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The Power

Behind the Pope

A TALE OF BLIGHTED HOPES

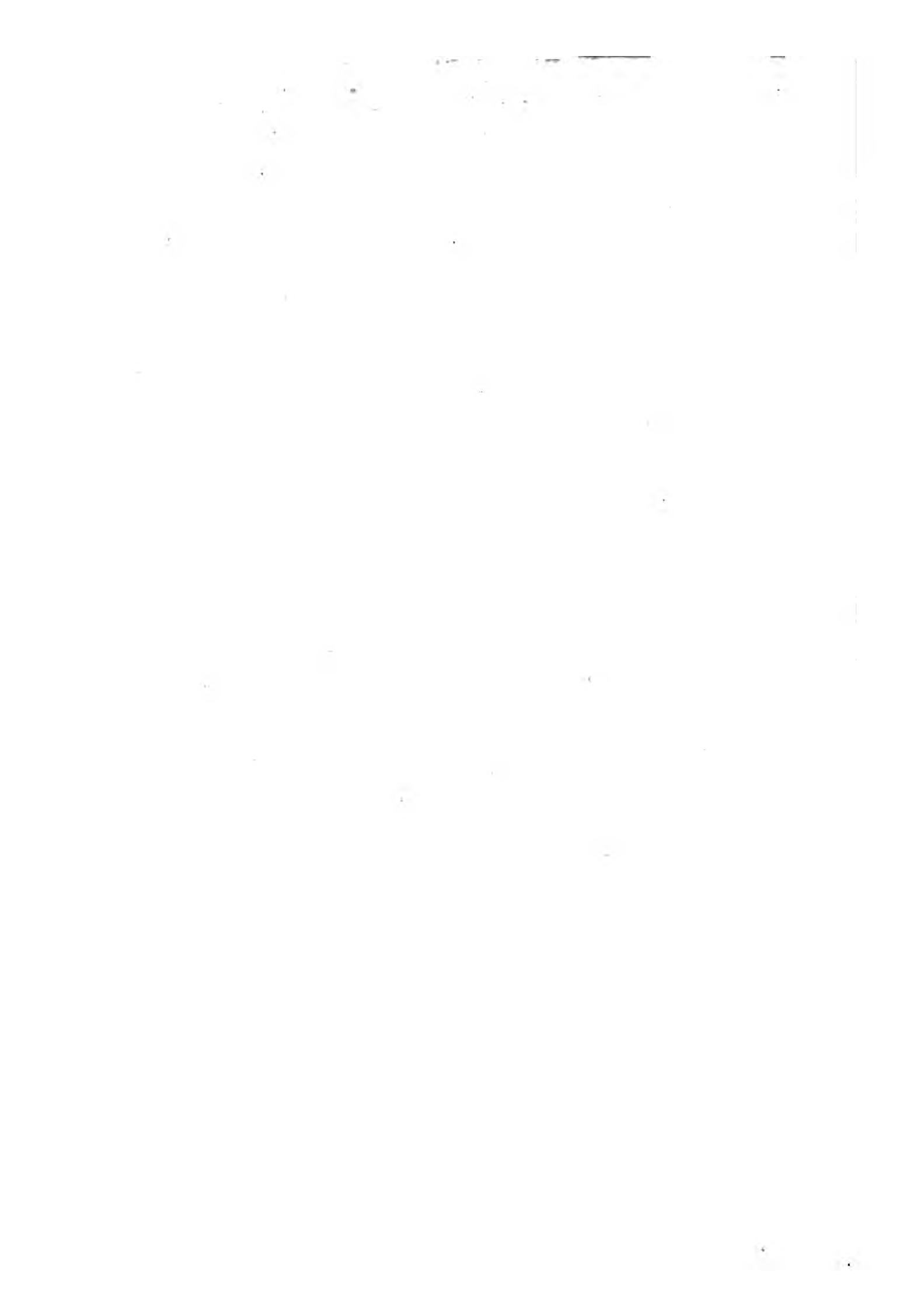








THE  
POWER BEHIND THE POPE.



THE  
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A TALE OF BLIGHTED HOPES

WITH TRANSLATION OF

*LASSERRE'S PREFACE TO THE GOSPELS*

BY

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THE  
POWER BEHIND THE POPE:

*THE STORY OF LASSERRE'S VERSION.*

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IN this book I have simply to narrate a marvellous story of blighted hopes, leaving the bitterness of controversy to any who may harbour bitter feelings towards the Church of Rome. I have taken pains, both in France and in Italy, to make myself thoroughly acquainted with the leading incidents of the case, and in the following statements I shall limit myself to ascertained facts. It would be folly to exaggerate where the truth is stranger than fiction.

Henri Lasserre is descended from an ancient family of Bourgogne. His father,

Dr. Lasserre, was a distinguished professor in the medical college of Toulon. In 1818 he married Christine Regnaud, an orphan lady, who, under the guardianship of the Count de Termes, had passed her girlhood in the most distinguished French society of the time.

Dr. Lasserre retired with his young and accomplished wife to a little farm at Coux, on the banks of the Dordogne, and there for thirty years the happy pair devoted themselves to acts of charity and mercy, without other reward than the joy of sweetening life. They lived in frugal simplicity, on the proceeds of their farm. He, the eminent physician, daily tended the sick of the district without fee from either rich or poor. She, the all-accomplished lady from the Court, "firm and upright in character," was his constant companion, and by simple faith and gentle deeds brightened the homes of sorrow.

In 1828 their own home was made happy by the birth of Henri, who has not only inherited the virtues of the parents by whom he was nurtured, but has lifted their name into everlasting remembrance.

Henri Lasserre was called to the bar in 1851, the year of the *coup d'etat*. Even then he had made his mark in literature.

Ten years later he stood forth as the chivalrous defender of Poland, and in 1860 he undertook a political mission to Rome, the result of which was the attitude taken up by the Pope towards Poland in 1863. On his return from Rome he issued a very able and successful reply to Renan's "Life of Jesus."

Of personal details it will be enough to add that about twenty years ago Henri Lasserre married Miss Aurelie Vasseur, the sister of the eminent archæologist, Mr. Charles Vasseur. Like his



father, he and his accomplished wife have retired to the old family home by the banks of the Dordogne, and from that charming and consecrated spot he is now extending to the spiritual needs of all France the same loving solicitude that his honoured parents had extended to their own immediate neighbourhood.

M. Henri Lasserre numbered among his many friends M. de Freycinet, the present Minister of War in the Floquet Cabinet. M. Lasserre had sore eyes, and M. de Freycinet, knowing him to be a devout man, suggested that he should send for water from the Lourdes Grotto, and invoke the Blessed Virgin. At that time the fame of Lourdes scarcely extended beyond the diocese. M. Lasserre, acting on the suggestion of his Protestant friend, used the water, and his eyes became suddenly well. His own account of the matter is simple:

“Our Lady of Lourdes has cured my sore eyes.”

In gratitude, M. Henri Lasserre wrote the history of the alleged appearance of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the peasant girl, Bernadette of Lourdes. The book was called “Notre Dame de Lourdes.” It was written in charming French. Each incident was narrated with the picturesque directness of a polished French scholar, and the persons and localities referred to were set forth in well-executed engravings. The book created “Notre Dame de Lourdes.” The Archbishop of Albi wrote thus to M. Lasserre: “Sir, our Lady of Lourdes owes you a recompense.” In fact, she owed him everything. He may safely be considered the patentee of the whole business, for without his prismatic and potent pen the wonders now so famous would scarcely ever have been heard of beyond the little Pyrenean village of Lourdes.

Several apparitions, similar to that of Lourdes, were reported in various parts of Germany, but Prussian policemen were despatched to the places, and the miraculous evaporated at the approach of Bismarck's representatives. The French apparition, on the contrary, revealed to France by the eloquence of M. Lasserre, received the patriotic sympathy of the nation; and while the poverty-stricken cabins of Lourdes rose into a pretty and prosperous town, the nine days' wonder of the place bloomed out into the greatest miracle of modern times. "Notre Dame de Lourdes" has been declared the greatest success in bookmaking of the century. In five years it had run through eighty-seven editions.

No one ever drank once only from a desert fountain, or wrote a successful book and then retired from authorship. Henri Lasserre wrote "Bernadette,"

“Les Episodes,” and “Mois de Marie ;” but as he was still working on the material exhausted by his great book, his new works added little to either his fame or fortune.

