

ROME LETTER

(From our own correspondent.)

June 2.

HOW CATHOLIC ITALY HAS GONE TO BATTLE.

While the war between Italy and Austria continues no reference to the struggle will be made in my Rome letter. Thus the censors will have one trouble the less. But this does not prevent me from giving some details to show how a really Catholic country goes to battle; they are too edifying to be omitted, and they prove that the Italian people, whatever differences exist between them in politics, are Catholic root and branch. This critical moment in Italy's life has been the means of bringing into evidence the best side of her character from a religious, charitable, patriotic, and economic standpoint, for the lessons of the past ten months have not been lost upon her. Therefore, the following facts will not be found uninteresting:

Shortly before the war broke out a circular was sent to a number of convents of nursing Sisters in the Italian cities by the Premier, asking to be furnished with a list of the nuns who were ready to accompany the army in the event of Italy taking the field. For King Victor Emmanuel knew the wounded soldiers would like to be tended by the Sisters. The generalissimo of his forces knew it also, and the Premier, a sincere Catholic, was of the same opinion. The result is that 8000 nuns are now with the army. As to the number of Italian priests serving in the army as infermarians, attendants, chaplains (who have the rank and pay of captains), and soldiers in the fighting line, it is computed they total close on 30,000. Among these are two priests who deserve particular notice. One is Sergeant Anterelli, of the Conventual Franciscans, who is Superior of the monastery and the guardian of St. Francis of Assisi. Another is Captain Gemelli, a Friar Minor, who, besides being a priest, is a medical doctor, and has therefore been assigned to the medical staff. Needless to say he abandoned practice on abandoning the Franciscan habit. Both these soldier-priests care for the souls as well as the bodies of their comrades. Father Gemelli is also editor of a highly successful *Vita Pensiero*, of which he is the founder.

THOSE IGNORANT MONKS.

Students of aerostatics enthusiastically laud the services which the air fleets are able to render their armies in this war. But how many of them give credit to the first person who conceived the idea of aerial navigation on scientific principles, Francis Lana, the learned monk of the 17th century. Verily science has not moved very far after all. Friar Lana knew nearly as much about aeroplanes as do the airmen of the European and American armies. Lack of means prevented him from giving to the world an airship two hundred years before the craft came to make things so lively. This was towards 1670. While the learned monk of Brescia lamented the want of means for the construction of his machine, he believed that God would not allow such a weapon to fall into our hands, because, who does not see that no city could feel safe from surprises, for the ship could come over the squares every hour and, coming near the earth, allow the people to descend? . . . And even without descending, by means of missiles, which could be flung from the ship, they could destroy vessels, kill men, and burn ships. And not only ships, but houses, castles, and cities: while those who threw them from unmeasured heights could feel certain of getting away in safety.

THE HOLY FATHER TO THE SACRED COLLEGE.

Though some time has passed since the publication of the letter of his Holiness Benedict XV., to the College of Cardinals through Cardinal Serafino Vannutelli on the European war, comments of a most favorable nature continue to be made on it by all political shades of the Italian press. As the Pontiff intimates in his letter to Cardinal Vannutelli, the idea of holding a Papal Consistory early in June has been abandoned.

However, it is not considered unlikely his Holiness will call around him the Senate of the Church in August or September. The office of Chancellor of the Holy Roman Church, left vacant by the late Cardinal Agliardi, is one usually filled at a Consistory. Along with this there are a dozen places in the Sacred College vacant, and of the Cardinals resident in Rome four are men who are of advanced years and not enjoying excellent health.

YOUNG IRISH PRIESTS FROM ROME.

To day, after finishing their course of studies in the Propaganda, the following young priests leave the Irish College for their respective dioceses:—Rev. Nicholas Power (Waterford), Rev. Joseph Sheedy (Galway), Rev. Thomas Ellis (Meath), Rev. Joseph Breen (Sedney), Rev. William Leonard (Limerick), Rev. Owen McMenamin (Derry).

NOTE.

Among those received in audience this week was the Rev. John Graham, of Tasmania.

FEAST OF ST. MARY MAGDALENE

(For the N.Z. Tablet by the REV. J. KELLY, Ph.D.)

He did not turn His face aside

When she came down the street,

With tress wreathed in her hair,

And little, dancing feet,

He did not shun her wanton eye

That rested on His feet;

It was not that He did not know

The sinner in the place,

And there were surely many men

Who thought that they should frown

Upon Him when they saw Him smile

On the woman of the town.

Because He did not turn aside

As she came down the street,

A word, a glance, a gentle hair

To win His boundless love,

Because He did not frown upon

That wanton woman's face,

When others felt she followed Him

Unto His dying place,

She gave her heart and soul to Him

Who did not turn aside,

The woman who was one of those

For whom He lived and died.

And do we do as He would do,

When day by day we meet

Poor sinners, whom the Pharisees

Went from in the street?

Aye, in the street for men to see

Who cannot see the soul,

Nor ever come to understand

How love can make us whole,

If we are strong and they are weak

Some day we too may fall:

Then may we love as Mary did

The Christ Who loves us all.

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