

A REMARKABLE CHAPTER.

THE following is taken from a recently published life, in English, of the Venerable servant of the Lord, Anna Maria Taigi. The process, with a view to the canonization of this holy woman, was commenced some years ago, but it has not yet got beyond the first stage. She has, however, been officially—that is juridically—declared Venerable. But this implies no more than that the fame of her sanctity had been duly proved before the Congregation of Rites, the proper tribunal in such cases. The official documents containing an account of the process so far, and the sworn testimony of the several witnesses examined on the occasion, have not been yet published; nor will they till her Beatification, should such ever take place. For the statements, therefore, given below, there is no authority beyond ordinary historical evidence. The Church is in no way committed to these statements. People, consequently, are free to reject or accept them according to the value they place upon the evidence in support of them. Anna Maria Taigi was born in Sienna, but brought up in Rome, where she received such education as usually falls to the lot of very poor people, and where she married when about twenty years of age. Her husband was like herself—poor; a servant of the House of Chigi. She could read and write, but was illiterate. Her life, however, was heroic in the practice of all Christian virtues, as has been amply proved by the clearest testimony. She died in 1837, nine years before the election of Pius IX.

PROPHECIES CONCERNING PIUS IX. AND HIS REIGN.

Anna Maria survived the election of Gregory XVI. only six years; dying in 1837, nine years before Pius IX. was chosen to fill the See of Peter. She had seen, however, all the events of his Pontificate in the mysterious sun, but for the present these details, though recorded in the Processes, are not given to the public; it becomes necessary, therefore, to test the evidences of those which are currently reported. Subjected to this test, many of them will be found to rest upon satisfactory authority. We shall devote this chapter to recording what has transpired of most interest concerning this, to us, the most interesting portion of her prophecies, limiting ourselves to those which can be referred with most certainty to the Venerable Servant of God.

Mgr. Luquet gives the following particulars as communicated to him, during the early days of Pius IX. by an estimable priest in whom Anna Maria had the greatest confidence, and who also attested the same in writing. 'She spoke,' says Mgr. Luquet, 'one day to this same priest of the persecution which the Church was to undergo. She foretold what impious men would do at Rome, as we have unhappily seen verified; and she particularised what he who conducted the bark of Peter would have to suffer. Wishing to know who this Pontiff would be, the priest asked her if he was then among the Cardinals; she replied that he was not, but that he was a humble priest not at that time in the Pontifical States, but in a very distant country. And, in fact, the Abate Mastrai was a simple priest attached at that period to the Nunciatura in Chili. Anna Maria described the future Pontiff: she said that he would be elected in an extraordinary manner; that he would introduce reforms; that, if men were grateful for them, the Lord would load them with blessings; but that, if they abused them, His all-powerful arm would inflict heavy chastisements upon them; he said that this Pontiff, chosen according to the Heart of God, would be assisted by him with very special lights; that his name would be famous throughout the world, and applauded by the people; that the Turk himself would venerate him, and send to compliment him. She said that he was the holy Pontiff destined to bear the rage of the tempest which was to be let loose against the bark of Peter; that the arm of God should sustain him, and defend him against the impious, who should be humbled and confounded; and that in the end he would have the gift of miracles, and that the Church, after painful vicissitudes, would obtain so glorious a triumph, that the world would be astounded.' So far Mgr. Luquet, writing above twenty years ago.

We have already referred, on the authority of extracts from the Processes, to the signal triumph which she predicted would follow the persecutions of the Church. Cardinal Fedicini records a divine communication on this subject which the servant of God received, but, as quoted in the 'Analecta,' many gaps have been left unfilled. She was at the time praying fervently and shedding abundant tears, offering her pains and sufferings for the conversion of sinners, that sin might be banished from the world, and God become known and loved. 'The Lord,' he writes, 'was pleased to manifest to her the dreadful sins of persons of all classes, and how highly He was offended by them. At this sight she felt a poignant sorrow, and said, sighing, "O my Beloved, how can so great disaster be remedied?" Then it was said to her in reply, "My daughter, My spouse, My Father and I will remedy all. After the chastisement . . . the survivors will act thus." . . . This omission is naturally supplied by what is elsewhere asserted, that she saw crowds of heretics returning to the bosom of the Church, and beheld their edifying behaviour as well as that of all the faithful. It will be seen that the nature of the chastisement which is to precede this happy time is not specified, at least in so much of the revelation as it has been considered fitting for the present to lay before the public. All will be fully known when the cause has proceeded to its completion, and the honors of beatification have been awarded to her whom our holy Pontiff has already declared Venerable. But, although the nature of the judgment and punishment which she foretold was to overtake the persecutors and oppressors of the Church is not precisely defined in any authoritative document, yet private individuals have spoken of it, and, in particular, one whose testimony is unquestionable, namely, her confidant D. Raffaele Natali, to whom, under obedience, she made known all her revelations, and who God willed should survive her so many years. This scourge, he told many persons, was to be a supernatural darkness, which was to prevail for three days, during which blessed candles would alone give light.

