

**LETTER FROM THE RIGHT REVEREND THE
LORD BISHOP OF ORLEANS TO M.
MINGHETTI, MINISTER OF
FINANCE TO KING VICTOR EMMANUEL:
ON THE SPOLIATION OF THE CHURCH AT
ROME AND THROUGHOUT ITALY**

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Letter from the right reverend the Lord Bishop of Orleans to M. Minghetti, minister of finance to King Victor Emmanuel: on the spoliation of the Church at Rome and throughout Italy by M. Minghetti & Félix Dupanloup

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M. MINGHETTI & FÉLIX DUPANLOUP

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PREFACE OF TRANSLATOR.

THE English press in general has represented the following Letter as only a fresh outburst of an eminent member of the Roman Catholic Church in favour of the Temporal Power, in order 'to keep alive the grievances of their chief in Italy;' which grievances they represent as purely imaginary.

A portion of the French press, on the other hand, considers that the Bishop's language is that of resignation to an accomplished fact—an impression which he himself indignantly denies.

We can only implore our readers not to be misled by these equally false though opposite statements, and not to trust to the garbled extracts from the Letter put forward in the newspapers; but to read, if possible without any preconceived prejudice, this plain and unvarnished statement of facts.

We believe that, with the strong sense of honesty and fair-play which is the inherent characteristic of all Englishmen, they will be startled beyond measure

at the revelations it contains, and which we defy them to disprove; and that they will feel that the 'solution of the Roman Question' can never be arrived at by injustice and wrong, or by a direct violation of the Divine commandment, 'Thou shalt not steal.'

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I. THE PROMISES OF THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT	8
II. THE SPOILIATION OF THE CHURCH — THE LIQUIDATION OF ECCLESIASTICAL PROPERTY	13
III. THE SUPPRESSION OF THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS — WHAT BECOMES OF THEIR PERSONS?	17
IV. THE SUPPRESSION OF THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS — WHAT BECOMES OF THEIR PROPERTY?	23
V. FOUNDATIONS OF CATHOLIC NATIONS — DISASTERS IN- FLICTED UPON THEM BY THE ITALIAN LAWS	28
VI. ANCIENT ORIGIN AND INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER OF THE PRINCIPAL RICHES OF THE ROMAN CHURCH	30
VII. BLOWS DEALT AT THE PRIESTHOOD AND RELIGION ITSELF	33
VIII. DESTRUCTION OF THE ROMAN COLLEGE	35
IX. DESTRUCTION OF THE MOTHER-HOUSES	37
X. DISORGANISATION OF THE ROMAN CONGREGATIONS	39
XI. THREATS AGAINST THE PROPAGANDA	41
XII. WAR DECLARED AGAINST LAY SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTIONS	45
XIII. THAT THE SPOILIATION OF THE CHURCH HAS NOT EN- RICHED ITALY	47
XIV. THE SPOILIATION OF THE CHURCH, IS IT JUST IN PRINCIPLE? HAS THE CHURCH A RIGHT TO POSSESS PROPERTY?	50
XV. CONCLUSION	53

LETTER TO M. MINGHETTI.

Sir,—In 1848 you were the Minister of Pius IX. ; I find you in 1874 the Minister of Victor Emmanuel.

You coöperated with the Holy Father in a great, fruitful, and glorious undertaking ; and although to-day you lend your aid to, alas, a very different work, I know that you have retained a grateful recollection of the generous Sovereign who gave you such a proof of his esteem. Therefore it is that with a certain degree of confidence I take the liberty of addressing you this Letter.

I am just come back from Rome. I have seen with my own eyes all that is passing there. Nothing can be more sad ; and I like to think that it is not without bitter regret that you are taking part in such proceedings. Everything is done with consummate skill, and with a deep meaning. There is no noise, no outward violence ; everything is concealed under an apparent legality ; but nevertheless, what is being done is the greatest disaster that could befall the Church, and, if she could be destroyed by the hand of man, would be her ruin.

But Europe, indifferent or distracted by other interests, appears to see nothing and to know nothing ; and France, still bleeding from her late reverses, and trembling on the edge of an abyss, can do naught but mourn. The Catholic world is deceived. They even boast of the liberty which the noble Prisoner of the Vatican enjoys under your protection !

I will say more : you are deceived yourselves. You do not know all that is being done in your name ; your agents (I

cannot think otherwise) go beyond your instructions; and allow me to say that they do not do you credit.

I have taken it upon myself, therefore, to let you know yourself the real state of things.

Do not, however, be afraid. I do not ignore the delicacy of such a subject, and I shall respect it; I do not, in this Letter, make an appeal to the sword, but to justice and good faith; I do not, either, intend to make this a party question. The subjects on which I shall touch are outside and above the arena of parties. You have solemnly declared yourselves that you would not wound the consciences of Christians, nor attempt to solve alone, but in accordance with the States possessing Catholic subjects, questions which affect the interests of the whole Catholic body. Would it be an offence to the Italian Government to remind her of her engagements and of her promises? And is it not doing a useful as well as a loyal act to warn those who need the warning?

Besides, if it be true, as I believe, that the actual position of things creates, not only for Catholics and for Italy, but for the whole world, a state of peril from which one may turn away for a moment in the midst of the pressing difficulties of the hour, but which we shall have to face some day or other, is it not the interest of every one, in so grave a matter, not to persevere in dangerous illusions?

For us, Catholics of all nations, it is a duty not to conceal, by our silence, that which, under no pretext and by no country on earth, could be excused or passed over.

And for the Government of which you are the head, is it not of vital importance to take account of such things and to foresee, so as to avoid them, the disastrous complications of the future?

I.

The Promises of the Italian Government.

Before giving an opinion on what is passing at this moment in Rome, it is important to recall the promises which the Italian Government made, and the engagements into which she entered, to respect the Church and her rights, and at the same time the rights of conscience of the Catholic world.