On a happy day he discovered the Four Gospels. He felt the spell of the simple but profound narratives which reveal Jesus of Nazareth in all the tenderness and loveliness of perfect manhood, and in all the might and majesty of Godhood. He saw that the fourfold story of Jesus was the very book that the French people needed. He believed that the Gospels would be received with joy by his countrymen, and he resolved to prepare for them a version worthy of their acceptance.

Prompt and zealous, he began the work of translation ; his aim being not to render the Gospels in the French as it ought to be, but in the French as it was. The result was a living translation, in

the sparkling current language of Alexandre Dumas, or rather, in the brilliant, picturesque style of Henri Lasserre, so familiar to the faithful in the glowing pages of "Notre Dame de Loudres."

The work appeared in perfect form. Every page said "read me." The arbitrary divisions of chapters and verses with numbers, which trip up Frenchmen who attempt to read the Bible for the first time, had wholly disappeared. The narrative fell into natural clauses and paragraphs, well spaced out, and the current of the Book of Life flowed on the page in abundant light. The Gospel of the kingdom, uncramped by closely packed type or jerky verses, was made as attractive to the reader as the most trashy novel. The most charming book in the world was printed in such a charming form that "a man of the world or a beginner, a woman of fashion or a servant, might read, understand,



enjoy, and love it, without the help of any one."

In substance the version is as faithful as Henri Lasserre could make it. The author, having himself felt the miraculous healing of the Blessed Virgin Mary, maintains the theory of the perpetual virginity with much boldness and ingenuity of translation. In M. Lasserre's hands our Lord's "brethren and sisters" become His "near relations, aunts, and cousins." The renderings in various places are given with literary variety, not with scientific precision. The translation of the passage used by the Church of Rome to confer the Primacy on Peter is ingenious, and is accompanied by a critical explanation which the uncritical reader will probably accept. In a few other passages, around which ecclesiastical theories have concentrated, we find traces of the author's bias; but the renderings and notes are clearly in accord-

ance with arguments which have convinced himself.

In questions of larger importance, M. Lasserre breaks away from the traditional renderings of the Papal Church. With splendid courage he translates the Greek word repent (*Μετανοείτε*) by "be converted," "repent," instead of by "do penance;" and he declares in a note that the Latin rendering (*Pœnitentiam agite*) fails accurately to represent the Greek original, "which means change your sentiment, repent, be converted; and does not, like the Latin, bear the idea of voluntary austerities with the object of expiation." To this rendering he sticks not uniformly, but in all places where the old rendering might be liable to misconstruction. The same fearlessness is manifest in the translations, "Adore the Lord thy God, and do not render worship to any but Him alone;" and "We are servants without merit," &c.

The translation is made from the Greek, and the translator has not only consulted the commentators of his own Church and the Fathers, but he has not neglected Protestant sources of information. "The Land and the Book," by Thomson; Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible;" the works of Trench, Alford, Tischendorf, Wetstein, Bengel, Tregelles, &c., have been examined, with a view to a right understanding of the original text; and the result is a free, fearless, and faithful rendering, in so far as Henri Lasserre—hampered with legendary lore, and lacking in requisite scholarship—was able to deal with the subject. Taken as a whole, the version is remarkable for its intrinsic excellence, but it is still more remarkable as being the work of a devout Roman Catholic.

To the version is added a preface as remarkable as itself. It is a brilliant essay of thirty-seven pages, and it is one



of the most formidable indictments of the Church of Rome for withholding the Gospels from the people ever written by a candid friend.

He begins by deploring the “notorious fact that the Gospels are scarcely ever read by those who profess to be fervent Catholics, and never by the multitude of the faithful.” He declares that of “a hundred persons who practise the Sacraments, there is seldom one who has ever opened the Gospels;” that “the greater part of the children of the Church know the Divine Book only by the fragments contained in the Prayer-Book;” and he adds his belief that it is no exaggeration to say that there are not three believers in each parish who have tried to study the Gospels. “The Gospel—the most illustrious book in the world—is become an unknown book.”

He declares that the Bible was not always so neglected; that all the Fathers

of the Church, from Tertullian to St. Bernard, urged the people to read both the Old and New Testaments, which were intended for all lands, races, and times. He declares that "none of the great men or saints have deprived a single soul of direct textual communication with the words of our Lord," and he quotes Chrysostom at large in support of his assertion.

He blames the Protestants for their free handling of the Bible, which led the Council of Trent to decree that every translation should have episcopal sanction and explanatory notes, and he considers that, in consequence of this decree, the Bible ceased to be a household book, and the Catholics feared to read the book lest they might be poisoned by Protestants heresy concealed like serpent beneath its leaves.

M. Lasserre then falls with tremendous severity on the modern Romish

system which deprives the people of the Bible.

He declares that, without daring to formulate publicly an absolute prohibition, this timorous school aims at taking out of the hands of the faithful the Divine Book, which is the foundation of our faith, and by degrees to replace it by a pious literature; that some of these books are excellent, but this is the exception; that in the majority of these works, in which, alas! the sugar of devotion replaces the salt of wisdom, the eternal verities and true teaching of the Gospel become quickly diluted, and lost in strange waters; special and party doctrines, ascetic or mystic considerations, rules of piety, methods, means, processes of perfection, and all sorts of prayers; that many of them are enervating by their intellectual inanity, by their narrowness of conception, by their false ideas, or their absence of ideas, by

their absolute ignorance—ignorance of the real world, ignorance of the human heart, ignorance of the true ways of God; but that, altogether, the best as well as the most lamentable are something else, yes, absolutely something else than the Gospel, whose apostolic mission they have noiselessly usurped.

A few pages further on he breaks forth again with the same indignation on the ecclesiastical pabulum of his Church, and says; that the watery and sugary effusions which, under the form of works of piety, have replaced in the case of the majority the Gospel nourishment, so pure, so substantial, so strong, so life-giving, can have had no other effect than to weaken the vigour of the Christian constitution; that petty devotions have too often taken the place of noble sentiments and high virtues, trifling practices have taken the place of manly actions; that the true type of the perfection to be

reached has been falsified, altered, attenuated ; that to the great and apostolic image of the *Saint*, whose example kindled enthusiasm, has succeeded the pale and washed-out image of the holy man whose life kindles no fires in the souls of others, and draws none within its orbit.

To replace such stuff Henri Lasserre sends forth his version of the Gospels with the following brave words :—

“ We must lead back the faithful to the great fountain of living water which flows from the inspired book. We must make them hear, taste, and relish the direct lessons of the Saviour, the words full of grace and truth which fell from His lips. We must put before them those teachings which have been given for all ages by the perfect Life—the life perfectly human and perfectly divine, of Him whom no sincere intelligence can contemplate without bending the knee, whom no true soul can hear and see without loving, without being seized with the desire to follow Him, and the will to serve Him. We must put the earth again face to face with Jesus Christ.”

The preface closes with a prayer of

wonderful sublimity and tenderness, which loses much of its force in our cold translation.

The book was published in the closing days of 1886 or early in 1887. How strange that such a book, with such a preface, should proceed from the author of "Notre Dame de Lourdes!" Strange that such a book, with such a preface, should be dedicated to "Notre Dame de Lourdes!" But there was something still more strange. The book appeared with the *imprimatur* of the Archbishop of Paris, and the approval and benediction of the Pope. On the first page appeared these potent words:—

ARCHEVÊCHÉ DE PARIS

*Imprimatur,*

FRANCISCUS,

*Archiepiscopus Parisiensis.*

PARISIIS,

*Die 11 Novembris, 1886.*



The *imprimatur* of the Archbishop of Paris, given in accordance with the rules of the Council of Trent, made the translation an "authorised version." It made known in a formal manner that "the diocesan authority had examined the work, and declared that it contained nothing contrary to the doctrine of the Church or the edification of the faithful," and that consequently the faithful might read it in perfect safety.

This was backed up by a letter from the Pope, written by Cardinal Jacobini, Secretary of State of the Holy See, and officially communicated through the Nuncio of France. The letter, in the original Italian, and in a French translation, followed the title-page. It ran as follows:—

"Illustrissimo Seigneur,

"Il Santo Padre, che ebbe regolamente la traduzione francese di' Santi Evangelii da Lei intrapresa, e condotta a termine con plauso e l'appro-

vazione di cotesta Curia Arcivescovile, m'incarica di encomiare l'intendimento, cui Ella s'inspirava nel porre mano e nel pubblicare l'interessante lavoro; di ringraziarla dell' omaggio di filiale divotione, resagli con la offerto di un esemplare del lavoro stesso; e di manifestarle i voti che forma perchè lo scopo, cui ha Ella mirato e fa appello nella Prefazione del libro, venga pienamente raggiunto.

