

A message we received on 5 December 2023:

I THOUGHT I'd take the time to say this: This Christmas time, I've had the chance to sit down and play through the hymns in the *Saint Jean de Brébeuf Hymnal*. I'm by no means a great organist—but most of the Catholic hymnals I've played contain arrangements that are clunky and non-intuitive. The one happy exception was the *New Saint Basil Hymnal*.

However, having now played through the hymns as in the *Brébeuf Hymnal*, I can happily affirm: it has the best arrangement of hymns since the *New Saint Basil Hymnal*. They are both beautiful and accessible. **You have gathered the best** from Catholic hymnals throughout the world, and it has done wonders promoting congregational singing in our church since we have adopted it.

Thank you for all the hard work and dedication that went into making the hymnal, as well as making it so easy to use for both singer and pew-sitter. Merry Christmas to you and yours.

—Director of Music
Saint Philip's Catholic Church

[Further details withheld for anonymity's sake.]

<https://ccwatershed.org/hymn/>

LABOR OMNIA VINCIT.

Prize

for Class Subjects

FORM ~~1~~ 2.

Awarded to

Mary Prior

Convent of Notre Dame

Birkdale. July 1938.

RELFE BROTHERS (1924) LTD. LONDON, E.C.1.



CARDINAL MERRY DEL VAL

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CARDINAL MERRY DEL VAL

by
MONSIGNOR VIGILIO DALPIAZ

Translated by
A BENEDICTINE OF
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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

THE third anniversary of the death of Cardinal Merry del Val, February 26th, 1933, was marked by the publication of a *Life* by Monsignor Pio Cenci, Archivist of the Vatican Secret Archives, which will doubtless remain the definitive biography, at least for some considerable time to come. It is a large work, copiously documented, and its bulk and price alike prohibit its becoming, in the accepted sense, a 'popular biography.'

Hence, since the ever-growing veneration for the man who, at the side of Pius X, worked and suffered for the Church during one of the stormiest of modern pontificates called for such a popular *Life*, Monsignor Vigilio Dalpiaz supplied the demand in 1935 by publishing an abridgement of the Cenci biography under the title of *Attraverso una Porpora*. This is the work now done into English with some modifications.

Written for Italian readers, the new popular biography naturally preserves in full what is of special interest to these, whilst omitting or curtailing other matter, some of which is often not only of much interest but of importance in a work prepared for English Catholic readers. Thus, for example, the share taken by the Cardinal in the work of the Commission on Anglican Orders, in

the establishment of the *Beda*, etc., given at some length in the larger book, is dismissed in a few lines.

Again, the omission of other, and more personal, matter, less necessary for those privileged to know and see him daily, was felt to be regrettable in a work which aimed at making better known the great and saintly personality of one who, in the past, has been frequently not only misunderstood but even calumniated.

Application was therefore made to His Eminence Cardinal Canali, the late Cardinal's devoted friend and executor, who has throughout taken a most kindly interest in the work, for permission to re-insert certain passages from the Cenci biography. This permission was graciously granted.

The restored matter consists of his own letters, reminiscences, etc., of those intimate with Cardinal Merry del Val, and other passages of varying length. Further, brilliant linguist though he was, English, the tongue of his childhood, in which he had learned his first prayers and received his first instructions, remained the one in which the late Cardinal wrote most of his original spiritual notes and prayers. The translator's grateful thanks are here expressed to His Eminence Cardinal Canali for supplying the English originals of these.

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CARDINAL MERRY DEL VAL

CHAPTER I

FAMILY AND EARLY YEARS

IRELAND. The Isle of Saints! Amid the disastrous storms which raged against the Church in the sixteenth century this historic aphorism was to have its fullest realisation. Whilst in England the defections among clergy and people could not be counted; whilst Calvinism spread over Scotland, and the head of the Catholic queen, Mary Stuart, fell beneath the axe of her jealous rival, Elizabeth, Ireland remained the land where Catholicism triumphed.

For the generous people, however, steadfastness in the faith of their fathers was synonymous with martyrdom; for the English parliament succeeded in hurling against the Isle of Saints the armies which, led by Cromwell, sowed broadcast slaughter and death. Yet from the blood and the death there bloomed, stronger and fairer, a crimson flower; the love of Jesus Christ and His Vicar on earth!

In those days of anguish the family from which was descended Cardinal Rafael was already known and noteworthy; indeed the origins on both sides go back much further. The family of Merry draws

its descent from the O'Hoolicans of Hy-Main in Connaught, but in the seventeenth century, like other Irish families, for political reasons they adopted an English name, and chose that of Merry.

In the second half of the eighteenth century a branch established in Waterford migrated to Seville, and there engaged in commerce on a large scale. The head of this Spanish branch, Thomas Merry, was thoroughly English, as is evident from his school books, still preserved. On the other hand, the next generation was entirely Spanish. Thomas was the eldest son of Richard Merry, and married, as his second wife, Mary, daughter of John White. Of this marriage were born two children, Richard and Margaret, the former of whom transferred the family to Spain. He had five sons and two daughters. The fourth son, Rafael, married Dona Maria de la Trinidad del Val, of a well-known Aragonese family originally belonging to Saragossa. So arose the family name *Merry y del Val* which, subsequently duly legalised, became simply Merry del Val. From this branch was descended the Cardinal.

The del Val were also an old and distinguished house. A del Val, a valiant Breton knight, fought against the Moors in the twelfth century and afterwards settled in Spain. One of his descendants was the child saint, Domingo del Val, to whom a chapel was dedicated in Saragossa cathedral.¹ From the marriage of Rafael the elder with Dona Maria del Val was born Rafael, father of the Cardinal, who on February 3rd, 1863 married in London

¹ The older of the two cathedrals of that city, known as *La Seo*.

Josephine de Zulueta, also of honourable Spanish lineage.

On his mother's side might be applied to the Cardinal the saying that a search into the genealogy of any great Englishman will always reveal a Scottish ancestor. Don Pedro Madariaga, Count of Torre Diaz, married Sophia Anne Willcox, the Cardinal's grandmother and daughter of a Scots Father, Brodie McGhie Willcox, and a Miss Van der Gutch of Dutch extraction.

The family of the Counts of Torre Diaz takes the surname *Zulueta* from a little town of Spanish Navarre. Pedro José, son of Don Pedro de Madariaga, founder of the well-known English shipping firm, the Peninsular and Oriental Line—'P. and O.'—married Miss Willcox and, among other children, had the daughter, Josephine, who became mother of the Cardinal.

Hence, as regards nationality the Cardinal belonged in varying degrees to Ireland, England, Spain, Scotland and Holland. Moreover, besides very close ties, he had also legal status in Italy, for in 1926 he was made an honorary citizen of Assisi. His mixed nationality was reflected in his outlook, his tastes, his character, his outward appearance and his mode of thought.

Always exemplary Catholics, the Merrys had numbered among them members distinguished in politics, public administration and commercial life. The Cardinal's father, Don Rafael, was one of the ablest diplomats of the last century. To one of his proud and noble character the changed Spanish political régime had meant an interruption

in his career, and he had preferred to live in retirement in London where he was in charge of the future Alfonso XII, who was then pursuing his military training.¹ Having rapidly passed through the lower grades of the Diplomatic Service he was nominated Spanish Minister to Belgium, then Ambassador to the Imperial court of Austria-Hungary, and finally, during many years, Spanish Ambassador to the Holy See.

In Rome also, as elsewhere, are still remembered the personal charm and gracious dignity of the Ambassadors, whose exceptional gifts rendered her an object of general admiration. Especially was this the case at the State receptions which took place in the magnificent apartments of the Palazzo di Spagna, the seat of the Embassy.

The Cardinal's parents were fervent Catholics. Not only in private but in public the Ambassador was pointed out as an example; his attitude of recollected piety, when present at religious functions or pontifical ceremonies, prayer book in hand, edified all present. His wife might without exaggeration be pronounced a model of virtue. Her rare piety, great charity, and real humility caused her to be esteemed wherever she lived, and especially in Rome where, in the true spirit of the Gospel, with unobtrusive activity she did much good.

It was not surprising, therefore, if a couple who were so deeply imbued with Christian principles,

¹ The period of Revolution and political experiments which opened in 1868 with the expulsion of Isabella II and, after the 'shadow reign' of Amadeus of Savoy, 1870-3, a Republican interlude, and much disorder, closed with the restoration of Alfonso XII in 1875.

and professed them so openly, had children worthy of them, who followed in their footsteps. Their marriage brought them five children: Alfonso, Rafael, Pedro, Domingo, and Maria. The eldest, the Marquis Alfonso, entered upon a diplomatic career, was private secretary to King Alfonso XIII, represented Spain in Morocco and Belgium, and was later, for many years, Ambassador in London and the doyen of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the court of Great Britain until the fall of the Spanish monarchy.

Don Domingo and Don Pedro live usually in Spain with their families, all of whom are devout Catholics. The former has devoted himself entirely to Catholic activities, of some of which he is president, as of Conferences of S. Vincent de Paul. He also founded the Confraternity of S. Dominic del Val for the training of boys for the service of the altar. Their sister, Maria, recently dead, lived unmarried in Spain, wholly given up to good works.

Rafael, the future cardinal, was born on October 10th, 1865, in London, where his father was attached to the Spanish Legation, and was baptised the following day in the Spanish Chapel,¹ by Canon Hearn. His godfather was his maternal uncle, Don Pedro José de Zulueta, and as godmother he had his grandmother, Dona Maria del Val de Merry.²

In his childhood his intellectual development was

¹ One of the old London missions. The chapel here mentioned was built in 1742, in Dorset Street, Manchester Square, and was replaced in 1890 by the present S. James's Spanish Place.

² Like many Spanish children he was well supplied with Christian names: Rafael, Maria, José, Pedro, Francisco Borja; Domingo (del Val); Gerardo de la Santísima Trinidad.

precocious, whilst physically he seemed rather frail and delicate. From his first years he showed himself inclined to religious practices. He learned his prayers very easily, and subsequently never failed to say them night and morning, not even omitting them when he was tired. His eldest brother, Alfonso, recalls how, when still a little boy, Rafael used to say that he wanted to be a priest, and even a parish priest. He was only six years old when, one day, his mother took him to see his uncle, Father Francis de Zulueta, now an octogenarian, and then a novice in the Society of Jesus.¹ When greeting Madame Merry del Val, one of the old Fathers asked little Rafael: 'Well, what do you want to be?' 'I want to be a priest,' was the child's prompt reply.

His mother often recalled how his chief, almost his only amusement, was to make little altars and sacred objects, and arrange candles and pious pictures. To his delight, she procured him all he required to gratify his longings, and his happiness was complete when he was able to have a miniature altar, together with missal and sets of vestments of all the liturgical colours. He used himself to prepare everything needed for the following day, and then, vested, he imitated the priest saying Mass, inviting one of his brothers, or small friends, to serve him.

Keen and intelligent, lively and restless, but always attentively watched and guided in the way most conducive to a child's wise training, Rafael was free from the failings, or rather from the in-subordination and impatience, common at his age

¹ Fr. Francis de Zulueta has since died: January, 1937.

and, so far as could be seen, even then gave promise of fine personal qualities.

Side by side with the harmless jokes and tricks typical of his years, there were clearer signs and stronger proofs of his goodness and natural leaning to piety. He was especially fond of the many priests who used to visit the house. He liked to remain near them and to talk to them about his 'masses,' repeating the prayers he had learnt by heart and impressing them by questions which might often have been put by an adult. He was very interested in the preparation of the altar in the private chapel, where Mass was said daily, and very quickly learned to serve Mass himself.

One day, when out for a walk with his governess, he saw a funeral pass and, unobserved, ran off after it and was lost in the crowd. Very anxious, the governess at last found him and scolded him for running away without saying anything. Rafael's reply came promptly: 'Mamma told me that when people die they go to Heaven, and I wanted to go to Heaven with that dead man!'

Among many other reminiscences, his mother used to tell how she was once teaching him the meaning of Papal Infallibility and, wishing to see whether he had understood, tried to trap him. Taking up a small book bound in black, she asked him: 'Rafael, if the Pope told you that this book was bound in white, what would you say?' After a moment's reflection, the child answered: 'Oh, Mamma, the Pope could never talk such nonsense!'

When the time came for him to go to school, he was sent to a preparatory school, Bayliss House,

near Slough. From the accounts of the Misses Butt, who kept it, it appears that, although his health was uncertain, he learned both quickly and easily, outstripping his classmates in the different lessons. Stern ladies were these Misses Butt! Pupils guilty of any misdemeanour had their hands rapped—and not lightly—with a ruler, and Rafael sometimes suffered the penalty, receiving sharp strokes on his delicate little hands for mistakes during his piano lessons.

His religious fervour rendered him a pattern to all, so, after having been well prepared, he was soon able to make his first Confession and, a little later, received the Sacrament of Confirmation. At the age of ten, he made his first Communion in the Jesuit church at Bournemouth, edifying all by an attitude which was described as 'angelic.'

His mother kept some of his first letters home. Though written in his simple childish style, for a boy of ten they are models. They are full of expressions of tender affection, always state that he is praying for his parents, and end with a request for their blessing. He was equally affectionate to his other relations.

In 1876 the family moved to Belgium, where his father had been appointed Spanish Minister. In order to have their son nearer them, the parents placed him in the college of Notre Dame de la Paix at Namur, conducted by the Jesuit Fathers. He remained there about two years, distinguishing himself equally for piety, good conduct and progress in his studies. Then, in October, 1878, anxious on account of his health, still so unsatisfactory, and

wishing to be able to watch over his physical development, they sent him to the Jesuit college of Saint Michel, at Brussels, where he stayed until he had completed his classical studies in 1883. The cards recording his weekly marks still survive in the family, and show that throughout his school days in Brussels, he always gained the highest mark—'Very Good'—which was entered on a pink card.

Father Alfred de Wouters, then Rector of the college, thus speaks of him: 'Young Rafael Merry del Val was put into the fourth class for Latin, but during a large part of the school year, 1878-9, his health was very delicate, so that, to his own great disgust, he was not able to do regular lessons. During 1879-80, and the following years, he completed his Humanities, up to the subjects included in Rhetoric, as a boarder at our college of Saint Michel. His studies were very thorough and his progress was clearly shown, alike by the high standard of his work and his great success in the examinations.'

'His happy disposition, the unselfishness of his friendships, his great enthusiasm at games during recreation, and his fervent piety made Rafael Merry del Val the best and most popular of companions. The Fathers and masters found, in the refinement of manner and high thinking of this boy, not only the attributes of a gracious and fine personality, but a valuable and happy influence over the many other pupils in our college. All his masters and schoolfellows esteemed him so highly that they used to foretell of him: "He will be a remarkable man!"'

Later re-named in honour of S. John Berchmans, the school is now directed by Father Leo Morel, S.J. After the Cardinal's death, Father Morel was asked to make from the records an extract of what referred to their distinguished former pupil. But in order to render more lively homage to the venerated memory of a great churchman, he asked several Jesuits formerly belonging to the community there, as well as the Cardinal's classmates, for their personal reminiscences of him.

Here are a few selections from the many replies, given by old schoolfellows without collaboration. Father Arendt, who sent them in the name of his confrère, Father Morel, describes them as: 'Truly a consensus of praise such as is read in processes of beatification.'

From a letter from a well-known member of the Belgian nobility we have the following: 'I knew Rafael Merry del Val intimately at the college of Saint Michel, and I can say that he was *an angel!* Never in the course of my life have I found in any of my friends such a perfect combination of good qualities. I never saw him ill-humoured or *brusque*. When he approached some group of boys whose conversation might be described as rather undesirable, instantly that conversation was changed, though I never heard of his having made any remark or given any reproof to any of his companions. Rafael impressed people by his natural attractive smile, for he seemed to radiate innocence and goodness.'

A Belgian magistrate writes: 'I was in the same class in Rhetoric with Rafael Merry del Val.

Although he was very charming with all his companions, by whom he was sincerely loved, at the same time his constant reserve, and his natural distinction, placed him in a position apart. His superiority over the rest was due to his character—in my opinion, even then he had attained complete self-mastery—to his natural refinement and culture and, beyond doubt, also to his moral purity. Every year, I think, he carried off the prize for good conduct, and was the first among the altar servers. He was undoubtedly, even then, deeply religious, though he never talked religion or showed any ostentation in his piety. Physically he was tall, well-made, agile; with perfectly regular features, distinguished looking, winning. With his bright eyes and his charming smile there was a great fascination about him.'

Another, now an excellent father of a family, writes:

'I remember him as serious, very pious, very simple, a boy who got on easily with his schoolfellows, liked by all. He was dignified without being haughty, reserved without being cold. There was nothing disagreeably austere about him and he could enjoy a joke. As a scholar our master in Rhetoric reckoned him among the best. He was an excellent actor and reader, and in particular I recall having seen him play the part of *Flavius Clemens*, in Longhaye's tragedy, with perfect success, and convincingly.'

For all his personal piety he never adopted an imposing or austere attitude, and his behaviour with others was always easy, lively and joyous.

Very good at games and athletics, he was especially proficient at tennis and cricket, as well as being a good chess player. He was a powerful swimmer, a good shot, one of the best pupils in the fencing school, and above all daring to rashness on horseback. These pursuits were not only to equip him as befitted his social status, and strengthen his delicate physique, but also to put to the test his desire to enter the ecclesiastical state.

The fact was that during his time at Brussels the idea of becoming a priest had been growing clearer and stronger, although he felt unworthy of it. One day his father asked him: 'How will you be able to become a priest while you are so fond of sport and games and riding?' He replied promptly: 'Everything must and can be sacrificed for God.'

In order to test him a little longer they tried to make him take dancing lessons; the possibility was held out to him of a brilliant military career, especially in a cavalry or artillery regiment; his relatives took him into society. But it was all of no avail; one ideal only made any appeal to him—the priesthood. Recalling him at this time, a family friend wrote: 'I can see him yet; bowed down before the Blessed Sacrament and buried in prayer.'

At first he wished to enter some Religious Order, and there is little doubt that he was thinking of the Society of Jesus, which had educated him and in which he had an uncle on his mother's side. Certain it is that, once ordained, he meant to give himself entirely to the sacred ministry, and especially to work for the conversion of England, whither he wished to return at the conclusion of his studies.

Such was the high ideal which would fire him with apostolic zeal in all the many and varied activities of his life; such the light in which he first saw his vocation; such his last yearning sigh, perpetuated on his tomb: *Da mihi animas, cætera tolle!*

But the seeds of this vocation, which was to develop so peacefully and fruitfully, had been sown by the fervent prayer of his mother, who had never ceased to ask of God that her son might one day mount the steps of the altar as His faithful minister.

CHAPTER II

STUDENT DAYS AND ORDINATION

THE world was smiling upon young Merry del Val with many promises of a brilliant future, but he was fixed in his resolve to consecrate himself to God, for his own sanctification and the salvation of souls. Hence, at eighteen, he began the new life in England, at the celebrated Ushaw College, where he followed the regular course in Philosophy and completed it in two years. There also, according to many fellow-students who were his intimate friends, he exercised 'a wonderful power of attraction'; 'a kind of irresistible fascination.' In the spring of 1885, with deep joy he received the tonsure and Minor Orders. In the meantime the future Cardinal Vaughan, who had conceived both a strong liking and a great respect for him, advised his completing his ecclesiastical studies in Rome.

No proposal could have been more acceptable both to himself and to his parents, who eagerly agreed to it. He would go to Rome, to complete his training, as also to let Rome form him to her spirit—Roman and Apostolic—but with the fixed intention of returning to work in England.

In the autumn of the same year, 1885, his father decided to take Rafael to Rome, to consign him

personally to the Scots College in the Via delle Quattro Fontane, according to the arrangements made with the Marquis Molins, then Spanish Ambassador to the Holy See.

At the college everything was ready for his reception. His room was already arranged, and he had wished it to be very plain and simple, furnished only with such articles as were absolutely necessary. These included a bed which was not only simple but hard, without a mattress and with lathes and palliase. And it was this bed, simple, poor and uncomfortable, which he used ever afterwards, even when Cardinal Secretary of State, until his death. It was but one of many details which reveal how alien was his spirit from anything savouring of show, or a seeking of his personal comfort.

When father and son reached Rome, the Ambassador Molins, the former's colleague in the Diplomatic Service, made it his business to inform Leo XIII, who consented to receive them at once in private audience. The great Pontiff, so wise and able a judge of men, held the young Rafael kindly at his knee, and whilst the youth remained before him, shy and embarrassed at finding himself, for the first time, in the presence of the Pope, he questioned him closely about his studies and his vocation. At the same time he was studying attentively his every gesture and word. Then he wished to know why the Scots College had been chosen, and at the end of the audience said plainly that he wished Rafael to study not there but at the Accademia dei Nobili Ecclesiastici, and that he would himself give the necessary orders to the

president, in order that he might be admitted at once.

