

EDITORIAL

THE BLEEDING HEART OF POITOU.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN the French prefecture of Poitiers a conflict of many-sided interest has broken out. The star figures are Mgr. Vachere, the Abbe of Gratelou, and his ecclesiastical superior, the Bishop of Poitiers.

What is it all about? Whence, why the interest that the conflict has excited among the “faithful” and the “unfaithful” alike?

A priest who celebrated mass in the private chapel of the Abbe, having one day announced that an ordinary effigy of the Sacred Heart affixed to the wall near the altar exuded drops of blood, thousands of pilgrims were attracted to the shrine, and the rumor spread that the miraculous blood when applied to the body, cured many cases of disease. The object speedily became known as the “Bleeding Heart of Poitou,” around which a brisk trade sprang up in postcards, photographs, strips of linen dipped in the blood, and even small phials filled with the miraculous fluid.

The fraud was transparent, though no more so than in so many other instances. It presented an issue. Would the Abbe of Gratelou’s superior condone the fraud, and participate in its pecuniary profits, or would he not. Whether warned by the loud guffaw that went up from “infidel” France when, upon the inventories of the religious Orders being recently taken, it was discovered that there were 10 legs of one Saint, and 13 toes of another, and more such anatomic miracles in the structures of the religious Orders of France; or whether, inspired by Modernist integrity, the Abbe of Gratelou’s superior, the Bishop of Poitiers, denounced the “Bleeding Heart of Poitou” as an “imposture,” ordered the “public nuisance” to stop, and forbade the Abbe to continue “the traffic.”

Nothing daunted, the Abbe of Gratelou persisted in his ways. Citing the “miracle of the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius” in Naples, which is allowed to be

trafficked upon with impunity, and pronouncing himself “marked out by the finger of God for a supernatural mission,” the wily Abbe defies the Hierarchy of the Roman Church to cause him “to disobey the command given him by Heaven.”

Well may the “faithful” be deeply interested. Which of the two sets that the “faithful” consist of will triumph—the Ultramontane set, represented by the Abbe, or the Modernist, represented by the Bishop, who realizes the practices of the Dark Ages can not prevail in the XXth Century?

Well may also the “unfaithful” be equally interested. The clean posture of the Bishop, in contrast with the unclean posture of the Abbe, tells the distance that popular enlightenment has traveled in recent years; above all, it is an eloquent demonstration of the superiority of the morals that rise from enlightenment.

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