“Aderendo poi ben volentieri alla domanda, la santita sua Le imparte di enore l'Apostolica Benedizione.

“E dopo ciò voglio profittare dell' incontro per dichiararmi con sensi di distinta stima.

“De vostra Signoria illustrissima affezionatissimo per servirla.

“L. CARD. JACOBINI.

“ROMA, 4 décembre 1886.”

“To M. HENRI LASSERRE, of Paris.

“Most Illustrious Seigneur,

“The Holy Father has received in regular course the French translation of the Holy Gospels which you have undertaken and accomplished, to the delight, and with the approval, of the Archiepiscopal authority.

“His Holiness commissions me to express to you his approval of the object with which you



have been inspired in the execution and the publication of that work, so full of interest. He thanks you for the homage of filial devotion which accompanies the volume which you offer to him; and he charges me to make known to you his earnest desire that the object which you pursue, and which you indicate in the preface of your book, may be fully attained.

“Yielding most willingly to your desire, His Holiness sends you, from the bottom of his heart, his apostolic benediction.

“And I myself profit by this opportunity to declare myself, with much esteem, your very affectionate servant,

L. CARDINAL JACOBINI.

“ROME, 4th December 1886.”

The *imprimatur* of the Archbishop of Paris placed Lasserre's version regularly in the hands of the French people. The Pope's letter placed the stamp of authority not only on the translation of the Gospels, but on the terrible preface which is expressly mentioned.

These recommendations, added to the intrinsic merits of the work, ensured its

success. A few weeks after the book was published, I received a copy of the *third* edition. A few months later, I bought in Paris a copy of the *twenty-first* edition. The sale of the version exceeded the most extravagant anticipations. Edition poured from the press on the heels of edition, until, within the space of twelve months, twenty-five editions had been published. It seemed as if Roman Catholic France was eagerly accepting the living Gospel of the living God.

When the book had reach the twenty-fifth edition, a splendid edition was issued "at the request of a great number of bishops and priests." All the ages were called on to illustrate and adorn the universal history of the God-man. The volume is illustrated from the ancient catacombs and from the modern surveys of Palestine. It is adorned with the masterpieces of Perugino, Raphael,

Michel Angelo, Fra Angelico, Van-Dyck, Albert Dürer, Rubens, Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt, Lebrun, Overbeck, &c., and with a great many photographs of the places referred to in the Gospel narratives. In no instance, as far as I know, have the Gospels ever been published with such wealth of illustration, artistic and accurate. To adopt the language of the editor's preface — "Like the Royal Magi at the cradle of Jesus Christ, art, history, and nature have brought their treasures to illustrate the sacred record of His life here below."

From preliminary matter in the *édition de luxe*, we learn still further "the verdict of the Supreme Authorities that govern the Church. A month after the first letter from Rome, His Excellence, the Cardinal Vicar of His Holiness, the illustrious Cardinal Parocchi, wrote a second letter, also dated from the Vatican."

He had not read the entire work, but from what he had read he declares :—

“The famous author of the ‘History of Notre Dame de Lourdes’ has just published a French translation of the Holy Gospels, which is an illumination of genius. He has been as faithful to the text as to the purest French. I do not hesitate to state that the diffusion of your work will be very useful for the reading of the New Testament.”

The Archbishop of Albi, Monseigneur Fonteneau, wrote :—

“In vain shall I try to tell you with what joy I have read this new and true French translation. I have been pained for a long time to see that the Book above all others, the Book which is found everywhere, and is quoted every day, the Book which God has placed in the foundations of the Church, the Gospel, is in reality scarcely ever read by those who profess to be fervent Catholics, and that it is never read by the multitude of the faithful. From this day I feel certain the Gospel will be read, thanks to you and the protection of the Immaculate Virgin. I say thanks to you, sir, for your translation is most charming and attractive. For many it will be a revelation of the Gospel. Following in your train this divine and enchant-

ing history, I am constantly recurring to the words of the Saviour, which I have never before so well comprehended—‘They are spirit and life the words which I have spoken unto you.’”

In similar words wrote also Monseigneur Fava, the Bishop of Grenoble ; Mgr. Bourret, the Bishop of Rodez ; Mgr. Soubrier, the Bishop of Oran, in Algeria ; Mgr. Isoard, the Bishop of Annecy ; Mgr. Ardin, Bishop of Rochelle ; Mgr. Blanger, Bishop of Limoges, &c. &c.

Nor did such approving sentiments reach Henri Lasserre from the episcopal authorities alone : *L'Univers, Le Monde, La Croix, La Défense, Le Français, La Gazette de France, L'Autorité, Le Pays, Le Soleil, Le Matin, &c.*, “united with the religious press in proclaiming that this translation of the Holy Gospels had arrived in time, and that it was made for the age.”

The book became the Family Bible



of France, and a few illuminated pages were prepared to receive the family record. According to the last edition: "The Holy Gospel, by this translation, has begun to be the habitual reading, the strong food, and the daily delight of the Church's children. To catechists and Catholic schools the book was given as a prize, and in many places the new version was the *Evangile du Dimanche*." In the words of the Bishop of Rodez: "Under the blessing of God, the book goes more and more where its author has wished to send it—unto all tables and into all Christian homes."

At this point in the history of the book, the bolt fell from the blue (or did it come from the other place mentioned by Shakespeare?) The Sacred Congregation condemned and proscribed the version as a book of degraded doctrine, which no one was to read or possess. With considerable difficulty I secured

at Rome a copy of the "Decree;" and as the document is destined to become famous, I insert it in full, with a translation, omitting the list of works by Lenormant, Ledrain, and others, which have also been proscribed.

“ D E C R E T U M

“ FERIA II DIE 19 DECEMBRIS 1887.

“ Sacra Congregatio Eminentissimorum ac Reverendissimorum Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae Cardinalium a SANCTISSIMO DOMINO NOSTRO LEONE PAPA XIII Sanctaque Sede Apostolica Indici librorum pravae doctrinae, eorundemque proscriptioni, expurgationi, ac permissioni in universa christiana Republica praepositorum et delegatorum, habita in Palatio Apostolico Vaticano die 19 Decembris 1887 damnavit et damnat, proscripsit proscribitque, vel alias damnata atque proscripta in Indicem librorum prohibitorum referri mandavit et mandat quae sequuntur Opera :

\* \* \* \* \*

“ Les Saints Évangiles, traduction nouvelle, par Henri Lasserre. Paris, 1887.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Itaque nemo cujuscumque gradus et conditionis praedicta Opera damnata atque proscripta, quocumque loco, et quocumque idiomate, aut in posterum edere, aut edita legere vel retinere audeat, sed locorum Ordinariis, aut haereticae pravitatis Inquisitoribus ea tradere teneatur sub poenis in Indice librorum vetitorum indictis.

“Quibus SANCTISSIMO DOMINO NOSTRO LEONI PAPAE XIII per me infrascriptum S. I. C. a Secretis relatis, SANCTITAS SUA Decretum probavit, et promulgari praecepit. In quorum fidem etc.

“Datum Romae die 20 Decembris 1887.

“Fr. THOMAS MARIA Card. MARTINELLI  
Episc. Sabinen. Praef.

“Fr. HIERONYMUS PIUS SACCHERI Ord. Praed.

“S. Ind. Congreg. a Secretis.”

[*Translation.*]

“D E C R E E

“MONDAY, DECEMBER 19TH, 1887.

“The Sacred Congregation of the Most Eminent and Reverend Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church — by OUR MOST HOLY LORD POPE LEO XIII. and the Holy Apostolic See appointed and delegated for the Index of books of degraded doctrine, and for proscribing, expurgating, and sanctioning the same throughout the whole Christian State—held



in the Apostolic Palace of the Vatican on December 19, 1887, hath condemned and doth condemn, hath proscribed and doth proscribe, or if otherwise condemned and proscribed, hath commanded and doth command, the following works to be put on the Index of forbidden books :

\*        \*        \*        \*        \*

“Les Saints Évangiles, traduction nouvelle, par  
 . Henri Lasserre. Paris, 1887.