Father and son alike were surprised, and somewhat disconcerted, at this immediate decision, and ventured delicately to make some observations to the Pope, in the hope of leading him to alter it. Among others the Ambassador urged that, being still so young, Rafael needed to enter an ordinary seminary, where he would receive real training and be under regular discipline, whereas the Accademia was for young men already ordained and formed, who had only to complete their higher studies and perfect their ecclesiastical training.¹

The Pope, however, remained firm, repeated his decision and bade them farewell, after having blessed the boy in an especially fatherly manner, placing his hand on his head. As the father was taking leave, Leo XIII said: 'I will be a father to your son.'

So the few simple articles of furniture, bought for the Scots College, were transferred to the palace in the Piazza Minerva, and the young student entered the establishment, welcomed with the greatest kindness by superiors and students alike. It is recalled that when, accompanied by his father and the President, he was shown the vacant rooms

¹ Often called 'the nursery of cardinals', the Accademia is intended for the training of young ecclesiastics for the Papal Diplomatic Service. Hence the students have normally already received the ordinary seminary training and, though sufficiently strict, its system allows of more freedom than that of the other Roman ecclesiastical colleges. Previous to the foundation of the *Beda*, converts studying for the priesthood were sometimes received there. Its Superior is an Archbishop.

that he might choose one, he noticed that one had no number. On asking the reason, he was told that the number of that room would have been 13, and so it had been removed! That was the room he chose and he remained in it throughout his time as a student.

He was the youngest of the students and the only one who was not yet a priest. Although he was bound by the same rules as the rest, he imposed upon himself a more strict way of life and kept to it scrupulously, especially during free times. Strong in his perfect mastery of himself, he knew how to moderate, and even quench altogether, the vivacity which in his early years might have been deemed rather excessive. When he entered the Accademia the reigning President, doubtless with the best intentions, treated the students to a regimen of extreme frugality, and when some one complained, answered that what the body lost the soul gained. Sometimes, when their unsatisfied appetites made themselves felt, the students provided for themselves in some way, but young Merry del Val would never take food outside the house, never grumbled and, as said a fellow-student, 'bravely and willingly embraced the cross of mortification.'

A few remarks of one of his contemporaries at the Accademia may here find a place: 'He had made his own those words of Our Lord: *Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.* He had an ardent temperament and a sensitive heart, and he might easily have yielded to his natural impulses, but he dominated and conquered himself in silence. Never

was he heard to complain and talk about anything which tried him, and never did he return evil for evil. He suffered in silence, happy to have something to offer to God. So he gradually acquired that evenness of temper, and that unruffled serenity, which distinguished him throughout his life.'

As his father was then Spanish Ambassador to Austria, Rafael was accustomed to spend his vacations with his family at Vienna. Sources of danger were not wanting. He was very handsome; so much so that an English lady, writing to the Cardinal's mother shortly before the latter's death, described the son in one short phrase: 'A beautiful soul in a beautiful body!' He was much admired in court circles, and as the son of an ambassador he could not but be known and even presented. But although he thus found himself of necessity in society, he always showed himself averse from visiting away from home, as from festive gatherings and receptions. He led a quiet life, given to prayer and study, and maintained close relations with some religious, especially one of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus.

On September 29th, 1887, the feast of S. Michael the Archangel, he received the sub-Diaconate at Prague, at the altar of S. John Nepomucene, in the Cathedral of S. Vitus, from Cardinal Schönborn, Archbishop of Prague, and an intimate friend of the family. In the same year, aged barely twenty-two, he received his first mission from the Pope. Leo XIII appointed him secretary to the Pontifical Mission sent to London to present the Pope's congratulations to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, on

the occasion of her Golden Jubilee. He begged the Holy Father to excuse him from such an office, saying that there were others, more suitable, who would gladly go, but the latter only answered: 'And we have decided to send just one who does not want to go!' It was then that, though not yet a priest, he was created a supernumerary Privy Chamberlain of His Holiness, with the title of *Monsignore*.

On his return to Rome, he resumed his ordinary life, and in March, 1888, was named secretary of the Mission sent to represent the Pope at the funeral of the Emperor William I, and to be present at the coronation of his successor, Frederick II. A few months later, he was again included in the special Mission sent by Leo XIII to present a gift to the Emperor Francis-Joseph of Austria. But as these tokens of esteem on the part of the Sovereign Pontiff roused in him no pride, so neither did they disturb his habitual spirit of recollection.

On Sunday, May 27th, 1888, he was ordained Deacon by Cardinal Lucido-Maria Parocchi, Vicar-General of His Holiness, and there followed some months of intensive preparation for the great step, the taking of which crowned the longing desire of his whole life; to be a priest of God and labour for the salvation of souls. On December 30th of the same year, the Sunday within the Octave of Christmas, the same Cardinal-Vicar conferred the priesthood upon him, in his private chapel in the old palace of the Vicariate in the Via della Scrofa.

He was the only ordinand, and a dispensation had been obtained since he was under the canonical

age. There were present his father and mother and a few friends. In the course of the ceremony the Cardinal-Vicar addressed to him a discourse, marked by that gentle gravity which characterised him, taking as his theme: *the Catholic priest is set for a 'sign to be contradicted.'* He applied the text to the newly-made priest, and, as after events were to show, it seemed as though the choice had been inspired. Never did mother and son forget those words. Rather they bore them about with them, as though engraven on their hearts, and often did they meditate upon them in hours of suffering.

On January 1st, 1889, Monsignor Merry del Val celebrated his first Mass, with intense devotion, in the Room of S. Ignatius, close to the church of the Gesù, in the presence only of his parents and a few family friends. His second Mass, served by his father, he said in the church of the Spanish Trinitarians, in the Via del Quirinale. He remained at the Accademia as a student until the end of 1891, when he completed his courses in Theology and Canon Law, taking his degree at the Gregorian University.¹ At the same time, he followed also the special course, held at the Accademia, in Ecclesiastical Diplomacy. Those first years of his priesthood set deeply upon his life the seal of intense spirituality and tireless zeal. He had laid down his own spiritual line.

¹ Among his professors were Fathers Billot, afterwards Cardinal; Wernz, afterwards General of the Society of Jesus, and De Augustinis, whom he would meet later on the Commission for Anglican Orders.

'Once the Will of God is known, that becomes the way of duty, and we must follow it resolutely.' So he wrote in one of his many spiritual notes, which radiate holiness.

And again:

'Accept everything from God . . . and your life will be the first strophe of an eternal hymn of praise; it will be the dawn of a happiness which will never fade.'

'We must place ourselves in God's hands with perfect confidence, see His hand in everything, and surrender ourselves to Him entirely.'

From the time of his ordination to the priesthood there began that 'exuberant spiritual life,' which spent itself only with his last gasp. But on what did he base his intense spiritual activity? It is not hard to discover. In his prayers and spiritual writings we constantly see emerging the twofold way which, at the same time, is also both the end and means of the spiritual life: the acceptance of the Will of God, and the renunciation of self. And to carry out such a programme he sought strength in a very strong interior life.

Of that life the Eucharist was the centre. As Cardinal, to the last day of his life, he used to withdraw into his chapel at fixed hours in order to pray. He renewed the light in the sanctuary lamp, and reserved to himself the duty of trimming and tending it. He never went out of the house without first visiting our Lord in the tabernacle, and he considered the faculty of reserving the Blessed Sacrament in his private chapel the greatest gift ever made to him by Pius X.

Loving Jesus as he did, how could he fail to love Mary? In the same chapel, above the altar, he had a picture of Our Lady of Sorrows, the general idea of which he had himself given to the artist. It was described as follows in the panegyric preached in the basilica of Santa Prassede, on February 26th, 1931, the first anniversary of his death.

'His experience of the sorrows of earth increased as the years went by. He came into contact with the thousand miseries which afflict our poor humanity; he was tried himself by many a bitter pang. As his tender confident, he had the Mother of Sorrows. So he had scarcely been granted permission for a private chapel than, having become a Servite Tertiary,¹ he decided to have painted a picture of Our Lady in the desolation of the evening of the first Good Friday. It is a striking canvas. The Blessed Mother stands erect, her hands clasped and resting upon a table on which lie the scourges, the crown of thorns and the nails, which have been used in the torments of her Son. The eyes full of tears, the pallor of the face, and the gentle *abandon* of the whole person, show at once the intensity of her suffering, and the heroic patience of her soul. In suggesting the details to the painter, without realising it the Cardinal had shown both his own devotion to her, and his insight into the Sorrows of Mary.'

Above his bed he always had hanging a copy of the picture of the *Mater Dolorosa* venerated in the

¹ He was received into the Servite Third Order by Father Alexis-Marie Lépiciér, then Prior-General, and afterwards Cardinal.

Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere, and when there was a question of placing a sacred picture over the entrance of the restored palace of the Holy Office he, then a Cardinal, went himself to an establishment near the Piazza di Spagna and chose a devout *Vergine Addolorata* in ceramics. In addition to the ordinary Rosary, it was his custom to recite daily the Rosary of the Seven Sorrows, which he used to twine round his right arm during the night. It was placed in his hands as he lay on his death-bed and consigned to the tomb with him.

He had scarcely become a priest than he felt surging up within him, with the ardour and impetus, as it were, of a holy passion long repressed, the longing to win souls for God and to convert non-Catholics to the Faith. He began at once to exercise his ministry amidst the English colony in Rome, as also among the Americans who were either living in the Eternal City or making passing visits. Above all he sought to bring into the fold of the Church those souls wandering as sheep without a shepherd, convinced, as he was, that a soul once converted possesses a special power to smooth and light up the way of truth for others.

And in this work he had his own method, from which he never deviated. First he ascertained the misconceptions and prejudices which kept those who came to him from the Catholic Church, then he made them follow a course of instruction which he wished to be both accurate and thorough. He was never in a hurry to receive converts, but he had the precious consolation of never having to lament

the lapse of a single one whom he had received. On the contrary, he had many of them for zealous co-operators in his apostolate.

One of the Sisters of Marie-Réparatrice in Rome wrote: 'The zeal and interest with which he followed up his new converts was wonderful. He held weekly conferences for them in our private chapel during the winter months, in order to consolidate his work, nor did his apostolate end here. It would be far from easy to reckon up all the conferences and retreats given by him, especially before he became a cardinal, and only God knows the zeal he expended in the confessionals of San Silvestro in Capite, in the convent of Marie-Réparatrice, in the Spanish College, the convents of the Sacred Heart at the Trinità dei Monti and Villa Lante, at Santa Rufina, the convent of the 'Blue Nuns' and that of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Via San Sebastiano. The different languages which he spoke fluently and correctly became so many instruments of apostolic work.

'So much success could not but arouse ill-feeling and hostility among the Protestant bodies; especially was this the case with a certain minister. Pamphlets were also published attacking his preaching. When he saw that these attacks, above all those aimed at the Pope, might make an impression upon some souls, he began a long and close polemical struggle with a Mr. Nutcombe Oxenham, the clergyman of the Anglican church in the Via del Babuino. As a result, after having been earnestly requested, he published in English a book which

was sold out in the twinkling of an eye. The work may be called a real treatise of apologetics against Protestant errors, and it revealed the solid culture and deep learning of its author.'

The magazine *Fides*, the periodical of the Society for the Preservation of the Faith, founded by Father Pio de Mandato, S.J., to combat the insidious anti-Catholic propaganda in Rome, when announcing the elevation to the Cardinalate of Monsignor Merry del Val, spoke thus:

'On the 9 inst. the Holy Father, Pius X, rejoiced our hearts; for in the Secret Consistory held on that day he created a Cardinal of Holy Church, Monsignor Rafael Merry del Val, who has so great a part in our work.'

And sketching the career of the much-loved Cardinal, it recalled how: 'As during his studies, so no less at the Papal Court, he never forgot that he was a priest in order to bring souls to Christ; and with tireless zeal he cared for the instruction and Christian training of youth, especially the youth of the working class.' It proceeded to enumerate the good works of the new *Porporato*, and added that: 'Untiringly, for more than fifteen years, he was engaged in the work of converting English Protestants who came to Rome, whom he instructed with admirable patience, and of whom a number were every year led by him to the fount of truth.'

But, despite his own social rank, he preferred simple folk, and among these the poor, to whom he was drawn by his sheer goodness. And it was just in the lowly quarter of the Trastevere, in the modest

school of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in the Via del Fratte, that in 1889, on a humble scale, he laid the foundations of that Pious Association of the Sacred Heart which, as we shall see, was the characteristic and personal work of his priestly ministry and his inexhaustible charity.

CHAPTER III

THE VATICAN AND THE ACCADEMIA

THE delicate and honourable missions in which the young Monsignor Merry del Val had taken part by order of Leo XIII foreshadowed others, much more important and difficult, which would be entrusted to him after his elevation to the priesthood.

On December 31st, 1891, whilst he was leading an intensely active life, wholly given over to pastoral work, he was appointed *Cameriere Segreto Partecipante*¹ to His Holiness. The rumour of the impending appointment had already spread in Vatican circles and gave general satisfaction on all sides, but the new Privy Chamberlain had written thus to a Religious in Vienna, who was in his confidence :

'Nothing could be more contrary to all my aspirations than this kind of post, so that I think our Lord would do me the favour to call me out of this life, rather than inflict such a trial upon me.'

He was very upset when he received the news of his nomination. He was dreaming of being able to work in England some day, and now it was no longer even to be thought of. He tried beseeching,

¹ 'Privy Chamberlains Participant,' of whom there are usually about nine, are always in attendance upon the Pope, relieving one another on duty in the Papal Antechamber.

and making others beseech, the Pope to leave him free for ministerial work, but Leo XIII was inflexible. So at twenty-seven, unhappy but resigned, he set himself to perform his new duties scrupulously, whilst seeking spiritual nourishment in his priestly labours during his free time.

Hence he retained his confessional at San Silvestro in Capite, and continued to preach, and give retreats to religious communities and others. Confessional and pulpits alike were ever more frequented, thanks to his theological learning and his deep spirituality, as also owing to his linguistic ability, since he spoke Italian, French, English, and Spanish perfectly, and German sufficiently for use. In a short time he was fairly besieged, and those who had once been to confession to him usually ended by placing themselves under his spiritual direction.

During the short summer vacation grudgingly granted by Leo XIII to his court officials, Monsignor Merry del Val went to Spain, to stay with his parents at San Sebastian, but instead of being a rest for him these few weeks brought rather an increase of work and responsibility. Whilst, at the request of Queen Maria-Christina, he assumed the task of giving religious instruction to the royal princesses, and then that of preparing the future Alfonso XIII for his First Communion, he did not cease from apostolic work in connection with the religious institutes and local convents, as also with English non-Catholics.

The part which he took in English ecclesiastical affairs is well illustrated by the letters written by him, between the years 1895 and 1903, to Monsignor

Rinaldo Angeli, Private Secretary to Leo XIII, requesting him to use his interest with the Sovereign Pontiff for the settlement of some questions which were of vital importance to the welfare of the Church in England. The great Pope made use of Merry del Val as a valuable adviser in all matters concerning English-speaking countries, so that there was no question, even of secondary importance, relating specially to England, upon which the Pope did not ascertain his opinion, and nearly always act accordingly.

His *Da mihi animas* was for him chiefly *Da mihi Anglos*; his ideal would have been to be sent to England to work for the conversion of the English. But he well understood, as did Cardinal Vaughan and other distinguished men who were his friends, that for Anglicans the return to the Church meant a retracing of their steps; a tacit recognition that they had been following a wrong road, a humble acknowledgement which, in any case, found an obstacle in the national and personal pride of whoever had to make it.

Whatever be the form in which it shows itself, in every non-Catholic body the centre of aversion is always the Papacy. Not even the most difficult doctrines, such as the mystery of the Eucharist and the necessity of Confession, are found so hard of acceptance. To bow to the teaching and orders of a man who for centuries has been the object of special abhorrence, and recognise as the representative of Jesus Christ him whom it has been the custom to consider anti-Christ, calls for an act of humility, a spirit of self-sacrifice which

borders on the heroic. Nevertheless, there are never lacking upright and honest souls, ready to embrace the truth if only it be shown to them in all its sovereign beauty, and, following the shining example of so many others, Monsignor Merry del Val sought to reveal it to such by word, by writing, and by works of charity.

His epistolary activity with respect to England just covers the period when Leo XIII was preparing his important pronouncements concerning that country: the Letter *Ad Anglos*, concerning the Reunion of the Churches, of April 14th, 1895, and the *Apostolica Cura* of September 13th, 1896, condemning Anglican Orders.

In compiling the former the Pope made use principally of Monsignor Merry del Val's capable assistance, and by the Pontiff's order the latter was responsible for the English version, prepared according to the genius of that language to render its diffusion and understanding easier. At this time, also, he composed and translated the prayer to Our Lady for the conversion of England, which Leo XIII desired to add to his appeal to his straying children:

'O Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and our most gentle Queen and Mother, look down in mercy upon England thy Dowry, and upon us all who greatly hope and trust in thee. By thee it was that Jesus, our Saviour and our hope, was given unto the world, and He has given thee to us that we may hope still more. Plead for us, thy children, whom thou didst receive and accept at the foot of the Cross, O sorrowful Mother. Intercede for our

separated brethren, that, with us in the one true fold, they may be united to the Chief Shepherd, the Vicar of Thy Son. Pray for us all, dear Mother, that, by faith fruitful in good works, we may be counted worthy to see and praise God together with thee in our heavenly home. Amen.'

But since there could be no hope of union unless Rome had first decided the question of the validity, or otherwise, of Anglican Orders, Monsignor Merry del Val urged that such a decision should be proceeded with. He was himself appointed by the Pope secretary of the special commission which was to study the grave problem from the historical standpoint.

There were not lacking some Catholics who, like the historian Duchesne, were seeking to show that the Anglicans had retained the Apostolic Succession, but, with the great majority of English Catholics, Merry del Val was of the contrary opinion. His statement was, in great part, reported in the Encyclical which decided the question by declaring Anglican Orders invalid.

In a private letter to Monsignor Angeli, he laments the fact that the *Révue Anglo-Romaine* is putting forward erroneous views concerning the unity of the Church. The following was written shortly before the appearance of the letter *Ad Anglos*:

'I think it would be well to call the Holy Father's attention to the last number of the *Révue Anglo-Romaine*, which in my humble opinion is scandalous.

'On the eve of the appearance of the Encyclical *De Unitate Ecclesiae*, which he knew was about to be issued, Portal has the audacity to publish, and

circulate in France and England, the work of an Anglican on *The Unity of the Church*, in an heretical sense, and still to persuade the public that it is possible to have the Church without the Pope.

'The book is the work of one of those same Anglicans who were in Rome with Portal until a few days ago. He is a writer well known to English Catholics, who also recently tried to mislead the Cardinals as to the real religious situation in England and Anglican Orders.

'While the Holy Father is anxious to make the *real* conception of the Church better known, Portal, playing the game of Halifax, who is his guide in everything, is taking upon him to weaken the effect of the Encyclical, spreading the poison of the most modern heresy on the constitution of the Church. This Review, which Father Brandi justly calls Protestant, and nothing more, is widely distributed in religious communities and generally. In this last number there is not one single Catholic article nor a note to correct the evil.

'I hear from Paris that Portal has returned from Rome saying that the Pope fully approves of his work and his Review; that he has an understanding with the Holy Father on what he is doing, etc.

'These statements go the round of certain Anglican circles, and you cannot believe how easily some in England delude themselves by imagining that the Pope is obliged to speak in one way in public documents whilst personally thinking in another, and that he lets it be known confidentially by means of Duchesne, Porta and others.'

The following letters refer to the preparatory studies which preceded the work of the Commission :

' WRITTLE PARK,
' CHELMSFORD.
' 29-viii-1895.

' MY DEAREST MONSIGNORE,

' Yesterday, I was able to see Cardinal Vaughan and hand him the Holy Father's letter. He is pleased with it, and thanks His Holiness for having answered so kindly and given the assurances which His Eminence so desired.

' The Cardinal tells me that he has nominated some thoroughly competent English historians and theologians, who will form a commission and begin to put together all the documents and prepare a serious work on the subject of Anglican Ordinations. Among them are Father Gasquet, a Benedictine, the same who discovered the Bull and the Brief of Paul IV; the Provincial of the Franciscans; a Jesuit Father; a Canon of the cathedral, formerly a student of the English College, Rome; a Dominican Father and a Redemptorist; all well-known and able writers. The Cardinal wishes that the Commission be kept a secret, in order that it may work quietly and the better co-operate with the Holy Father's intentions. It would be of the greatest assistance if this Commission might have a copy of Duchesne's book. It is certain that this work will be the most serious that can be produced in favour of Anglican Ordinations, and as the only question here is that of learning the truth and making it known, they would work

better if they had before them the arguments adduced by Duchesne, whether these be true or not.

