

a high-mindedness which he neither possessed nor understood. The value of noisy professions of all the virtues, domestic and public, had not then been so convincingly demonstrated as it has since; and Platt, with commendable freedom from hypocrisy, set himself quite openly to the task of debauching voters and manipulating legislators.

But mere indifference to principle would never have carried him into the United States Senate. His ambitions were backed by an uncommonly keen intellect. Persons who have seen Platt only in his declining years, since he has been shorn of his power, can hardly imagine what a force he was in his prime. In political astuteness his only rival was the Democratic leader—sometimes, it is suspected, Platt's co-worker—David Bennett Hill. Platt held the Republican party of this State in the hollow of his hand. It was an adage of his that in quiet times the machine rules; and he built up a machine of extraordinary efficiency. He had plenty of money; for at the insurance investigation he told how he used to bleed the big corporations, with the understanding that he would grant suitable favors in return. This money was most judiciously expended throughout the State. He knew the exact capacities of all his minor leaders, the size of the vote which each could deliver, the relative purchasing power of a dollar in city districts and in rural, the various factional quarrels, the possibilities of dicker and intrigue, both within the Republican ranks and with venal or discontented Democrats. New York is a vast chess-board on which to marshal an army of pawns, but Platt deployed his with consummate tact. He was called the "Easy Boss," because he could drive with a free rein (within the prescribed limits) as well as apply the spur. He could take a high-spirited, conscientious, and carable young man, give him his head when he became restless under the discipline of the depraved party organization, tempt his ambition, promise him a career of great usefulness and honor, entangle him in one compromise after another, threaten to bury him in that famous Platt graveyard, and finally bind him to the machine, helpless and hopeless. As a corrupter of youth, we grant the palm to Platt, with his amazing smoothness and cleverness.

His shrewdness was never more strikingly shown than after his disgraceful fall in 1881. With Conkling, he had resigned from the Senate in a quarrel with President Garfield over the patronage. The two men came back to Albany to plot for a reelection; and the hotel corridors were filled with rumors of bribery and scandal. Then Platt, caught in a nasty scrape, was forced to withdraw, and as one of the newspapers then put it, he "stole into the darkness." That a man thus thrust out of public life should ever rehabilitate himself seemed incredible. But he was indefatigable, and before long he appeared at Albany in control of half-a-dozen votes in the Legislature. With this small capital he began trafficking in legislation. He managed his resources, dexterously, steadily enlarged his stock of Senators and Assemblymen, added an attractive line of delegates to city, county, State, and national conventions, ornamented his show-window with Congressmen, Federal officeholders, and even Governors, and then in 1897 returned in triumph to the Senate. But in his twelve years there he has not brought forward any large piece of constructive legislation. His activities have been confined to the field in which he has won all his successes—if we may use that term—office-broking. With his mental equipment, he might have made a record to be proud of; but he deliberately narrowed his interests and centred his attention on petty jobs.

We need not press the lesson. It is easy to sneer at ideas and the idealists; but in the long run it is the idealist who wins and the gross materialist who goes down in shameful defeat. Platt and Platt's influence have wrought nothing but harm in State and nation. A life so sordid, unilluminated by lofty impulse, unredeemed by anything resembling devotion to duty, can secure but one verdict from history; and in this instance Platt's contemporaries anticipate the condemnation of posterity.

#### FRENCH ANTI-CLERICALISM.

Last week M. Clemenceau's Minister of Public Instruction appointed the Abbé Loisy professor of the history of religions at the Collège de France. The choice was significant, both because of the character of the man on whom it fell and the manner in which it was

brought about. The authorities of the Collège de France had recommended M. Loisy; but the Academy of Moral Sciences, which had a voice in the matter, declared in favor of another candidate by a vote of 19 to 17. Later the Academy reconsidered its action and came to the support of M. Loisy, who was promptly confirmed by the authorities. There can be little doubt that government pressure had been brought to bear on the Academy. The candidacy of M. Loisy had taken on a political aspect. Rejecting him would be a triumph for the Catholic cause; appointing him would be a striking demonstration of the government's unflagging zeal against Rome. For it must be remembered that M. Loisy is the most redoubtable champion of that dangerous heresy of Modernism which the Church has so recently spewed out of its mouth. As far back as 1893 the Abbé Loisy became suspect, and was removed from his professorship at the Institut Catholique. In 1903, five of his books were placed on the Index. In 1907, the Papal decree *Lamentabili sane exitu* stamped as heresy sixty-five propositions drawn largely from the writings of Loisy. The abbé replied. He was excommunicated, and Rome proclaimed a general war on Modernism in the encyclical *Pascendi*.

Neither the Church nor its enemies, in France, hold the opinion that everything was lost and won when Separation was effected some two years ago. The bishops and the faithful, under the lead of Rome, are taking up new positions and are reforming their ranks, with an eye to continued resistance. The passionate anti-clericals are pressing on towards victories new. While the necessary after-effects of Separation move on apace, while Church property is being laicised and liquidated, and, on the other hand, the Church finances are being reorganized on the basis of voluntary contributions, the firing line has shifted from Parliament and the courts into the schools. The schoolmasters as a class have a strong liking for the revolutionary ideals so plentiful in France of the present day. Trade-unionism, as applied to their own profession, is defended. Teachers have been known to lecture their pupils on the folly of patriotism quite in accordance with the principles of Gustave Hervé. Naturally, the anti-religious spirit is strong in the average French schoolroom. Text-

books on the history of France, in which the rôle played by religion and the Church is neglected or slurred, are popular. In other words, the radical secularists have borrowed a page from the book of their opponents. They know what an advantage it is to carry your beliefs into the elementary schools. And the Church is fully conscious of the danger. Helpless, under the present régime, it sees its hopes of the rising generation being swamped by the teachers of irreligion, of spiritual and moral, as well as social, anarchy.

