

ROME LETTER

(From our own correspondent.)

February 18. THE RELIGIOUS REVIVAL IN ITALY.

Since Italy unsheathed the sword the world has heard a great deal of the religious revival among her 40,000,000 people. Her churches are crowded, her confessionals are besieged, human respect seems dead or dormant; between the priest, the soldier, and the layman one sees in public that comradeship so eloquent of the healthy spirit which ought to exist in every Catholic country. All this causes no surprise to anyone knowing that at bottom Italy is a Catholic country, no matter what impression many of her emigrants make by falling off from religious practices on leaving her cathedral-covered land.

But does this mean that the Church can expect any appreciable diminution at the end of the war in the hostility of her enemies? I do not believe it. No one who watches current events can believe it, either; for the anti-Catholic societies (secret and open) now labor even more energetically than ever to thwart the clergy, to represent the Holy See as hostile to the nation. Only his week the clergy were prevented by the Mayor of Ravenna from officially officiating in the funeral cortege of the victims of the aerial bombardment. To such a pitch can the anti-Catholic obstinacy of a few miserable cliques go in beating itself against the Rock unshakable.

After all, reader, is it not natural for this kind of gentry to witness all nations hearkening to the voice of the Holy Father? In *L'Eclair* this week, M. Gudet upholds the thesis that none is so well adapted as the Pope to save the world from brutal solutions of differences in opinion. What has he not done for individual prisoners, and for Belgium, Poland, Armenia? And at present, Mgr. Heylen, Bishop of Namur, is carrying out the Pope's mandate to go through the dioceses of France and make spiritual and material provision for the parts most overrun by troops. M. Briand, Premier of France, though making no effort, needless to say, to see the Holy Father during his recent visit to Rome, found it to his purpose to meet Cardinal Mercier. So that Church and State, no matter how many Separation Laws are passed, go hand in hand. Truly the Pope's influence is felt by all—even those most reluctant to recognize it. No wonder every ruse is adopted to represent him as not being neutral in the war.

But what a charming little note has come to Benedict XV. from the four children named Hollande, to thank his Holiness for, as they ingenuously put it, 'saving their father's life.' The little ones who sign the letter vary in age from two to fourteen years.

'Most Holy Father,' they write from Paris, 'we are four French children, very grateful to your Holiness for the initiative which you had the goodness to take on behalf of the sick prisoners. Our father, after seventeen months of hard imprisonment in Germany, having been seized with pleurisy, has been interned in Switzerland. As he is the first officer of the French army who has been conducted there, we regard it as our duty to thank your Holiness for all our family and for our dear France, and beg you to please accept the expression of our profound respect and devoted attachment.'

This charming note has been aptly called in Rome 'a lily among thorns.' About the same time as it appears, some curious statistics come to hand. Will it be believed that in Paris alone the number of clairvoyants, mediums, witches, and others of the pythonesque genus come to the pretty total of 34,607? These are the professionals; those who exercise their calling privately are not included. It is calculated the annual receipts of the tribe amount to 73,000,000 francs. And one daily alone pockets from 250 to 300 francs a day for advertisements of the birds of prey and their dupes.

THE IRISH MARTYRS.

There is no man with a drop of Irish blood in his veins who will not join the Most Rev. W. J. Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin, in thanking Cardinal Vannutelli for the recent advance in the Cause of the Irish Martyrs, and for the care with which he guarded its progress these past ten years. Ever since the vast quantity of documents compiled in the diocesan courts of Sydney and of Dublin were placed before the Sacred Congregation of Rites, Cardinal Vincenzo Vannutelli has guided the Cause as a true friend. In the February number of the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Archbishop Walsh writes of the debt of gratitude due to Cardinal Vannutelli, not only for the manner in which, as Cardinal Ponente of the Cause, he pushed forward the examination of the Ordinary Process which the chief pastor of Sydney and of Dublin sent to Rome to Mgr. Murphy, but also for his steering the case clear of postponements. Dr. Walsh's tribute is well merited.