'Do you think that the Holy Father would object to letting me have a copy of that book, and is it a thing which might be asked? As you know, Lord Halifax has let it be known that the work exists, and hence naturally all want to know what Duchesne has to say. Cardinal Vaughan would be glad if you could give me an answer on the matter.

'I see that another French work has appeared on the subject of Anglican Ordinations, also full of historical mistakes, and showing absolute ignorance of the subject. To treat so grave a question so lightly is inexcusable. Here the ferment against these French writers continues and increases, and it is fully justified. The seriousness of the case seems to escape them all, and they do not see the disastrous and irremediable consequences should the Holy See ever have to recognise that, taking its stand on crass ignorance of the facts, it has been mistaken for 300 years, and during all that time has been repeating two Sacraments without scruple. I am more than persuaded that when the whole question is studied seriously, and all the documents known, it will be seen that the Holy See has done what it had to do. If it has been mistaken, as some wish, it will have to recognise it before all, for since the repetition of a Sacrament is involved there can be no question of not publishing a decision unfavourable to us. But I am convinced that it will not be so. Above all, it is necessary now that the question be discussed and decided anew at Rome. It cannot but do good; and if Anglican

Orders are again condemned, as presumably they will be, many Ritualists are disposed to abandon the Anglican Church and the way will be opened for many conversions.

'I hope the Holy Father is well. May God spare him long yet to our affection and for the good of the Church! Recommend me to God and believe me

'Yours affectionately,
_____'

To this letter Monsignor Angeli replied as follows:

'I have received your letter of the 29th of August, and have communicated the whole contents to the Holy Father.

'His Holiness has learned with pleasure that His Eminence Cardinal Vaughan has appointed a secret Commission of competent English theologians and historians, charged to compile a serious work upon the validity of Anglican Orders, and he desires and recommends that the study be thorough and complete in every respect. It must be remembered that what is being done now is only in the nature of preparation. We are at the first stage of an important task, in which all the materials must be carefully sought out and collected which are to be used for the second stage, which will be that of *discussion*.

'Here the Holy Father has had no other object in view in asking for the different opinions which, as you know, have been given by various persons, and the English Commission must have no other in putting forward its findings. And as the former have worked independently, without any reciprocal

communication, so it is well that the said Commission should do its work without taking previous account of that of others. For this reason His Holiness does not think it opportune to send a copy of Duchesne's work.

'When we are at the second stage, that of discussion, then the preparatory work will all be produced, examined and collated. For the discussion a cardinalial commission will be appointed, but competent theologians, thoroughly acquainted with the matter, will be invited to take part also, especially those interested, that is to say some of the English Commission. So you see that the grave and important question will be discussed and decided with that full and mature consideration and prudence which the Holy See is accustomed to bring to bear on all subjects of the highest importance.'

The letters to Monsignor Angeli continue through the holidays of 1895 :

'MARUFA,
'BOSCOMBE,
'BOURNEMOUTH.
'13-ix-1895.

'... Cardinal Vaughan's speech at Bristol last Monday, has already been an eloquent, although indirect reply to the pastoral letter of the Archbishop of Canterbury. . . . I shall make it my business to let you have a translation of the Pastoral Letter, which says much the same thing as was said (by the Archbishop) in his speech last July, which I translated and sent to the Holy Father, together with other documents.

'I think that His Holiness will be able to see that he has been well informed, and that I was not mistaken in making known the real feelings and the real religious situation in England, which Lord Halifax has so travestied. Much of what the Archbishop says Lord Halifax repeats, although on other matters their theories are in open conflict.'

'MARUFA,
'BOSCOMBE,
'BOURNEMOUTH.
'22-ix-1895.

'I made a point of at once communicating to Cardinal Vaughan all you told me in your last letter, on the part of the Holy Father. It will not be possible to report the work of the Historico-Theological Commission, for it is not yet completed, but they are hard at work and all will certainly be ready for next November. The Cardinal wished me to be present at the meeting of the Commission last Friday, and so I was better able to take account of all there is to do. Father Gasquet and Canon Moyes, both known and respected in the other camp for their competence on all questions of Anglican controversy, will probably be the two sent to Rome. Other members of the Commission are the Provincial of the Franciscans, an able man who well knows Duchesne and his writings; another Benedictine, also a writer of ability; a Dominican and a Jesuit. This last is much esteemed as a writer, and is himself a convert and educated at Oxford.

'Finally there is on the Commission a very learned priest, also a convert from Anglicanism, who was a

member of the Privy Council which, as you know, is the supreme tribunal of Anglican orthodoxy.'

'October 13th, 1895.

'During these days the *Church Congress* is being held at Norwich. . . . Here is the address of the Archbishop of York, which just comes to confirm what I have been saying during these last months. After this, and the pastoral written *in the name of his colleagues*, tell me whether there is not reason to fear that the consideration and condescension towards the Ritualists will only delude them and promote indifferentism in the masses; for they will be persuaded that all religions are good, and that Rome is only one among many others.

'Faced with these documents and so many others, tell me how Halifax could have had the audacity to assert in public, last Monday, at the meeting of the Association of which he is president, that the Church of England does not reject the Supremacy of the Pope! He understands it in his fashion, but nevertheless those words of his raised an outcry and cries of: "Down with the Pope."

'If he is not a visionary what is he? Meanwhile the harm is done and continues.'

'December 15th, 1895.

'I beg you to hand to the Holy Father this letter of Halifax's, as it was given textually in the Anglican newspapers. I think His Holiness will be persuaded that I was right when, so many months ago, I said that whoever believed and maintained that Halifax admitted the Primacy and Infallibility of the Pope

was mistaken. His doctrine, shared anyhow only by a minority, is well known to me, though it is very complicated, and he is able to speak like a Catholic and easily mislead those who do not know it.

'This letter of his is very clever but speaks clearly. Father Gasquet writes to me that he knows that, aware that a clergyman was about to be converted, Halifax went to him, and showed him a letter from Duchesne which asserted that the Pope personally believed in the validity of Anglican Orders. . . .'

'February 17th, 1896.

'The Archbishop of Canterbury is *broad* in religious views; he is absolutely national, a declared enemy of Rome, and has recently classified together Jews, unbelievers, and Roman Catholics. These, he says, should have nothing to do with the government of their own schools. . . .

'Portal's Review is doing a lot of harm; wrong impressions are being given to the French, and then the Anglicans are encouraged by the French to stay where they are.'

Part of Merry del Val's labours in this connection was a study, afterwards published under the title: *Concerning Anglican Orders. An unpublished document on the religious situation in England*, which revealed him to the intellectual world as a thorough student, a learned theologian, and an able polemical writer.

With the same zeal which he expended in the matter of Anglican Orders, he set to work in order to secure that among the converts the Church

might find zealous apostles for England. With this object he thought of opening in Rome, in addition to the English College, the Beda College, which should receive and train convert candidates for the priesthood. Of this college, in the founding and success of which he had so large a share, he later became Cardinal Protector. That share is revealed by the following letters, also written to Monsignor Angeli :

‘ September 7th, 1898.

‘ The object of this letter is the definitive establishment of the Beda, and the desire to assure its future. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of this work which the Holy Father has undertaken, but it is essential at the beginning not to build on sand.

‘ Father John Prior, nominated Vice-Rector of the Collegio Beda by the Holy Father, has returned to Rome, after a short absence, and is full of zeal and good-will. But naturally, so long as the constitutions and rules have not been *formally* promulgated by the Holy Father, his position remains a very delicate one with respect to the Rector of the (English) College, who does not view the foundation of the new college with a favourable eye, and is trying to tie Prior’s hands and reduce the Beda to a mere department of the English College.

‘ That is fatal to the object of the work, and will make shipwreck of the Collegio Beda as it did of the Collegio Pio.¹ It is indispensable that the Vice-

¹ In 1854 Pius IX had placed some convert students for the priesthood in a portion of the English College under the style of Collegio Pio.

Rector of the Beda should be almost independent by the tenour of the constitutions, and it would be well that the wish of the Holy Father in this respect should be communicated to the Rector.

‘ If Prior does not bear the title of Rector, this is solely owing to the necessity of the two colleges’ living together under one and the same roof, but for the ordinary government it is absolutely fitting that the Vice-Rector should have great freedom of action. Otherwise Father Prior will never enjoy prestige among his students nor be able to exercise his influence.’

Referring to the same matter, he writes :

‘ If Prior becomes a mere subaltern, without freedom of action, the college will be finished before it is begun.

‘ For these reasons I beg you to beseech the Holy Father to hasten the promulgation of the constitutions and rules, and to let Monsignor Giles know privately of his wishes with respect to the Vice-Rector. It occurs to me that if His Holiness would be willing to nominate Prior an Honorary or Privy Chamberlain perhaps it would be better, in order to give him more prestige.’

‘ Yesterday evening His Eminence, Cardinal Vaughan, sent me the two letters of the 13th and 14th inst., with the copy of the *Motu Proprio* and the nomination of Monsignor Prior. . . .

‘ I have no words to thank you adequately for the trouble you have taken in this affair of the Collegio Beda, and I am full of joy and gratitude towards the Holy Father at reading the good news which you have sent me. . . .

'Cardinal Vaughan, to whom I have written at length to-day, will be very pleased, and will certainly not delay in returning me the *Motu Proprio*, which I shall at once send back to you. Time presses and it is well to lose no more. The work is so important, and promises so much for the religious future of England, that we can never do too much to ensure its success.

'I note your remark as to Prior's nomination. I do not think that the Rector will be *very* pleased about it, but he will say nothing, and even if he should say anything it does not seem to me that, considering the important interests involved, any notice should be taken of it. Moreover, you must know that there are precedents, and at present the Vice-Rector of the Collegio Ghislieri is a Prelate di Mantellone.¹ Much more, therefore, can the Vice-Rector of a college like the Beda be such. Under the present circumstances, I maintain that this nomination is both opportune and useful.

'I am praying for your poor father, and begging God to comfort you in this misfortune. Certainly I shall offer my prayers, for what they are worth, for you and for him, in Holy Mass. Do not forget me on your part. . . .'

Nor were English affairs his only concern, as the following extracts show. They are from an account written by Don Ruiz de los Panos, Rector of the Spanish College.

'The beginnings of the Spanish College in Rome

¹ Privy Chamberlains are so called from the long purple stuff coat worn by them on certain occasions.

are closely bound up with the name of Cardinal Merry del Val. The college was founded by the devoted priest of Tortosa, Don Manuel Domingo y Sol, who met with the then young Monsignor Merry del Val, and from that time the college became their joint undertaking. Don Manuel came to Rome in 1890, full of high ideals, and God, who was guiding his steps, placed at his side his "Angel Raphael." The revered founder used often to repeat the verse: *And the holy Angel of the Lord, Raphael, was sent.* (Tobias iii, 17.)

'Those who know the truly grand story of Don Manuel, see the finger of God in that first meeting with Monsignor Merry del Val. Then only a student at the Accademia, the latter was of valuable assistance to him, presented him to different Cardinals, and was his constant guide and counsellor. The interest which he took in the foundation of the Spanish College is evident from these words written by him to Don Manuel in 1891:

"I very often celebrate the Holy Sacrifice for this intention; and every day I see more how necessary this college is, and the great results which it will produce for the greater glory of God and the salvation of many souls."

'It was he who made arrangements with the Superiors of the Gregorian University; who prepared for the first students in the quarters in the Via Monserrato; who summoned Don Manuel to Rome with the first students. When the little party arrived and the college was opened, he became the guide of the young students; he accompanied them on visits to the Basilicas, presented them at

the Gregorian University, cheered them in the difficulties of the beginnings. He attended to the uniform of the alumni, to their first outings. In short their whole life in that first nest was watched over by the really *motherly* care of the Monsignor. In July he presented the college first to the Cardinal Vicar and then to the Holy Father, Leo XIII.

'Its first domicile could be only temporary, and he concerned himself closely with the problem. He faced it, spoke of it to Cardinal Rampolla, then Secretary of State, wrote about it to some Spanish bishops, especially the Cardinal Archbishop of Seville, and above all discussed at length with the Pope the importance of a permanent home for the college. And when, with royal generosity, Leo XIII decided to give the Palazzo Altemps, Monsignor had scarcely been informed of the fact by Cardinal Rampolla than he hastened to send the joyful news to the Rector of the College, expressing his own great satisfaction and ending his letter with these words: *Gesù mio! Tibi soli honor et gloria!*

'He personally attended to all the details and necessary alterations with the architect, and made rich gifts to the chapel, where finally on November 11th, 1894, he was able joyfully to place the Blessed Sacrament. . . . Whenever new difficulties arose, Don Manuel merely used to write to the Rector: "Talk it over with Monsignor Merry del Val."

'When the college, having taken firm root, began to stretch its branches over all the dioceses in the homeland, although, owing to his fresh burdens, he could no longer give it his immediate care, yet for a long time he continued to take charge of the

spiritual direction of the students, to the great benefit of their ecclesiastical training.'

In 1897, having given such proofs of prudence, knowledge and spirituality, he was appointed a Domestic Prelate and Apostolic Delegate on the Extraordinary Mission to Canada, where a very serious dispute had arisen and was continuing over the bilingual schools in Manitoba. During the years immediately preceding and following 1890, Canada was passing through a period of exceptional social and religious tension, and a wave of prejudice against Catholicism had swept over the country. This state of things showed itself politically in an attack against the Catholic schools and the use of the French language, culminating in the notorious *Manitoba Law*, which abolished the 'separate' schools and was strenuously resisted in Parliament.

The Judiciary Commission of the Privy Council ended by declaring that the province had the right to pass the law, but a painful situation had been created for which it was vital to find a remedy. Before the amendment of the law could be approved Parliament had been dissolved, and the ensuing elections were fought on the Schools Question. The concessions made by the Greenway-Laurier Agreement had left many Catholics dissatisfied, and acute animosity existed between the two parties. An appeal was made to Leo XIII, who sent Monsignor Merry del Val, as his delegate, to investigate and report on the matter.

The question was an exceptionally thorny one, which had roused passions and divided souls.

Whilst some thought that to give in would be a cowardly surrender of principles, others believed that to hold out would lead to interminable bickering with the Government and the final ruin of the schools.

Leo XIII's action caused surprise. Indeed for the young prelate, only thirty-two years of age, the nomination was a proof of the unbounded confidence placed in him by the Holy Father, but also necessitated his facing an extremely difficult and dangerous situation. It was not very surprising that some of the more rabid members of the contending parties thought that the best course would be to ignore the young ecclesiastic altogether, since they considered that he had been sent to decide upon a question which he was probably utterly incapable of judging. But it was not long before they discovered that they had met their match. Those who commented upon the youth and inexperience of the Delegate knew neither his clear-sightedness nor the force of his personality nor, perhaps also, his power of prayer.

'I recall as though it were yesterday,' wrote Father Anclair, 'the arrival of the Papal Delegate at Montreal, in the evening of April 2nd, 1897. A great crowd was waiting at the station, and in the front rank were the leading ecclesiastical and civil dignitaries of the city. The carriage door opened and he appeared; tall, lightly built, handsome, very young, but with a certain air of distinction and gravity which inspired respect.

'I still hear the clear, musical voice in which he answered all with equal ease in French, English,

and Italian. He said that he was grateful for the reception which they had given him, which he knew was in honour of the Pope whose representative he was; that his mission to Canada was one of peace; that he felt he might count beforehand on the good-will of all concerned.

'The response was an ovation. The throng had not lost a word of what he had said, and had at once come to the conclusion that he was the man to deal with the situation. "The Pope knew the man to send," said a man standing next to me. The official reception in the cathedral followed half an hour later.

'He stayed seven or eight months in Canada, and everywhere it was the same story. The situation was not an easy one, but the Papal Delegate never encountered real opposition. The spirit of faith, and of fidelity to the Church, which characterises the Canadian Catholics, triumphed over every personal consideration. The Monsignor listened to them all with gentle sympathy, quietly repeating that his was a mission of peace. All classes, governors of states, Bishops, ministers, officials of every kind, were received with the same cordial kindness. The Delegate studied every question, weighed every opinion, and there were even those who were inclined to believe that he read their thoughts.

'The result was the Encyclical *Affari Vos*, the essential point of which was that the Catholics ought to accept the concessions granted, whilst endeavouring, by conciliatory means, to secure something more. August, 1899, saw the appointment of a permanent Apostolic Delegate to Canada,

with his residence at Ottawa, the capital of the Confederation.'

Leo XIII proclaimed the complete success of the arduous mission of the young Delegate in his Encyclical dated December 8th, 1897, addressed: *Ad Ordinarios Fœderatarum Civitatum Canadensium: De Institutione puerorum Manitobensium*. (To the Canadian Bishops on the question of the Manitoba schools.) In it he thus speaks of the work of Monsignor Merry del Val:

'And with reference to the matter upon which very many were awaiting a pronouncement from us. . . . We were pleased to decide nothing in the present matter before the arrival of our Delegate Apostolic who, ordered to enquire diligently into the state of the said question, and to report to us thereon, has perfectly and faithfully—*naviter ac fideliter*—carried out the task which we entrusted to him.'

The biographer of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, writing in 1931, thus refers to the Delegate:

'In order to put an end to a religious situation which could not be prolonged without danger in a country like Canada, Wilfrid Laurier appealed to the Pope better informed. The Pope sent a delegate; a great gentleman, a born diplomat. . . . Cardinal Merry del Val. He spent about a year between the federal capital and Quebec, and everywhere he was well received. He went into all circles without distinction of parties. So far as concerned the opinions he was forming the Papal Delegate was impenetrable, but together with the Roman majesty he seemed to bring with him a power of making

peace. . . . Laurier followed out the diplomacy of which Merry del Val had shown him the model.'

Leo XIII also charged him with the arrangements for the visit to the Vatican of His Majesty King Edward VII of England, then Prince of Wales. It was owing to his tact and prudent foresight that all the difficulties which, at the last moment, had threatened to shipwreck the visit, were satisfactorily overcome.

In view of his wide learning and linguistic versatility, in 1898 he was made a Consultor of the Congregation of the Index,¹ and was often entrusted with the examination of books, especially those in English. When forwarding one of his reports to Father Cicognani, the Secretary of the Congregation, he once remarked: 'I do not know whether you will be satisfied, for I am not worth much and can do little, but I have put all my good will into it, and taken all possible care.' Nevertheless, his decisions were highly esteemed.

In the summer of 1899 died Monsignor Castracane degli Anteminelli, President of the Accademia, and shortly afterwards Leo XIII nominated as his successor Monsignor Merry del Val. The latter tried to escape from the office, but in vain, so eight years after he had left the institute, at the end of his student days, he returned as its President.

The nomination met with general approval. Though very young, it was apparent to all that he was perfectly suited to the position, for his mature

¹ By *Motu Proprio* of March 25th, 1917, Benedict XV suppressed this Congregation and its work was taken over by the Holy Office.

judgement and priestly spirit fitted him for the task of training the young ecclesiastics who were principally destined for the Diplomatic Service of the Holy See.

At the beginning of the New Year, he entered upon his new duties, and when giving up the quarters he had occupied in the Vatican he made presents to his friends of all the furniture, even to the copper saucepans in the kitchen. At that time his father was Spanish Ambassador to the Holy See, but, notwithstanding his own intimate personal relations with the Embassy, he took care that nothing of the life there should penetrate into the Accademia, in order to avoid any possible ill-effect on the studies and spirit of the alumni. As always, he was before all a priest.

Some months later, on April 19th, 1900, he was named Titular Archbishop of Nicæa, and on the following 6th of May he received episcopal consecration in the Spanish church of Our Lady of Montserrat, at the hands of Cardinal Rampolla del Tindaro, Secretary of State. Several archbishops and bishops were present, many of the Roman aristocracy, all the Diplomatic Corps, and the Spanish and English colonies in Rome, as well as a large representative gathering of clergy and laity. Two much moved members of the congregation were the father and mother of the new Archbishop.

Instead of giving the customary banquet, often costly and a real cause of embarrassment in such cases, in his delicate charity he gave a dinner to two hundred poor of both sexes, each of whom received also a gift and a new garment. Accompanied by the members of his family, he came

himself, and after acknowledging their warm expressions of gratitude he said grace. In the evening Cardinal Rampolla gave a dinner in his honour.

Among the presents he received on the occasion was a simple pectoral cross, given him by the boys of his club in the Trastevere, which he prized and used for many years. On receiving it, he kissed it delightedly and at once put it on. His mother, who witnessed the scene, was moved to tears at seeing how her son was loved by these boys.

