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RECOLLECTIONS OF DR. DÖLLINGER.

1870. THE VATICAN COUNCIL.

IN a paper in the *Guardian* of January 22nd, 1890, very delightful to those who have had the happiness of knowing Dr. Döllinger, and very instructive to those who have not, H. P. L. expresses a hope that "our own brilliant countryman Lord Acton" will write the life of the great man who went to his well earned rest on January 10th. Many will echo that hope. No one, either in Germany or elsewhere, is so competent to write it. "But," H. P. L. goes on to say, Dr. Döllinger "has had many friends of a less conspicuous order, even in England; and some of these may be encouraged to place their recollections of him upon record by remembering that every such contribution, however fragmentary, does something to promote that full appreciation of what he was, which all must desire who have had the happiness of knowing him." And he mentions the present writer as among such friends. Similar suggestions have been made in private; and now, not unwillingly, but also not without some misgivings, an attempt is here made to respond to them. It is a very real pleasure, if a sad one, to recall something of the very many hours spent in Dr. Döllinger's most captivating society, and to endeavour to convey to others something of the impression made upon oneself by the power of his intellect, the vastness of his knowledge, and the beauty of his character. But, on the other hand, there is the risk of doing, not only scant justice, but serious injustice, to a subject which needs a master hand. Yet, if deep reverence and affection, based upon a friendship of nearly twenty years, will serve as qualifications for the task of trying to sketch some features of his life and conversation, one may make the venture; trusting that those who may be pained

by the manifold shortcomings of an attempt which to their more adequate knowledge of the great theologian must seem grievously inadequate, will pardon it for the sake of those who as yet have no knowledge of him at all.

It was on July 4th, 1870, that I first conversed with Dr. Döllinger; it was on July 28th, 1889, that I last did so. Between those two dates he has at different times allowed me to see a very great deal of him, generally at Munich, but sometimes at Tegernsee and at Bonn. I heard his last lectures on Church history in 1870, and the very last lectures of all in 1872. Sometimes we walked together almost daily, and for two or three hours at a time. I had the free use of his library; could go in and out as I pleased; read there, or carry away the books, just as might be convenient. He also gave me the use of his name at the Royal Library, so that I could do the same there. And when I was back in England he sometimes found time to write a letter. Of all this immense kindness very grateful and very vivid recollections survive. But, what is more to the purpose for these reminiscences, many notes taken at his lectures and immediately after conversations with him survive also. So that what is here offered is no mere recollection, which after fifteen or twenty years would almost certainly be at times inaccurate, but a compilation from memoranda which were generally written within a few hours of the interview, and sometimes after what is recorded had been said more than once.

One or two remarks on the bestower of all this bounty will be in place, before trying to recall some of his words. Only those who have frequently talked with him can have any adequate idea of the *immense* stores of knowledge which he had entirely at his command. His books show a very great deal, especially those marvellously compact, lucid, and highly finished essays, published a year or two ago as specimens of his *akademische Vorträge*. The range

of reading which they imply is really prodigious. But they were written in his study, with the opportunity of constantly referring to books. His conversation would lead one to think that the books, long ago studied, would not often be used. On numbers of subjects, and especially those which are historical, he seemed to be always able to talk as if he had just come from a careful study of them. The details, as well as general results, were all there. And it may be doubted whether there ever was a man who in a greater degree combined such amazing powers with such beautiful simplicity. He had received almost every honour that the State or the university could bestow upon him; he was the friend of princes and the confidant of statesmen; he was possessed of information which would have made a score of men intellectually rich: and throughout it all he had the simplicity of a child. Nothing could be more exquisitely natural than the way in which he spoke of the great men with whom he was intimate, or in which he imparted to others some of his boundless stores of knowledge. Anything like ostentation was absolutely foreign to his character.

