

ROME LETTER

(From our own correspondent.)

January 22.

THE FEAST OF ST. AGNES.

Chief among the feasts most loved and celebrated by the Roman people is that of St. Agnes, the wonderful girl-martyr, which is observed throughout the world on January 21. From Wiseman in *Fabiola* we all remember the walk out to the church two miles outside the walls of Rome to visit the tomb of her, who chose death before the altar of Minerva rather than burn a few grains of sand to the goddess; about whom St. Jerome and St. Ambrose wrote so feelingly; whose painting by Carlo Dolci points to the great artist having put his heart in his work. 'Many will remember it to have been a beautiful day,' wrote Cardinal Wiseman, 'on its anniversary, as they have walked out of the Nomentan Gate, now the Porta Pia, towards the church which bears our virgin-martyr's name, to see blessed upon her altar the two lambs, from whose wool are made the palliums sent by the Pope to the Archbishops of his communion. Already the almond trees are hoary, not with frost, but with blossoms; the earth is being loosened around the vines, and spring seems latent in the swelling buds, which are watching for the signal of the southern breeze to burst and expand. The atmosphere, rising into a cloudless sky, has just that temperature that one loves, of a sun, already vigorous, not heating but softening the slightly frosty air. Such we have frequently experienced on St. Agnes' day, together with the joyful thousands hastening to her shrine.'

As soon as the celebrant of the Mass had blessed the two white lambs which were laid in their baskets upon the altar, emblems of innocence and sacrifice, they were delivered by the master of ceremonies to messengers sent for them from St. John Lateran. Straightway they were borne to the Vatican, where Benedict XV. blessed and sent them to the nuns of St. Cecilia by the Tiber to be cared for until Easter. At Easter they will be shorn of their beautiful fleeces, from which the Pope will have made the palliums for the Archbishops of the world.

CARDINAL MERCIER.

In that concourse at the festival there was one upon whom all looked with interest. This was Cardinal Mercier, Primate of Belgium, whose reception on arriving at Rome was that at which even an old Roman emperor might feel gratified. The tall spare figure looked bowed. Since his coming to Rome the Cardinal has seen few callers outside the ranks of the Sacred College, and he has not exchanged a single word with the representative of any journal. It is not unlikely an official account may be given to the public as to his visit, on his hour's conversation with the Pope on his first audience, about his hopes for his country.

To-morrow morning half the students of the Belgian College will undergo medical examination as a preliminary for joining the Red Cross of Belgium. And the remnant left of the French College—40 out of 150—may be summoned to the trenches any day.

AN UNFOUNDED REPORT.

And now we come to that report of the recent nomination of a North of Ireland Bishop through the medium of Sir Henry Howard, British Envoy to the Holy See, which, as I mentioned last week, is entirely without foundation. Probably it grew out of a mistaken idea about the censor's duty. Anyway, there are some interesting facts regarding the censorship of communications between Italy and Ireland that are worth noting. In the autumn of 1914, British censorship was active in the case of letters coming to and from Ireland, not excluding those dealing with ecclesiastical matters. Needless to say there are certain letters, as every Catholic fully understands, that must remain private to the sender, and to him to whom they are addressed. The domain of conscience must be sacred from prying eyes. How, then, was the difficulty of censorship to be obviated? An arrangement

was made according to which communications between the Holy See and the United Kingdom should be spared censorship if they were transmitted through Cardinal Bourne, Archbishop of Westminster. But this the Bishops of Ireland declined to do. However, the problem of the censor was solved in another way. Italy's intervention in the war on the side of England removed all necessity for censorship.

NOTES.

In passing, it may be observed that, if the newly-appointed Bishop of Nottingham, England, Dr. Dunne, does not owe allegiance to St. Patrick, his parents certainly did. Several Irish priests have been appointed in recent years to rule English dioceses. Thus Bishop Cotter of Portsmouth is a Corkman, Bishop Kiely of Plymouth hails from Limerick, Bishop Lacy of Middlesbrough came from Royal Meath, and, certainly, if Bishop McIntyre, Rector of the English College, Rome, is not Irish, his parents were, for they went from Connaught to England.

The news of the death of the doyen of Australian journalists, Mr. Joseph Winter, has been received here with keen regret. For many years he was known and respected in English-speaking circles as a tireless worker for Catholic and Irish Nationalist interests.

The Scotch College, Rome, is the first seminary to give a volunteer to the European war. Mr. Chisholm has, with the permission of his Bishop, left Rome to join the Cameronians. After the war he expects to resume his studies for the priesthood.

Until recently Europe has been unable to obtain an adequate idea of the horrible treatment meted out to the Catholic Church in Mexico. An interview given to the *Corriere d'Italia*, a Roman daily, by the Archbishop of Guadalajara, who had to fly from Mexico, lets us know details of horror hitherto unrealised.

I regret having omitted from the list of Cardinals given last week the name of Cardinal Piffl, Archbishop of Vienna, 62 years of age, and two years in the Sacred College.

WEDDING BELLS

RYAN—O'CONNOR.

A very pretty wedding was solemnised in the Catholic Church, Ohaupo, on February 9, the contracting parties being Mr. J. J. Ryan and Miss Emily M. O'Connor, eldest daughter of the late Mr. M. O'Connor, of Rangiora, Canterbury. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. Father Lynch. The bride, who was attended by her brother (Mr. H. O'Connor), was attired in a grey cloth costume, relieved with a pretty shade of shell pink. She wore a hat of grey silk crepe-de-chine, with a most exquisite ostrich plume, and finished off with pink satin rose. The bridesmaid (Miss T. O'Connor) was tastefully attired in a dress of cream silk voile, trimmed with shadow lace, and wore a black Tagel hat. The bride carried a bouquet of roses, narcissi, and maiden-hair fern. Mr. D. Ireland attended the bridegroom as best man, and Mr. B. O'Connor as groomsman. After the ceremony the guests adjourned to the residence of Mr. F. O'Connor, where the wedding breakfast was partaken of. The usual toasts were honored, the Rev. Father Lynch proposing that of the 'Bride and bridegroom.' The bride's present from the bridegroom was a handsome gold brooch, and the bridesmaid was also the recipient of a gold brooch from the bridegroom. The bride's present to the bridegroom was a silver sovereign case and tobacco pouch. After the breakfast the happy couple motored to Rotorua, where the honeymoon was spent. The bride's travelling costume was a dress of apricot crepe-line, trimmed with point lace, and a black Tagel hat relieved with berries. Mr. and Mrs. Ryan were the recipients of many useful presents, including a handsomely bound Bible, the gift of the Rev. Father Lynch.

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