

# The Catholic World

## ENGLAND—A Papal Honor

By a Brief, dated the 3rd of June, and signed by the Cardinal Secretary of State, the Holy See has been graciously pleased to honor Mr. Charles Robertson, late of Begbroke, Oxon., with a Knighthood of St. Gregory. The Holy Father refers to Mr. Robertson's happy conversion to the Faith, and speaks in handsome terms of his exemplary Christian life, of his devotion to the Apostolic See, and of his large and numerous charitable benefactions. The immediate occasion of the Brief was the donation by Mr. Robertson to the diocese of Birmingham of a large, well-appointed mansion and valuable property at Begbroke, which are, in the terms of the trust, to be used 'as a residence for the Bishop, and as a clergy-house or home of rest for secular priests, particularly those residing in the R.C. diocese of Birmingham, or for such other charitable purposes as the trustees, with the consent of the Bishop, may determine.'

## FRANCE—Peculiarities of the Law

In France (says the 'Catholic Times'), when the Catholic clergy are concerned, law and justice may prove to be very far apart. A case in point is that of the Assumptionist Fathers. When in 1900 the Religious Congregations were dissolved, these Fathers were owners of the newspapers published under the name of 'La Croix,' and very widely read throughout France. Being thenceforth unable to hold property, they sold their papers and printing works to a M. Feron-Vrau. But the Government liquidator took an action to have the sale declared illegal, with the result that the court now gives him a verdict, and has decided that the purchase was invalid, on the ground that the vendors had no right to sell! Curiously enough, just before the sale, the Assumptionists had taken out a large loan with the Providence Assurance Company; but the court holds that the company has a title to recover its debt. So that the Assumptionists are bound to pay their debt, but may not sell their property to do so. The liquidator will manage the whole business, make his profits out of it, and meanwhile be in charge of the papers, which are Catholic papers. The position is one that offers fine testimony to the love of freedom and justice in the breasts of freethinking anti-clericals in France, where everybody has rights of property except monks and nuns.

## GERMANY—Incendiaries at Work

Berlin's mysterious band of incendiaries (telegraphs the Berlin correspondent of the London 'Daily Mail'), who have terrorised the populace by causing more than five hundred fires during the past two months, to-day made a dastardly attempt to burn down a Catholic church, crowded with worshippers at the Whit Monday Mass. A panic, with what must have been serious loss of life, was only averted by the coolness of the half-dozen priests, and the presence of mind with which they contrived to imbue the congregation. The desperate determination of the incendiaries was revealed by the finding of twelve firebrands, soaked in petroleum, distributed at various points in the roof, which was the first portion of the church to take fire. The building which it was planned to destroy was the St. Paul's local house of worship of the Dominican monks in the Moabit quarter. The church was filled to the last pew for the 11 o'clock Mass owing to the fact that the celebrated monk, Father Bonaventura, was to preach the sermon. The Mass was nearing its end when word was brought to Father Bonaventura that the church was on fire. Calmly surveying the congregation, who at the moment were kneeling in silent prayer, Father Bonaventura tiptoed over to a fellow-priest, who was the Celebrant, and asked him to declare the service abruptly at an end. The roof of the building was by that time already aflame, and the fire brigade was on its way to the church. Father Bonaventura and the other priests then calmly descended from the altar, and walked down the different aisles, and in quiet whispers suggested to each powerful of people that perhaps they had better leave, as some little blaze had been discovered in a remote section of the building. With splendid discipline the worshippers, numbering over 2000, and including hundreds of women and children, filed out of the building without the semblance of a panic. The first to reach the street found the fire brigade already preparing to attack the flames. The proximity of the fire station and the consequent quick arrival of the apparatus enabled the brigade to cope with the flames before they had done much more than wreck the roof of the church and a portion of the belfry. The police are convinced that the same gang of incendiaries who set fire to the

Kaiser's garrison church on the night of April 14 are responsible for Monday's blaze.

## INDIA—The late Father Lafont

Of Father Lafont, S.J., the 'distinguished' scientist, whose death was recently announced in our columns, the Bombay 'Examiner' says:—With him disappears a name known throughout India, and an influence which reflected on St. Xavier's College, Calcutta, and, we may say, on the Mission in general. He owed his name to his knowledge of Experimental Physics and his unequalled power of popularising science. He arrived in the country in 1865, when little was heard and less known of Physical Science. As soon as he succeeded in gathering the first instruments for his "museum"—as he liked to call his laboratory—he began lecturing, and gained the name of "The Father of Science in India." As his fame extended, public opinion endowed him with the reputation of an authority on every possible subject, even on such matters as never attracted his attention for a moment. In his numerous lectures, in and outside the college, in the pulpit, as well as in society, Father Lafont could always be interesting, and he was a great favorite with all the Viceroys, Lieutenant-Governors, and other high officials that passed through India during his long career. His Grace the Archbishop received the following letter from the Lieutenant-Governor: "My dear Archbishop,—I have heard with great sorrow of the death of the Very Rev. Father Lafont, who has been my valued and esteemed friend. He has done splendid service to the Church and to Bengal, and has passed to his rest full of honor. I sympathise deeply with you and with his colleagues in this bereavement. There are many who mourn with you a man greatly respected and beloved."

## ROME—Scots College

The Right Rev. Mgr. Fraser, on June 9, in the name of the Scots College, Rome, presented to the Holy Father as a Jubilee gift ten chasubles and two sets of Mass vestments, two missals, and two altar glasses. At the same time, he read an address to his Holiness from the college. In his reply, the Pope expressed sympathy with the two Scottish students who were wounded by roughs at Albano. His Holiness paid a high compliment to the college on the discipline and the spirit of study for which it was, he said, conspicuous amongst the Catholic Colleges in Rome. Mgr. Fraser afterwards presented to the Pope a gift of vestments in the name of the Edinburgh Altar Society.

## The Lateran Basilica

The restoration of the ceiling of St. John Lateran—the mother and the head of all the churches of the city and the world—which has been carried on during the past seven years, is now completed (writes a Rome correspondent). The cost has been over £40,000. The work owes much to his late Holiness Pope Leo XIII., of whom a fine statue stands over the door opening into the sacristy.

## RUSSIA—No Change for the Better

A special correspondent of the 'Catholic Times' in Russia, writing of the present position of the Church in that country, says:—The Catholic Church remains in much the same state as before the proclamation of liberty; the laws of the Church and the requirements of the Government are often opposed to each other; not that the Faithful are deprived of the services of the Church or any spiritual consolation. The first is duly performed, but if any dispute should arise between the priest and the Governor of the province or the chief of police, then, rightly or wrongly, the priest must suffer and a church may be closed at any moment. This has happened over and over again. The proceedings of the authorities have not been modified in any respect. In October the Bishop of Vilna, Baron Von der Ropp, was exiled by a decree of the Emperor, and these acts cannot be criticised by the Duma. At the same time, the Government required the members of the Chapter to elect an administrator. They replied that they had not the jurisdiction to do so, as their Bishop lived; that, if under the pressure of the Government they elected one, the election would be excommunicated. In consequence of this answer, given on November 2, the members of the Chapter were deprived of the usufruct of their possessions till the nomination of a Bishop. One of them, Bishop Sadofsky, secretary of the Consistory, has received orders to go to St. Petersburg. How the question will terminate it is impossible at present to say; it is the first time that we see in Russia a diocese in a state of the most complete stagnation in all that appertains to its administration. The Government would be very glad to transfer Bishop Ropp to another See, but he did not agree to the proposition, and the Holy Father approves of