

ROME LETTER

From our own correspondent.)

December 21.

PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF NATIONS.

When Pius the Ninth fled from the fury of the revolutionists from Rome to Gaeta, a project was mooted in virtue of which the various small States of Italy should form a confederation with the Pope as their president. His Holiness was to be *Primus inter pares*. But the scheme proved abortive. Whether a similar plan could have been carried through shortly before the Roman question is opened, it is difficult to say. But not a few far-seeing European thinkers are coming to see what an advantage it would be for universal peace if the Sovereign Pontiff were chosen as president of the Council of Nations, chairman of the party which will probably be chosen as arbitrator of international difficulties after the conclusion of peace. No dynasty in the world enjoys so much influence by reason of the experience of twenty centuries' rule as does the Vicar of Christ. Before most of the great nations had issued from their primitive barbarism he arbitrated among peoples well and wisely, leaning neither to the left nor to the right—hence his peculiar suitability at this hour.

LETTER OF BENEDICT XV. TO THE PRIMATE OF BELGIUM.

Of three letters written by the Holy Father to his Eminence Cardinal Logue, Archbishop of Armagh; Bishop Shaw, St. Anthony's, New Orleans; and his Eminence Cardinal Mercier, Primate of Belgium, the last will be found the most interesting, inasmuch as all persons, whether pro-Allies, or pro-German will, with Benedict XV., sympathise with a people whose soil remains the cock-pit of four powerful nations.

'We see,' writes his Holiness, 'the King of the Belgians, his august family, his government, dignitaries, bishops, priests, and all the people endure such sufferings that the spectacle excites the pity of every mind not closed against sentiment. May the Merciful God hasten the end. Until then, let us do all in our power to remedy so many ills.'

'We have been particularly pleased: and We have publicly expressed Our satisfaction at seeing Our beloved son, Cardinal Hartmann, Archbishop of Cologne, obtain that all French and Belgian prisoners, who are priests, should, while in Germany, be accorded the same treatment as officers.'

'With regard to Belgium in particular, We have been these days informed that the faithful of this nation, despite the deep trouble in which they are living, have not forgotten to turn piously towards Us their eyes and souls, and that, though weighed down with misfortune, they propose to collect Peter's Pence in aid of the Holy See as they usually did. We admire in the highest degree and We receive with benevolence and gratitude this truly remarkable testimony of piety and love for Us. Nevertheless, seeing the extremely unfortunate conditions in which our loved sons are, Our heart could not adhere to such noble intentions, and We wish that the collection, if it is made, be given for the use of the Belgian people.'

Finally, his Holiness imparts his Apostolic Blessing to the Primate and each member of the Belgian Nation.

THE RECENT NOMINATIONS IN THE HOLY SEE.

The nomination of his Eminence Cardinal Vincenzo Vannutelli to the position of Datary of his Holiness, in place of the late Cardinal Di Pietro, has been the occasion of a good deal of interest in ecclesiastical circles of Rome, for Cardinal Vannutelli is one of those elevated to the Sacred College by Leo XIII. At a time when the future Pope occupied a subordinate position in Rome, Cardinal Vannutelli made him one of his friends, never dreaming a day would come when he should look up to him as his august lord. By entering the Dataria, Cardinal Vannutelli leaves the Prefecture

of the Supreme Tribunal of the Segnatura, court of appeal from the Rota and other tribunals, which Benedict XV. has bestowed upon Cardinal Lega, eminent among the canonists of Rome. On scanning these appointments, and the nominations to bishoprics by Pontifical Brief, one concludes that the Holy Father has no intention of holding a Consistory for some time to come.

RELIGION AND FATHERLAND.

So far it is very premature to think of the chief characteristic by which Benedict XV. will be known in history. Leo XIII. was 'The Workingman's Pope,' Pius X. was 'the Children's Pope,' or perhaps, better still, 'the Friend of busy Bishops and Priests,' inasmuch as the codification of Canon Law and the shortening of the Sunday Office are a boon to both.

What will the world call Benedict the Fifteenth? He has vindicated by the letter the right of the Church to call Dante 'one of ours.' And now he has in public audience refuted a stale calumny. In some countries there are people who would fain convince us that religion and fatherland do not go hand-in-hand. Last week his Holiness received in special audience 500 members of the Roman Club, 'Religione e Patria,' (Religion and Fatherland). And in reply to their address, the Pontiff said: 'You have these two words, "Religion and Fatherland," on the banner of your society. Act so that you may never separate in your souls the two loves signified by the two words on your banner, and on the tree of your lives fruit will not fail to grow.'

NOTES.

The Franciscans have this week to mourn the death of the great priest-composer, Father Hartmann, O.F.M., of Munich, Bavaria, who died of heart disease. His fame grew along with that of Father Perosi of the Vatican. Among his oratorios the chief were 'San Pietro,' 'San Francisco,' and the 'Last Supper.'

These days lovers of art are flocking to the Collegio Angelico, the great International College of the Dominican Order, erected in Rome some five years ago, for the purpose of hearing the second lecture of Father Ferretti, O.P., on 'The History of Art.'

In the fourth-century Church of St. Marcellus in the Corso, one of the Servites of Mary is preaching a series of sermons on 'The duties of Catholics to the Catholic press.'

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