\*        \*        \*        \*        \*

“And so let no one of whatsoever rank or condition, dare in any place or in any tongue, either to publish in the future, or if published to read or to retain the forementioned condemned and proscribed works, but let him be held bound to deliver them to the Ordinaries of the place, or to the Inquisitors of heretical iniquity, under the penalties proclaimed in the Index of forbidden books.

“These having been referred to OUR MOST HOLY LORD POPE LEO XIII. by me the undersigned Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of the Index, HIS HOLINESS approved the Decree and ordered it to be issued. In token whereof, &c.

“Granted at Rome on December 20, 1887.

“Fr. THOMAS MARIA Card. MARTINELLI  
 Episc. Sabinen. Praef.

“Fr. HIERONYMUS PIUS SACCHERI Ord. Praed.  
 “S. Ind. Congreg. Secretary.”

Thus the same infallible Pope placed under his infallible *malediction* the very same version of the Gospels that he had sent forth glowing with his infallible *benediction* twelve months and fifteen days previously. I leave to others the polemic and grotesque reflections which this fact suggests. To right-minded people the story is too sad for fierce denunciation. As M. Lasserre points out, in the following preface, the Church of Rome did not always withhold the Gospels from the people, and it seemed as if she was going to break with her less worthy past, and let the children hear their Father's voice in His own words. We are disappointed. The Gospel is not considered a safe book to send forth, on the authority of that colossal fabric at Rome which has arisen on the *débris* of paganism.

The immediate result of this Decree was the withdrawal of Lasserre's version

from circulation. So completely was this done that it was only after a weary search I found a copy at Pau. When I asked for the book, I got the uniform reply, "All copies have been recalled."

Any additional words from me would only lessen the effect of this astounding Decree. A few points, however, deserve consideration.

Does this Decree place the Pope's benediction in the Index? The Pope publicly and officially sanctioned and approved the book and its preface, and his letter accompanies all the copies.

How does the infallibility stand in the transaction? We are told that the Pope is only infallible in the discharge of his teaching office. In officially blessing and applauding Lasserre's version of the Gospels, he was acting in the discharge of his teaching office. Is not the infallible teaching therefore in the Index?

Can the Congregation of the Index

annul the *imprimatur* of the Archbishop of Paris, given in accordance with the decree of the Council of Trent? The Archbishop acted with calm deliberation. He had the book twice examined by the priests of St. Sulpice, and he was within his well-ascertained rights in officially sanctioning the book for his diocese.

So much, I think, is certain. The man who is Pope approves the Gospels. The human in the Cardinals approves the Gospels. The Archbishops and Bishops at their best approve the Gospels. The French press, secular as well as ecclesiastic, unanimously approve the Gospels. Better still, the people of France have purchased twenty-five editions of Lasserre's Gospels at four francs per copy—probably one hundred thousand copies—and the books are in their hands and homes. But there is a power behind the Pope, the Cardinals, the Archbishops, the Bishops, the people, and the press of

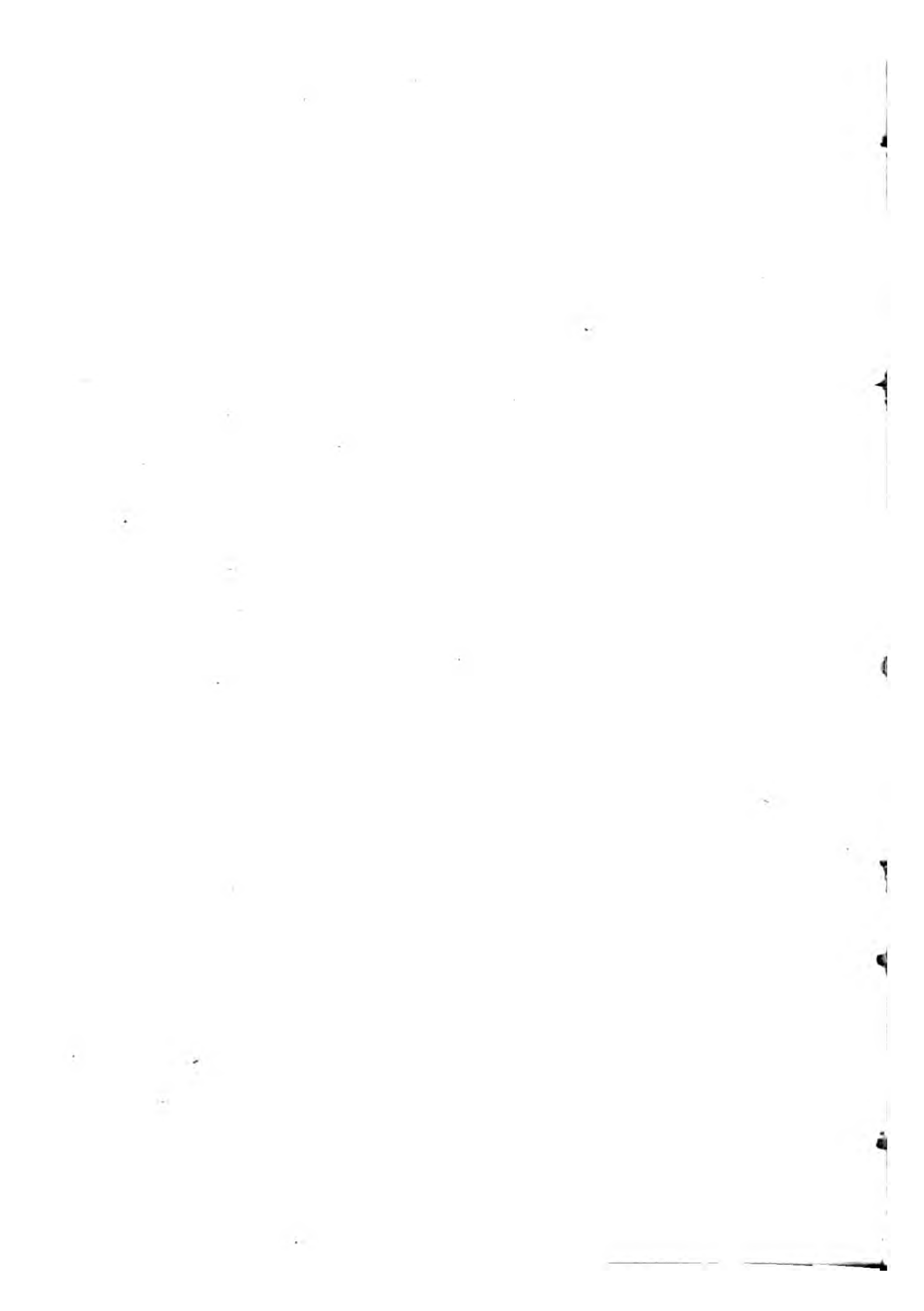
France, strong enough to dash the bread from the children's hands.

What is not certain is, how this matter will end. Will the Pope, the Cardinals, the Bishops, the French press, and the French people tamely submit to be treated as children incapable of judging for themselves? And what of the French people who have bought the twenty-five editions of the book, and who have heard in their own tongue their Saviour's voice, which is still ringing in their ears?

And what of Henri Lasserre, on whom the Divine eyes have looked down from the Cross? Like a faithful son of the Church, he bowed before the decree, and suspended the translation of the whole Bible on which he was engaged. He is still under the stunning effect of the blow. What will he do when he has time to reflect, and when Jesus looks on him as He did on Peter? How will he settle the question of his duty to the

God-man whose word and will he so clearly understands?

I have good hopes of Henri Lasserre. The writer of the wonderful preface will be heard of again. Of one thing I can assure him. He has the sympathy of all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. And I think I can also promise that until he brings his acts up to the level of his brave, true words, the people for whom his version was intended shall not be left to perish for lack of the Bread of Life.





## PREFACE.



### I.

WE have often heard eminent men,—priests of exalted merit and of great zeal, bishops even,—discussing in our presence a notorious and universal fact—a fact altogether extraordinary in itself, and at first sight inexplicable—which they considered to be the cause of certain deviations from piety with many believers, as the first cause of the decay of the Christian spirit.

“*The Book* of all books,” they said; “the Book whose teaching has changed the face of the earth; the Book which is found everywhere, and quoted every day; the Book which God has placed in the foundation of the Church—THE GOSPEL

—is in reality very rarely read, even by those who make a profession of being fervent Catholics. By the general body of the faithful it is not read at all.”

Alas! nothing is more true.