With the government definitely arrayed against them, the bishops must fight their battles by extra-political means. They must utilize public opinion. Since it would be less than useless for them to work on the schoolmaster or his superior, they are trying to work through the parents of the school children, whose future welfare they regard as threatened. The great majority of Frenchmen are, formally at least, still in communion with the old faith. The women are still largely susceptible to priestly influence. If the mothers and fathers of France could be brought to protest against the growing godlessness of the schools, there can be little doubt that they would have to be listened to. But for the success of such a policy, or of any policy that the Church in France may bring forward, it is essential that the Church should show a spirit of partial compromise, a certain readiness to recognize the logic of accomplished facts. And especially is it important that its members should act as Frenchmen and not as privates at the absolute behest of Rome. Unfortunately, Rome has shown no desire for compromise, and the Church in France displays no desire or ability to question the orders from Rome. The tendency is the other way. Because the French bishops in their plenary assemblies favored a policy of moderation in the Separation crisis, the plenary assemblies are now abolished and provincial assemblies are substituted. So strong a Catholic organ as *Figaro* has characterized this change as a scheme for splitting up the French Episcopate in order to prevent the formation of a united opinion, within the French Church, in possible opposition to Rome. At the beginning of January, M. Andrieu, the archbishop of Marseilles, probably the most steadfast opponent of compromise with the state,

was raised to the dignity of cardinal. It was unmistakably a reward.

Under such circumstances, the anti-clerical swing is gaining force. It is war to the hilt, even if it is sometimes war to the point of the ridiculous. The author of a depreciatory life of Joan of Arc is made professor at the Sorbonne and riots follow. The Socialist Mayor of Ivry celebrates "civic baptisms." The new-born are brought in to the strains of the "Marseillaise," listen to a discourse on liberty and democracy, and depart to the strains of the "Internationale," taking with them a box of candy and a penny savings bank as the gift of the state. The situation is not pleasing to good Catholics.

#### WILLIAM MORRIS.

##### I.

Mr. Noyes, himself one of the most serious of the younger English poets, has written a life of William Morris in a tone of almost lyrical enthusiasm\*; affording further evidence that the maker of "The Earthly Paradise," as the representative of one of the diverging lines from Tennyson's early Victorian compromise, is receiving more serious critical attention. When Morris went up to Oxford in 1853, bearing with him the humors of a strange romantic boyhood in Epping Forest, he was already steeped in Tennyson, and it was natural that he should have joined himself to a set of men who were under the same spell. "We all had the feeling," says Canon Dixon, one of that university group, "that after Tennyson no farther development was possible: that we were at the end of all things in poetry." As a matter of fact, though Tennyson no doubt exercised a strong influence on these ardent seekers after beauty, their course was to be by no means a continuation of the great Cambridge poet's.

Morris, too, like Tennyson, made a friendship at the university, which colored all the rest of his life. When he took his examination at Oxford, there sat beside him in the Hall of Exeter, a boy from Birmingham, Edward Burne-Jones, the future artist, with whom and three or four others was to be formed the Brotherhood (not to be confused with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood), whose eccentric doings are chronicled so entertainingly in Lady Burne-Jones's memoirs of her husband. Both Morris and Burne-Jones were deeply imbued with the enthusiasm left over from the Oxford Movement, and their first aim was to form a conventual society with some vague notion of preserving and

disseminating the religious ideas of the past. Meanwhile, their activity took the usual form of publishing a periodical, the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*. It succumbed after a few months, like other such ventures; and if a neglectful world was bettered thereby it was not immediately, but through the lasting influence of those warm aspirations on the men themselves. And I often think that nothing is more striking, nothing, indeed, more lamentable, than the absence of these little societies from our American universities. How utterly lonely and unhelped is the path of many college men who cherish the long hopes of youth. We have so little sense of the power and comfort of these frank conspiracies for fame; we seem to be born with a shame of great ambitions, and tremble lest any one should suppose we nourish a plot to conquer the world. And so we go out into life with no recollection of that first buoyant sympathy to hearten us against life's subduing indifference. We lack the reserve force and the retiring place of such a memory. Well, that is for America, and, perhaps, for England of to-day; not for the Oxford of the Brotherhood.

##### II.

Their religious zeal soon waned, if it was not rather factitious from the beginning. Morris might be described as a High Churchman and Neo-Catholic when he entered the university, but his religion even then was more a matter of the senses than of morals and creeds. There is a significant note in one of his earliest poems preserved in a letter to a friend:

'Twas in Church on Palm Sunday,  
Listening what the priest did say  
Of the kiss that did betray,

That the thought did come to me  
How the olives used to be  
Growing in Gethsemane;

That the thoughts upon me came  
Of the lantern's steady flame,  
Of the softly whispered name;

Of how kiss and words did sound  
While the olives stood around,  
While the robe lay on the ground.

One can imagine the scorn with which Newman would have regarded this use of the Passion of Christ for æsthetic titillation—he who recoiled with suspicion even from the allurements of natural scenery. And there was little of the earlier zeal then at Oxford to correct or change this tendency. "The place was languid and indifferent," wrote Burne-Jones; "scarcely anything was left to show that it had passed through such an excited time as ended with the secession of Newman." In the hollow ritualism that was beginning to crystallize from the Oxford Movement our band of enthusiasts could find satisfaction neither for conscience nor for imagination, and they gradually turned from

\*William Morris. By Alfred Noyes. (English Men of Letters.) New York: The Macmillan Co. 75 cents.