A short time afterwards, Monsignor Angelo Maria Dolci, who lived at the Accademia, was appointed Bishop of Gubbio. On the day of his consecration, the representatives of the clergy of the diocese went to call upon Monsignor Merry del Val and all noticed, with some surprise, that he was not wearing his episcopal ring but, instead, had his middle finger bandaged. With his usual quick wit, he thus addressed the Gubbio clergy: 'My dear friends, to-day I am like the bishops at the Council of Nicaea who had come out of the prisons of the persecutors, and whose scars and wounds were kissed by the faithful. So you must kiss not my ring but the wound on my finger, received in a much more humble cause!' He then explained that as he was not used to wearing a ring, the vigorous handshaking he had received from his fellow-countrymen and friends had ended by cutting his finger.

Once consecrated bishop, he resumed his office at the Accademia, and showed fatherly care and affection for his students. He was exact in keeping the rules himself and was scrupulous in being

present at every community duty. In the morning they always found him first in the chapel, and it was he who read out the points for the meditation. He was never absent from the refectory at meals, and never dined with his family at the Palazzo di Spagna, even on great feasts, notwithstanding the fact that his parents, especially his mother, pressed him to do so. He used to say that if it were his duty to stay with his students at ordinary times, it was still more important that on great days in the year he should not leave them alone.

So also, unless strictly obliged, he would not be present at the formal receptions at the Embassy. Yet he never failed in showing the filial affection which he always cherished, and he made time on afternoons in the week to go and see his parents, whose specially loved son he was. They, on their part, cheerfully sacrificed their longing to have him with them in order to leave him free for his ecclesiastical duties.

After dinner and supper he took part in the students' recreations, willingly played billiards with them, or played the piano or the pianola, then just beginning to be known, or engaged in pleasant conversation.

He was exacting when accepting new students, and although they were nearly all priests he made a special point of cultivating the priestly spirit in them, and initiating them into the work of the sacred ministry. On Sundays and feast days he sent some of them into the chapels of the Agro Romano to say Mass, explain the Gospel and hear confessions. Others went to the institutes for poor

boys especially those conducted by the Brothers of the Christian Schools, to celebrate Mass, give religious instruction, and even preach retreats to the school children.

He warmly favoured and prompted devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which was later to spread all over the world with immense profit to souls. At the beginning of his presidency, he established first Friday devotions at the Accademia, and the day was made a sort of retreat, with preaching and the Stations of the Cross, at which he never failed to be present. It was owing to him that a sodality was founded among the old alumni, the members each celebrating Mass for the deceased members of the college. He also introduced a regular course of religious instruction for the servants of the house, one of the students taking it each year.

Unfailingly he returned to the house at the evening Angelus, and any who came in afterwards, and enquired of the porter whether the President had come in, received the invariable reply that he had. He never used penal methods to maintain discipline, for his own personal example was the best stimulus for all to the perfect fulfilling of their duty. One evening some students indulged in a chat in a corridor after the hour of night silence had struck. Shortly afterwards, there was heard the unexpected sound of a single stroke on the community bell. That stroke, rung by him, who was a model of discipline and observance, was far more effective than any reproof or remark. In cases of sickness, or any unusual trial, or in the students' private

troubles, he spent himself with utter unselfishness, and showed himself more than fatherly. He took measures to improve the administration of the establishment, and saw to it that the food was good, abundant, and suitable.

Whilst President of the Accademia he never went out merely for a walk, but left the house exclusively for reasons connected with his office or his ministry. He used to walk rather fast, and was completely recollected, whilst from the streets he traversed his destination could be guessed; either his boys' club in the Trastevere, or some other centre of his pastoral activity.

For some time he taught languages at the Accademia himself, especially English, and he presided over the examinations at which a representative of the Papal Secretariate of State was also present. It was during his presidency, also, that a two years' course in Ecclesiastical Diplomacy was instituted, at the end of which a diploma was conferred. Then he exchanged views with the Cardinal Protector, as also with the Holy Father, as to the capabilities of those who had completed their studies, and the advisability of employing them either in the Diplomatic Service or elsewhere. His opinion was well weighed and impersonal, and was always acted upon.

His last act as President was to present the students to the new Pope, Pius X, on one of the first mornings after the election. In the Sala dei Paramenti¹ on the first floor of the Vatican, as

¹ So called because formerly the cardinals assembled there to vest for great functions.

the Pontiff came out of the Sistine Chapel, he thus addressed him: 'Holy Father, here is my little community. I ask a special blessing for all of them.'

Pius X showed much interest in the Accademia and the alumni, spoke words of affectionate praise of the President, who was then Pro-Secretary of State, and blessed them all with fatherly kindness.

Nor amidst his many and various activities, did Monsignor Merry del Val slacken his zeal in exercising his sacred ministry. Thanks to his spirit of order and punctuality, he knew how to find time for everything, and managed to hear confessions, give conferences, preach retreats, visit the sick, help the poor, and instruct converts. After he was raised to the episcopal dignity he was constantly summoned to confer Confirmation, and he gladly went anywhere, especially in the poor districts of the Trastevere and Testaccio. His father used to send him his carriage, to assist him in his work, and so the sumptuous vehicle would be seen stopping in the queerest alleys, before wretched hovels. Some apologised for not being in a position to offer him the customary candle, but not only did he comfort and encourage them with his words of faith, but in needy cases slipped—carefully without letting it be noticed—an envelope containing a generous alms into the hand of one or other of the parents. And it was then that his face would become radiant with a strange brightness, the living reflection of the deep interior joy his soul experienced in secretly and generously practising the charity of Christ.

And while he was thus intent upon uplifting the poor he did not forget his own studies, not even those connected with early Christian archæology. Hence he took the greatest interest in the Catacombs, particularly those of Priscilla. This is how the writer of a memoir of the celebrated archæologist, the late Professor Orazio Marucchi, refers to the Cardinal:

'The distinguished Cardinal Merry del Val was greatly interested in the archæological studies made by Orazio Marucchi in connection with the ancient Cemetery of Priscilla, on the Via Salaria, during 1905-7, which established the fact that there is the memorial of the first residence of the Apostle Peter in Rome. Many a time the Cardinal accompanied Marucchi on visits to the excavations, which were being carried out there by the Commission of Sacred Archæology. He also assisted the undertaking by a generous donation, especially for the excavations of the ancient basilica of San Silvestro, also discovered above the same cemetery, where may be seen the tombs of the Martyrs Felix and Philip, two of the seven sons of S. Felicitas, who suffered in the time of Marcus Aurelius.

'When these important works were completed, a solemn inauguration took place on December 31st, 1907. In the morning, Cardinal Respighi, Vicar-General of His Holiness, pontificated at the Mass, and at the afternoon function Cardinal Merry del Val himself intoned the solemn *Te Deum*, after having been present at the conference given by Marucchi.'

(Bollettino di Archeologia Cristiana, 1908.)

CHAPTER IV

THE CONCLAVE AND ITS SEQUEL

MONSIGNOR MERRY DEL VAL liked to be in Rome for the feast of S. Peter, to whom he always bore a special devotion, and he used to stay on in the Eternal City for some time afterwards, since he did not wish to take his holidays until the examinations of the students at the Accademia were finished.

In July, 1903, at the conclusion of these, at which, as always, he had presided, whether owing to the exceptional heat, or to the excessive fatigue involved in his indefatigable priestly labours and faithful fulfilment of the difficult tasks entrusted to him, he was anxious to leave Rome. Just in those days the Pope, whose health had already given cause for uneasiness, became so much worse as to cause fears that he was nearing his end. In consequence Merry del Val delayed his departure, not only because he was Superior of an important ecclesiastical institution, but from personal devotion to the old Pontiff, who had given him so many proofs of special confidence and shown him particular kindness.

Whilst the attacks and rallies alternated and the life of Leo XIII slowly drew to its close, to general consternation and dismay Monsignor Alessandro Volpini, Secretary of the Consistorial

Congregation, suddenly collapsed and died, actually in the Papal Antechamber. Since his office included also that of Secretary of the Sacred College, at the death of the Pope he would have become automatically Secretary of the Conclave. A few days later Monsignor Merry del Val had gone to the Vatican to enquire for the Pope when he was approached by Cardinal Oreglia di San Stefano, Dean of the Sacred College, who informed him in confidence that he intended to propose him to the cardinals as successor to Monsignor Volpini, and hence as future Secretary of the Conclave.

Utterly taken aback at the proposal, the Monsignor tried by every means to dissuade the Cardinal from carrying out his intention. He alleged his own incapability of arranging for the Conclave, and also the need he felt of leaving Rome on account of his health. But the old Cardinal Dean was not to be moved, and in the first plenary Congregation after the death of the Pope, the cardinals, having received Oreglia's recommendation very favourably, nominated Monsignor Merry del Val as Secretary of the Conclave.

That same afternoon he entered upon his high office, amid hearty expressions of good-will and general approval on the part of the Curia and others, especially on that of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See. From that moment he cast no further thought to himself, the heat, his weariness and need of rest, but threw himself wholly into his work and would not even have remembered his meals had not Cardinal Oreglia, whose table he shared, sent his secretary to call him at meal-times.

Although he had been seven years at the Vatican as Privy Chamberlain his task now was extremely complex and delicate. It must be remembered that twenty-five years had gone by since the last Conclave, in which Leo XIII had been elected. Moreover, that Conclave had been the first since the events of 1870 and, for many reasons, could not be taken as a precedent upon which to base the arrangements for the new one. However, in a short time the Secretary was able to submit to the Sacred College the general scheme for its practical organisation, and this was discussed and immediately approved.

It was wonderful how he stood the work, under such conditions and in summer. His whole day was spent in the Borgia rooms, where he remained until very late, whilst during the first days he returned to sleep in his modest quarters at the Accademia. Early in the morning, as soon as he had celebrated Mass, he was back at his work. His own state of mind during the time may be learned from the following letter, written to his old friend in England, Monsignor Broadhead, a few days after the death of Leo XIII :

' I reckon on your prayers. I am installed in this splendid abode, which is mine until after the Conclave. I will not speak of myself except just to tell you that I am overwhelmed at the trust placed in me by the Sacred College. You will imagine my feelings. The death of the Holy Father, the death of Volpini, the responsibility, and the work of having to be all of a sudden the acting Secretary of State. I can only leave all to God. I

have not a moment free. I have, of course, all the staff of the Secretariate of State at my disposal and the staff of my own department. I shall be shut up in the Conclave. Imagine the contrast of Pinturicchio with electric light, a telephone on my table, and a typewriter.'

At the conclusion of the nine days, with the traditional ceremonies, Monsignor Merry del Val entered into Conclave with the cardinals as their secretary. After the reading of the Apostolic Constitutions governing the Conclave, one by one the cardinals took the oath to observe them in the election of the Pope. After Cardinal Oreglia had read in Latin the ritual formula of the oath, the Secretary took the Gospel and went round to each cardinal to receive his oath. Oreglia was the first to take it and, last of all, he received the oath of the Secretary.

Two episodes are noteworthy in this Conclave; the first refers to the notorious *Veto* which, registered by Cardinal Puzyna on behalf of the Emperor of Austria, caused such a sensation. Before presenting the *Veto* against Cardinal Rampolla at the session for the scrutiny, Cardinal Puzyna informed the Secretary of the mandate he had received from His Majesty Francis-Joseph, requesting him to make the matter known to the Cardinal Dean and see whether it would be possible to obtain the approval of his action beforehand. Monsignor Merry del Val did not fail to make some grave observations to Cardinal Puzyna in order to induce him to renounce his intention. As, however, the latter insisted, the Cardinal Dean, also by means of the

Secretary, let him know that he very strongly disapproved of it, adding that his opinion would certainly be shared by all the cardinals. Cardinal Puzyna, notwithstanding that he understood that he would be taking a false step, sought to excuse himself, saying that he could not then withdraw.

The second incident concerned the first meeting between Monsignor Merry del Val and Cardinal Giuseppe Sarto, Patriarch of Venice. Although he had been seven years on duty in the Papal antechamber, Merry del Val had never had occasion to meet and make the personal acquaintance of the Patriarch of Venice. As gradually the votes were concentrated upon Cardinal Sarto, he, frightened and aghast, endeavoured to convince the cardinals that they should turn their thoughts to another, saying that he felt himself utterly unable to bear the formidable burden.

'It was that very adjuration, his grief, his profound humility,' said Cardinal Gibbons afterwards, 'that made us think of him all the more. We learnt to know him from his own words as we could never have known him by hearsay.'

There could no longer be any doubt as to the intention of the cardinals, and so the Cardinal Dean instructed the Secretary to go to Cardinal Sarto and beg him, in his name and that of the Sacred College, not to persist in his refusal in the following session. Monsignor Merry del Val went to his cell, but he was not there. Instead he found the Patriarch of Venice kneeling alone in one of the benches in the Pauline Chapel before the Blessed Sacrament, his face in his hands.

Approaching him, he informed him of the request of the Cardinal Dean. Tears were pouring down the face of Cardinal Sarto, who, turning imploring eyes on the Secretary, replied: 'No, no; I beg of you to tell the Cardinal Dean not to think of me. Let him do me the charity not to think of me!' At the sight of such anguish the Monsignor could not restrain himself from answering respectfully: 'Courage, Eminence!'

The will of the Sacred College, and the personal urging of the cardinals who were his friends, triumphed over the Cardinal Patriarch of Venice, who was chosen Pontiff. 'If this chalice may not pass from me unless I drink it,' he said when accepting the election, 'may God's will be done!' He then announced that he accepted the election 'as a cross.' To the question of the Cardinal Dean as to what name he would take, he replied: 'Since the popes who have suffered most for the Church in this century have borne the name of Pius, I also will take this name.' And on the 4th of August, by the voice of Cardinal Luigi Macchi, the first cardinal-deacon, the election of Pius X was proclaimed from the outer balcony of the Vatican Basilica, whilst a great, anxious crowd thronged the piazza.

Towards 8 p.m. the same evening, when the Pope, still in his conclavist's cell, was saying his Office, Monsignor Merry del Val came to him, in order to obtain his signature to the letters notifying his election to the sovereigns and heads of states having diplomatic relations with the Holy See. To sign these is the first act performed by the Pope,

as such, after his election. The new Pontiff took up his pen, wrote on a sheet of paper, for the first time, his papal signature, and turning to the Secretary asked him: 'Will this do?' Outside the cell waited Monsignor Giacomo della Chiesa, then under-Secretary of State, anxious to see the first letters signed by the new Pope.

All the more important acts of the Secretary of the Conclave are recorded in the account which he prepared for the solemn reception of the Diplomatic Corps, which went officially to call on the Cardinal Dean to present its condolences on the death of the Pope. The discourse was very able and detailed, written in perfect French, and made a great impression. It is a complete account of the whole course and arrangement of the Conclave of 1903, and besides filling up a gap in such material it served as the model for the two succeeding conclaves. It forms a volume and is preserved in the archives of the Sacred College.

When he had dispatched the more important and urgent business, at the close of an audience Monsignor Merry del Val said to the Pope: 'Holy Father, my task as Secretary of the Conclave is ended. I warmly thank Your Holiness for the kindness and the confidence you have shown me from the beginning of your pontificate. I beg you to pardon my incapacity, and the mistakes I may unwittingly have made in the discharge of my duties. I leave Your Holiness these papers, which refer to matters which are pending, and in returning to my dear Accademia I beg you to give me your fatherly blessing.'

Pius X looked at him affectionately with those calm eyes of his—eyes which, as someone has said, seemed to see into Eternity—and in a paternal tone said to him: 'What! Monsignor, you wish to leave me?' Much moved, the young Secretary replied softly: 'No, Holy Father, it is not that I wish to leave Your Holiness, but my duties are ended. The Secretary of State, whom Your Holiness will appoint, will take my place and take over the transaction of business.'

'Take these papers away with you, Monsignor,' rejoined Pius X, 'and I beg you to remain in your office until I decide otherwise.'

Another letter written by Monsignor Merry del Val in the first days of the new pontificate, to the same friend in England, reveals his state of mind:

'I could tell you many interesting things about all I have witnessed and come through. Unfortunately I have no hope of getting away. I do not expect to be able to move, and I do need so much to have some quiet and restful days. God must be helping me in some extraordinary way, or I could not hold out as I am doing. The heat here is overwhelming. We have a holy Pope. He seems to be very prudent and sagacious, and he is most sweet and gentle in his manner. I wish you were here with me. Pray for me.'

Some days later Pius X sent him a large photograph of himself—the first taken as Pope—with an affectionate dedication in which, calling him 'Our Pro-Secretary of State,' he thanked him for

his valuable help and bestowed upon him a special Apostolic Blessing.

As time went on, without bringing the nomination of the new Secretary of State, the Pro-Secretary remained in his laborious office, devoting himself in an admirable spirit of self-sacrifice and giving full satisfaction to the Pope, by whom he was received in audience every morning for the discussion of business. As was to be expected, a thousand guesses and suppositions were rife as to the choice of the First Minister, and naturally recommendations were not lacking, and suggestions as to possible candidates. Pius X listened to them all without giving the least hint of his intention. One highly placed personage begged the young Pro-Secretary to suggest to the Pope the name of a certain cardinal of the Curia, who died after Pius X. The interested party made it clearly understood that the cardinal, whose name he thus put forward, highly esteemed him (Merry del Val), and that, if he were chosen Secretary of State, would place him in a position to render greater services to the Holy See, by assigning him to some important nunciature, such, for example, as Vienna.

The Pro-Secretary firmly rejected the proposal, in so far as it concerned himself. As for recommending the Pope to choose the cardinal in question, he stated that, for his own part, he would willingly do so, but that he doubted whether such a proceeding would have any effect on the Pope's decision. Subsequently, in face of further representations which were made to him, he did mention the matter to Pius X, who easily grasped the situation, and

contented himself with saying that in a matter of such great importance it was better to await God's guidance than that of men.

In a book of reminiscences of Monsignor Giuseppe Pinchetti-Sammarchi, who, being a native of Mantua where Sarto had been Bishop, knew the new Pontiff, we may read :

'I went up to Monsignor Merry del Val, who received me joyfully and, after speaking enthusiastically to me of the Pope, referred to the intention there was of making him Secretary of State. For the sake of the truth, I am bound to say that on that occasion he gave me a formal commission to speak to the Pope, couched in these terms: "Tell the Holy Father, in my name, that I am well aware as to what is being done in order that I may be nominated Secretary of State. Do draw his attention to the facts that I am a foreigner and too young for such an office, and therefore let him think of somebody else." I promised that I would fulfil the commission conscientiously, for the greater good of the Pope and the Church. It was the Dean of the Sacred College, Cardinal Oreglia di S. Stefano, who was so much in favour of the nomination of Merry del Val as Secretary of State.

'It was already late and I put off the business until the next day. I performed my promise to Merry del Val, and also seized the opportunity which offered of informing Pius X that, in the opinion of all the best-informed persons, Cardinal Dominic Ferrata seemed indicated as Secretary of State. I added that my own could weigh but

little, but that for my own part I also considered Ferrata suited to the difficult office, for he would be a great help to His Holiness.

'The Pope then remarked that he knew the various opinions of the Sacred College, and that if he named one, another would be considered wronged: that if he did name Ferrata it would give occasion for thinking that the French policy was to be continued, then, as though questioning me, he unexpectedly spoke thus :

"But did not all the cardinals agree in choosing Monsignor Merry del Val Secretary of the Sacred College?"

'I called his attention to the immense difference there was between Secretary of the Conclave and Secretary of State. I said that the cardinals would never have chosen him for such a position, had they foreseen that he would subsequently become Secretary of State, and that finally such a nomination would be an affront to the whole Sacred College, which would be highly offended by it. To this long expostulation the Pope made no further reply, and ended by saying that he had not yet decided anything, that there was time enough, and that he would think about it.'

Those who were with Monsignor Merry del Val at the time are able to say how calm and serene he remained. From morning till night he devoted himself to his work, and although the question of the nomination of the Secretary of State was the subject of the hour everywhere, the one who concerned himself least of all about it was precisely Monsignor Merry del Val. He also held himself in

readiness to hand over everything to the new Secretary, just as though every day were his last in his office.

But from the first days Pius X had conceived for him the greatest esteem, together with a fatherly affection, and an equal confidence in him. As he himself told a distinguished prelate afterwards, the Pope watched and observed him daily, and with his keen intuition he had come to recognise his spotless rectitude and adamant strength of character. Pius X understood that Providence had destined this man to be his enlightened collaborator, his unconquered companion, his devoted friend amidst the sufferings and conflicts of his pontificate.

Even before the final nomination, he had given him his full confidence, showing in him an unlimited trust, sharing with him his views and intentions with respect to the weightiest matters as well as to persons. One of the first confidences which he made to him—as the Cardinal related later—was his intention to codify the Canon Law, and shortly afterwards that of the general reform of the Curia. He shared with him his anxieties, especially over the thorny question of France, which was then under discussion; of the so-called Christian Democracy, which in those days was taking a very dangerous turn from the point of view of doctrine and ecclesiastical discipline, especially in Italy. He highly valued his advice, especially on matters regarding the nunciatures and Diplomatic Corps.