Just ask your neighbours, friends, those who form your own circle,—ask them personally, dear reader,—and you will soon come to the conclusion, not perhaps without profound astonishment, that of a hundred persons who observe the sacraments, there is often not one who has opened the Gospel, except casually, and to glance at, or meditate upon, a few isolated verses here and there.

Most of the Church's children know only fragments of the divine Book, without order, logical or chronological, reproduced in the Prayer-book for the festivals and Sunday services of the year; and they hardly remember any of it except the special quotations, which, occurring oftener than others on the lips

of preachers, or in books of piety, come to take possession, with or without leave, of all memories, and thus form part of the public property of the community.

We believe that we are in no degree exaggerating when we take for granted that there are not perhaps, on an average, three faithful in a parish who have gone beyond this vague notion, and who (even once in their lives) have set themselves to follow out and to study in its general harmony, and in the fourfold form which the Evangelists give it, the complete history of the God-man. Astonishing and distressing contrast : the Gospel, while it continues to be the most illustrious book in the world, has become a book unknown.

How has such an abnormal phenomenon been produced among us ? The question deserves to be examined with religious care, and with absolute sincerity.

## II.

We may observe, first of all, that if this fact is general, especially in our own country, it is not of ancient date. It may be affirmed to have no root in the past.

Indeed, from Tertullian to St. Bernard, all the Fathers of the Church earnestly recommended to all Christians capable of reading, a personal acquaintance, if not with the Old Testament, of which many passages relate exclusively to the Jewish nation, at least with the Gospel, which was written for all nations of the earth, for all races, and for all times. To none of the great men, to none of the saints, did the obscurities and difficulties which may be incidentally met with in the heavenly Book appear a sufficient reason for wresting from any single soul the immeasurable blessing which it is called to draw from a direct communication

with the actual words of our Lord, with the sanctifying manifestation of His existence here below.

“Why,” says St. John Chrysostom, “should the Holy Spirit have borrowed, in order to write the Gospels, the pen of publicans, of fishermen, of lowly artisans, of poor people without instruction and without letters, if it was not with the manifest aim of putting such a book on the level of the least educated reader? That which it concerns all to know the Evangelists have set forth clearly and in the manner most intelligible for all, as being the common teachers of the universe. Who is the man who, on hearing these words, ‘Blessed are they who are meek and lowly of heart, blessed are the merciful, blessed are they who weep, blessed are the pure in heart!’ and the rest, needs any master to explain them to him? Is there the least ambiguity in the narrative which is given us of the

miracles and the events of the life of Jesus Christ? . . .

“Yes, yes! it is the duty of every Christian assiduously to read these sacred books. It is not sufficient that he should be only not absolutely ignorant of what they contain; he ought to meditate upon them, in order to gather their hidden virtue. What good will it do you to hear the expositions which we continually give in consecutive order, if you render all our efforts useless by neglecting in the first instance to make yourselves acquainted, through diligent perusal, with the books themselves which form the subject of our discourse? For want of this co-operation on your part, is not our labour rendered almost entirely fruitless?

“Know that these writings have not been given to be only a vain ornament to our libraries, but that we may imprint their divine lessons in our very selves. To possess them only as the Jews did,



with whom the precepts of the law were graven on tables of stone, would be to forget that pressing obligation which lies upon us all to inscribe them on the living tables of our heart, spirit. . . . I would that, by continually reading them, you were completely penetrated by them.

“If the Devil trembles to approach a house in which ‘the Christian Book’\* is found, with much more reason will he fear to enter a soul fully possessed with its celestial teaching.”

The unanimous feeling of the Doctors of the Church, and the feeling of the Church herself, on the important subject which occupies us, is summed up in these pressing exhortations of St. John Chrysostom.

Moreover, the reading of the Gospel has during long centuries nourished the manly

\* “The Christian Book.” This remarkable expression of St. Chrysostom to indicate the Gospels is found also in other Fathers, and especially in St. Athanasius.



faith of our ancestors, and stirred up the ardour of souls for the service of Jesus Christ. The greater part of the sermons and homilies of the holy Fathers presuppose, in the audience gathered around the pulpit, a familiar acquaintance with the Book of books, which formed, as it were, the basis of all their teaching, moral and dogmatic.

“The Gospels,” they repeat every moment, “were written to be read and meditated on by every believer at his own fireside, afterwards commented on, elucidated, and explained in the House of God by His ministers, and finally interpreted, when it became necessary on any point, by the supreme authority of the Catholic Church.”

### III.

In the sixteenth century Protestantism attempted to cut this theory in two. Rejecting all superior judgment, it pro-

claimed the right of every reader to declare in the most absolute manner the supreme interpretation of the Word of God according to his own individual will and fancy.

Then, when the Church and the very nature of things had established a fruitful liberty, under the guardianship and sanction of a tutelary power, the innovation proclaimed license, and opened the gates to all the excesses which it brings in its train.

Thenceforth it became necessary and imperative to protect the good faith of the public from the danger of false or erroneous translations, and to warn the faithful against alterations of the divine Book, against misinterpretations of its meaning, against corruptions. With this aim the Council of Trent laid down a very simple rule. It decreed that thenceforth every translation, whether in whole or in part, of the Holy Scriptures, must

be sanctioned by the Episcopal *imprimatur* of the diocese in which it should be published, and also be accompanied by explanatory notes. Just as, in every country—when it is a question of precious materials, such as gold and silver—the State controls and declares by its stamp the purity of the metal; so it was with the *imprimatur* of the Bishop. In like manner, with regard to the notes, on all high-roads which the multitudes traverse there are placed at difficult and doubtful spots, sign-posts, directions, even lamps, to assure the safety of travellers, to keep them from straying from the right way, from wandering in any wrong direction, or from falling over precipices.

We must point out, in passing, that by this double precaution and careful attention the Church made clear its express desire that every one should follow the same road; and (with the exception of one temporary suspension, at the height

of the crisis) it continued to invite the vast multitude subject to it to go and draw life for themselves directly from the sacred waves of the evangelical source.

#### IV.

Unfortunately the rarest virtue in this world is *moderation*. If the infallible Church was wise, fallible man was not; and the fear lest a present evil, of which they were the alarmed spectators, should develop and increase, threw them back, as so often happens, into another evil, of which they did not see the future bearing and the distant consequences.

The abuse which the separatists had made, and were making, of various inspired texts, on which they endeavoured to base their errors, frightened a certain number, a considerable number, of Catholics of an anxious orthodoxy; and there was produced among them a sort of re-

action against the very use of the sacred writings, of which every page, it was murmured with the exaggeration of fear, contained, like snakes in the grass, the most terrible dangers of heresy.

Without daring to formulate publicly an absolute prohibition which might have fallen under the censures of the Church, this timorous school endeavoured, without even confessing clearly to itself its own purpose, to dash from the hands of believers the divine Book which forms the foundation of our faith; and it laboured to replace it, little by little, by a pious literature destined to give to hearts and spirits food accommodated to their strength, and nourishment without peril.

Some of these books, we do not hesitate to admit, are excellent in themselves, and have contributed to the sanctification of many souls. Nevertheless, they are the exception. In the greater number of these works (where too often, alas,

the sugar of devotion replaces the salt of wisdom) the eternal truths and the real teachings of the Gospels are quickly diluted, and, as it were, lost in strange waters; doctrines of an individual or a party, reflections ascetic or mystical, rules of piety, methods, means, processes of perfection, and prayers of all sorts. Some are absolutely distressing by their intellectual insignificance, by their narrowness of conception, by their false ideas or absence of ideas, by their absolute ignorance; ignorance of the world as it is, ignorance of the human heart, ignorance of the actual ways of God. But all alike, the best with the worst, are quite another thing (yes, absolutely another thing) than the Gospel, whose apostolic mission they have by a gradual, we were going to say clandestine encroachment, usurped.

We take leave (before proceeding to examine the consequences of this litera-



ture) to insist, at the risk of repetition, even at the risk of being tedious, on this reversal, on this secret revolution, accomplished without any outward change, in the inner life, and in the usages of the orthodox multitudes.

Having for their principle and aim to cause the Christian people to know and love the very tenor of the Gospel, the holy Fathers, as we have seen above, far from wishing to replace or supplant the Gospel by their own writings, had devoted their labours to elucidate its smallest expressions, to scrutinise and explain its sense, not in order that the commentary might push aside the text, but that the faithful, in their own houses, whether alone or assembled in their families, might the better understand and relish the life-giving savour of the holy Word. In requiring, from the epoch of Protestantism, and from the first century of printing, that translations in the vulgar



tongue should thenceforth be accompanied by approved notes and by quotations from the Doctors, the Œcumenical Council assembled at Trent had solemnly ratified so just a conception of things by the sanction of its infallible authority.

