

ROME LETTER

(From our own correspondent.)

February 11.

THE WORLD'S PEACEMAKER.

It is with no little amazement one views the displays of hostility on the part of a number of bigots because of the deference shown by the warring nations to the different proposals hitherto made them by Benedict XV. and also because of the appointment of a British Minister at the Vatican. With a view to easing the minds of those good people it is well to recall that such action does not spell recognition of the Temporal Power.

Some people refer to the Middle Ages as the 'Dark' Ages. One reason for this is because they are in the dark—very much in the dark—about that glorious period. Another reason is because religion was dear then to men's hearts, and nations acknowledged the Pope as their official arbitrator. We need not go back for a few centuries in search of instances to show the world still recognises the Pope as its peacemaker: the last century furnishes plenty of them. In 1884 (I may be in error as to exact year) the Republics of St. Domingo and Hayti submitted to Leo XIII.'s arbitration a serious dispute. In 1885, at the suggestion of Bismarck, Germany and Spain left their dispute about the Caroline Islands to the same Pontiff. And we all remember that, when the Italian Government had spent money and influence to induce Menelik I., Emperor of Abyssinia, to liberate 2000 Italian prisoners and allow them to bury their dead, the intervention of Pope Leo sufficed to accomplish the desires of the Government of Italy.

THE PATRON OF MEDICAL DOCTORS.

On the feast of St. Cyrus, martyr and medical doctor of Alexandria, an edifying scene may be witnessed on January 31 each year in the Church of the Gesu, Naples. Here the martyr's body lies, and around his tomb the physicians gather in fervent prayer. On such an occasion the most thickly populated city of Italy recognises how many sincere Catholic doctors she has within her walls. This year the Holy Father manifested his appreciation of the 'Association of Catholic Doctors' of Naples by wiring them through the medium of the Papal Secretary of State his Apostolic Blessing.

THE POPE AND WARRING NATIONS.

In Europe among thinking men the general opinion is that 'the Pope has a difficult card to play' with regard to his attitude of declared neutrality among the warring nations. So specious are the proofs adduced to show the Pontiff's sympathy with one side or the other that not a few are sometimes temporarily deceived. Indeed, so much so is this the case that one finds the only really safe rule to follow is to look

askance upon all such reports and credit none that do not directly emanate from an official source. Time after time the Holy See has declared that it is outside and above national quarrels, but just as often have attempts been made to drag in the name of the Holy Father in some way or other. Naturally, his Holiness feels most for those upon whom the rigors of war have most heavily fallen, but this is no reason for placing him upon one side or the other on the battlefield. He has dear and loyal subjects in both trenches.

NOTES.

So generous have been the people of Italy in response to the appeal in aid of the survivors of the recent earthquake that the fund opened by the Pope alone has come to 280,000 francs.

The *Giornale D'Italia* is authority for the statement that the famous Benedictine Abbey of Monte Cassino has suffered from the earthquake. In this monastery St. Benedict and his sister, St. Scholastica, are buried.

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