After the usual papal audience in the morning, Monsignor Merry del Val went down to his study in the Borgia rooms, and according to custom began

to receive the chief officials of the Secretariate of State, who were then Monsignor Pietro Gasparri and Monsignor Giacomo della Chiesa, and then others. Between one audience and the next he read the documents given him by the Pope. One morning, when going through these, he found an envelope addressed to himself in the Pope's own hand. He had previously had notes from the Pontiff among the business papers, and thinking it dealt only with some official matter, he opened it indifferently. Having read the unexpected document he was much disturbed and preoccupied. He at once suspended the audiences, recollected himself for a short time in prayer in his own room, and, without saying anything to anybody, returned immediately to the Pope. On the threshold of the latter's apartments, just coming out from an audience, he met old Cardinal Mocenni, who had heard from Pius X of the appointment of the new Secretary of State, and was the first to congratulate the elect.

The meeting between the Holy Father and his newly appointed First Minister was brief, but, as Merry del Val had later to own to one of his intimate friends, it could not have been more moving. Not only would Pius X not yield to his beseeching, and to the reasons he urged in favour of his being excused from accepting the heavy burden, but he declared explicitly that the nomination was fully in accordance with the will of God. He encouraged him to take up his cross, blessed him, and said lovingly: 'We shall work together and suffer together for love of the Church!'

The autograph letter of October 18th, 1903, in which Pius X appointed him Secretary of State, runs as follows :

'The opinion of the eminent cardinals who choose you as Secretary of the Conclave, the kindness wherewith you consented to undertake, during this time, the duties of the Secretariate of State, and the devoted care wherewith you have filled this most delicate office, oblige me to ask you to assume permanently the post of my Secretary of State.

'For this reason, and also to satisfy a heartfelt need of my own, and to give you a little token of my warm gratitude, in the forthcoming Consistory of November 9th I shall give myself the pleasure of creating you a cardinal of the Holy Roman Church.

'For your comfort, I may further add that by so doing I shall accomplish an act very acceptable to the majority of the cardinals, who share my admiration of the eminent gifts with which God has enriched you, and with which you will certainly render signal service to the Church.

'To this end, with particular affection, I impart to you the Apostolic Benediction.'

This appointment was something exceptional in the annals of the Church. A prelate only thirty-eight years of age, and not an Italian, had been raised to the office of Secretary of State.

A few weeks had sufficed for Pius X to learn to know the character, the piety, the ability and devotedness of his young helper. Pius X—the good parish priest—had found another—and one

who had wanted to become a parish priest—who would help him to carry out his programme of restoring all things in Christ. To the Pope, who had been so effectively a parish priest, God gave a Secretary who was a parish priest by vocation. And so these two, who had begun so differently, were united ; inspired by the self-same ideal : the Kingdom of God in souls !

One day Pius X told a cardinal what had led him to the choice of Monsignor Merry del Val :

'I chose him because he is a linguist ; born in England, educated in Belgium ; a Spaniard by nationality, who has lived in Italy. A diplomat's son and himself a diplomat, he knows the problems of all countries. He is very modest and he is a saint. He comes here every morning and informs me concerning all the problems of the world. I never have to make an observation to him. And then, there is no compromising about him !'

The news of the nomination spread through the Vatican immediately, and the Secretary of State had a real plebiscite of congratulations. One who was in his confidence, and had to do with everything which concerned his elevation to the cardinalate, has left it on record that he was so taken up with the work of the Secretariate that it was not easy to induce him to let himself be measured by the tailor for his new cardinal's clothes. He testifies that he would never have perceived that he had been made a cardinal at all, had it not been that on the day of the elevation he had to dress in red !

In the allocution pronounced in the Consistory of

November 9th, 1903, which was the first allocution of Pius X, in announcing to the cardinals that he was raising Monsignor Merry del Val to the Purple, the Holy Father said that the elect, 'highly esteemed, by the testimony of the same Eminent Fathers during the vacancy of the Holy See,' had, during the past few months shown that he was endowed 'with precious gifts of mind and character, and with no common measure of prudence in the conduct of affairs.'

Again, during the ceremony of imposing the red biretta, Pius X, from his papal throne, willed to bear this solemn testimony of his esteem for his Secretary of State :

'The good odour of Christ, my Lord Cardinal, which you have shed abroad in every place, even in your temporary home (the Vatican), and the many works of charity to which you have devoted yourself in the exercise of your ministry, especially in this our city of Rome, have won unanimous admiration and esteem, and we believe that you yourself—to God be the glory!—have been able to learn that this is so from the sincere manifestations which have been made to you on this occasion.'

Not even under these circumstances did the new Prince of the Church wish money to be spent on receptions or other ceremonies. As he had done formerly at his episcopal consecration, he substituted works of charity for the banquet, and went to an old lady, a foreigner, ill and in need, to take her his first blessing and his first alms as a Cardinal. His parents had the happiness of being present at all the official ceremonies of the Consistory, and his

devout mother, in particular, amidst the general congratulations, did nothing but pray and ask prayers that God might give her son grace, strength, and health, to acquit himself worthily of the tremendous task which the Pope's trust had imposed upon him. When Pius X graciously received them in audience for the first time, he spoke to them of *his* Cardinal in such cordial and laudatory terms that they were not so much proud as really confused, wondering at the Pope's kindness.

The impression of those who were near him in those days was that the change of colour, from purple to red, was as a surprise to him! But his humility was as deep as the dignity he received was high, and so were his faith and love for the Church and the Pope. To those who had not yet known him intimately his behaviour on the occasion of his elevation to the Sacred Purple revealed him as a model priest and prelate. When he received the *biglietto*, which announced his elevation, after saying that to God was due all the glory, he added that 'the new Pope, in whom the virtue of humility shone out beyond all others, had wished to show his modesty even in the choice of his *first creature*.'

From the first days of his pontificate to the last day of his life Pius X had Cardinal Merry del Val ever at his side, a devoted son, a faithful servant, an understanding helper. The few dignitaries of the Papal Court whose enviable lot it was to be at the bedside of the dying Pontiff recall, with lively emotion, the last moment, when the Pope, who had lost the power of speech but whose mind was still clear, took the Cardinal's hands in his own, and

pressing them tightly looked him fixedly in the face for some minutes; a last and expressive look which was the farewell on earth of two great souls: it seemed as though Pius X were leaving his faithful minister the depositary of his sublime spirit, his love, his zeal, his tenderness towards the humble and the suffering.

CHAPTER V

CARDINAL SECRETARY OF STATE

THERE is not a page in the history of the pontificate of Pius X from which the name of Cardinal Merry del Val can be disassociated. Day by day, that history is marked by the understanding and faithful co-operation, as by the absolute self-abnegation, of the Cardinal Secretary of State. The very differences, natural and spiritual, between the Pope and his henchman were such as to draw them nearer together, and weld them into an indissoluble union of outlook, programme, and action.

Pius X and Cardinal Merry del Val were, as the common saying has it, twin souls also in their ascent of the road of Christian perfection, even before they met in the government of the Catholic world. They had the gift of mutual spiritual understanding in such wise as to knit them together in that gracious and holy association which daily became closer as they calmly appraised facts and situations. The eleven years during which Cardinal Merry del Val was uninterruptedly at the side of Pius X put him in an unique place in Church History.

His noble figure stands out, with all its strong and exquisite qualities; clear vision and largeness of view, well-weighed and sound judgement, a ready and sagacious eye for appreciating men and cir-

cumstances, an unbounded devotion to the Church and her Head, an enlightened comprehension of his duties and the directions given him, and of the needs for which he had to provide. To all these must be added a profound piety, and a living faith which made him still more akin to his great and holy chief.

When Cardinal Giuseppe Sarto was raised to the tiara, it was said that the new pontificate would be, as it were, essentially a religious one, without any political character. Events showed how hasty and superficial was the judgement. Eminently religious, the pontificate of Pius X could not be uninterested in or disassociated entirely from the world of politics, if for no other reason than that of its necessary contact with the various civil powers.

The breaking-off of diplomatic relations with France; the Law of Separation, with all its well-known consequences; an odious anti-clerical movement in Italy; the deliberate attempt at a Liberal¹ programme in Spain; the Portuguese Revolution, with the resulting vexatious laws for the Church, and the diplomatic rupture with the Vatican; many difficulties of an ecclesiastical character with Germany, Austria, Russia, and other countries; the formidable struggle with Modernism; the condemnation of the *Sillon*²; the great and bold reforms, which had to be faced, and carried through

¹ It should be borne in mind that in continental countries the term 'Liberal' is usually synonymous with 'anti-clerical,' i.e., anti-Catholic.

² The French Social Movement inaugurated by Marc Sangnier among the workers. Its extremes, and especially its aim at identifying the Church with a particular Political Party, led to its condemnation on August 24th, 1910. The 'Sillonners' loyally accepted the Pope's ruling.

amidst continual obstacles; such, in mere outline, was the heavy account of those eleven years!

At the close of the pontificate of Leo XIII Catholic Action in Italy was all confined to the Work of Congresses and the Catholic Youth societies. When Pius X ascended the chair of Peter it was necessary to give to this movement a direction and programme differing from those made evident and affirmed at the Congress at Bologna, in November, 1903. On July 20th, 1904, a letter from Cardinal Merry del Val, as Secretary of State, to the bishops of Italy, announced the suppression of the Work of Congresses and clearly traced out the guiding principles of Catholic Action, as understood and desired by the Pope, under the immediate and direct supervision of the bishops.¹

Shortly afterwards, in November, 1905, the National Democratic League was condemned, as contemplating a programme religiously, socially, and politically unacceptable from the Catholic point of view. Meanwhile in the Encyclical *Il Fermo Proposito*,² Pius X looked forward to the rise of the Popular Union, which was destined to gather together the Catholics of every social class, but especially the great body of the people, around a single centre of teaching, programme and organisation. So was born that Popular Union, which co-ordinated and directed the vital and active forces of Italian Catholics in that programme of frank and perfect Catholic Action which later on, under the reigning Pontiff, had to be reconstructed

¹ The *Second Group* of the 'Congresses' was excepted from the dissolution which applied to groups i, iii, iv and v.

² June 11th, 1905.

—outside and above all political aims and objects—along the lines which, with his keen intuition, Pius X had wished.

From the beginning of his pontificate he had been a severe and watchful guardian of the religious discipline of the Catholic associations, not allowing them to turn aside to political manifestations and intervening directly where this ruling was not observed. He desired that Catholic Action should be based on open profession of the Faith, holiness of life and blameless conduct, and, for this reason, to the fundamental guiding principles given to the association and approved by him, he added these, his precise rulings :

'Just as words are valueless unless preceded, accompanied, and followed by example, the necessary characteristic (of the Union) is that it manifests the Faith openly by holiness of life, spotlessness of conduct and the scrupulous observance of the laws of God and the Church. And this because such is the duty of every Christian, and also in order that *our enemies may be ashamed, having nothing whereby they may speak evil of us.* (Ep. Tit. ii, 8.)'

Nor must the weighty impulse given to the Catholic Youth Movement in that period be forgotten; an impulse which culminated in the memorable congresses and imposing processions in the different cities of the Province of Rome, which were the scene of the first public manifestations of Catholic Juvenile Action.

The Roman Question—as was justly observed—was at the iron barrier of the *Non expedit*; Italy

was between order and revolution. In revolution lay the final ruin and destruction of her Christian soul; in order the last hope of the religious and moral security of the people. In the Roman Question was involved a territorial claim, guarantee of the divine mission of the Papacy to which was attached—as said the Encyclical—'that supreme good of society which must absolutely save us.'

This 'supreme good'—well being—was then also threatened by the moral and civil condition of Italy. The 'very weighty reasons' of Pius IX and Leo XIII, concerning the rights of the Holy See, were reappearing again at this period which was vitally affecting souls. The apostolic soul of Pius X did not hesitate and, having reaffirmed the protest against the violation of the rights of the Holy See, he called upon Italian Catholics, as citizens, to defend their own spiritual treasures, whilst being careful to explain clearly the purely religious end of the regulation.¹

The instructions, which were then given by Cardinal Merry del Val, indicated the mind of the Holy See very plainly; as though to prevent and forearm the Catholics against that which might arise through their inexact observance: the formation of a Catholic Party. The derogation from the

¹ In his Encyclical letter, *Il fermo proposito*, addressed to the Italian bishops, Pius X says that 'very weighty reasons' deter us from departing from the rule laid down by our predecessors . . . but also allows that 'equally weighty reasons' may render exceptions necessary in individual cases. Leo XIII had already dispensed from the *Non expedit* in such cases, but on private request from the bishops concerned. Pius X merely made such dispensation public. The same political direction was given to France, Poland and other countries.

Non expedit was clearly indicated in the necessity of allowing Catholics to vote in the elections, in order to hinder grave injury to the Church, but it was at once pointed out that the candidate favoured by the Catholics must not present himself as the *Catholic candidate*, as though to form a Catholic parliamentary centre party which, as the document says explicitly, *the Holy Father does not wish*.

According to the pontifical ruling, what was permitted to Catholics, by the derogation from the *Non expedit*, was only to support the candidate in favour of order, but not to proclaim and uphold a candidate of their own, which was positively forbidden. Beyond that, the general rule of *Non expedit* remained in full force. With respect to the Roman Question and its solution, something more concrete was received on the occasion of the eighth Social Week of Italian Catholics, held at Milan from November 30th to December 5th, 1913, on the subject of *The Civil Liberties of Catholics*. Cardinal Merry del Val then directed the following letter to Count dalla Torre, President of the Popular Union among Italian Catholics.

'The Holy Father, Pius X, has received with pleasure the notice of the forthcoming Social Week of Milan, and has taken cognisance of the subjects for discussion. They are of the highest importance, and coincide very well with the present celebration of the Sixteenth Centenary of the Edict of Constantine for the peace of the Church. And there is no doubt that treated, as it is hoped, by those who are not timid, who are friends of the truth, and sincerely and unconditionally united to the Apostolic See,

they will not fail to produce those salutary results which are looked for by all good men, and in particular by His Holiness, who from this moment sends, to all who shall take part, the Apostolic Blessing.'

Replying to a message of homage to the Holy Father from Cardinal Andrea Ferrari, Archbishop of Milan, and honorary President of the Social Week, Cardinal Merry del Val, added :

'The eighth Social Week has the singular merit of having called the attention of Italian Catholics to the grave actual problem of the liberty and independence of the Roman Pontiff ; and its work—a work which is purely one of study—is indeed worthy of all praise for having opened up an ample discussion on the same problem and a noble field of scientific activity.'

During this week Count dalla Torre pronounced the following words which raised such a storm in the anti-clerical press : 'As citizens we think that peace between Church and State, that the just solution of so destructive an opposition, may yet come about by the constitutional will of the country, which takes its rise from the State, without any compromising of its civil sovereignty. This is our sincere conviction and also our legitimate desire, since we should be justly proud and happy to see the dawn of that day wherein our Italy, reconciled with the Church, by her own virtues shall once more intertwine her glories with those of her faith, and thus secure, resume again in the world her mission of civilisation and Christian progress.'

These words had been authorised by Cardinal

Merry del Val, as Count dalla Torre declared in his commemorative address in the palace of the Cancelleria. Neither more nor less—even in more explicit terms—would the Secretary of State of Benedict XV declare later, when in 1917 he would appeal to 'the sense of justice of the Italian people.'

At the death of Pius X the great organisations of Catholic Action were: the Popular Union among Italian Catholics; the Economic Social Union; the Electoral Union; the Catholic Youth; the Catholic Women's League. This last, a completely new institution, developed and prospered in a short time in such wise as to produce the most consoling results of its apostolate, and, thanks to the care and foresight of the Cardinal Secretary of State, to extend itself to all the centres of Catholic Action. More than once had Pius X to praise the great activity of the Catholic Women's League. In September, 1934, it celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of its foundation, and on the 4th of that month its President, Signora Rimoldi, when received in audience by the Holy Father at the palace of Castel Gandolfo, together with 2,000 delegates, was able to state, in the address of homage to His Holiness, that the little nucleus of women, closely gathered around the Church for the defence of Christian ideals, had become an army of over 300,000 members. But how many difficulties and how many sorrows were strewn along the way!

On the 20th of September, 1910, the Mayor of Rome, Ernest Nathan, not content with commemorating the anniversary in a provocative manner in the exercise of his office, launched out into derision and

insult of the teachings of the Church and of the Pope, directly attacking the spiritual jurisdiction of the Pontiff and holding up to public ridicule both his authority and the acts of his apostolic ministry. Moreover, already in 1907 a foul campaign had been inaugurated against the Church and clergy, kept alive by pretended revelations of alleged scandals in some Religious institutes.

At Milan, Genoa, Mantua, Spezzia, scandals were invented, so that demonstrations and violence against priests and religious institutions could be carried out with impunity, under the eyes of the authorities who looked on as passive spectators. The Cardinal Secretary of State himself narrowly escaped falling a victim to an ambush laid for him by the anti-clericals of Marino, whilst he was on holiday at Castel Gandolfo.

The incidents of the falling through of the visits of Fairbanks and Roosevelt to the Pope, the journeys of President Loubet and the Prince of Monaco had a profound echo in public opinion which, in regard to the Holy See and the action of the Cardinal Secretary of State, was in great measure deceived by the anti-clerical press. In the article of February, 1920, of *Scribner's Magazine*, a periodical with a wide circulation in the United States of America, there was published a long letter from the ex-President to Sir George Trevelyan, in which he spoke of the steps taken with respect to the visit which Mr. Roosevelt desired to pay to Pius X; a visit which, in the event, as is known, did not take place. In relating the facts—not at all exact under the circumstances—the ex-President gave expression

to statements very offensive to the Secretary of State, Cardinal Merry del Val, and not less irreverent to the august person of His Holiness.

With dignified restraint of language, the Cardinal therefore related the incident in its true light, without a shadow of reticence. His exhaustive statements were published by the *Civiltà Cattolica*, in its number of May 15th, 1920.

Speaking of the Fairbanks case, His Eminence thus expressed himself:

'The incident took place a few weeks before Mr. Roosevelt's arrival in Rome, but neither the Holy Father nor I had occasion to intervene. We knew nothing until after the affair, which for the rest was very simple as it was reported to me by Monsignor Kennedy.¹ On the day before that fixed for the Papal audience of Mr. Fairbanks, formerly Vice-President of the United States, it came to the knowledge of Monsignor Kennedy that he (Mr. Fairbanks) had promised to go the same day to a reception given him by the Methodists of the Via XX Settembre. On his own initiative, therefore, Monsignor Kennedy drew the attention of Mr. Fairbanks to the impropriety there was, and the painful impression which would be created by the fact of his going to testify publicly his approval of those implacable enemies of the Holy See.

'According to what Monsignor Kennedy told me, Fairbanks was unaware of the situation and expressed his regret, adding further that, as he was pledged to go to the Methodists, he was obliged to his regret to renounce his pontifical audience,

¹ Then Rector of the North American College, Rome.

and that the circumstances should be noted. And there all ended. But naturally the Fairbanks affair warned Monsignor Kennedy to take precautions in view of the arrival of Roosevelt. Here is the explanation of the reply, which was entirely confidential, given by Monsignor Kennedy, by means of the Ambassador Lishman, on March 23rd, and cited by Roosevelt on page 135. The terms of the reply, which seemed to me kind and delicate, were dictated by me, as was also the second reply cited on page 136; neither did I dictate anything else regarding the matter or put pen to paper.

'Hence there exists no letter of mine wherein, according to Roosevelt, I had written—as he expressed it—that the audience could only take place "on the understanding that I was not intending to see the Methodists." Be it noted that Roosevelt reduces the gravity of the matter to a simple "see the Methodists"; moreover, he alters a number of circumstances and presents the whole affair in a biased manner.'

As for the visit of Mr. Roosevelt, here is the further statement of the Cardinal:

'My conversation with Mr. O'Laughlin, Mr. Roosevelt's private secretary. He came to me a few hours before Mr. Roosevelt arrived in Rome (March-April, 1910) and had scarcely been ushered in when he said that he had come to explain everything and arrange for an audience for Mr. Roosevelt with His Holiness. I replied expressing my satisfaction and my desire that the Holy Father should receive the ex-President of the United States, adding that

I knew such was also the wish of His Holiness. Mr. O'Laughlin, without preamble and in conformity with the instructions which he had received, as can be seen from the said article, page 136, informed me that Mr. Roosevelt was desirous of seeing the Pope, but would accept no restrictions of any kind, and that he intended to act with the greatest liberty, going to whom and where he willed. After the delicate and confidential observations made by Monsignor Kennedy to the Ambassador Lishman, it was very obvious to what he was alluding. I answered, begging him to reflect, first of all, that there was no question of religious opinions, but simply of an elementary question of fitness and decorum; that if, for example, Mr. Roosevelt wished to go to some place of Protestant worship at his pleasure, immediately before or after the Papal audience, I had nothing to say, nor did I intend to concern myself with that. I explained, therefore, the odious behaviour of the Methodist centre at Rome towards the Pope, adding its continual and vulgar campaign against the Catholic Church, with insults to the Pope in his own house, and with opprobrious politico-religious propaganda, in open alliance with all the anti-Catholic hotbeds of the city; that it opened its doors to openly condemned apostates, and fomented hatred of the Papacy by a proselytism based upon money. I concluded by saying that the Pope had every right to ask that, whilst he was ready to receive Mr. Roosevelt cordially the latter should abstain from giving his support to the ruthless enemies of the Catholic Church and the Pope in his own residence.

