

The Passing of Pope Leo XIII.

AN APPRECIATION.



TELEGRAM in Tuesday's daily papers announced the death of Pope LEO XIII., one of the most illustrious of the long line of Pontiffs that have occupied the Chair of St. PETER. LEO XIII. was far past the ordinary span of human existence, and his declining years were, in KEBLE'S words, marked with

'Such calm old age as conscience pure
And self-commanding hearts ensue ;
Waiting his summons to the sky,
Content to live, but not afraid to die.'

Now the Grand Old Man has passed to his reward—

'Life's race well run,
Life's work well done,
Life's victory won :
Now comes rest'—

and, let us pray, rest eternal !

For several years past the world knew that the cord must soon snap, and Protestants as well as Catholics watched the closing days of the great Pontiff with a profound interest and friendly sympathy which has once more found eloquent voice in the almost universal chorus of eulogy which the non-Catholic press has devoted to the memory of his name and work. Perhaps no one that had a hold upon the world's ear had such peculiar opportunities of studying what may be called the inner life of Pope LEO XIII. as the eminent Italian-born novelist, Mr. MARION CRAWFORD. And, speaking of great men, Mr. CRAWFORD says that 'in some rare high types, head, heart, and hand are balanced to one expression of power, and every deed is a function of all three. LEO XIII. probably approaches as nearly to such superiority as any great man now living. As a statesman his abilities are admitted to be of the highest order ; as a scholar he is undisputedly one of the finest Latinists of our time, and one of the most accomplished writers in Latin and Italian prose and verse. As a man, he possesses the simplicity of character which almost always accompanies greatness, together with a healthy sobriety of temper, habit, and individual taste, rarely found in those beings whom we might well call "motors" among men. . . . It is commonly said,' Mr. CRAWFORD goes on, 'that the Pope has not changed his manner of life since he was a simple bishop. He is, indeed, a man who could not easily change either his habits or his opinions ; for he is of that enduring, melancholic, slow-speaking, hard-thinking temperament which makes hard workers, and in which everything tends directly to hard work as a prime object, even with persons in whose existence necessary labor need play no part, and far more so with those whose little daily tasks hew history out of humanity in the rough state. . . . For he is a great Pope,' says Mr. CRAWFORD. 'There has not been his equal intellectually for a long time, nor shall we presently see his match again.'

It was quite in keeping with the life and character of Pope LEO XIII. that he should pass away, so to speak, in harness. In the quoted words of KEBLE, he was 'content to live, but not afraid to die.' But he had, even in the slow twilight of his long day, much beneficent work to do, and neither extreme age nor weariness prevented him working while yet it was light. He was of the kind who wear out, but never rust out. And he was a very hero of duty. 'The Pope, in fact,' says a distinguished writer, 'had made up his mind not to be an invalid. So long as there was work to be done he was quietly determined to do it. He was much happier in that way than many great princes and prelates. The shadow of death gets witheringly on many men in great positions, and makes them incapable of or indifferent to the business of their high place. The story of emperors and kings is full of pathetic and pitiful accounts of the manner in which this or that sovereign collapsed and became cowed when it was made clear that only a short time could interpose between him and his death. There was no weakness of this kind in the moral and mental constitution of LEO the Thirteenth. So long as there was a year, so long as there was an hour left to him, he meant to do the work of that year or of that hour. When he must go he must, but, in the meantime, let work go on. . . . So long as

he lived he lived, and so long as life lasted to him, his duty to life lasted too.'

LEO'S mental and moral activity knew no flagging, and to his latest day his eye swept the whole horizon of human affairs. 'It would seem,' said Cardinal SATOLLI, in his summary of the purpose and results of the late Pope's reign, 'as if from the time when LEO XIII. succeeded PIUS IX., he had formed a grand plan, in which he took cognisance of all the needs of humanity, and determined on the provisions he would make for those needs during the whole course of his Pontificate. We can,' he continues, 'best distinguish this design of the Pope in three particular directions : Firstly, in the Holy Father's ardent zeal for the development of studies ; secondly, in the continued interest which he has shown in social science ; and thirdly, in his untiring efforts to bring peace into the Christian countries by the spread of civilisation, the teaching of religion, and the promotion of concord between the Church and the State.' It is unnecessary here to enter into any detail of what the great and scholarly Pontiff did for the study of classical literature, of philosophy and the natural sciences, of theology, of Biblical exegesis, of ecclesiastical history, and of Roman and comparative civil law. By the masses of the people he will, perhaps, be best remembered as the Pope of the working man. The late Mr. GLADSTONE once said that the most striking characteristic of DANIEL O'CONNELL was 'a passion for philanthropy.' 'The words,' says JUSTIN MCCARTHY, 'would apply with absolute accuracy to Pope LEO the Thirteenth. Philanthropy, indeed, appears to be with him a passion. There have been political Popes and theological Popes, but LEO the Thirteenth is above all things a philanthropic Pope. Some of the great social movements which came up during his time might well have intimidated a less heroic spirit. Some men in any position at all resembling that of LEO might have turned away in mere affright from certain of the developments of Socialism which we have all seen during these later years. The Pope had no fear. He looked boldly and searchingly into each new phenomenon, and calmly endeavored to unders and its actual significance. He seems to have brought to bear no prejudices, no unalterable preconceived opinions, to the task of examination. He had, apparently, made up his mind to the recognition of the fact that where there is an impassioned demand, there is also a claim which has a right to a hearing.' His bold and weighty encyclical of 1878 against Socialism, Communism, and Nihilism ; that of 1888 on Liberty ; and that of 1891 on the Condition of the Working Classes, excited universal attention, proved him both a statesman and a churchman of the highest order, and received from politicians, preachers, and writers outside the Fold a warmth of commendation such as had probably never before been accorded by them to a papal utterance. In the words of the Anglican Bishop of Manchester, LEO 'put his finger on the sore part of our social system, and his word must be listened to, or otherwise the world would have to expiate its neglect by some terrible calamities.' He pleaded for the slave both in Africa and Brazil ; he was the constant and bountiful friend of the poor and the afflicted ; and, in the words of a great writer of our day, 'it is only just to LEO XIII. to say that no cry of a wounded soul ever reached him which did not arouse his compassion, and his best efforts to give relief.'

The deceased Pontiff was a strenuous, though prudent, defender of the rights and liberties of the Church. Against the usurping Italian Government he combined the dignified '*non possumus*' of PIUS IX. with the passive principle of *ne electi ne electori*—'neither electors nor elected,' so long as an Italian Parliament sat inside the violated walls of the Eternal City. The long struggle of the Church in Germany against the infamous Falk Laws forms a memorable incident in the pontificate of LEO XIII. The first chapter of the struggle ended in the downfall and resignation of Dr. FALK in 1879—'the inevitable result,' says an historian of the period, 'of the discouragement which had come over his policy in the strife with the Vatican.' Such, in effect, was the admission made by BISMARCK in the Imperial Parliament. 'It is,' said he, 'the part of a brave man to fight on when the conditions demand it ; but no real statesman desires to combat a permanent institution.' The Pope insisted that the Church must be perfectly free in its spiritual