

Surely a magnificent record for a pontificate, even though it should outrun the years of Peter!

AS A CURATE.

His ministry was one of work, love of the poor always characterising it. Of his services as an assistant, which extended over the space of nine years, we have only to hear the testimony of the pastor under whom he served: 'They have sent me as an assistant a young priest whom they have charged me with forming to the parochial ministry, but the more I observe him, the more I find in him such an ensemble of qualities, so much zeal, maturity, tact, that I could rather myself, even at my age, learn something at his school—I am convinced that this young priest will mount the steps of the ecclesiastical hierarchy—the episcopal mitre of a surety is destined for him. And then? *Chi sa*— who knows?'

This was a prophecy to be fulfilled, as indeed it has been, every nine years, and a step higher was climbed until to-day he is the spiritual head of the Church on earth—the ruler of the Christian world.

HIS HUMOR.

The humor of Pius X. was discovered long before he became Pope, but for the last five years the anecdotes related of him are too numerous to pass belief. Here is the latest of them, which bears an appearance of verisimilitude. Lately a Jewish banker from Venice, whom the Pope had known when he was Patriarch, was admitted to his presence, and the conversation soon turned on a common friend, one of the leaders of the Catholics in Venice, who was very ill. As the visitor stood up to take his leave the Pope asked: 'Are you going back to Venice soon?' 'Tomorrow or the day after.' 'In that case,' said the Pope, 'I want you to do me a favor—take my blessing to our good friend.' The banker could not conceal his astonishment and embarrassment. The Pope's eyes twinkled with amusement. 'Oh,' he said, 'you are afraid to take a Papal blessing? Take it, take it. The wrapper may be a bad one, but the contents are good.'

PETER'S PENCE.

What is known as Peter's Pence is a voluntary offering such as has no parallel in the world's history. Over two hundred million Catholics of every race, nationality, language, color, and social condition joining in a world-wide movement to show their affectionate regard for the successor of Peter, is a sight which must appeal strongly to even the most unimaginative. It is one of the outward expressions of the union that binds the Church Militant into one indissoluble whole. From every quarter of the globe there flow towards the seat of Peter the offerings of the spiritual children of Pius X. The moral effect of this is incalculable. The enemies of the Papacy cannot fail to take note of it. They must see in it the strongest proof of world-wide influence of the spiritual power they would destroy if they could.

SOME ANECDOTES.

A recent number of the *Pro Vita Fratres*, the bulletin of the Life Insurance of Verona, tells an amusing story, the truth of which is guaranteed by the Marquis Crispolti, describing how the Holy Father was inveigled into insuring his life. While he was Patriarch of Venice he was besieged by importunate agents so fiercely and so perseveringly that he absolutely refused to see any of them, or even to have the word 'insurance' mentioned, in his presence, until one day a real diplomat in the business found occasion to have a conversation with him on some other matter, and then adroitly led the talk to the tabooed topic. The Patriarch told him how much he had been pestered, and how he had succeeded at last in getting rid of his persecutors. The wily agent cordially agreed with him, adding: 'Of course, it would be absurd

for your Eminence to insure your life; you have no near relative depending on you for support.' The Patriarch, however, corrected him: 'That is not exactly true, for I have relatives living with me, and for whom I must make some provision.' In any case,' replied the man, your Eminence has no need to insure, for, of course, you have saved something, and your relatives would be provided for in any case.' 'Saved something!' said the Patriarch. 'I've never saved anything, and I possess nothing.' The agent simply added: 'And then?' And a few minutes later he was instructed to make out a modest policy on the life of Joseph Sarto, for the benefit of certain persons closely related to him.

No Pope of modern times has shown less patience with Vatican etiquette than Pius X. Simple, ever trustful and solicitous for the comfort of others, the successor of Leo desires to be unhampered by courtly traditions and free from the annoyances of ceremony, wherever such can be dispensed with. One of the curious rules of etiquette is that the Pope must dispense with a watch. Pius X.'s attention has been called to that rule time and again since he donned the white cassock of the successor of St. Peter, still he persists in carrying his old nickel watch of the type of the never-to-be-forgotten Waterbury.

About a year ago a French Bishop, visiting at the Vatican, saw the Pope's redoubtable Waterbury. 'I heard of your Holiness' curious watch,' said the Bishop, 'and would like nothing better than to have it for a souvenir. May it please you to examine this excellent watch, the finest French make, beautifully chased and jewelled. I got it as a present from my diocese, but would gladly exchange it for your timepiece, for I am sure my people, far from finding fault with me for giving away their present, will delight in the gracious souvenir.'

The Pope examined the French Bishop's watch, studied the works, admired the jewels and case. Then he replaced his own five-franc timepiece in his pocket. 'No,' he said; 'I cannot accept your generous offer, for this little bauble is very dear, indeed, to me. I held it in my hand, watching my dear mother's life ebbing away during her last illness.'

Admirers of the Pontiff must have noticed in many of his pictures a lock of hair prominent on the forehead. On latter-day photographs and paintings it is not in evidence, for this reason: A certain French portraitist, when the Pope granted him a sitting, commented in eloquent language on the beauty of the lock of hair, insisting that it gave the Pope's face its real distinction; recalling the famous lock of the great Napoleon. The Pope, who hates flattery, impatiently brushed the lock aside, and next day appeared without it. The painter said he was in despair. 'Never mind,' smiled the Pope, 'it's gone; I cut it off myself before I came here. I will not have you painters argue with me about a bit of hair.'

Monsignor Bisleti is the Papal Master of Ceremony, and naturally the man who suffers most on account of the Pope's disregard of etiquette. As a rule, his lamentations are endured with good-humored contempt by Pius; but once, he admits, 'Bisleti really made me prick up my ears.' Continuing: 'I had invited to audience a number of Cistercians, Fathers and Abbots, and, it being a very hot day, I was particularly wrath when I found them on their knees as I came in.' 'Dear sons,' I cried, 'rise, rise at once,' and observing Bisleti's astonished looks, I added out of a spirit of mischief, I must confess, 'rise and be seated, be seated by all means.'

Hearing this, Bisleti ran from the room, even forgetting his usual bow. However, I hardly blame him for his behaviour, for at the end of the audience the Secretary of State informed me that when the Pope asks a prelate to be seated it signifies that he may expect the red hat within a short time. 'Just imagine,' said the Pope, 'by merely being polite, I came near burdening the Church, poor as it is, with the salaries of nearly one hundred new princes. Needless to say, I never asked another prelate to sit in my presence.'