'The only reply made by Mr. O'Laughlin was that Mr. Roosevelt was accustomed to do what he pleased, and that if, on coming out of the Papal antechamber, he wished to betake himself straight to the Giordano Bruno he could do so. (I am quoting literally.) Then, as though joking, I remarked that, absolutely speaking, certainly Mr. Roosevelt *could* act thus, just in the same way that he, Mr. O'Laughlin, *could* have presented himself to me in his shirt sleeves, and failed to conform to every social convention; but that all that *could* be done was not done, and that had he acted thus it was probable that his behaviour would have been judged severely and that someone would have requested him to withdraw from my rooms. At this remark Mr. O'Laughlin could not restrain his laughter. Then, making use of an *argumentum ad hominem*, I went on: "Reflect upon what happened a little while ago, whilst Mr. Roosevelt was President of the United States. A rumour was spread at Washington that the Pope intended to send on a mission to the States, to Cardinal Gibbons, a person who was unacceptable to the President. Roosevelt then sent one of his Secretaries of State, Mr. Bonaparte, to the Apostolic Delegate, Monsignor Falconio, to inform him in confidence how matters stood, and ask him to advise the Pope that whenever the said person were sent to America the President, to his regret, would be unable to receive him at the White House. At the same time he requested the Pope not to take amiss this step, which was entirely friendly and confidential. 'What was our reply?'" I asked. "We might perhaps have said that the

Pope did not suffer restrictions, and intended to act with complete freedom and as he thought best! No; the answer, which I myself dictated, and sent, was as follows: that the rumour was unfounded, but that, on the other hand, far from resenting the step taken by Mr. Roosevelt, the Pope thanked him, and requested him to act in like manner in similar cases; since it would be displeasing to His Holiness if a representative of his could not be received at the White House. This seemed to me the way to answer in such cases."

'I added further: Would Mr. Roosevelt have received at the White House a person who, having gone to Washington, had been present at some gathering of fierce adversaries of the President himself? And would Mr. Roosevelt ever be received by the Emperor of Germany if when, having gone to Berlin (as he was on the point of doing), he accepted the invitation of some anti-monarchist club in the city? Mr. O'Laughlin was silent, but my words had no effect and he repeated, with emphasis, that Mr. Roosevelt would be bound by no undertaking. Then it was that I, in order to show the greatest consideration and make the way easy for Mr. Roosevelt, said actually: "Very well, Mr. O'Laughlin, I wish to trust in Mr. Roosevelt's sense of fitness. Let us leave him aside and tell me yourself: Can you personally assure me that Mr. Roosevelt will abstain from committing these acts displeasing to the Holy Father?"

"No, I cannot do so," he replied, "he is just the man to do it!"

'It is absolutely false that I ever said that if Roosevelt had consented secretly not to visit the Methodists I should have been contented that he should say publicly that he had given no undertaking (*Scribner's*, May, page 136), and that hence I had acted with a duplicity unworthy of an honest man; and I do not deserve that this insult should be offered me. I did not concern myself, nor was it a case for concerning myself, over what would be said about the affair, since I expected Mr. Roosevelt to defend his procedure, if he thought fit. It was enough for me to spare the offence to the Holy Father.

'So ended my conversation with Mr. O'Laughlin, who when taking leave foretold to me disastrous consequences for the Catholic Church in America; and I concluded by telling him that I was ready to accept the judgement of American public opinion, once it had been rightly informed as to what had occurred. My actual words were: "I am ready to abide by the verdict of public opinion in America when the facts are known." Subsequently the facts made it clearly evident that it was not the Church but Mr. Roosevelt who suffered their sad consequences.'

There were other points to bear in mind:

1. When Roosevelt came to Rome he was no longer President of the United States but a private citizen, and could not pretend to urge special exigencies.
2. He was not a Methodist, and therefore could not adduce the motive of his religious convictions for going to the Methodists.

3. It became clear that he had pledged himself to them beforehand and did not wish to renounce his intention; as also he was compromised with the Freemasons, and when in Rome, on the very day on which he would have gone to the Pope, took part in a Masonic ceremony of the Fera Lodge, and was invested with the Masonic Degree with speeches, etc. (the Nathan banquet at the Municipality).
4. In the article in question, Roosevelt tried to make it appear that the attacks upon the Holy See were only the work of some individual and to extenuate the responsibility of the Methodists. Such is not the case, as all know unless they wilfully close their eyes to the evidence; and this was amply proved also on this occasion by Archbishop Ireland. On the other hand, the same Mr. Roosevelt admitted that one of their leaders was preaching frantically against the Pope, calling him 'the harlot of Babylon' (page 135), and that others, whom he had begged during those days to moderate their language, and not to attack the Pope (in order to justify his own proceeding), had not paid any attention to him (page 137).
5. Cardinal Merry del Val had never had any occasion of meeting Mr. Roosevelt, and hence it is hard to understand how the latter could judge him in so categorical a manner.
6. With respect to this incident the *New York Herald* published an authorized statement, setting forth the facts in their true light.

The Prince of Monaco came to Rome at the end of 1910, in the character of an Oceanographer, hoping that this subtle distinction would allow of his ignoring his position as a Catholic prince. The Secretary of State, however, did not see fit to accept such a formula, in order not to create a precedent with respect to the prohibition then in force for Heads of Catholic States visiting Rome. The pontifical protest hence could not be wanting, for all that it was couched in mild and considerate terms.

On April 24th, 1904, the President of the French Republic, M. Loubet, accompanied by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Delcassé, came to Rome as the guest of the King of Italy. On the 28th, at Naples, he was present at a review of the fleet, and the following day left by sea for Marseilles. On May 4th it was announced that the French Foreign Minister, M. Delcassé, had received a protest from the Holy See with reference to the visit of M. Loubet to Rome.

It has often been repeated that such a protest on the part of the Holy See, made on this occasion in the form of a *Note* dated April 28th, 1904, addressed to M. Nisard, the French Ambassador, and signed by Cardinal Merry del Val, was the cause of the breaking off of Diplomatic Relations. This is historically untrue, as is evident from the *White Book*, entitled *The Separation of Church and State in France*, published by the Secretariate of State in 1905.

The Papal Nuncio, Monsignor Lorenzelli, was

charged by Cardinal Rampolla to make it clear to M. Delcassé in the audience of June 3rd, 1903, that the Holy See, always averse from involving itself in the home or foreign politics of States when these do not touch the interests of the Church, had never intended to reprove or hinder in any way the *rapprochement* of Italy and France. On the contrary, it views with pleasure everything which tends to favour the brotherhood of nations and to remove the danger of international conflicts and wars. Consequently, if in this *rapprochement* of the two nations President Loubet had visited King Victor Emmanuel III in another Italian city the Holy See would not have said a word. Moreover, Cardinal Rampolla, by the *Note* of June 1st, 1903, delivered to M. Nisard, stated plainly that 'the Holy Father would have regarded a possible visit of M. Loubet to Rome as an offence not less to the rights of the Holy See than to his own person.'

The sectarian press of both countries, and all the elements hostile to the Church, did not fail to give the presidential visit a character of conspicuous hostility to the Pope, associating with its applause of the President the most insulting attitude towards the Roman Pontiff.¹ It was natural, therefore, that the Holy See should draw attention to the

¹ That the visit of the French President, paid under such circumstances, did in fact call forth lamentable press comments is sufficiently plain from the language of the *Tribuna*, the Italian monarchist paper. 'It is the first time that France enters Rome not to bring aid to the Papacy. . . . It is the first time that the France of the Revolution enters Rome . . . No longer as the *Eldest Daughter of the Church*, no longer as the *Most Christian nation*, but absolute mistress of herself and of her action.'

offence received. This was exactly what was done by the protest of April 28th, 1904. This action of the Holy See was not intended to be made public, yet in order that this visit might not be considered as setting a precedent, the Secretariate of State deemed it necessary to make the protest known to the sovereigns of other Catholic countries. This was done by sending a despatch to the pontifical representatives resident at foreign courts, and authorizing them to communicate it to the respective governments. An exception was made for one sovereign to whom, as he had not a papal representative at hand, the protest was conveyed by means of a *Note* transmitted to his representative in Rome.

Although, naturally, the ideas expressed in the French protest were repeated in such a *Note*, nevertheless, the Holy See was at liberty to make—as in fact it did—those modifications which it believed more opportune in each particular case; and this without failing in loyalty. But also such Communications should have been kept secret. Further, to reassure the Catholic conscience, the *Osservatore Romano* published on May 4th a *Brief* simply announcing the fact that the communications had been sent. But on May 17th the Paris newspaper, *L'Humanité*, published the *Note* above mentioned, with the variant introduced, which ran as follows: 'And if, notwithstanding that, the Apostolic Nuncio has remained at Paris, this is due solely to very grave reasons of a quite special nature and order.'

On May 20th M. Nisard, by order of his govern-

ment, asked Cardinal Merry del Val whether the *Note* published by the said newspaper were authentic; whether the same *Note* had been sent to other Governments; and in particular whether in the communications to the other Governments the phrase relating to the Papal Nuncio had been inserted.

The Cardinal answered requesting the Ambassador to put his questions in writing, when they would be answered immediately. M. Nisard then declared that time was pressing, and that M. Delcassé must have an answer before the meeting of the *Chambre*, which was to take place that same day; and that he was instructed to ask for a *verbal* answer, adding that His Eminence ought to understand that a very delicate matter was in question. His Eminence replied that he could give the answer in an hour, or even half an hour, but, precisely because a very delicate matter was in question, he desired to have the question and give the answer in writing. The Ambassador insisted upon having a simple Yes or No, and the Cardinal replied that he regretted that he could not answer otherwise than he had done.

The Ambassador then said that he must conclude that His Eminence did not recognise the text published as authentic, but the Cardinal drew his attention to the fact that he had not answered the question. Nisard added that he would be obliged to telegraph that His Eminence refused to reply, but the Cardinal then rejoined that he could not telegraph that, but that *he had promised to reply in writing within an hour.*

After a pause the Ambassador rose, saying that

he had to write at once, and added that he hoped His Eminence would not keep him waiting long. The Cardinal replied by repeating that it would be a matter of an hour, or even half an hour. Two hours having passed without any communication from the Ambassador, the Cardinal let him know that he was still ready to answer, but the questions were not sent.

On Saturday morning M. Nisard presented himself to His Eminence, and told him that what he had feared had happened; namely that the Cardinal's insistence in asking for the questions in writing had been interpreted as a desire to evade the questions, and that he had received orders to take his leave. M. de Navenne would arrive in Rome as *Chargé d'Affaires*, and meanwhile he asked leave to present the Baron de Curzel, who would be acting *Chargé d'Affaires* in the interval.

A Roman prelate who was received in audience immediately after M. Nisard, relates that the Cardinal was very calm, and said to him: 'Do you see? That gentleman is the French Ambassador, who has just taken his leave and leaves Rome this very day. I feel perfectly tranquil about it. A short while ago I saw the Holy Father, and he said to me: "Eminence, let us look at the Crucifix; what does it say? It says *Non possumus*. Well, here is our way; here is our guidance."'

Whilst matters had reached this point, there arose the question of Dijon and Laval. Various and serious accusations were being made against the bishops of those two dioceses, accusations which instead of dying down were continually assuming

a graver character. What more natural than that the two bishops should be summoned to Rome to explain their conduct? Having decided that the time was ripe for the rupture, the French Government required the Pope to revoke the order, and when, in the most conciliatory terms, Cardinal Merry del Val informed it that that was impossible, since it would mean the abdication of all Pontifical authority over the bishops, France finally broke off Diplomatic Relations with the Holy See.

The two bishops came to Rome, were received by the Pope with fatherly consideration, and by the Secretary of State with every kindness. Monsignor Le Nordez, Bishop of Dijon, retired from the diocese 'solely from delicacy of conscience, and the doubt as to whether his ministry could succeed fruitfully henceforth.' When Monsignor Geay, Bishop of Laval, reached Rome he received a letter from Paris, wherein M. Combes 'had the honour to inform that, on account of his departure for Rome, his stipend was suspended.'

The *White Book* concluded by declaring that France has broken off Diplomatic Relations with the Holy See:

1. Because, after having informed the same Government of the matter, the Holy See had summoned to Rome two bishops in order that they might clear themselves of the serious charges under which they lay; which charges were of a public and purely ecclesiastical character.
2. Because the Apostolic Nuncio had notified Monsignor Le Nordez that it was the wish of

the Holy Father that he should provisionally suspend Ordinations, and this for reasons of elementary prudence. Hence the rupture took place on a religious and not on a political plane.

The decided and immovable attitude taken up by Pius X and his Secretary of State in these painful crises was criticised by superficial thinkers, but events have already proved that it was the salvation of France. The new golden links of the mystic chain which was to bind the Church of France more closely to Rome were the fourteen bishops whom Pius X then consecrated at the tomb of S. Peter, on February 25th, 1906, and sent to their dioceses freed from every shackle of lay interference, to preach the doctrine and authority of Rome.¹

The field of politics and diplomacy during the pontificate of Pius X yielded a plentiful harvest of sorrows and anxieties, but to every vicissitude the Pontiff's apostolic heart knew how to oppose his unshakable trust in God, whilst by wise action his Secretary of State studied to render the conflicts less hard and their consequences less painful.

One day the Russian Minister received a Note from the Holy See, lamenting the obstacles which the Government of S. Petersburg was placing in the way of the nomination of some bishops. The Minister glanced at it in the Cardinal's presence, then said furiously: 'I do not receive it. I have not read it.' 'Which means then,' replied the

¹ Vocavi vos non ad honorem et gloriam, sed ad persecutiones et calvariam; ad crucem et ad crucem gravem (I have called you not to honour and glory, but to persecutions and Calvary; to a cross and to a heavy cross), said Pius X addressing the new bishops.

Secretary of State, 'that you have finished your dealings with us?' The Minister re-read it immediately and his explanations were sufficient.

Side by side with the course of political activity ran another, both far-seeing and valuable. 'In his relations with France,' wrote a venerable prelate, 'Pius X, so to speak, saved the body of the Church, but in his struggle against Modernism he saved her soul. But not only the soul of the Church in France, but of the Church as a whole.'

Modernism, which was spreading in Germany, England, France, and Italy, was not simply an error, but an accumulation of errors; a whole system which threatened the very foundations of the Faith, under the specious but dishonest pretext of writing its apology. Deprived of every dogmatic and objective basis, religion was reduced to sentimentalism pure and simple. Dogmas were transformed into mere moral symbols; the ecclesiastical hierarchy was explained as a human institution, born of the necessity of a system of government in the Christian community; its divine character was denied. The Holy Scriptures were presented as a work arising from poetic inspiration. Such were the leading tenets of Modernism, and this terrible upheaval was all the more dangerous in that it was presented as the scientific result of biblio-historical critical study, and propagated by men who, fighting for the most part within the Church, pretended to justify their historical theories on the grounds of the need of defending the inviolable rights of science, and of harmonising the Catholic religion with the exigencies of modern thought.

It was a great battle, rendered necessary for the vindication not only of the rights of the Faith, but even of those of reason alone. And it was fought to a finish by Pius X and Cardinal Merry del Val, who carried it on intrepidly and trucelessly, as do men who have profound convictions and realise the imperious duty of obeying conscience. The Decree *Lamentabili sane exitu* was issued on July 3rd, 1907, followed by the Encyclical *Pascendi* of September 8th, which sufficed, even alone, to crush the venomous hydra of Modernism. The Pope equally with his Secretary, were called an intolerant fanatic, and became the target of every insult, but, once condemned, Modernism rapidly disappeared from literature, schools, and life, and after the death of Pius X, as Secretary of the Holy Office, Cardinal Merry del Val watched in order to preserve intact the fruits of the glorious victory. For the rest, time itself has done them justice. Not only have all the accusations, shown to be calumnies by the sheer force of the facts, vanished like snow before the wind, but Pius XI, gloriously reigning, has confirmed, and emphasised, the condemnation pronounced by his predecessor Pius X against Loisy, the standard-bearer of the Modernist forces.

In 1913, during the centenary of the Edict of Constantine, when, owing to illness the Holy Father was unable to receive the many pilgrimages which came to Rome from every part of the world, delegated by the Pope, Cardinal Merry del Val in less than two months received twenty-three, and addressed appropriate words to each, according

to their nationality and circumstances, in Italian, French, Spanish, English, or Latin.

Thus on April 22nd he spoke as follows to the pilgrims from Cambrai :

' You have come to celebrate the centenary of the Edict of Constantine, which granted peace and liberty to the Church ; those liberties which are now, in great part, denied to you, and which you justly claim. Your faith, your love of religion and the Church, with which goes hand-in-hand devotion and affection to your country, cannot fail to crown your hopes. We are still too near to this period of struggle between God and evil, between faith and unbelief, to see all the beautiful pages which are being written in it ; but we are convinced that posterity will read the history of this time, and will be lost in wonder at these glorious pages, and see how, on each of them, the historian's pen has had to write a name—France !'

And to the pilgrims from the United States on April 23rd :

' You have repeatedly alluded to the present situation of the Holy Father ; and well you may, since none better than the sons of America may speak thus. And indeed it is of your great country that the Pope said on a memorable occasion : " The country where true liberty is respected." More than any other, you have the right to claim for the Holy See that which is necessary to it in order that it may freely govern the Church. I am very glad when I am given an opportunity of learning how the situation of the Pope interests, not only this or that people, but the whole world.

Indeed it cannot be allowed that the Pope, and his position, be considered the concern of but one single nation, since the Pope represents Our Lord ; that is, he represents a universal *Good*.'

He again addressed a French pilgrimage on May 11th, 1913 :

' It has been said that Christianity is as a great alms placed beside a great need. Better than any other nation, France understands and feels it ; she who is the classic land of charity ; of that charity which alone can lead all to the feet of Jesus Christ ; of that charity which goes out to unbelief, and imposes itself upon it by the strength of sincerity and devotion, and will make all come to the knowledge of the truth, and adore it beneath the garments of love.'

On May 20th he spoke to a Belgian pilgrimage :

' It is very just that to this imposing manifestation of Catholic faith, at which we are present on the occasion of the centenary celebrations of the peace and liberty of the Church, Catholic Belgium should contribute a special part ; a nation—as their leader has well said—modest as regards the extent of her territory, but great and strong by her faith and her piety.'

Speaking of this side of the Cardinal's activity, in his address at the Cancelleria, Count dalla Torre said : ' When near to finishing his course, in that sad sunset streaked already with a lightening of blood, Pius X often sent the Cardinal to be the interpreter of his fatherly gratitude. And he rejoiced to know how in this, his ambassador, there lived again the former preacher of *San Silvestro in Capite*,

and *San Giorgio*. The old zeal for souls, too, that had never been extinguished; so that his words flowed again, after so many years, unctuous, moving, persuasive. Cardinal Agliardi could not listen to him without shedding tears. Still the missionary; always the missionary, and apostolic indeed!

The work of Cardinal Merry del Val for the sufferers in the earthquake in Calabria and Sicily on December 28th, 1908, was direct and personal. In the first list of subscriptions collected by the Relief Committee of the Italian Catholic Youth, formed on December 29th, the first name is that of the Secretary of State. The hospice of Santa Marta was transformed into a hospital to receive the wounded who were brought to Rome, and on the morning of January 4th the first 150 refugees had scarcely arrived when the Cardinal set out to visit them. It was on that occasion that he met the Mayor, Nathan, who asked him whether the refugees and wounded needed anything. The Cardinal thanked him and replied that they needed nothing, since the Pope had thought and provided for them as a father. The Mayor then thanked him for the charitable efforts on behalf of so many unfortunates, and begged him also to thank the Holy Father for the hospitality shown to the poor sufferers.

When in 1908, after difficulties which seemed insuperable, Pius X was able to bring to pass the desired reform of the Secretariate of Apostolic Briefs, hitherto directed by a Cardinal-Secretary, in his capacity of Secretary of State, Cardinal Merry del Val had to assume also the direction of that

important and difficult office. He was the first Secretary of State to preside over the important department of the Secretariate after it had been divided into the three departments of Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, Ordinary Affairs, and Apostolic Briefs.

