

A Senate of Jesuits

IN a book entitled “Interêts et Maximes des Princes et des Etats Souverains, par M. Le Due de Rohan; Cologne, 1666,” an anecdote is recorded concerning the Jesuits: so much the more curious, as neither Puffendorf nor Vertot have noticed it in their histories, though its authority cannot be higher.

When Sigismond, king of Sweden, was elected king of Poland, he made a treaty with the states of Sweden, by which he obliged himself to pass every fifth year in that kingdom. By his wars with the Ottoman court, with Muscovy, and Tartary, compelled to remain in Poland to encounter such powerful enemies, he failed, during fifteen years, of accomplishing his promise. To remedy this in some shape, by the advice of the Jesuits, who had gained an ascendancy over him, he created a senate to reside at Stockholm, composed of forty chosen Jesuits, to decide on every affair of state. He published a declaration in their favour, presented them with letters patent, and invested them with the royal authority.

While this senate of Jesuits was at Dantzic, waiting for a fair wind to set sail for Stockholm, he published an edict, that the Swedes should receive them as his

own royal person. A public council was immediately held. Charles, the uncle of Sigismond, the prelates, and the lords, resolved to prepare for them a splendid and magnificent entry.

But in a private council, they came to very contrary resolutions: for the prince said, he could not bear that a senate of priests should command, in preference to all the honours and authority of so many princes and lords, natives of the country. All the others agreed with him in rejecting this holy senate. The archbishop rose, and said, “Since Sigismond has disdained to be our king, we also must not acknowledge him as such; and from this moment we should no longer consider ourselves as his subjects. His authority is *in suspensio*, because he has bestowed it on the Jesuits who form this senate. The people have not yet acknowledged them. In this interval of resignation on the one side, and assumption of the other, I absolve you all of the fidelity the king may claim from you as his Swedish subjects.” When he had said this, the prince of Bithynia addressing himself to Prince Charles, uncle of the king, said, “I own no other king than you; and I believe you are now obliged to receive us as your affectionate subjects, and to assist

us to hunt these vermin from the state.” All the others joined him, and acknowledged Charles as their lawful monarch.

Haying resolved to keep their declaration for some time secret, they deliberated in what manner they were to receive and to precede this senate in their entry into the harbour, who were now on board a great galleon, which had anchored two leagues from Stockholm, that they might enter more magnificently in the night, when the fireworks they had prepared would appear to the greatest advantage. About the time of their reception, Prince Charles, accompanied by twenty-five or thirty vessels, appeared before this senate. Wheeling about and forming a caracol of ships, they discharged a volley, and emptied all their cannon on the galleon bearing this senate, which had its sides pierced through with the balls. The galleon immediately filled with water and sunk, without one of the unfortunate Jesuits being assisted; on the contrary, their assailants cried to them that this was the time to perform some miracle, such as they were accustomed to do in India and Japan; and if they chose, they could walk on the waters!

The report of the cannon, and the smoke which the powder occasioned, prevented either the cries or the submersion of the holy fathers from being observed:

and as if they were conducting the senate to the town, Charles entered triumphantly; went into the church, where they sung *Te Deum*; and to conclude the night, he partook of the entertainment which had been prepared for this ill-fated senate.

The Jesuits of the city of Stockholm having come, about midnight, to pay their respects to the Fathers, perceived their loss. They directly posted up *placards* of excommunication against Charles and his adherents, who had caused the senate of Jesuits to perish. They urged the people to rebel; but they were soon expelled from the city, and Charles made a public profession of Lutheranism.

Sigismond, king of Poland, began a war with Charles in 1604, which lasted two years. Disturbed by the invasions of the Tartars, the Muscovites, and the Cossacks, a truce was concluded; but Sigismond lost both his crowns, by his bigoted attachment to Roman Catholicism.