It was with a letter of introduction from Dr. Pusey that I called on him in 1870, at 11, Frühlings Strasse, to ask leave to attend his lectures. I went somewhat in awe; for the eyes of all Europe were then upon him, especially since his signed article in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* the previous March, in which he pointed out that the Vatican Council, in submitting to be fettered by a pre-arranged order, was imperilling its validity; and that a council cannot create new dogmas, but only bear witness to those which have been universally accepted by the Church. But he at once placed me at my ease. I might certainly come to his lectures, if the early hour of 7 a.m. would not frighten me. He was lecturing on the history of doctrine in the third and fourth centuries. He had written on the subject

twenty or thirty years ago, but *further study had induced him to change a good many of his views.* We soon got on the subject of the Council and the famous letters in the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, to which it is generally believed he often supplied the finishing touches. He thought that we should hear something definite very soon, for about eighty speakers who had put down their names had since then renounced their right to address the Council. And he quite expected that the dogma of the Infallibility would be proclaimed. When asked whether it was not possible that the Council might take refuge in an ambiguous formula, which each side could interpret in its own way, he replied that he did not believe that such a formula was possible, for there was no middle ground on which the two parties could both stand. The whole question was the *absolute* and *personal* infallibility of the Pope: nothing less would satisfy the majority at the Council, and this the minority could not accept.

"And if the dogma is defined, what will happen?"

"What the bishops of the minority will do, it is impossible to say. Probably the question will be raised as to whether this Council has authority, whether it fulfils the indispensable conditions, whether the discussion and the voting have been free, and so forth; and this question I believe that many will answer in the negative. It will be a terrible thing for the Church, at any rate for a time. But it may be God's will to bring good out of it, and I believe that such will be the case. There are many at the present time who are nominally in the Church, and yet are scarcely believers at all; and it will be a good thing if an *Ausscheidung*, (you understand that word?) if a distinction comes to be made. This, I think, must take place before we can look for the union of Christendom to which perhaps we are tending: and this the definition of the dogma may bring about. But meanwhile it will cause grievous trouble."

"It seems strange that any human being should believe in his *own* infallibility: and one must suppose that the Pope does so."

"Yes, he does: but that is not so wonderful in a man of the Pope's temperament. He believes himself to be inspired.[1] I have this from persons who know him far better than I do. For instance, in appointing men, not merely to ecclesiastical posts, but to offices in his temporal government, he waits until he gets what he thinks is an inspiration, and then he makes the nomination. Now a man who is of that turn of mind——" And Dr. Döllinger raised his shoulders.

"The Pope is not, I believe, a learned man."

"Quite the contrary," replied Dr. Döllinger, "quite the contrary. He was ordained priest only as a special favour, his ignorance of the ordinary theological subjects being so great. He is the younger brother of a house of rank, and an exception was made."

Dr. Newman's famous letter, in which he spoke of the "aggressive, insolent faction" in the Roman Church, which was driving all things to extremes, especially in forcing on the definition of the dogma, was mentioned. It was commonly believed that this letter, written to Bishop Ullathorne, of Birmingham, was shown by him to Bishop Clifford, of Clifton, who was one of the anti-infallibilist minority at the Council; and that Bishop Clifford sent it to England, where it appeared in the newspapers. Dr. Döllinger did not seem to think that Dr. Newman had been very badly treated, or to condemn those who had caused the publication of the letter.

"The letter was no doubt a private one," he remarked; "but the respect in which Dr. Newman is held, both by

[1] He said, "As to the Infallibility, as a simple clergyman, I always believed it; now as Pope, I *feel* it." (*Per l'infallibilità, essendo l'Abbate Mastai l'ho sempre creduto; adesso, essendo Papa Mastai, la sento.*)

Catholics and by members of the English Church, is such, that it was scarcely possible for him to remain silent. I felt this in my own case. I felt that, holding the views which I do hold on this subject, it was my duty to make them known; and I think that hereafter Dr. Newman will be glad that his opinion has become known, although at present the circumstances may be very painful to him."

The letter in question contained the following:

"I cannot help suffering with the many souls who are suffering; and I look with anxiety at the prospect of having to defend decisions which may not be difficult to my own private judgment, but may be most difficult to maintain logically in the face of historical facts. What have we done to be treated as the faithful never were treated before? When has a definition *de fide* been a luxury of devotion and not a stern, painful necessity? Why should an aggressive, insolent faction be allowed 'to make the heart of the just sad, whom the Lord hath not made sorrowful'? . . . With these thoughts ever before me, *I am continually asking myself whether I ought not to make my feelings public;* but all I do is to pray those early doctors of the Church whose intercession would decide the matter—Augustine, Ambrose, and Jerome, Athanasius, Chrysostom, and Basil—to avert the great calamity."