Throughout the pontificate of Pius X he was also Prefect of the Sacred Apostolic Palaces, and personally concerned himself with everything relating to the administrative working of the complex 'palatine' department of the Vatican. Every week he presided at the meeting of the heads of separate departments, and chief officials of the Prefecture. He also had the state of the buildings examined, and in order to strengthen the corner of the Palazzo opposite the Porta Angelica, which was threatening to collapse, he had the whole of the woodwork of the vast roof of the Sistine Palace renewed; a work involving great expense.

Seeing that, in view of the grave happenings of the times, and because of his deep sense of duty, his Secretary of State devoted himself to the absorbing and wearing work with such thoroughness as to forget himself completely, Pius X, with a fatherly concern for his health, in the summer of 1904, insisted that he should give some days' truce to his labours, and take a little rest at Castel Gandolfo, where some rooms had been prepared for him in the papal apartment of the palace. Yielding to the Pope's kindly urging, he passed some weeks there during the months of August and September, coming to Rome once or twice a week for audience

with His Holiness and to receive the Diplomatic Corps. The official letters were sent out daily to him for signature, so that he continued to direct the Secretariate of State.

But that short distance and the Cardinal's absence from Rome, did not lessen the Pope's watchful affection for his Secretary, or the latter's unselfish devotion to the Pope. Here is an autograph letter from the Pontiff, dated August 20th, 1905.

'I thank you for your constant thought of me and the Vatican, but rest assured that I desire nothing more than your health, and that the well-being of Your Eminence has a wonderful influence upon my moral and material state. Be at ease with respect to me, and believe me always your most obliged and affectionate . . .'

The Cardinal spent the short period of his summer holidays at Castel Gandolfo for four years, returning thither once even after the hostile demonstrations of Marino; but as time went on the work of the Secretariate became more heavy, and the advanced age of the Holy Father rendered his presence at the Vatican ever more necessary. Hence he ended by giving up his holiday, consenting only—at the earnest entreaties of the Pope—to spend short periods of rest in August and September in a modest villa on the height of Monte Mario, lent him by Count Blumenstihl. But even that sojourn was not a holiday, and therefore the Pope insisted that at least the Cardinal should make some excursions, if only for single days. And so it was that during the summer and autumn he absented himself for a

short time from Rome, and was able to visit Assisi, Orvieto, Viterbo, Montefalco, the abbey of Casamari, Monte Vergine where he stayed overnight, Monte Cassino and Subiaco, Genazzano, the sanctuary of Montagna Spaccata at Gaeta, and other places. His artist's soul revelled in their beauty, and with his camera he recorded the most interesting and most panoramic spots, but the expeditions had another side. Monsignor Giuseppe Pescini, his companion on these occasions, and private secretary to Pius X, has preserved some reminiscences:

'The pilgrimages which he made in those days to different sanctuaries in the neighbourhood of Rome are of interest. They lasted two or three days at the most, hence they had to be accomplished with all speed, and above all care had to be taken to preserve his incognito, in order to avoid loss of time, owing to ceremonies and the rest, as may be imagined. For his own part, in such visits, from which he derived spiritual refreshment, he had at heart, above all, simplicity and recollection. Those who accompanied him perceived that at once, as it were, a transformation came over him. It seemed as though he no longer saw anyone; that he withdrew himself from everything human around him to immerse himself in a prayer, a contemplation, wherein his soul was bathed in the supernatural, the divine. Nevertheless there was a side to these pilgrimages which, though perfectly justifiable, may be said to have been sometimes diverting. I have said that, at all costs, he wished to remain unrecognised, so when arranging the programme of each excursion this point in particular assumed great

importance. The matter was very problematic, if not impossible, for although His Eminence laid aside every sign whatsoever of his rank, he could not so easily conceal the personal features which were so characteristic as to mark him out in a thousand. His friends had to do their best to solve the problem, which mattered much to him and led to comical incidents not to be forgotten.'

SUBIACO.

'We were to go to Subiaco to the Sacro Speco, without being recognised. One of the monks was my friend, a Venetian and an old schoolfellow. We set off by car hoping that the affair would succeed; it was in the early days of the pontificate of Pius X, and His Eminence had carefully discarded every sign of his dignity. An English friend of his was with us. On the way we discussed how to manage the incognito; he was to pass for a French priest, his friend, naturally, for an English one, and I was charged to accompany them on a visit to the sanctuary of Subiaco. His Eminence doubted whether the plan would be successful, and said to me: "You will see that you will end by calling me *Eminence*, in a moment of forgetfulness!" For my part I took every precaution. We arrived at the monastery of S. Scholastica about midday, and, having left the car in the town, we made the ascent to the Sacro Speco under a scorching sun. When we reached it I asked for my friend, Father Borin, who came at once.

'We had not seen each other for some time, so at first, without looking at my companions, he greeted me and asked for news. Then he turned to the

others and I introduced them: a French priest and an English one, both very estimable, entrusted to me by His Holiness that I might bring them to visit the Sacro Speco. Dom Borin's keen eye was struck by the features of His Eminence, and he whispered to me: "This Frenchman bears an extraordinary likeness to Cardinal Merry del Val." I calmly replied that it was so, and had been noticed elsewhere, and my coolness satisfied him that I was not deceiving him. Meanwhile His Eminence stood a little apart.

'Seeing that we were tired with the climb, Dom Borin offered us some white wine, and knowing the Cardinal's habits I told him that the French priest would prefer lemonade, adding a joking remark about French tastes. Dom Borin smiled and asked me: "Does he understand Italian?" Overcome by a fit of laughter, His Eminence pretended to look attentively at some pictures of little interest which were hung around the room. The wine and lemonade arrived. I invited him to take something, addressing him as "Monsieur l'Abbé." He did not reply. "He is very interested in those pictures," grumbled Dom Borin. I answered: "All these foreigners are like that; when they come to Italy they even stop to look at the milestones!"

'His Eminence remained motionless in front of the pictures; he could do nothing more for laughing; but at a fresh summons he turned resolutely and instead of taking the lemonade, in his distraction took the wine, which was already poured out. Dom Borin said to me: "See, he likes wine also!" As we were among Benedictines we had to eat

abstinence food. I asked Dom Borin to give us a little lunch and in the meantime we chatted about one thing and another. The French and English priests remained looking at us ; I took no notice of them.

'With the well-known courtesy and hospitality of the Benedictines there was served a lunch of eggs and fish. We were hungry and sat down to table ; I in the centre, His Eminence on the right, and the other on the left. In order not to forget and give him the feared title, I took no notice of him and even treated him with a certain coldness. He very carefully avoided raising his eyes to look at us and calmly ate his modest lunch. Dom Borin looked at me and my companions and their behaviour, and in the Venetian dialect said : " But do tell me : has His Holiness any other encumbrances to entrust to you ? "

'The Cardinal, who had partly understood the sentence, unexpectedly burst out laughing, but with the help of his handkerchief managed successfully to pretend it was a sneeze. After lunch we visited the little monastery and the sanctuary, and I cannot describe the recollection wherewith His Eminence prayed before the tabernacle and before the statue of S. Benedict. Dom Borin was anxious to show us the celebrated frescoes which adorn the sacred spot, but the Cardinal continued in prayer as though nobody were waiting for him. Then the monk suggested to me : " Do tell that Frenchman of yours to make haste ! " The Cardinal heard him and was nearly convulsed with laughter again, but managed to control himself.

'When we had finished the round of visits, according to custom the good monks presented us with the visitors' book. It was the hardest moment. I at once signed first, then the English priest, but the Cardinal stood a little behind ; I do not know what he was thinking. Meanwhile Dom Borin was scrutinising him and, noting his reluctance, handed him the pen. He hesitated a moment, then signed his real name. Dom Borin, who had his eyes upon him, read it, looked at me angrily, and said : " You have deceived me ! I said that it was His Eminence, Cardinal Merry del Val. "

'At once the scene changed ; the Prior also was annoyed at this ruse, which he had not discovered before. Both of them were at the Cardinal's feet asking pardon. I know not for what ! In the meantime the news of the Cardinal's presence at the Sacro Speco had been telephoned to the monastery of S. Scholastica, and while we descended the rough road downhill, a group of monks and students ascended it to meet us. His Eminence, having made and received the complimentary speeches in the middle of the road, regained the car in all haste, and returned to Rome, happy over his outing and his " incognito ! " "

Of another excursion, that to the abbey of Monte Vergine, Monsignor Pescini thus speaks :

'We arrived by train at Canello towards evening. At the station two unpretentious carriages awaited us, with the Abbot of Monte Vergine, who was later Archbishop of Salerno, Monsignor Grasso. We made the ascent as far as the foot of the Holy

Mountain, where night had already fallen. Here we were met by some men and mules, in order to reach the sanctuary by the long and rocky road. His Eminence and his English friend sat their mounts easily, but the writer found himself rather in difficulties, since it was the first time he had ever so travelled. Indeed several times in the course of the ride he was seen to embrace the animal's neck in desperate confidence, and the humble mount must certainly have shared the merriment of the others at the sight of the grotesque and unusual situation of the inexperienced rider.

'On our arrival the Cardinal was received with the greatest respect by the religious and other dwellers in the place, who had come expressly to pay their respects to him, and for all he had smiles and gracious words. We were shown our rooms, and His Eminence asked at once to go to the sanctuary. He was offered something to eat but he insisted upon going to the Church, saying that he needed nothing and wished above all to pay a visit to Our Lady, albeit a short one, before anything else. He was forthwith taken to the church and, after a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, spent some time in prayer before the miraculous picture, so dear to the good, simple folk of the Campagna.¹

'After this visit, supper was served; strictly

¹ This monastery was founded in 1119, on the site of a temple of Cybele, by S. William of Vercelli. Later Catherine de Valois, mother of the second husband of the notorious Queen Joanna of Naples, presented to it the famous picture which has caused it to become one of Italy's great sanctuaries of Our Lady. It now belongs to the Benedictine Congregation of Subiaco, but the monks retain the traditional white habit.

abstinence fare, for these monks never eat meat. When it was over the Cardinal chatted familiarly with the community, who were happy at having with them so distinguished a Prince of the Church. After a time, he expressed the wish to retire, and we were very glad for we had spent nearly the whole day travelling. I had been already some time in my room when I remembered that I had made no arrangements with the religious for the next day. Although it was the first time I had been in that monastery, and hence did not know my way about, I thought that perhaps I might find someone. I wandered through the long, wide corridors, in semi-darkness, lighted only by some little lamps, and knocked at some doors. There was no answer. I went down the great staircase, and crossed a sort of porch, or ante-chamber, which led to the church. I approached. It was not shut and through the partly opened door I could see that it was lighted. Urged by curiosity, I slipped through the door and entered the church, though without any hope of finding what I sought. What was not my surprise when I beheld, shining in the light of innumerable lamps, the chapel where, almost covered with precious stones and golden ex-votos, the famous Byzantine picture of the Blessed Virgin is enthroned; where, generation after generation, almost without interruption, the pious folk of the south have come to kneel and ask for graces and mercy. But my wonder was greater still when, all alone, kneeling on the altar steps, I saw the Cardinal, in an attitude of devout recollection, his face turned to the miraculous picture.

'The church was closed and all around in darkness. A sweet, mystic silence enveloped the sacred place. The unexpected and impressive sight held me, as though rooted to the spot, a few paces from the entrance. I did not dare to move, and instinctively I held my breath, seized with a vague fear of disturbing that vision. Then I looked round and, almost concealed in the shadow beside a pillar, I perceived the Abbot, his white habit betraying his presence. He was quite motionless and likewise absorbed in prayer. He did not seem to have noticed me. Then, without making any noise, I drew back where the darkness was deeper. How long did I remain thus ?

'All at once, the Cardinal rose softly, mounted the steps and began to look more closely at the picture of Our Lady. I wondered what holy and noble thoughts were passing in his soul at that moment, and I realised that I was an intruder there. Slowly, very slowly, I withdrew, much moved at the scene I had witnessed, which had given me an opportunity of better appreciating the Cardinal's inner spirit.

'Next morning he was up very early and celebrated Mass in the same chapel with his usual devotion. He spent almost the whole morning in church. His face bore an expression of holy content, as of one who was at home, or near someone to whom he was bound by sweet ties. He was, indeed, in a famous monastery, consecrated to Her whom he loved so dearly throughout his earthly life !

'He left in the afternoon. There was a look of joy on his face, an enthusiasm and contentment about him, which I shall never forget. And after-

wards, when we spoke again of the pilgrimage to Monte Vergine, he, always so restrained in his words, would recall that visit as though it were a very precious memory.'

ASSISI.

'When we reached Foligno we had over an hour to wait for the train to Assisi. It was a lovely spring day, sunshiny as it can be in Umbria. It was suggested that we should go and have some lunch ; but where ? Foligno is so near Rome ! We walked round to get an idea of the restaurants, and decided to go into one which seemed full of business-men. When we entered they stared at us a little, but indifferently ; they were all occupied in eating and talking. The waiter who approached looked at us curiously but at once asked for our order. The Cardinal enjoyed being in a corner of the lively restaurant, and with keen eye noticed the different types, their gestures and conversation. After lunch we visited the cathedral and then hastened to the station. During the short journey we talked of the inn where we were to stay at Assisi, and of how we should manage to celebrate Mass next morning whilst escaping recognition, which seemed inevitable. We had been strongly recommended to an unpretentious hotel, very clean, and from which there was a wonderful view of the valley. As for Mass, I had procured a letter of introduction to the Superior of the Sisters of Charity at the town hospital of Assisi.

'We left our light luggage at the hotel and then visited the sanctuaries one after the other, as well

as some other objects of interest. We had not stopped at Santa Maria degli Angeli on our arrival, fearing to be recognised there. It goes without saying that that would have been the end of everything. The Cardinal's English friend proposed that we should separate for Mass; since nobody knew him he would go alone into the town; the Cardinal and I to the Sisters.

'It was getting dusk. When we reached the hospital the portress showed us into some kind of parlour. I asked for the Superior and consigned the letter of introduction to the Sister. We waited a long time but no Superior arrived. At last she presented herself, with a very embarrassed air, and the manner of one who had been disturbed in her occupation. She scarcely greeted us and then, after many fanciful difficulties, ended by saying that it was impossible for us to say Mass in their chapel; that lower down there was a girls' orphanage, in charge of the Sisters, where it would be easier; and that she would warn them.

'We departed, somewhat disillusioned as to the effect of my letter, and having made enquiries, learned that this orphanage was almost outside the city and on the top of the hill. Early next morning we set off by quiet streets, and on our arrival rang repeatedly. Finally a Sister came, a little anxious, and opened to us. We asked for the Superior and she answered: "I am she." I answered at once: "You will have been told by your Sister at the Hospital that we were coming to say Mass this morning?" Very surprised she said that no one had spoken of us. Annoyed at what

had happened I stated the case, and also mentioned the name of the Sister in Rome who had given me the letter. At this she gave a start, said joyfully that she owed much to her, and led us in forthwith.

'A simple, graceful, charming little church, which, like the whole place, cried out "sixteenth century"; altar linen, etc., plain, but very clean and perfumed with lavender; there, amidst a country silence which was very consoling we celebrated simultaneously at two altars. Only a few Sisters were present, for the girls had gone on an outing. When Mass was over, His Eminence, as was his custom, made a long thanksgiving; so that the Superior came to me to rouse him: "Tell your friend that he can continue his prayers while he is visiting the shrines and that coffee is waiting now." I went up to the Cardinal and said mischievously: "Eminence, this good Sister is in a hurry to get rid of us, and is inviting us to take coffee."

'In a little room, from which could be seen the panorama of Assisi, smiling in sunshine and verdure, with its famous churches, we found coffee, milk and biscuits. The Sister sat near us. She was anxious to learn who we were, and with a certain skill questioned me accordingly. "Had we been to Rome? Was it the first time? Had we seen the Pope? Had we been able to kiss his hand? I also have had that privilege." She spoke with a simple liveliness which was interesting. His Eminence joined in the conversation, asking when and how she had seen the Holy Father. She then became more talkative than ever.

"Imagine, thanks to the Sister who gave you your

introduction, I had an audience when others could only have one with difficulty. I did not see the reigning Pontiff, but Leo XIII. I had come to Rome on business, but unfortunately the Pope was not giving audience on those days. Then, in spite of that, I saw the Holy Father himself, by means of Sister X., who was very well thought of by the Pope. You should have seen what it was like inside. We went up the stairs, then we passed through the Loggia; and there a gendarme saluted us. Then we entered a great hall, which seemed to me like a church, and there were the Swiss. Then another hall, with servants dressed in red; then other gentlemen with gold chains around their necks; then a little priest dressed in purple; that one they call a *Cameriere Segreto*. We had come to the door of the very room of His Holiness. After we had waited a little we were taken into the presence of the Pope. . . . Oh, it is impossible to tell you what I felt. . . ."

'In the midst of all this discourse she kept repeating like a chorus: "But do take some milk; it is so good!" And to His Eminence in particular, seeing that he liked it: "Do take it, Father, take it." The Cardinal had listened attentively to the Sister and was smiling; and she meanwhile went on insisting, and added: "Do take it without hesitation; we have a cow in the house." It was time to go, and, after some more chatter, we warmly thanked the good Sister. We were just about to wish her good-bye when the Cardinal, moved by the cordial reception given us, whispered to me: "Shall we tell her who we are?" "Why not?"

I replied. Then I introduced His Eminence who, in his turn, introduced me. It was as a thunderbolt from a clear sky for the poor religious who, astounded, lifted up her hands and began to cry out: "What! Never! What are they telling me?" His Eminence showed her the ring and cross which he was keeping concealed. "Is it possible, possible?" went on the Sister. "Sisters, quick, come, ring the community bell . . ." and she went on her knees before the Cardinal.

'He begged her to be quiet and not to spoil everything. Some of the community came and received his blessing and, in all haste, we departed. Shortly afterwards it was being said in the town that Cardinal Merry del Val was at Assisi, but no one knew where. We hired a carriage and set off at once for a visit to the Carceri. The rumour had not spread there, and we went over the holy solitude in peace, His Eminence listening with devout attention to the explanations of one of the Friars Minor.

'On our return to the hotel we feared lest someone might have let them know of the Cardinal's presence, but strangely enough nothing happened. We had dinner and went down to Santa Maria degli Angeli. We visited the basilica, where there were few people, and entered the sacristy. A friar kindly answered our questions, but whilst he was speaking another presented himself, all obsequiousness, knelt and said: "Eminence, what a great honour to have you with us!" A little annoyed, but smiling, His Eminence replied: "Yes, but for a very short time, for I am leaving by the next train." It was a religious from the college of

S. Anthony, Rome, who had seen the Cardinal on other occasions. The latter thanked them for their invitation to enter the convent, and allowed them to present to him the Superior and some other Franciscan dignitary, whom I did not know and who was passing by. These good friars were sufficiently discreet, so that His Eminence was able to take the train Assisi-Foligno-Rome !'

The Cardinal made it a rule never to exhibit the tokens of kindness and good-will which he received from the Pope. Every year, unfailingly, on the feast of S. Raphael, the Holy Father sent him an autograph letter of good wishes, which bore the imprint of his sincere affection, and accompanied it always with some valuable gift, carefully chosen by himself a few days previously. He was wont to do likewise when any special anniversary came round in the life of his Secretary. Out of a feeling of delicacy, the Cardinal tried to keep such a secret, but the Pope always got to know. When the Secretary wished to keep the Silver Jubilee of his priesthood quietly, in silence and recollection, he received together with a handsome pectoral cross and chain, the good wishes and congratulations of His Holiness, who wrote him the following letter :

'If, owing to Your Eminence's modesty, it was not possible to discover the exact date of your first Mass, I hope that you will be equally pleased with the good wishes, which I send you from my heart for not only your priestly but your episcopal and cardinalial Golden Jubilees ; and that you will

accept this small token of my gratitude for the wise, affectionate, and disinterested assistance which you render me in the government of the Church, and for the privations which it involves.'

The Cardinal's wish that his Jubilee should be marked by no official celebrations was effective. He said Mass in the chapel of the Association, in the Trastevere, among his beloved boys, and his feelings were expressed in a letter which he wrote to a Roman friend, who had recently lost a son :

'I am deeply grateful to you for the personal interest which you have taken in my Jubilee of priesthood, and believe me I highly appreciate your affectionate congratulations, for I know that they are sincere. I wanted to keep this personal and intimate anniversary a secret, and may say that, up to a certain point, I have succeeded, by profiting by the coincidence of the Jubilee date of the foundation of the Pious Association of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in the Trastevere.

'When I reflect upon the sublime dignity of the priesthood, the responsibility which it involves, the duties which it imposes, and when I see all I ought to have done during these twenty-five years, and have not done, every wish to celebrate feasts and receive congratulations vanishes, and there arises the desire to take refuge in some far-off corner of the earth, to weep over my own failings and prepare myself for eternity.

'Your dear son is happy ! I do not forget him.'

