

The Catholic World

CHINA—Former Empress a Catholic

On January 16, students of the Vatican Archives were considerably astonished by the unusual presence in their midst of a mandarin, who it appears stands high in the Chinese diplomatic service. He had come to consult various documents bearing on the history of his country, among the rest one of great importance which was brought to light recently by the investigations of Monsignor Ugolini, Vice-Archivist of the Library. It is a letter written on yellow silk by no less a personage than a former Empress of China. In it she informs the then Pope, Innocent X., of her conversion, as well as that of her three children, and she asks his Holiness to send as many Jesuits as possible to evangelise her native country. She adds that in baptism she took the name of Helena, and that her children took the names of Anna, Mary, and Constantine. The letter, which bears the seal of the Celestial Empire, is in an excellent state of preservation.

FRANCE—An Apostolic Prelate

The clergy under the jurisdiction of one of the French prelates, the Bishop of Digne, are in such straitened circumstances that he recently decided to make an appeal outside the diocese for funds on their behalf. The anti-clericals seized the occasion to reproach him. He should, they said, reduce his own expenditure. The Bishop's reply deserves to be given literally: 'How can I cut down my household expenses? As everybody in Digne knows, I have no carriage and no house-maid. All the work of my house is done by a single servant, who received a medal last year because she had been in my service fifty years. She discharges the domestic duties and mends my clothes, which, like my shoes, have often to be repaired. For our support and the entertainment of my guests the year's outlay has been £24. Do you think that too much? When I travel I do so as a second-class passenger, and instead of a cab I use the omnibus and the tram-car.' If the anti-clericals have not banished from their breasts every sentiment of natural kindness, they will feel touched by the Bishop's words and regret their undeserved reproaches. Apostolic simplicity is the rule in the household of the Bishop of Digne. He cultivates the simple life.

The Upkeep of Churches

About the middle of January M. Maurice Barres brought before the French Parliament the serious question of the closing and destruction of several churches, and the wilful neglect of municipal authorities to keep them in repair, whereby they become uninhabitable, and, moreover, the refusal of Government officials to allow the people to repair the edifices. M. Barres, in the public press, has called the attention of the people of France to the designs of the enemies of religion to make use of another means of extinguishing the faith of the French nation by allowing the churches to fall to pieces for want of repairs, and then razing them to the ground, on the plea that they cannot be used with safety. At the passing of the Law of Disestablishment, the Church buildings, as well as all Church properties, passed into the hands of the Government. The State did not dare to lock up all the churches, but they are determined to allow time to do the work by leaving them to crumble to pieces. The officials will not repair the churches, nor will they permit the priests or people to do so; hence, in the near future, with the exception of the churches that are considered works of art, the people of France will be driven to worship God in the woods or in the open fields. M. Barres denounced the Government in no measured terms for their blindness and injustice. He gave many instances of the refusal of the Government authorities to allow the priests and people to repair the churches at their own expense.

PORTUGAL—The Government's Tyranny

The special correspondent of the *Times* at Oporto says the policy of the Provisional Government with regard to religion meets with widespread opposition there. Unless that policy is changed public opinion must have a notable effect on the elections. Owing to the Government's tyranny much uneasiness is felt as to the future definition of the word 'liberty.' The decree separating Church and State is not to be promulgated 'until the country is in a more pacific state.'

The Government's Generosity

Do the Portuguese Ministers and the journalists whom they call around them when they try to throw dust in the eyes of the nations of Europe preserve solemn faces, or do they all join in laughter over the joke? (asks the *Catholic Times*) They certainly must possess the power of self-restraint to an unusual degree if they refrain from laughter or smiles. On January 21 the Minister for Foreign Affairs summoned a meeting of the representatives of the foreign press. His object was to dilate on 'the toleration and generosity of the Government.' He told them that in its bountifulness it was making monthly payments of £444 to Queen Maria Pia and £666 to King Manuel, and then he expatiated on the peace and happi-

ness which the revolution had brought to Portugal, as was acknowledged at home and abroad. The 'news' was duly telegraphed and appeared in the papers with headings which did not indicate that the Dictators were endeavoring to fool the European public. But the nature of the Government's 'toleration and generosity' became evident the following day. On the highest Portuguese authority it was stated that Queen Maria Pia's dowry was settled in an Act approved of by the Portuguese and Italian Chambers before her marriage with the late King, Dom Luiz, and is an international agreement binding upon whatever Government may be in power in Lisbon, and that King Manuel has so far received no sums except those derived from the estates of the House of Braganza, which constitute his personal property. There can therefore be no question of any display of toleration and generosity. Is it not time that the Dictators ceased to assume that people who read the newspapers are devoid of common sense?