Dr. Döllinger used to lecture in Hörsaal No. 12, in the university. In spite of the action of Senestrey, the fanatical Bishop of Regensburg, who not long before had forbidden his theological students to attend the suspected Professor's lectures, theological students did attend. Evidently other bishops had not followed his example, and possibly he was not entirely obeyed. The lecturer stated his facts with the utmost clearness and decision; yet it was the decision of a man who, although he had quite made up his own mind, had no wish to make up yours. "Judge for yourselves" was the attitude throughout. His audience used to rise as he entered the room and as he left it; and he bowed to them before leaving his desk.

In treating of the Nestorian controversy, one could not help feeling that his remarks were sometimes made with a side reference to current events. Thus he said that we

gathered a different account of the position of Nestorius from his own statements, than we should have done, if we had had only Cyril as an authority. Both sides in the controversy, as so often happens, attributed to their opponents conclusions drawn from the statements of their opponents, which however would not have been admitted by the opponents themselves. This was very much the way in which Döllinger's own statements were being treated. Again, he said that the only condition on which an œcumenical council could meet to settle the question was, that the emperor should summon one, and should decide *when* it was to meet. Which perhaps meant that the Pope, by summoning the Council and fixing the date for it, had acted in a way which prejudiced the freedom of the Council. *His* date might be one which would prevent highly representative bishops from being present, or from remaining till the close. When Dr. Döllinger went on to remark that at the time of the gathering of the Council of Ephesus (Pentecost), the heat was so great that many of the bishops were unwilling to remain on account of their health, there was something very like a titter throughout the lecture room. It had been well understood that it was the device of the ultramontanes at that very moment, to prolong the Council through the summer months, when Rome would be intolerable to all but Italians and Spaniards, who are almost all of them infallibilists.

It was probably something more than a coincidence, that on the very day on which he made that remark (July 8th), the Roman letter in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* began thus:

"In the Middle Ages ecclesiastical controversies were decided by the ordeal of the cross. Representatives of the two parties placed themselves with their arms outstretched in front of a large cross. Whoever first let his arms drop or (as sometimes happened) fainted away, lost his cause. The heat, and the fever caused by it, have at the present time taken the place of this ordeal at Rome. . . . How clearly the inestimable value of this new ally, Heat and Fever, is

recognised by the authorities, is shown by the papal pet journalist Veuillot, in his laconic but significant words, '*Et si la définition ne peut mûrir qu'au soleil, eh bien, on grillera*' (in his 125th 'Letter on the Council')."

The previous Roman letter in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* had stated that Rome was like an episcopal hospital, so great was the number of prelates who were laid up or seriously unwell. When it was reported to the Pope that the lives of some of the bishops were in danger, and that the Council ought to be prorogued, he is reported to have said, "*Crepino*," "Let them rot like sheep." This brutal reply made a great stir in Rome, for the report was believed.

On Friday, July 15th, came news that war had been declared between France and Prussia, and Dr. Döllinger's audience began to thin. Then came the proclamation of the Infallibility dogma, July 18th. Two days later, Dr. Döllinger reached the Honorius question. One knew beforehand what he thought about it; but it was very interesting to have it from his own lips, and precisely at that crisis. July 28th he brought his lectures to a close; and after he had signed the certificates of the other students we walked back to his house together. He told me that the Archbishop of Munich (Scherr), who had just returned from Rome, was one of the hundred and fifteen who retired before the Infallibility was proclaimed, leaving their *non placet* in writing. When he started for Rome, Dr. Döllinger saw him off, and the archbishop's farewell words were, "I do not expect that the Infallibility dogma will be proposed: but, if it is, you may rely upon my opposing it." "These bishops who have opposed the dogma," remarked Dr. Döllinger, "now find themselves in a novel and very uncomfortable position: they are so accustomed in all things to submit entirely to Rome. And the French bishops are worse off than the German, for they have the inferior clergy and the mass of the religious people against

them. I think that a schism of the oriental bishops, which is talked of, is not improbable. But at the Council of Trent the decrees were not supposed to come into operation until the Council had formally broken up, so that these anti-infallibilist bishops may still have some respite in which to consider their position. The Vatican Council is still nominally sitting. Italian bishops, with a few from Spain and South America, remain in Rome and keep up the name of a council. It is to assemble again in reality in November. Until it finally breaks up, its decrees *may* be regarded as not yet in force; and meanwhile the war is withdrawing attention and causing a diversion. But precedents have been so entirely set at naught throughout the Council, that it is quite possible this decree may be enforced at once. The archbishop himself is very undecided as to his future action, and I fear that the separation of the bishops who have opposed the dogma will have a very weakening effect. They may possibly succumb, one by one, before they meet again in November."