Acting in the name of the Holy See, the Archbishop of Dublin is now taking the next great step in the case, technically known as the Apostolic Process, which will take to complete anything from two to four years. The desire of every Irishman at home and abroad is that both Cardinal Vannutelli and Archbishop Walsh may be spared to hear one day the Vicar of Christ proclaim in St. Peter's the elevation to the honors of the altar those 280 men and women who died for the faith. And in Rome

the one great regret is that two are not alive to share the expression of thanks tendered to Cardinal Vannutelli—viz., Cardinal Moran and Mgr. Murphy.

NOTE.

In the recent issue of the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* publication is given to the warm letter of encomium written by Benedict XV. to Viscount D'Hendecourt on the flourishing condition of the conferences of St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Science Siftings

By 'VOLT.'

Discovering Earthquakes.

Though the man in the street might easily mistake a slight seismic disturbance for the rumbling of a traction engine or an explosion, the marvellously delicate instruments which record earthquake shocks are immune from such deceptions. Sunk in the earth on solid foundations, the recording pen of the seismometer ignores any local tremblings which have not a seismic origin; but the faintest real earth quakings, though they have travelled thousands of miles through the earth, set the pen tracing the tell-tale graph by means of which the seismologist calculates the place, time, and magnitude of the happening. Years before the genius of the Japanese gave birth to the science of seismology, a very rough record of a Scotch earthquake was obtained at Comrie by means of a basin of treacle. The basin was about half-full of treacle, and by noting the magnitude and direction of the treacle marks made on the inside when the 'quake' disturbed its normal level, a fair approximation was obtained as to the magnitude and movement of the seismic waves which caused the earth disturbance.

A Surgical Magnet.

A strong magnet for lifting weights is not an unusual engineering operation, but it is not customary to enlist a surgical one for the purpose. This is being done by one of the most powerful magnets in the world, and has been installed by the Westinghouse and Electric Manufacturing Company in the relief department of its East Pittsburg works. The magnet is mounted on a box containing the resistor, which is used to regulate the amount of current flowing through the coils. It requires 4000 watts for its operation, or enough power to supply one hundred lamps of thirty-two candle-power each, and is designed for operation on seventy volts. It is not an infrequent occurrence for steel and iron workers to get bits of metal in their eyes or hands. Previous to the installation of a magnet the only means of removal was by probing, a method which is as uncertain as it is painful. Since this machine was put in operation, it is a very simple proceeding to extract such particles. The portion of the body in which the foreign particle is embedded is placed near the pole tip of the magnet, the switch is closed, and the magnet does the rest. Some remarkably small pieces have been extracted in this way. The pole piece is removable, a number of different shapes being supplied for various classes of work.

Measuring Starlight.

There are only two ways of learning anything about the stars; one of them is to measure their movements, and the other to examine their light. This phrase occurred in the introduction of a lecture given by Dr. F. W. Dyson (Astronomer Royal) at the Royal Institution, London, on measuring the brightness of the stars. He explained that there were other methods of examining starlight besides measuring its brightness, but he wanted to confine his remarks to the single property that had been greatly investigated of late and had led to important results. Measuring the luminosity of a star is a very different problem from that of measuring the candlepower of a lamp or an electric light, because of its wonderful minuteness. The lecturer gave an idea of the difficulty by saying that there were somewhere between one and two hundred million stars within telescopic vision of the earth, and yet all the light that the world received from the stars was about one-hundredth part of that received from the full moon, or, measured in more definite terms, the light given out by a 16-candlepower lamp when viewed at a distance of 47 yards. The standard by which one could measure these small lights was performed an exceedingly small one, and many had been proposed, of which the most successful—before the introduction of photography—had been made by reflecting moonlight so as to form an artificial star, with which others could be compared. Nowadays, the effect of the light on a photographic plate led to very important results. Amongst others, the inspection of the photographs had shown us how the stars thin out in various directions through space, the fainter and more distant stars being exceedingly numerous in the direction of the milky way, but comparatively few in other directions. This seemed to show that our solar system was very nearly in the middle of the stellar universe, and that the stars, so far as we could observe them, were spread out in an oval of which the long diameter was eight and a half times as long as the short one.

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