Such had been the doctrine and the universal custom from the beginning. And certainly, if the writings of which we speak, inspired with the same thought and working with the same feeling, had continued to follow the same direction, there would have been nothing to say of them, unless to praise the merits of some and regret the imperfections of others. . . . But what is to be deplored is that, starting from a wholly different point of view, and forsaking in so doing the tradition alike of the Church and of the Fathers, they tacitly pursued and finally attained the very opposite end. Considering the sacred Book useless, nay, even dangerous reading for the

faithful, they thought to do a pious work in relegating it, far from the profane, to the learned recesses of the sanctuary.

Was not this to forget that the teaching of Jesus, instead of being limited to the initiated few, within a carefully guarded enclosure, had on the contrary resounded in the open air on the public places, on mountain slopes, on the lake shore, in the midst of the crowds of people pressing around him ; among the ignorant as among the learned ; among the good and the wicked, the great and the small, the righteous and sinners ; among Jews and heathen, old men, women, and children ? Was it not to forget that it was commanded to the Apostles and to their successors to proclaim everywhere the same Gospel across the ages, and to make it known to every creature under heaven. “ Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every

creature" (Mark xvi. 15). "*κηρύξατε,*" says the Greek, "be like public criers." Was it not to forget that this order was so absolute that, when it happened to our Lord to take His disciples apart and converse with them outside the multitudes, He did not fail to impress upon them that even these words which He addressed to them thus privately were afterwards to be repeated and spread abroad like all His other teachings. "What I tell you in the darkness, speak ye in the light; and what ye hear in the ear, preach ye on the housetops" (Matt. x. 27).

The dread which was felt of seeing readers stray into the paths of heresy, put out of sight these injunctions of the divine Master, and the constant desire of the Church.

## VI.

Nevertheless, the needs of souls and hearts were such that, in spite of in

fluences and currents, certain of the faithful endeavoured, and persisted in endeavouring, to return to the reading of the New Testament.

But, as if all circumstances had fatally conspired to maintain and gradually to widen the separation between the people and the Word of God, an obstacle all at once presented itself before them—very secondary in appearance, and very grave in reality—which did not fail to discourage and by degrees to arrest their good movement.

In the midst of the progress or increasing changes of our language since the sixteenth century, and in opposition to the literary exigencies which flowed from them, it unfortunately came to pass that the translations of the Gospel were rigidly cast in a form of strange and singular aspect, which for the generality of readers robbed them of all movement, all colour, all life.

Through an extreme respect for the letter of the sacred text, a respect legitimate and praiseworthy in its principle, but which we think misconceived in its application, the various translators who have succeeded one another seem to have considered it a duty to take no account whatever of the idiom in which their translations were to be read. They have invariably set themselves to reproduce with the most scrupulous accuracy the turning of the phrases and the arrangement of the words; that is to say, the precise external form of the writings which they had to translate. In short, to speak Greek, or Latin, or Hebrew in our land under the sound of French, whatever might be the vast learning or the talents of the authors, there necessarily resulted from this method (which itself also was a product of the timid school) translations in a barbarous style. Who does not know, alas! and who has

not deplored this style—laborious, involved, overladen with dependent clauses; this style so fatiguing and obscure, in the midst of which the attention, soon discouraged and weary, vainly exhausts its strength in the effort to follow the idea, and sometimes even to find the meaning, so unintelligible has it become.

One fault, however, always begets another. By contributing thus to obscure the thought and to misrepresent the true expression of it, this method brought with it, by a natural and logical consequence, the necessity of explaining almost every word by added comments. Hence the excessive use of notes and glosses, of which the Church had prescribed the use only within the simple and sober limits of the indispensable. Few in number, they are an assistance which gives help and satisfaction to the mind; unduly multiplied, they smother the text, and destroy the thread of the narrative.



Shall we also mention those old typographical customs which it has been thought a duty to preserve religiously in the translations of the Gospel, as if these forms, which have disappeared from our observance, had in themselves something priestly, inviolable, and sacred? Shall we refer to those strange pages which offer to the astonished gaze two long and narrow columns of small print paragraphs, furnished at the foot with a perfect thicket of notes, and starred here and there with a thousand threatening references? All this also drives away the modern reader.

Among these purely external arrangements there is one which, in the opinion of the best judges, has had the most vexatious effect.

Every one knows that the Latin and Greek versions of the Old and New Testaments are arranged in chapters and



verses. But what is perhaps less known is that these divisions, purely arbitrary, form absolutely no part of the actual text of the holy writings. The division into chapters dates from the thirteenth century, and was the work of Cardinal Hugues de St. Cher. As to the division into numbered verses, it was introduced, in the sixteenth century, by the famous Parisian printer, Robert Stephens, and was soon universally adopted, owing to the great convenience of such an innovation for quotation, verification, and the finding of any passage of Scripture.

This ingenious idea, it is true, facilitated to an enormous degree the labours of the learned, of expositors, and of preachers; but there its utility came to an end. By transferring to versions in the vulgar tongue (that is to say, into editions, not for research, but for reading and meditation) these divisions of the printer Stephens; by introducing

into the discourses of the Saviour and the narratives of the Evangelists these perpetual and brutal gashes which are as annoying to the mind as to the eye; by inflicting on the understanding, without either necessity or advantage, this constant arrest and resumption of movement, this uneasy, jerky, skipping mode of progression, the intrinsic charm, the profound and peaceful charm of the Book of Life is more and more destroyed.

Have you sometimes tasted the sweetness of a refreshing walk in one of those quiet country paths which lie buried in the depths of the great woods, in those lovely avenues, bordered by venerable forest trees in which the birds are singing, enamelled with wild flowers in which the buzzing bees are seeking booty? Above your head the infinite sky; around you the deep silence and the dense shades; within you the consciousness of

the presence of God. How this voyage on the bosom of nature rests you! How your whole being revels in the calming freshness of that tranquil solitude, and tastes deliciously, and without effort, the universal life which penetrates it from all sides!

Well! suppose now that some surveyor, in order to fix for himself and others the exact position of each point of landscape, takes into his head to dig trenches across the path at every five or six yards, to mark the distance. Is it not evident that in condemning you henceforth every moment to leap over these incessant landmarks, he will have put an end to your walks in the forest, and without having touched a branch or a leaf, will have destroyed the indescribable charm which, whether at morning or at eve, or at high noon, has drawn your steps towards those shady groves?

Precisely similar is the effect pro-

duced by this cutting of the verses in the various translations. It vexes the reader; it wearies him; it almost irritates him; it drives him away from the sacred forest.

. . . . .  
It is true that in the extracts from the Gospels given in Prayer and Service books verses are altogether excluded, as well as the notes; some of which, however, appear to us to be at times indispensable. But an opposite and equally regrettable extreme has been fallen into by the manner in which these fragments are printed, always preceded by the traditional formula, "At that time. . . ."

However important may be the passage quoted, however distinct the events, the episodes, the words, the dialogues, the discourses which it relates, an inflexible rule has been adopted of never breaking the line, of running at one stretch from beginning to end, without halting for a

second, and without taking time to breathe. The four narratives of the Passion which we read during the course of Holy Week occupy each of them eight, ten, and even twelve uninterrupted pages ; not a single division, not a single interval, not a single rest. The immense paragraph forms one indivisible block, a compact mass in which all the sentences touch and crowd and muddle each other ; so that the mind, constrained by unrelieved tension, comes to take note no longer of the details, but only to receive a confused impression of the whole.

## VII.

It is thus, by a series of many causes, that the custom of reading the holy Gospels becomes less from age to age, and at length almost disappears from Catholic homes.

Shall we be rash if we think and say,

since this has been the case, that all that the most ardent and indefatigable zeal has laboured to supply to Christian hearts and minds has not made up for that which they have lost? Shall we be rash to think and say, in accordance with the Fathers, and in accordance with the Church, that the word of man has been fundamentally powerless to replace the divine word, and however full they may have been of good and holy intentions, all these myriads of volumes have not equalled in value that single book *the Gospel?*

And further :

The watery and sweetened dilutions which, under the form of books of piety, have replaced for so many the nourishment of the Gospel, so pure, so substantial, so strong, so life-giving, could have no other effect than in the long run to weaken the vigour of the Christian temperament.