At 2 p.m. that day I dined with him, to meet Canon Liddon and Sir Roland Blennerhasset, the latter of whom had just come from Rome. Our host was most entertaining, as he commonly was at these simple but most delightful hospitalities. He corrected one of us for saying that the Council had broken up. "No; there are a certain number of bishops remaining who are nominally the Council, just to enable the Curia to say that the Council is still sitting. That is quite an old trick. At that 'miserable synod,'[1] the Fifth Lateran, a handful of Italian bishops were kept together, just for the name of the thing, for years. They did nothing, literally nothing. There are two or three years in which not a single act of the Council

[1] Dr. Döllinger was probably quoting Jerome, who calls the Council of Diospolis, which acquitted Pelagius, a *miserabilis synodus*. This he had told us in his final lecture that same morning.

is recorded. But Pope Leo X. wished to be able to say that the Council was still sitting. At the Council of Florence, again, some bishops, chiefly Italian, were kept together, merely as a set off against the reforming Council of Basel, long after the Greeks had gone away."

Dr. Döllinger then gave us some of his own experiences in Rome. He had been there in 1857, but neither before nor since. It has sometimes been stated that he was there during the Vatican Council; and this error seems still to prevail in some quarters (see the obituary notice in the Stuttgard *Neues Tagblatt*, Jan. 12th, 1890). In 1857 he was greatly struck by the apathy and indifference of the ecclesiastics; they seemed to take no interest whatever in ecclesiastical affairs. "Everywhere else where I travelled I was asked questions. But not there; not a single word. No one in Rome seemed to care at all how Church matters stood in Germany, what the condition of religion was among us, or anything of the kind. And in 1857 I was not a suspected man; no one distrusted me then. Therefore that was not the explanation. *Now* I should not be surprised if I was not questioned on ecclesiastical affairs; but it was otherwise then. I was presented to a cardinal as a German theologian of some repute,—or something of that kind,—who had written a good deal. '*Bravo, signor!*' was all he had to say to me, a bow, and then the interview ended. Not a word more. A friend asked me if I should care to be introduced to any one in particular. He would ask some people to meet me. What sort of men would I like? I replied that, as theology was my study, I should be glad to meet one or two theologians. He was rather taken aback at my request, said that they were not so easy to find, but he would try. Well, they came. I raised one theological subject after another, but there was no getting them to talk. Nothing seemed to interest them. I speak Italian, so that it cannot have been

the language that was the obstacle. If I asked a question, it was '*Si, signor,*' or '*No, signor*'; and then the matter dropped. At last, in despair, I gave up theology and began to talk of the weather. Then they began to talk also."[1]

The fact that Dean Stanley had admitted a Unitarian to the holy communion at the gathering of the committee for the revision of the Bible was mentioned, and it was stated that one apology which had been made for this act of the dean was, that the man was not really a Unitarian, but only an Arian, in his opinions; but perhaps that did not make much difference. Dr. Döllinger exclaimed, "Ah! they just cut the Unit off, then, and made him into an Arian"; and after this joke the subject dropped.

As to the feeling in Munich about the new dogma, he said that there were about two hundred and twenty clergy in the city, and that out of these only eight or nine were infallibilists. Hence the archbishop's position was a very strong one. He had the king with him, the government with him, most of his clergy with him, and the university with him,—including Dr. Döllinger, who was a host in himself. But, as Dr. Döllinger remarked, it was quite possible that the number of infallibilist clergy in Munich

[1] On another occasion, Dr. Döllinger told how his audience with the Pope made a very unpleasing impression on him; the adoration paid to the Pope was so offensive. He said to himself as he left the Vatican, "Of my own free will, I will *never* come here again." A cardinal had instructed him as to the proper amount of ceremonial, "and I was very careful to follow the instructions most obediently. The Pope, I think, watched me narrowly. I genuflected twice as I approached, and when I reached the Pope I knelt and kissed his shoe. He said that things in Germany would go on very well, if all were obedient to that supreme power which God had placed on the earth. I replied that I was not aware that there had been any want of obedience: but I rather think that he confused me with another Munich professor, whose book on the soul had been placed on the Index, and who had refused to submit. However, before I left he called me '*un grand' uomo*,' the meaning of which rather puzzled me; but I think he said something of my having done good service by writing in defence of the Pope: and when I reached Bologna I found a diploma conferring on me the title of *Monsignore*."