It will already have been observed, in the passages which we have quoted from the 'Analecta,' that during several consecutive days Anna Maria saw the world enveloped in a dense and awful darkness, accom-

panied by the falling of walls and timber, as if a great edifice were crumbling into fragments. As, however, the servant of God saw many allegorical figures and representations in her sun, the question would still remain whether moral or physical darkness were signified. But if this vision be identical with the one mentioned by D. Raffaele, there is every reason for concluding that the latter is the correct reading of the prophecy. Her confidant must have had the best opportunities of knowing her mind and hearing her explanations, and, indeed, the mention of blessed candles alone giving light seems to show that the darkness foretold is to be real and sensible, not figurative. We may consider it therefore as certain that Anna Maria foretold a judgment of three days' darkness, and that, not only because we have the testimony of persons to whom D. Raffaele confided the fact, but also because P. Calixte's Life of the servant of God, in which this prediction is confidently attributed to her, has (as he himself declares in connection with this subject) been carefully examined at Rome and pronounced to be the most exact and conformable to the Apostolic processes of any hitherto published. This favorable judgment, one may naturally conclude, would certainly not have been expressed had he ventured on an assertion not borne out by her recorded and attested prophecies, which are reserved under the seals of the sacred congregation of Rites. We may add that P. Calixte's work was approved of by his own Superior, the General of the Trinitarians and Postulator of her own cause.

If, however, it might be deemed rash positively to decide that the predicted darkness will be physical, it would be something more than rash to ridicule the idea of such an occurrence being preposterous and absurd. The very state of men's minds, so prone to regard any intervention of God in his material creation as a thing out of date, if not a species of impossibility, renders it perhaps the more likely that God has reserved such a judgment as a lesson to the present sceptical generation. Some remarks to this effect made by M. Amédée Nicolas, a French avocat, in a late publication, appears to be much to the point. 'True it is,' he says, 'that men everywhere laugh at the idea of such an event occurring, and regard it as a dream: so they laughed at the deluge during the hundred years that Noe was employed in constructing the ark. As for me, I do not affirm that the darkness foretold will be physical darkness; but it does seem to me that the subject is sufficiently serious for men to abstain from scoffing at it; and both history and Scripture prophecy as well as the state of minds at the present epoch, may well justify apprehensions on this subject. Seeing that three days of physical darkness occurred in Egypt, it follows that we may have the same again in our time; for if a thing has once been, we must conclude that it can be. The Apocalypse, at the opening of the sixth seal, seems to me to predict darkness, when it says that suddenly there shall be a great earthquake, and that "the sun shall become black as sackcloth of hair;" and if we have arrived at this period in the duration of the world, how shall we be able to see when the sun gives no light? (We shall be in darkness.) "The errors and corruption of men are at the present time deeper than those of Egypt in Pharaoh's days; atheism and materialism reign supreme among the masses. An event partially divine is needed, in order that people should return to a belief in the existence of God and the spiritual world. Now this darkness would be an irrefragable proof, to which there could be no reply; and therefore it is more opportune and more necessary than that of Egypt. The same 6th chapter of the Apocalypse, renewing a prediction already uttered by the prophet Isaias, announces that "the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the tribunes, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman, and every freeman" shall be seized with such dread on witnessing this cataclysm of nature, that they shall hide themselves "in the dens and in the rocks and mountains," and say to the mountains and the rocks, "fall upon us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" This horrible scene does not belong to the convulsions at the end of the world, for it is followed by a great religious renewal; it does not refer to the judgment of the dead, but to a sort of judgment of the living, which may be signified by those words of David: "*Judicabit in nationibus, implebit ruinas.*" And what fact could occur which would strike such great terror? And if its results should be the conversion of the world to Jesus Christ, would it not be a great blessing for our human race, so widely gone astray, and ought it not to be desired and earnestly begged of God by those who desire that His name should be hallowed, His kingdom come, and His will be done earth as it is in heaven?"

Three centuries ago the Ottoman Empire was in full vigor. From its capital of Constantinople it seemed desirous of ruling the world. Christendom and civilization were about to be subjected to the rule of the Oriental. Asia, Egypt, and Africa were under its sway, and many provinces of Europe had already bowed down before the armies which marched to victory under the banner of the Crescent. The fleets of the Turk hovered around the coasts of Italy, and threatened Malta, while they had free course on the confines of the Ionic, Adriatic, and Mediterranean Seas. In this serious moment, when danger filled the air, and when the greatest effort was demanded, the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius V., was found equal to the occasion. The Spaniards and the Italians united their forces. Venice supplied 121 ships or galleys in a total of 243, and a force of 41,000 between soldiers, marines and rowers. Spain 51 ships and 15,900 men; the remainder, 27,020 men, were supplied by the Pope and the other States of Italy. On the 7th of October, 1571, the Battle of Lepanto decided the fate of Western civilization. By this great Christian victory the Ottoman Power was shaken to its basis, and Christendom saved from the evil rule of Mahometanism. No wonder, therefore, that the memory of this Pope, who preserved for Europe the glorious heritage of the Faith, should be a memory dear to Pius IX. and the Catholic world. Every individual rejoicing in the name of Christianity has cause to bless the memory and be grateful for the great act of St. Pius V. Therefore, the 5th of May, is a special festival in Rome.