

The New Pope's Career

Archbishop Cerretti writes in the London *Tablet*:—

Achilles Ratti is a son of the Diocese of Milan, having been born at Desio, in the Brianza, on May 30, 1857. After his preliminary studies in the diocesan seminaries, he completed his course in Rome at the Lombard College, obtaining at the Gregorian University the triple Doctorate in Philosophy, Theology, and Canon Law. He was ordained priest in Rome in 1879, and celebrated his first Mass over the tomb of St. Peter in the Vatican Basilica. On his return home he was, from 1882 to 1888, Professor of Dogmatic Theology and Sacred Eloquence in the diocesan seminary. In the latter year, chiefly through the influence of the celebrated scholar, Mgr. Ceriani, at that time Prefect of the library, he was appointed to the staff of the College of Doctors of the world-famed Ambrosian Library, the foundation, as is well known, of the great Cardinal Federico Borromeo. Under the sure guidance of the great scholar Ceriani, Dr. Ratti soon became master of all the scientific treasures of that famous library, so that on the death of Ceriani in 1907, he was naturally and unanimously elected to the vacant post. The literary activity which he displayed during the years of his administration is evidenced by the long list of his scientific writings in various learned publications, filling some two columns of an ordinary newspaper. One of these is a deeply and pathetic historical sketch of the fate of the famous library and archivium of St. Columbinus at Bobbio.

In the midst of all his literary and scientific labors Dr. Ratti was devoted to his work as a priest and director of souls. During the years of his early priesthood the nuns of the Order of the Cenacle opened a house in Milan, first in the Corso Venezia, later in the Via Monte di Pietà, where it still exists. The then reigning Archbishop, Mgr. Calabiana, appointed the young priest chaplain to the new convent, and to that work he devoted himself with admirable zeal to the very end of his sojourn in the city. For over 30 years he gave to it all the enthusiasm of his sacerdotal heart. No good work was undertaken in that ever active home of good works in which Don Achille Ratti was not the chief co-operator. In 1883 he organised an Association of Catholic Schoolmistresses, of which he retained the direction during the whole period of his stay in the city. The congregations of Children of Mary for the young ladies of Milanese high society, for those of middle class, women clerks, work girls, and all the social classes, had the benefit of his direction and of his elevated and edifying, though simple, instructions. The humblest of the little guests of the Cenacolo were the little chimney sweeps. These little fellows are gathered together by the good Cenacle nuns for religious instruction, and the learned Prefect of the Ambrosian Library, in the midst of his absorbing work, found time, both to pass afternoons of feast days in teaching catechism to little boys in the Church of St. Sepolero, and also to prepare the little chimney sweeps for their First Communion, on the occasion of which he would share their little feasts and their innocent games. This life of combined learned labors and apostolic works was suddenly interrupted in 1911, when Mgr. Ratti was called to Rome as Pro-Prefect of the Vatican Library and assistant to Father Ehrle, whom he succeeded as Prefect in 1913, when he was also made Protonotary Apostolic. The Great War, which has changed so many things in the world, put an end to Mgr. Ratti's career as a librarian.

The war had not yet come to an end when, on April 25, 1918, Pope Benedict XV sent him out as Apostolic Visitor to Poland in order to regulate the complicated affairs of the Church in that unfortunate country. When Poland finally obtained her restored independence, the Holy Father, to show his sympathy with the Catholic State, appointed Mgr. Ratti Apostolic Nuncio to the new Republic of Poland, creating him, in the Consistory of July 3, 1919, titular Archbishop of Lepanto.

The sudden transference of one hitherto known almost exclusively as a scholar and a writer, from the tranquil life of a great library, passed amid ancient codices and bibliographical research, to the active life of diplomacy in the very midst of the most disturbed portions of Europe, caused universal surprise. Poland, after the Peace of Brest-Litovsk, was still occupied by German troops, although there was a Council of Regency consisting of Archbishop (now Cardinal) Kakowski and two others. The situation was in

every way extremely difficult and critical, but the new Nuncio displayed such remarkable tact and diplomatic skill, and even heroism, that he played quite a leading part in the final settlement of both the political and ecclesiastical difficulties which surrounded the birth of the new republic. It was chiefly owing to his efforts that the two articles were introduced into the Constitution of the State, the one declaring that the Catholic religion occupies the first position in the Polish State, and the second, still more practically important, that no measures concerning the Catholic Church may be taken without preliminary agreement with the Holy See.

Even outside Poland, the intrepid Nuncio was able to exercise important influence in various directions. Through his diplomatic good offices, he obtained the liberation of many prisoners and hostages from the hands of the Russian Bolsheviks, including the Archbishop of Mohilew and the Bishop of Minsk. Quite recently he was appointed in extraordinary mission as Ecclesiastical Commissioner for the plebiscite in Upper Silesia, and this, at the unanimous request of Poland, Germany, and the Inter-Allied Commission.

Two interesting precedents in connection with Mgr. Ratti's appointment have been noted in the Italian papers. This is the second occasion on which a Nuncio Apostolic in Poland has been recalled from Warsaw to be Archbishop of Milan and Cardinal, the same having happened to Mgr. Benedetto Odescalchi in 1713. It is stated, moreover, that the Cardinalatial title assigned to Mgr. Ratti, namely, that of San Martino dei Monti, was held for four years by the new Cardinal's illustrious predecessor, St. Charles Borromeo.

The Sistine Choir

The well-known Australian *entrepreneurs*, Messrs. E. J. and Dan Carroll, are to conduct the managerial side of the Sistine Chapel Choir tour, which will extend to New Zealand for one month. Mr. Leo Du Chateau, the Carrolls' New Zealand representative, reports having booked a splendid tour, which will take in, besides the four centres, all the provincial towns with a population exceeding 15,000. His Grace Archbishop Redwood, and the Coadjutor, Archbishop O'Shea, have, through their respective secretaries, volunteered their best interest and encouragement, and there can be no doubt that the visit of this distinguished choir will mark a most notable event in the musical history of New Zealand. This Sistine Chapel Choir, which has won the homage of such masters as Mozart, Mendelssohn, Mascagni, Verdi, Gounod, and all the great conductors of the day, is composed of 60 voices. It is now in the fifth century of its existence, and the singing of the present members, trained by the great composer Perosi, and conducted by the famous Monsignor Rella, is said to be a revelation. The whole of the programme will be rendered without the aid of any instrumental accompaniment, and will include a wonderful variety of music ranging from joyous madrigals of ancient and modern times to ancient Requiems and Te Deums.

We must have our discouragements, indeed, but we need not, therefore, be utterly cast down. We may despond, but we need not feel despair.

AN APPEAL

The St. Vincent de Paul Orphanage, South Dunedin, is overcrowded. It is imperative that extra buildings be erected at once so that these orphans (Our Lord's little ones) may be decently accommodated, and it has been decided to hold a Monster Queen Carnival in Dunedin to raise the necessary funds. Miss MAY INDER is the Southland Queen. The generosity of the Southland people will be gauged by the amount they contribute through their Queen.

Gratefully acknowledged:—Mrs. Boyle, sen., Nightcaps, 20/-; Mrs. Balloti, Wreys Bush, valuable donation of goods for the stall.

J. J. MARLOW,
313 Princes St., Dunedin,
Organiser for the Southland Queen.