

## ROME LETTER

(From our own correspondent.)

May 15.

### THE FEAST OF SS. NEREUS AND ACHILLEUS.

Notwithstanding the excitement in connection with the political situation, the Church did not omit to celebrate in the Catacomb of St. Domitilla, which lies two miles outside the walls of Rome, the Feast of SS. Nereus and Achilleus, martyred under Domitian, who had been converted to Christianity by St. Peter himself. Their feast was celebrated with much pomp and solemnity by a society of priests and laymen, who had the long dark passages lighted up on the occasion, and guards placed at points beyond which no visitor is allowed to pass lest he might get lost in the gloomy labyrinths. The niches, or loculi, in which the bodies reposed before being transferred within the city walls in the eighth century, were covered with fresh flowers; and all the preparations for High Mass were made by this zealous body. These services were already performed when the faithful arrived from Rome at the Catacomb of St. Domitilla yesterday. In this catacomb on the Via Ardeatina, Mass was celebrated in the bowels of the earth, upon the tomb in which the bodies of SS. Nereus and Achilleus lay for over 600 years. After the Gospel, a prelate read the homily pronounced on that very spot by Pope St. Gregory the Great. And after the Holy Sacrifice had been offered up, Rome's foremost archaeologist, Marucchi, gave a lecture on the glories of the feast, all it recalls, and all that every Catholic breast feels on reading of the martyrs buried in the Roman catacombs.

### POPE BENEDICT XV. TO HIS OLD DIOCESE.

One of the grandest works of art produced in this century is said to be the magnificent gold monstrance which his Holiness the Pope has donated to the Cathedral of Bologna, as a token of affection for his old diocese. The monstrance is of massive gold, artistically chased, surmounted by a cross made of Oriental pearls and amethysts. The base consists of Oriental stone on which scenes of the Five Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary are represented. Like Benedict XIV., his successor Benedict XV. loves Bologna in deep affection.

### THE CAUSE OF THE IRISH MARTYRS.

In the course of about three weeks we expect the Sacred Congregation of Rites to return to the Archbishop of Dublin all documents concerning the names of the 257 Irish bishops, priests, laymen, and women, mentioned in the recent Decree on the Irish martyrs. The Most Rev. Dr. Walsh will be asked to act in the name of the Holy See, and gather all further evidence that is possible to substantiate the claim to martyrdom for the faith put forward on the part of each of these holy servants of God. This is called the Apostolic Process. With such an energetic man at the helm, as is Archbishop Walsh, we may expect the entire mass of evidence to be ready for forwarding to Rome in about a year.

Time flies quickly in Rome. It seems only yesterday that I saw Father Conmy, S.J., arrive in Rome in charge of the mass of evidence that led to the publication of the recent decree authorising the introduction of the Cause to the Sacred Congregation of Rites. He was relieved by Monsignor Murphy, Rector of the Irish College, to whom, as Postulator of the Cause, Father Conmy delivered up the documents. That is ten years ago. Both are now gone to untimely graves—kindly, learned, courtly gentlemen who are not yet forgotten in Rome.

### NOTE.

Next Sunday, the seventh centenary of the solemn approbation of the Franciscan Order, given in 1215 by Pope Innocent III., will be duly observed in Rome.

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## Science Siftings

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### Ireland's 'Straddle' Railway.

Running between Ballybunion and Listowel, in Ireland, is a unique 'peg-leg' railroad, so called because it runs astraddle a single rail, elevated a suitable distance above the ground. The entire weight of the train is carried by this rail, guide rails being arranged nearer the ground to keep the train balanced. Each coach consists of two compartments, one on each side of the elevated rail, and the engine has two boilers, fire-boxes, and smoke-stacks.

### Strange Potato Industries.

Towns in the Netherlands have several ways of dealing with the surplus production of potatoes. According to a recent Consular report, there are now factories for drying potatoes, with an annual output of many thousand bushels. Of these plants 350 are for the production of potato flakes, while in 86 the potatoes are dried by the hot-air process. Potato flakes can be used for feeding stock, for distilling alcohol, for making starch, and for the other purposes for which natural potatoes are used; or they can be ground and boiled to make potato flour. This flour is a yellowish-white product, rich in carbo-hydrates, and is used principally by bakers for adding to rye and wheat flour in making bread. It is claimed that the addition of potato flour gives the bread a good flavor, makes it more digestible, and keeps it fresh for a comparatively long time. It is also used to some extent in thickening soups and sauces.

### Quicksilver.

The ore from which quicksilver is obtained is a brilliant red rock known as cinnabar. When of high purity it is actually vermilion in color. Cinnabar is the original source of the pigment known commercially as vermilion. It is a compound of sulphur and quicksilver, and in order to separate the latter from the sulphur the rock is roasted. Passing off in the form of a gas, the mercury is afterward condensed and flows out in a fine stream, like a continuous pencil of molten silver. Like gold and silver, mercury is occasionally found in a native or pure state. Sometimes the miner's pick penetrates a cavity that contains a cupful or more of the elusive and beautiful fluid. Miners suffer much from the poisonous effects of the quicksilver fumes. Extreme cleanliness is the best safeguard for workers in this dangerous occupation.

### Silkworms.

Though the silkworm is allied to the destructive caterpillar tribe, this little creature compensates for all the mischief occasioned by the rest. It has been made of the utmost service to man; and furnishes him with a covering more beautiful than any other animal can supply. The silkworm is now very well known to be a large caterpillar, of whitish color, with twelve feet, and producing a butterfly of the moth-kind. The cone on which it spins is formed for covering it while it continues in the aurelia state; and several of these, properly wound off and united together, form those strong and beautiful threads which are woven into silk. In the warm climates, the silkworm proceeds from an egg, which has been glued by the parent moth upon proper parts of the mulberry tree, and which remains in that situation during the winter. The manner in which they are situated and fixed to the tree keeps them unaffected by the influence of the weather; so that these frosts which are severe enough to kill the tree have no power to injure the silkworm. The insect never proceeds from the egg till Nature has provided it a sufficient supply, and till the budding leaves are furnished in sufficient abundance for its support.

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