over more than fourteen hundred thousand children. M. Viviani's name was in itself enough to fill Catholics with fear, but the articles of the bill further confirmed their anxiety. Eventually it passed the Senate; later it came before the Chamber; and on July 27, 1917, it became the law, which is known as the *Loi sur les Pupilles de la Nation*.

The adoption by the nation of the war orphans, which was the ostensible object of the law, had the fullest sympathy of Catholics, for they, no less than others, were eager to provide for the care and education of those whose fathers had fallen in the defense of France. The provisions of the law were such, however, as to give them only too well-founded reasons for serious apprehension. They made no secret of their anxiety lest the execution of certain articles of the bill should be so applied as to make of the children not so much wards of the nation as wards of the dominant political party and a prey to anti-Christian propaganda.

Accordingly they proposed amendments to the law which would guarantee the preservation of the faith of the children and insure its just application. Their amendments were swept aside, their protests disregarded; and in spite of their insistent representations, the political animus which permeated the entire bill controlled the debate, resolutely refused concessions, and vitiates the law now about to be put into operation. M. Painlevé, addressing the Masonic *Ligue de l'Enseignement*, voiced his jubilation when he described the war orphans as the "sacred battalion of democracy." This phrase, which has a sinister ring to all who know the nature of this powerful Masonic organization, was later characterized publicly by M. Guiraud as one that "unveiled his own

[Painlevé's] designs and those of his friends to make these children minister to the triumph of the dominant political party."

The people of the United States, taken as a whole, have no realization of the true spirit of the law, but some of them have expressed doubts about it, and to reassure them concerning the education which the law proposes to give the children, M. Will Auberl, the *Directeur des Services d'Etudes et d'Information* at Washington, in a letter addressed to an inquirer on April 8, 1918, spoke of the law "as voted unanimously and without alteration in the Senate and the House." He added: "The most punctilious Catholic will not find therein anything to rouse his indignation or cause him worry."

These statements, emanating from the *Haut Commissariat de la République Française*, require some explanation. It is true that the bill, notwithstanding certain changes made in the Senate, was voted through practically unchanged, but this was done in opposition to Catholic wishes. The modifications accepted in the Senate were taken by the Catholic Senators to be a manifestation of good-will and the bill received their votes, not, however, without formal reserve as to many of its articles, in the expectation that it would undergo still further changes in the Chamber, without which it would be neither acceptable nor satisfactory. They were deceived. When the bill came before the Chamber the Catholic deputies pleaded most earnestly for alterations in a number of articles, but were voted down systematically by the majority. When the final vote was taken the bill passed unanimously, but merely because M. Groussau and his party abstained from voting. Not approving of the bill, and finding in it grave cause for objection, they could not in conscience vote for it; on the other hand, being pledged to the *union sacrée*, they could not in honor vote against it. As a consequence, they did not vote at all. No one can attach any value to so factitious an unanimity.

As for the further statement that "the most punctilious Catholic will not find therein anything to raise his indignation or cause him worry," it is not borne out by actual facts. The law has caused Catholics extreme indignation, it has caused them great worry in France, England, Ireland and the United States. The fact is that the worry in France has been so acute that it has stimulated French Catholics to unprecedented activity in order to obtain the modicum of minor positions open to election; it has led them to publish minute commentaries on the law with a view to making the beneficiaries aware of their rights; it has been the occasion of repeated warnings to Catholics to be on their guard against Government officials and not to let themselves be made the victims of disastrous deception. Catholics should remember the words of M. Guiraud on the subject:

In spite of the acceptable changes which our friends have made it undergo in the Senate, in spite of the liberal promises extorted in the Chamber from the one who reported it and from the Government, this law is still full of danger for the autonomy

of families, the religious conscience of the children, and the liberty of private and Christian charity.

Catholics have not forgotten M. Guiraud's declaration that the law was drawn up by the worst enemies of the Church and that its single purpose, in the beginning, at least, was the Masonic monopoly of the war orphans. They still recall the words of M. Groussau, who, making an official report on the law at the request of Cardinal Amette, the Archbishop of Paris, exposed its many dangers and stated that the just or disastrous execution of it would depend on the contingency whether the Catholics could and would mass sufficient strength to hold in check the great Masonic machine.

Such is the opinion which French Catholics entertain concerning the French Government's attitude towards the war orphans, as manifested in the recent law. Yet we are told by an official in high standing in "The Fatherless Children of France," that the association is in entire agreement with the French Minister of Education. The nature of this agreement needs some explanation before Catholic anxiety can be set at rest. Catholics are eager to assist the French orphans, but they do not wish to play into the hands of the French Freemasons in the scheme to rob the children of their faith. A second paper on the subject will give further details of the campaign against the children of France carried on, unfortunately, by the aid of American money contributed in part by Catholics.

"The Great Thousand Years"

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IT was not in vain that the poet sang of the happiness of the man who knows the causes of things. For he it is who penetrates to the heart of life and reads the secrets of nature, humanity and God. He is the true philosopher. Such a man does not merely see in the physical, moral and spiritual world a succession of incoherent events, the loose and fragmentary counters of an insoluble puzzle. He sees a correlated whole. On the stage of life he beholds something more than the actors of a meaningless puppet show, moved by blind chance or cruel fate. He holds in his hand the thread which will lead him from the perplexing mazes through which so many stumble. He grasps an underlying principle around which countless facts naturally and easily cluster. It has ever been the dream of historians to discover such a principle around which they might group the events of the past. Bossuet and St. Augustine behold in the midst of the ceaseless activities of the race, contradictory though they may be, selfish and even criminal, the ever-watchful Providence of God using all things sweetly for His own Divine purposes and forcing even falsehood and evil to serve the cause of virtue and truth. Buckle in his "History of Civilization" maintains that the essence of history consists in intellectual progress, while a widely-spread system holds that economic laws lie at the foundation of all historic development.

The man who will contribute an explanation of the facts of history that will really deserve the name of a true philosophic principle will accomplish a great and lasting work. For history is not a mere collection of dates, the mere chronicling of battles, sieges, fortunes, the recording of the rise and the fall of empires. It is the study and the grasp of those motive powers which impel men along a certain definite course, not blindly,