Many of the precepts of the New Testament, very rough and very plain, being sometimes left in the shade or softened down, lest they should cause a shock, and on the other hand the reading of the divine Book, not coming every day to correct these too human precautions and these regrettable accommodations, it followed, and could not but follow, that the spirit of the world, infiltrated by imperceptible gradations into the religious ideas of many truly believing souls, thoroughly disposed to do right, and passionately attached to the minutest observances of worship.

Little acts of devotion then too often took the place of lofty sentiments and exalted virtues ; minute observances that of manly action ; the true type of the perfection to be attained was falsified, altered, diminished. To the grand and apostolic ideal of the *saint* whose powerful and brilliant example stirs the enthu-



siasm of hearts, and leads captive the will, succeeded the pale and faded form of the saintly man, whose life, edifying as it may be, never penetrates the souls of others with glowing warmth, nor draws them within its own orbit. Now, the force of expansion and of attraction, the force of Christian proselytism, consisting above all things in the holiness of Christians, that is to say, in the entire application of evangelical precepts and counsels, it comes to pass that being thus enfeebled inwardly, they have less energy, less power to act on and to convert others, to draw into the bosom of the Church those who have had the misfortune not to be born in it, to restore to it those who have left it, to retain within it those who are becoming alienated from it.

Another result, not less grave, has followed from this total ignorance of the Gospels, in which so many sheep of

the faithful flock have slumbered, unconscious of peril. Holding scrupulously and with fervour to all the externals of religion, docile, orthodox, zealous, even sometimes a little narrow, many Christians have become, alas ! more and more incapable, not only of gaining and convincing those around them who do not believe, but of opposing any serious intelligent resistance to the attacks of which religion is the object, to the audacious falsehoods respecting the origin of our faith, to the calumnies against the sacred Book ; and this internal feebleness, the evils of which were hardly felt in the days when the whole community repeated the same Creed, constitutes at the present time a danger which must strike every observer.

We live, in fact, in an age when it is no longer sufficient to be content with a blind faith like that of a coal-heaver—a faith undoubtedly worthy of respect, but

only in a coal-heaver. Whoever can read, write, work, think, ought to have (and particularly in our day) a faith clear-sighted, giving good reason to itself of all that it holds and of the reasons for holding it—a faith armed both for defence and for apostleship.

Surrounded by hostile publications, by inimical journals, by contradicters always on the watch, we need at every moment, whether we like it or not, to be prepared to furnish the reasons of our belief, and to defend against many and many a foe the Gospel that is the object of attack. How shall we do it? And if, questioned and cross-questioned by our adversaries on the subject of this book—of this book twice sacred for us, since it contains the history of our God and was inspired by the Holy Spirit—we are constrained to tell them with a blush that we have never read it, shall we not justly be the object of their ridicule and scorn? What explana-

tion can we give, indeed, which will justify in their eyes a contradiction so flagrant between the reverence which reaches even to worship and the indifference which reaches even to not having made acquaintance with these pages, which we look upon as coming from Heaven?

To the general ignorance of the Gospels alone was due in France, some twenty years ago, the success of the scandalous romance which appeared under the name of "The Life of Jesus." Among a people ever so little familiar with the narratives of St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John, such a work could never even have ruffled the surface of the popular mind, and there would have been no need to refute it; every one would have seen for himself, without anybody's aid, its flagrant falsifications, its gross sophisms, its absolute inanity.

## VIII.

This deep-seated and complex evil which we have thought it our duty to analyse with perfect frankness, this enfeeblement of the Christian spirit, these failures of faith, this want of vigour to defend ourselves, this lukewarmness of zeal, these aberrations of piety, this gross ignorance of a great many, must awaken mournful anxiety in the Catholic who reflects. Among those who have authority, or who make authority in the Church, it is unanimously understood that one of the best remedies, perhaps the most efficacious of all, for this state of things, would be to return to the good custom which the holy Fathers and the Councils recommended, with so much solicitude, to the strong generations of other times.

“We must,” it is already said on many sides, “we must lead back the faithful

to the great fountain of living water which springs from the inspired Book. We must make them hear, taste, and relish the direct lessons of the Saviour, the words full of grace and truth which fell from His lips. We must bring them face to face with the lessons taught, for all ages, by the perfect life, the life all human yet all divine of Him whom no sincere intelligence can gaze upon without bowing the knee to Him, whom no true soul can hear or see without loving Him, without adoring Him, without feeling itself inflamed with the desire to follow Him, and the will to serve Him. We must set the whole earth face to face with Jesus Christ."

But if the necessity for the remedy is beginning to impress itself on all in unmistakable characters, it is infinitely less simple to carry it into action. After this sad and universal interruption of which we have just examined the causes,



we cannot conceal from ourselves that it is extremely difficult to introduce afresh the daily reading of the Gospel into the habits of the faithful. Is that a reason for not making the attempt?

No, indeed! for to forego action in the presence of a simple difficulty, however great it may be, as one would in the presence of a manifest impossibility, would be not only a failure of courage, but a neglect of duty and a formal ignoring of that special grace which God infallibly accords to every man who, instead of giving way before an obstacle, consecrates his strength, however puny, to overthrowing the evil and establishing the good.

The Sovereign Master, however, does not demand from us success and triumph, but that which He alone gives as it pleases Him; He demands of us goodwill and effort, which are never in vain, even when they seem for the moment to

fail. What one begins, others finish ; what one sketches out to-day only partially, or even roughly and unskilfully, will be brought to perfection by more able hands that come after him. Thus the labour of the small and humble, if it does not attain the result after which it strives, serves at least to prepare the paths which lead to it, to clear the way, to make easier the road, to bring to light, even if by its own faults, the stumbling stones which have to be avoided.

It is for these reasons that we have worked for nearly fifteen years at the constant revision and correction of the work which we publish to-day. It is for these reasons that, notwithstanding all the defects which our incompetence, alas, has still left in it, we have determined at length to send it forth from the press, with the certainty of responding to the want of many souls.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A piece of private information may give the reader some idea of the reverential care which we have en-

## IX.

The foregoing observations explain the aim which we have proposed to ourselves, and the method which we have followed, in endeavouring to translate the Holy Gospels for the Christians of our time, and for the non-Christians also.

We think we may claim for ourselves that by the study of authorised commentators and of philologists, by the attentive examination of various readings, and by our own reflections, we have spared no pains to penetrate the exact sense and bearing of each phrase, of each expression, of each word of Greek and Latin, of each Hebrew idiom. On the

deavoured to give to a work so difficult and so delicate. It is twelve years since the present volume was completely printed, by the firm of Lahure & Co., and since then we have paid rent to that firm for the type employed, in order to be able to retouch, alter, or correct indefinitely, in such leisure as we could command, the successive and innumerable proofs of the book.

other hand, with the sense once firmly settled in our mind, we have set ourselves not to make a servile tracing from the dead language in the living language, but to express in the best French which it was possible for us to write the exact shade of the original.

Just as in order to understand the Evangelists we have been inspired constantly and solely by the genius of the language in which they spoke, so, to translate them, we have been inspired constantly and solely by the genius of the language which we had to speak. Scrupulously strict in all that constitutes the idea itself, in all which is of the inviolable essence of the sacred text, we have set ourselves the task of presenting in all faithfulness to our readers the thought and the feeling, without adding anything, without diminishing anything, without disturbing anything, and without losing anything ; just as with a thou-

sand precautions one pours, from one vase into another, some precious liquid, fearful equally of losing a single drop, and of mixing with it the smallest particle of extraneous matter.

We have borne in mind that St. Jerome, in his letter to Pammachus on the art of translation, lays down as a principle this precept of Horace : “ If you would be a true interpreter, beware first of all of attempting to render invariably word for word.” And St. Jerome adds : “ What some people call fidelity, men of real learning call servility. When it is manifest that, by translating every word, I should obtain in my language something inadmissible, who, I ask, could accuse me of failing in my duty as an interpreter if, to give the true sense, I modified the order of the words, the form of the sentence or the expression ? A translation, word for word, conceals the sense which it professes to transfer from one language



to another. Let who will follow syllables and letters, do you attach yourself to the meaning. . . . A whole day would not suffice me to quote the testimony of all who in their translations have sought solely the meaning and the truth. I content myself for the moment with naming to you the holy Confessor Hilary. Translating from Greek into Latin, homilies on Job, and several treatises on the Psalms, he guards himself carefully against attaching himself closely to the sleeping letter ; he lays hold of the sense like a conqueror, and carries it off into his own language.”