ROME—Municipal Muddling

Though the Exhibition is to open in about two months, it is curious how little is heard of it (writes a Rome correspondent). Indeed, if you mention the word exhibition to a Roman, though he may not say much, the sceptical shrug of the shoulders with which he dismisses the subject is as expressive as the longest discourse. The fact is that the Exhibition is almost as great a mystery as that now puzzling the brains of the good Romans—how the municipality, under the leadership of its chief, the redoubtable Nathan, is to find any relief from the huge debt of five million francs which the enlightened administration of the past four years has produced. Whispers have been heard recently about the probability of the dissolution of the Municipal Council and the appointment by the Government of a Royal Commissioner, whose business it would be to set right the things that are out of joint. At any rate, such is the remedy provided by law for a crisis of this nature. But though it has been applied on at least one former occasion, for much less serious motives, it is unlikely that it will be resorted to before the end of the year—that is to say, before the closing of the Exhibition. As for the Exhibition itself, the preparations continue to go on at a leisurely pace—so leisurely, indeed, that people are beginning to wonder if it is really the intention to have it opened at the date already fixed. Meanwhile the streets are in a dreadful state. They have been ripped up for various purposes; heaps of clay lie about everywhere; and the mud and slush that cover the pavements on a wet day have recalled the Concentration Camps to the mind of one who was through the Boer war. To add to the misfortunes of the city, the number of visitors is not much more than a third of what it usually is in the winter season in Rome; nor is there any likelihood that things are going to improve in this respect during the year. The cholera scare has been accountable for this falling off, though at no time was there any reason for fear as far as Rome was concerned. There were indeed some cases, but they were so few as to be a negligible quantity.

A Notable Event

A notable event (writes a Rome correspondent) has been the brilliant success achieved by Maestro Perosi, the well known priest-composer, in the concert conducted by him at the Augusteum, in the presence of the élite of Rome, intellectual and aristocratic. So keenly was the performance looked forward to that for several days previously a ticket could not be had for love or money. The expectations were more than fully realised. The performance evoked indescribable enthusiasm. Over and over again the audience burst into applause and cried 'encore' after 'encore.' The press has been unanimous in describing the event as 'a great triumph.' The staid *Popolo Romano* waxed enthusiastic for once:—'The admiration aroused by the genial compositions of Perosi, so rich in spontaneous lyrical inspiration, and so powerful in wise and vigorous orchestration, was indescribable, and at the end of the performance the enthusiasm was loud, furious, and altogether exceptional.' Even the *Messaggero*, for a wonder, finds a good word to say for a priest, in the following comment:—'Rarely has a composer, and at the same time a director of an orchestra, been received with such warm and at times such wild enthusiasm as that of yesterday. Accustomed though he is to applause, Don Lorenzo Perosi cannot but have been deeply moved by it. Though the immense audience that, elegant and applauding, literally crowded the vast hall, contained the most varied elements—from friar and prelate to noble dame of both black and white world, not excluding the Queen—all without any distinction of rank, religion, or politics, felt themselves stirred by one feeling alone—that of admiration for the artist; and right well did he deserve it.'

UNITED STATES—An Event of Importance

Among the events of importance of this year in the United States will be the golden jubilee of the ordination of his Eminence Cardinal Gibbons. It is expected President Taft will attend the celebration. Cardinal Gibbons was ordained to the priesthood June 30, 1861, and was made by Archbishop Spalding private secretary. He was appointed Vicar-Apostolic of North Carolina in 1868, and