had greatly increased since the dogma had been defined. And this was one of the deplorable effects of the definition. People who are known to have held that the dogma is untrue now profess belief in it, simply because of authority, and not because their reason is in the least degree convinced. And this notorious fact is used as a lever to overthrow all positive truth in religion. "Now we see how dogmas are made," is the cry. "You believe these things, and tell us to believe them, not because you are convinced that they are true (perhaps you are even convinced of the contrary), but because some authority, which you choose to obey, tells you that it must be true. Now we see how councils are worked: assemblies packed, discussion suppressed, and the result a dogma, which every one must accept or perish." "*Si cambia la religione*" is the good-humoured scoff of the Roman populace on the subject.

Dr. Döllinger thought it most extraordinary that Archbishop Manning should be so ignorant of the state of men's minds as to declare to the Pope that thousands of people in England would join the Church of Rome, if only the dogma were defined. He supposed that Manning's experience was confined to a few ladies in high position, who thought that an oracle on earth would be a very comfortable thing; and that he drew a large conclusion from a few instances. When Manning told the Council that thousands in England longed to see the dogma proclaimed, Bishop Clifford of Clifton made the crushing rejoinder, "Yes; thousands of *Protestants*, who know that the proclamation of the dogma will be a tremendous blow to the Catholic Church." Dr. Döllinger thought that Manning was certain to have a cardinal's hat, of which a great many were vacant just then. It was noticed as remarkable that Bishop Clifford should hold the views which he did respecting the dogma; so many of his antecedents would have tended to make him an infallibilist. He was educated

in Rome, and consecrated by the Pope himself. His enemies said that he had turned against the Pope out of pique, because Manning had been put over his head as Archbishop of Westminster; but no one who knew Bishop Clifford's character would be likely to believe that. The names sent to Rome by the Westminster chapter were Errington, Clifford, and Grant. Errington had been Wiseman's coadjutor with *right of succession;* but the Pope ignored that and the chapter's nominations, and appointed Manning.

One of the party expressed a hope that some future and larger council might, without directly contradicting the decrees of this one, put things on a more tolerable footing. Dr. Döllinger said that this would be very difficult indeed to accomplish. "Care had been taken to stop every loophole. No possibility of escape had been left. *Romani Pontificis definitiones esse ex sese,* NON AUTEM EX CONSENSU ECCLESIÆ, *irreformabiles*—there was no getting out of that." It had been reported that some bishops had declared that they would never promulgate the dogma in their dioceses; but if excommunication was to be the inevitable consequence of rejecting the dogma, a refusal to promulgate would amount to a schism. On the other hand, Manning had been audaciously declaring that the dogma must over-ride history; and (as an illustration of how history could be ridden over) had been assuring people in Rome that the newspapers were utterly mistaken in saying that there were dissensions in the Council. How could journalists know anything about it? Whereas he was in the Council, and he could assure them that there were *no dissensions whatever,* the bishops were *perfectly unanimous.*

A little after 4 p.m. a visitor was announced. It was Gregorovius, the author of the well-known *History of the City of Rome;* and soon after his arrival the rest of us took our leave.

I saw Dr. Döllinger once more that summer, and had a three hours' walk with him in the English Garden. He had much more to say about the Vatican and other councils, as well as about many other subjects. But this paper has already reached its full limits, and must be brought to a close. It shall conclude with an incident which those who have walked much with him must frequently have witnessed. Little children of all classes would come, and (without at all knowing who he was) gaze up in his face or take his hand. He was always most tender with them; and that wonderful smile, with which he could express so many things, would steal over his face as he looked down on them. No doubt a silent blessing often went with it. But the smile was sometimes a sad one. Who could tell what sorrows a long life might have in store for not a few among them? And was it not strange, that among the clergy his own pupils should profess to distrust and execrate him, for holding fast to the truths which he had taught them, while these little strangers instinctively and uninvited manifested their trust and their affection?

ALFRED PLUMMER.