For the old chapters and verses, introduced by the hand of man to facilitate reference, we have, to facilitate reading, substituted divisions more in harmony with the habits and logical requirements of contemporary minds. Here, following the actual order of the facts or the ideas ; there a different division of the successive paragraphs of the narrative ; here,



numerous breaks ; there hyphens, marking dialogue, according to the rules of modern printing ; in other places blanks, spaces, intervals, asterisks, sometimes lines of dots, in order to guide the understanding by guiding the eyes, and in order to render more intelligible the general drift of the whole.

The old divisions, carefully indicated in the page headings, admits, however, of precise reference to the text of the Gospel, and of comparison of our translation with the Latin and the Greek, as they are printed in our ordinary editions.

Bearing in mind how much the appearance of a volume bristling with references alarms and repels the majority of readers who absolutely require, in order to enjoy a book, that they shall not be interrupted by perpetual explanations, observations, and dissertations, we have endeavoured to avoid such a rock.

The few geographical, historical, even

philosophical notes which have seemed to us of a nature to elucidate or to complete the text, and consequently to interest every one, are indicated, in the usual way, by a figure referring to the bottom of the page.

As to the notes, purely lexicographical, which support this or that detail of translation, they are collected and arranged at the end of the volume. But as they are only useful to such of our readers as are arrested by a difficulty, and as, for others, a reference in the body of the text would disturb without any advantage the progress of the narrative, we have confined ourselves, in regard to every expression supported by a lexicographical note, to placing in the margin an asterisk, which we have purposely made very small in order not to attract the eye. This asterisk signifies, "There is, at the end of the volume, a note which relates to the line you are

reading.” Whoever needs the note is thus informed that it exists, and he can go in quest of it by following a reference given at the bottom of the page. Those who have met with no difficulty (in the line in question) can continue their reading without troubling themselves about the asterisk, and often even without noticing it.

## X.

We have now explained our method. We have made clear the principles which have guided us and the end we have followed, trusting not in ourselves but in the grace and the blessing of God. Profoundly convinced of the sanctifying and apostolic virtue of the divine Book, we have striven in the measure of our strength, or to speak more correctly, according to the measure of our weakness, to render it more accessible to all, to place it again, according to the tradi-

tion and wish of the Church, in the hands of the faithful, to place it also under the eyes of unbelievers, of those who do not pray, of those who never cross the threshold of the house of prayer, and who live as if God did not exist.

“What!” some will perhaps exclaim, “you have tried to translate the Gospel for men of the world, and to throw its sacred leaves on profane tables, strewn, alas, with so many romances and unwholesome books?”

Certainly! Yes, that is precisely our design; and may God grant us some small success in realising it! Is the Gospel anything else than the very word and example of Jesus Christ, piercing through all the intervening ages, and presenting itself to all souls that they may see it and hear it? Did not our Lord, when He came down upon this earth, address His instructions to all? Did He not come for sinners rather than

for the righteous? Was He not to be seen continually scattering truth wherever there was error, good wherever there was evil, health where there was suffering, life where there was death, entering into the houses of publicans as well as the houses of Pharisees, breaking bread with all, raising the Magdalen bowed down under the burden of her sins, speaking of Redemption to the woman of Samaria, asking and receiving hospitality under the roof of Zaccheus, and thus leading back, by the inherent grace of His heavenly teaching, all those hearts of good-will who were but gone astray? The listener who heard Him at first with a careless ear, became attentive; once attentive, he became a disciple; once a disciple, he became an apostle.

May the blessing of the Lord grant that in passing through our unworthy hands the work of the Evangelists may

have lost nothing of its life-giving power and renovating force! Mayest thou, then, O Book Divine, still true to thyself, under this new form suited to my time and country, mayest thou reveal the Living God to those who know him not; strengthen the weak and tottering, comfort those who are in trouble, restore hope to the despairing, give the faith of the kingdom to come, and of the illimitable and infinite felicity to those who groan under the miseries here below. O holy Word! speed forth and through even the imperfections of our work and the shortcomings of our language, carry light into spirits and souls, bear charity into hearts, even as the sun, notwithstanding the fogs and clouds which rise from the earth ceases not to brighten the world with its rays and to flood it with fertility. Amen.



# THE POWER BEHIND THE POPE.

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## OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

“Irish Nationalists may consider with advantage an excellent instance of the ease with which Rome throws over its own past, as drawn by Dr. William Wright in the *Contemporary Review*. His article is little more than an orderly *catena* of established facts, but just because of this it is all the more forcible. Rome comes badly out of the incident; . . . but in the face of this, Irish Catholics ought to feel no surprise at the Papal action against the Plan of Campaign.”—*The Record*.

“A distressing story is revealed to us in the May issue of the *Contemporary Review*, pointing to the implacable hatred entertained by some overpowering influence in the Church of Rome towards any attempt to give copies or portions of the Holy Scriptures to the members of the Catholic Church. Dr. Wright tells the story with much force in the *Review*, under the title ‘The Power Behind the Pope.’”—*Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette*.

“There is a singular irony of fate in the lot of Henri Lasserre. He gained fame and fortune by adopting and announcing the miracle of Our Lady of Lourdes, and more recently has added to his wealth and renown by his translation of the Gospels into French. The book sold at four francs per copy, and was approved by Bishops, and even the Pope. But now it is in the Index. As Dr. Wright says, in his remarkable article in the *Contemporary*, the power behind the Pope is stronger than the infallible Vicar himself.”—*The Methodist Times*.

“All this is full of significance. We know not what gloss Cardinals Manning and Newman will put upon the facts. Rome is unchanged and unchanging. She hates the Gospel.”—*The Freeman*.

“How fallible this great department of the Curia may be has just been proved in a very startling fashion. They allowed to go forth with their blessing, after deliberate examination, and to run through seven editions” (twenty-five editions), “receiving the blessings and *imprimaturs* of Bishops and Archbishops as it went, a version of the Four Gospels, which they now, after a second examination, have pilloried in the Index, and ordered to be withdrawn from circulation. This is the popular French translation by Henri Lasserre, author of the famous book about the miracle of Lourdes.”—*United Ireland*.

“Dr. William Wright contributes a brightly-written and very interesting article to the May *Contemporary* on ‘The Power Behind the Pope.’”—*British Weekly*.

“This book, with its remarkable preface, was actually dedicated to Notre Dame de Lourdes, an unmistakeable proof of the faith and ingenuousness of its author. This version of the Gospels was issued with the *imprimatur* of the Archbishop of Paris and the benediction of the Pope. But Rome suddenly awoke, and on December 19, 1887, appeared a *Decretum* of the Sacred Congregation condemning Lasserre’s version as a book of degraded doctrine. What will the end be?”—*Sunday School Chronicle*.

“The article by the Rev. Dr. Wright in the May number of the *Contemporary Review* will, we are glad to learn, be issued in a separate and enlarged form, and will include the important preface to M. Lasserre’s translation of the Gospels.”—*Presbyterian Messenger*.

“The believers in Papal Infallibility are on the horns of a dilemma. The same book has been blessed and banned. One of these contrary decisions must be right and the other wrong. Whichever be accepted, Infallibility stands condemned.”—*Word and Work*.

Appreciative articles appeared also in the *Globe*, *Commonwealth*, *Standard*, &c.

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Inscriptions by W. H. RYLANDS, F.S.A.

“REV. AND DEAR SIR,— . . . The first announcement of the work you have produced filled me with a lively interest, for it belonged to a region on the borders of which I have long, though but intermittently, laboured. Your account of the local extension of Hittite influence is in complete conformity with the idea which conceives them as within the circle of possible Trojan alliances. I may add to the suggestion which I first published, in fear and trembling, that the manner of the mention in Homer is completely in accord with your doctrines as to the greatness of the Hittites. (1.) Because the slaughter of their chief seems to be the crowning exploit that had been performed by the son of Achilles. ‘I will not,’ says Odusseus, ‘name all that he slew, but only the hero Eurupulos.’ (2.) Because the Keteioi are named without epithet, description, or indication, which accords with the idea of their being a famous and well-known race. The gradual building up of primitive history is, in my eyes, to the full as interesting and as fruitful a process as the extension of physical sciences, which attracts a thousandfold more attention.—I remain, Rev. and dear Sir, faithfully yours, W. E. GLADSTONE.”

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