Of Pius X it was said repeatedly that if he had been less holy, even during his earthly life he would have appeared to the world in all the greatness of

intellect and heart which he humbly shrouded in the mantle of his virtues. Equally it may be said of Cardinal Merry del Val that, launched out into public life when still very young, invested with high ecclesiastical dignities, and called to fill offices full of responsibility, he could not completely hide the outstanding qualities which the divine Goodness had accumulated in him. But with the ingenious endeavours of his humility he did succeed, in great part, in concealing from the eyes of the general public that wealth of priestly virtues which only his death would reveal. And, in his delicate refinement, not only did he never make any show of his gifts in presence of others, even those beneath him in rank, but tried, as it were, to make them forgive his superiority. Well did Monsignor Jeremich, Bishop-Auxiliary of Venice, say, in the course of the memorial gathering of the Cardinal, held at Riese on September 21st, 1933, that Pius X and his Secretary of State 'had found in the depths of their souls the point of agreement, the explanation of their moral homogeneity, the one and true cause of their happy association: profound humility of heart!'

Their glorious names are linked to great and lasting works, such as the victorious defence of the Faith against the unhappy Modernist movement, the Codification of Canon Law, the reform of the Roman Curia, the Vatican picture gallery, which preceded the other sumptuous building of His Holiness Pius XI; the new assets to Italian Catholic Action, in the institution of the Catholic Women's League, and the encouragement of sport among the Catholic Youth. How great a part was played in

these and in the other achievements of the Pontificate of Pius X, which was so extraordinarily fruitful, by his Secretary of State it would be difficult to determine. Certain it is that he had a great part in them, and brought to them the effective contribution of initiative and industry.

The devoted and understanding co-operator in them all, he interpreted and faithfully carried out the noblest religious achievements of Pius X in the matters of the Communion of children, the great work of forming a holy and learned priesthood, the promotion of the beauty of divine worship, the reform of Church music, and of the Liturgy. Such was Cardinal Merry del Val.

'In his unconquered faith, unbounded zeal, fortitude in adversity, firmness of character, incomparable fidelity, delicate simplicity, Merry del Val was less the effective minister than the faithful and intimate collaborator in the government of Pius X', said Monsignor Chimenton, at Riese on August 20th, 1934, at the celebrations held at Riese in memory of Pius X. 'The programme of the one was that of the other; two saints, two apostles, their names will remain blended together in the splendour of the light of truth and peace.'

On the morning of August 19th, 1914, the Cardinal had his last conversation with Pius X. In the audience, which lasted about half an hour, the Secretary referred some more urgent matters to the Pope, and concerned himself above all with his state of health. He went out very uneasy. Scarcely two hours later came the crisis which ended by

depriving the Church of a Pope who had been providential as well as holy.

In its first plenary session *Sede vacante*, the Sacred College agreed to present Cardinal Merry del Val, whose office as Secretary of State ceased, with a pastoral ring, in recognition of his services to the Church. Cardinal della Volpe, then Camerlengo of the Holy Roman Church, who in 1903 had conveyed to Monsignor Merry del Val his nomination as Secretary of the Sacred College, immediately carried out the mandate of his colleagues, and personally presented him with a valuable ring.

How he felt in that hour of sorrow may be learned from a letter written by him to a country parish priest in Umbria, on September 9th, 1914 :

' Worn out with the grief caused me by the death of my angelic Pontiff and father, I have been unable to take up a pen to thank you for your words of sympathy. I now do so, and sincerely. I have suffered and am suffering much, but our Lord will comfort me. Help me by your prayers to throw myself without reserve at His sacred feet.'

And on September 30th, to one whose director he was, he wrote :

' Thanks for your letter of condolence. I suffered much and am still suffering ; the void will remain in my heart as long as I live. God will provide for His Church, but the personal loss of him who was to me more than father or friend, the Holy Father, to whom all my life was devoted, and who had opened to me the vast treasures of his great heart, that loss is irreparable, and nothing can compensate for it. Help me then, in your charity, with your prayers.'

CHAPTER VI

ARCHPRIEST OF SAINT PETER'S

SCARCELY had the office of Archpriest of the Basilica of S. Peter's been left vacant by the unexpected death of Cardinal Mariano Rampolla del Tindaro, than within and without the Vatican, Cardinal Merry del Val was spontaneously and unanimously spoken of as his successor. But even before the general rumour was confirmed Pius X had cast his eye upon his Secretary of State. The latter, so cosmopolitan, was wonderfully in his place in the 'universal' atmosphere of S. Peter's, and with his spirit of piety would edify both clergy and people. The clear intuition of Pius X was not at fault. In vain did the Cardinal, thinking himself unequal to the high office, by means of Monsignor Vincenzo Ungherini, who enjoyed the Pope's special confidence, seek to convey tactfully his request that the Pontiff would turn his thoughts to some other, and more suitable, cardinal. The Pope was resolved and personally informed him of the choice, and when thanking him for accepting it added that, with that act, he also wished to leave him a lifelong remembrance and testimony of his gratitude and affection. On January 14th, 1914, he had the Bull of nomination sent to him.

The new Cardinal Archpriest took possession of

the benefice by an act of devout homage to Our Lady, on February 2nd, the feast of the Purification. Many representatives of the Diplomatic Corps were present at the solemn ceremony, and on that occasion he presented to the Chapter, for the Treasury of the basilica, some very valuable gifts which Pius X had placed at his disposal as a pledge of his fatherly good will. They included a magnificent chalice and pyx of solid gold, both set with gems and of very fine workmanship; also precious cruets and a sacring bell for Mass, likewise richly adorned and highly finished.

Since he considered the office of Archpriest of S. Peter's not only as a duty, but as a real mission to promote the welfare of souls and the glory of God, he dedicated to it all the resources of his zeal and energy. When any meeting of some Congregation, or some Pontifical Commission to which he was summoned, took place on Sunday, he usually asked the Cardinal-Prefect or President to excuse him in order that he might go to S. Peter's; and when on a feast day some appointment, or visit, had to be fixed, he always gave notice that he would be at home after the High Mass at S. Peter's. Not only did he set an example of diligent attendance at choir, but when there was a question of conferring any benefice, whether of greater or lesser rank, he always considered it an essential condition that the candidate should be in a position to attend choir regularly. When the new members of the Chapter went to pay him homage, he never failed to urge upon them regular attendance at choir, reverence and silence during the celebration of the Divine

Office, pointing out the good effect thus produced upon the faithful who are present.

During the sixteen years that he was Archpriest he always carried out the special functions of his office. He celebrated pontifically for the first time on Easter Day, 1914, at the Papal Altar, and again, by special indult, on the feast of S. Peter, that same year, as also on March 12th, 1922, on the occasion of the third centenary of the canonisation of SS. Philip Neri, Ignatius Loyola, Francis Xavier, Teresa, and Isidore Agricola. He particularly loved the ceremonies of Holy Week, and carried out the long office of Maundy Thursday, including the Consecration of the Holy Oils, with the liveliest satisfaction. The last occasion when he officiated as Archpriest was on February 2nd, 1930, his last function, as his first, being the Blessing of the Candles.

All who saw him officiate in S. Peter's were impressed by his majestic bearing, and his attitude of recollection and devotion. An American lady,¹ who owed to him her conversion to the Church, thus wrote in a diary, after having been present at the solemn High Mass on Ascension Day, 1927:

'Throughout the ceremony I was able to see the tall, imposing figure of the cardinal to whom I owe so much. I am ever more filled with admiration of his calm, composed dignity; his erect, still figure, whether standing or sitting; never turning round or leaning back unseemingly, as others do, but always upright, and above all profoundly recollected, his eyes and his attention fixed on the book in his hand.'

¹ Mrs. Craven-Learned of New York.

Paul Boyer¹ thus recalls his impressions of Cardinal Merry del Val officiating in the basilica :

'I shall never forget the grace, the distinction, the majesty—I may say—of that handsome cardinal who was presiding at the sacred offices of the Vatican Basilica. Such as he was on those great days in S. Peter's and in his reception-room, he has remained, as it were, photographed or sculptured forever in my memory.'

Everywhere he bore about with him this spirit of piety and recollection. One afternoon during the Exposition of *Quarant' Ore* at S. Peter's, he was noticed kneeling on the ground leaning against one of the ordinary benches. During the Lenten Station, at the church of SS. John and Paul, he was seen praying on his knees in a corner. He was recognised, and one of the Religious hastened to fetch him a cushion but the Cardinal courteously declined it. He was also observed following with the pious crowd at S. Clemente, Santa Sabina, Santa Pudentiana, SS. Cæsar and Achilles, and elsewhere. Subsequently, however, he found that, despite his efforts to escape notice, he was too well known to do so, and hence he had to give up the practice.

He maintained discipline in the Chapter with watchful care and firm hand. On very rare occasions when he could not do otherwise, he made use of some penal measure, albeit very unwillingly, but his method was based on fatherly kindness and interest in each individual. His generosity in

¹ Administrator of the School of Oriental Languages at Paris, and said to be the pioneer of the scientific teaching of Russian in France.

the circle of S. Peter's had no limits, but it was always exercised with an exquisite reserve and delicacy, so that his acts of benevolence were known only to those who were the objects of them. Not a few priests were supplied by him with Mass stipends, and even the employees of S. Peter's experienced his unselfish liberality, especially in cases of misfortune and serious domestic troubles. By them he was dearly loved, and that with a certain pride in having him for their Archpriest.

He had a special predilection for the *Sampietrini*, and sought in every way to help them morally and materially, and encourage them in their arduous daily labours. He was very generous to them, especially whenever they did any work at his residence of Santa Marta, knew them all by name, and joked with some of them good-naturedly. The good *Sampietrini* were devoted to him; every year without fail, on his feast day, a delegation of the oldest among them presented him with a magnificent basket of flowers, purchased with the contributions of all, and to His Eminence this was the most expressive and precious of his gifts. On the morning of October 10th, 1930, those who went to his tomb could admire before it a mass of beautiful flowers, with this simple and moving inscription: *The Sampietrini to their unforgettable Cardinal*. His hand was outstretched to help in secret, also, in cases where his help had not been asked.

At his own expense, he wished to reprint the Proper Breviary of the Basilica, and formed a special capitular commission, to which belonged, among others, Monsignor Achille Ratti, then one of

the Canons, to-day His Holiness Pius XI. They met and carried on their work of revising and arranging, under his presidency, in the library of the *palazzina* of Santa Marta, but when the reigning pontiff expressed his desire to give this present to the Chapter himself, the Cardinal Archpriest, following the example of his sometime predecessor in the office, the Cardinal Duke of York, had printed the new edition of the Office of Holy Week, adding to it the Offices of Christmas Day and the feast of SS. Peter and Paul. Thus the Offices needed on the only days when the Clergy are not in the Chapel of the Choir were bound together in one handy volume.

He took special interest in the choice of the preachers for Lent and Advent, considering the various proposals with the Canon-Secretary of the Chapter, and making sure that, besides possessing other qualifications, the orator was sound in his explanation of Catholic doctrine. He took pleasure in attending the sermons himself, and discussed them afterwards with his intimate friends, telling them his own impressions. He acted likewise when the preacher had to be chosen for the triennial capitular Retreat, in which he always took part himself to the general edification.

Once, as a souvenir of the Retreat, he distributed to the canons the Exhortation given by Pius X to the Catholic clergy, in memory of his Jubilee of priesthood. He had translated into English, by Dr. Thomas Tobin, the little work *Comede*, by Father Robert Montoli, which gives the Exhortation in 100 meditations for priests; and for this he wrote an Introduction which, as was justly remarked by

Canon Andreani, Professor of the Senior Seminary at Como, 'reveals his truly priestly soul in all its beauty.'

As Prefect of the Fabric of S. Peter's, he brought to the Basilica a contribution of activity and direction which was both effective and lasting. He made a point of examining everything connected with its ordinary upkeep, as well as the need for fresh work, and sought to promote the interests of the administration in every possible way.

On the death of Pius X, as at that of Benedict XV, he was charged by the Sacred College to choose the places for the tombs in the crypt of S. Peter's. He made very detailed observations and selected the spots which best answered to the needs of the cases, and showed wonderful self-control as he assisted at all the mournful ceremonies of the sepulture, and the walling up and covering with marble of the tomb of Pius X. It seemed as though, in that blessed tomb, he had laid also his own sorrow-stricken heart!

On February 6th 1925, he was present at the unveiling of the memorial tablet given by Norway, and set in the crypt wall beside the tomb of Adrian IV, the only English Pope, who died in 1159.¹

February 20th of the same year saw him at the opening of the new Museum of S. Peter's, due to the munificence of Benedict XV and Pius XI, which adjoins the Vatican Basilica and was erected

¹ Adrian IV (Nicholas Breakspear) was sent to Norway as Legate by Eugenius III. There he founded the See of Nidaros in 1152, ended the civil wars by reconciling the sons of King Harold, organised the hierarchy and did much for the Christian instruction and civilisation of the people.

to house all that serves to illustrate its history and artistic evolution. He also carried out the happy idea of having inscribed on a large marble tablet, in the entrance to the Sacristy, the names and dates of the fourteen popes buried in the Basilica. The tablet is adorned with a rich bronze frieze and surmounted by a figure of S. Peter.

In 1924, accompanied by a representative of the Chapter, he went to Arenzano, near Genoa, in order to crown the image of the Child Jesus of Prague, so greatly venerated at that sanctuary. The demonstrations of Faith were solemn, and the honour shown to the pious cardinal unforgettable. It was then that he recalled how 'a sweet bond linked him to the Infant Jesus of Prague; for it was in that city, and under His auspices, that he had consecrated himself to God, when he received the Subdiaconate; and therefore that day's solemn coronation awoke in him a precious personal memory.'

On Sunday, June 22nd, 1924, in the vast space outside the portico of S. Peter's, in presence of the Chapter and a great crowd of the faithful, he solemnly crowned the statue of Our Lady of Graces, which is venerated in the church dedicated to her in the Via di Porta Angelica. On January 25th in the following year, in the church of S. Nicholas-in-Carcere, amidst a rejoicing throng, including a large pilgrimage of Mexicans, he performed the crowning of Our Lady of Guadeloupe, which statue the Jesuit Fathers brought to Rome from Mexico in the second half of the eighteenth century.

As he had done to Benedict XV, so to Pius XI,

the present Pope, he presented the Chapter and clergy of the Vatican, at the beginning of the pontificate, expressing their devoted homage. In reply Pius XI used words of high and paternal praise for him, and, recalling among other matters his assiduous attendance in choir, was pleased to call him still 'my Archpriest.'

In 1926 the twenty-fifth anniversary came round of the Association of Christian Doctrine, for the boys and girls of the Roman parishes, the foundations of which had been laid in 1901 by the pious noblewoman, Evangelina Caymari. Cardinal Merry del Val may be reckoned its co-founder, since he was its first guide and strongest support as President of the Accademia. On April 26th of that year he celebrated Mass in S. Peter's, at the Altar of the Chair, and gave their First Holy Communion to six hundred boys and girls. After the Mass the children were grouped under banners, according to their different parishes, and marched from the Basilica to the neighbouring papal hospice of Santa Marta, where they were regaled with a feast-day breakfast. The Cardinal shared it, surrounded by the Council directing the work, and by many parish priests of Rome. Some little girls gave him an address of thanks and, as a souvenir, presented him with a picture of our Lord blessing little children. Then the Cardinal rose and, much moved, mounted on a bench and, with gentle, fatherly familiarity, after having with difficulty secured a little silence, delivered an extempore address, suited to the memorable day, when those dear little ones had received for the first time the Bread of Angels.

In the course of it he said that God had made for us many beautiful things ; all His gifts, all the beauties of nature, with which He has surrounded us. But the most beautiful, and the most precious of all is that divine Eucharist, that Holy Communion, wherein He gives us not something which He has created but His whole self, to be our companion, our friend, our comforter, our physician in the ills which affect our souls. All this these dear boys and girls had known when for the first time they had received Jesus into their innocent hearts. Therefore—he concluded—let that Communion be not an isolated act in their lives, but the first of a long series of frequent, and ever more fervent, Communions ; so that, when they came to the end of life, their last Communion might be as their first, and a ray of the glory of Heaven.

His words roused unrestrained enthusiasm in the great throng of children, who were won by the gentleness of his face and his kindness.

The work he undertook for the erection of the monument to Pius X in S. Peter's was a long labour of love. It was solemnly unveiled in the presence of Pius XI, surrounded by many members of the Sacred College, on June 28th, 1923. There were present also the Diplomatic Corps, the Roman Patrician families, members of Religious Orders and Catholic laity. The inaugural address was delivered by the Cardinal-Archpriest, as President of the cardinalitial commission, and was vibrant with tender and devoted loyalty to the memory of the holy Pontiff. In his reply the Holy

Father said that, from the monument, spoke the Saint :

'The Saint speaks ; he who seems truly to say to us : *Sursum Corda!* Hearts on high ! He seems to tell us that our conversation is in Heaven ; he seems to remind us how far above all the things of poor earth are the eternal treasures ; he seems to call us to the things above, to all that is holy ; all that brings us closer to God. *Venite adoremus!* *Venite adoremus!*'

He added further :

'Here, truly, is a monument and a glory which, notwithstanding all his modesty, all his invincible humility, cannot be displeasing even to the humble and lowly son of Riese ! Here is one of those glories before which neither the poet nor the historian will have to stop and ask himself whether it were true glory ! This is true glory, for it is born of pure and beneficent goodness ; because it derives its origin from God, and leads back again to God.'

With every care, and in a thousand ways, the Cardinal-Archpriest showed the affection which linked him to *his* Basilica in the years of his office, and he wished to give proof of it even after his death, for he left provision for the re-flooring of the marble pavement around the Confession. The new pavement is in polychrome marble with a variegated design in which the principal *motif* is a sea shell, with intertwining white bands. The area extends for 1300 square metres in the immense circle beneath the cupola. The following inscription, recording the generous act of the great Cardinal, was composed by Monsignor Giuseppe Del Ton :

MARMOREUM STRATUM—QUOD LOCUM CONFESSIONIS
BEATISSIMI PETRI—VARIO PERSPICUOQUE AMBIT
NITORE—RAPHAEL S.R.E. CARD. MERRY DEL VAL—
PATR. VATICANÆ BASILICÆ ARCHIPRESBYTER—PRO
SUA IN APOSTOLORUM PRINCIPEM—INCENSA PIETATE
—PROPRIO ÆRE REFICIENDUM CURAVIT.—A.D.
MDCCCXXX.¹

Laudatory as they were, the words wherein the late Monsignor Talamo, Dean of the Vatican Chapter, addressed the congratulations for the Cardinal's Episcopal Jubilee were deserved:

' Archpriest of this Patriarchal Basilica, revered and loved by us all, you, Most Eminent Prince, carry out the many duties involved with exemplary and admired dignity, befitting the magnificence of the temple and the splendour of the worship carried out therein.

' It is not the honour which attracts and allures you, it is your living spirit of religion which renders you assiduous and zealous for the honour of this place which, built upon the unshakable Rock of Peter, reveals to the world the infinite majesty of the House of the living God. And, ably and wisely, you rule in the same spirit. In every difficulty which crosses our way, whatever vicissitudes arise, whithersoever our aspirations turn, your counsel, your clear insight, and the generous impulse of your heart, are ever there to help us. And now we are gathered together to testify in public our love, our gratitude and our veneration.'

¹ This marble pavement which, in the brightness of many colours encircles the Confession of Blessed Peter, His Most Reverend Eminence, Cardinal Merry del Val, Archpriest of the Vatican Basilica, out of his ardent love towards the Prince of the Apostles, caused to be restored at his own expense, A.D. 1930.

CHAPTER VII

THE CARDINAL OF THE TRASTEVERE

THE young Merry del Val was still a student at the Accademia, and not yet a priest, when, owing to one of the students being transferred elsewhere, there was no priest to minister to the boys of the Pontifical Mastai School for the poor, directed by the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

As it was by now a tradition that the Mastai School should have for its Spiritual Director one of the students of the Accademia, the head of the school, Brother Ludovico, went to the President to ask for another priest. The President informed the good Brother that he had available a young man, possessing remarkable gifts of mind and heart, and that he would send him as soon as ever he was ordained priest. The young man was Rafael Merry del Val. Accordingly, he was scarcely ordained than, in January, 1889, he went to the Trastevere to celebrate Mass for the boys of the school.

From his first coming into contact with the young people of the Trastevere he realised the good which might be accomplished, and which would result in a revival of faith, religious practice, and Christian life. Consequently he placed his plans and his hopes in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and had scarcely

been appointed to the post of Spiritual Director of the Mastai School by Cardinal Parocchi, the Pope's Vicar, on January 25th, when he began to cultivate the devotion to the Sacred Heart among the children.

Every Saturday evening he went on foot to the school in the Via delle Fratte, picking his way amid the débris of demolished houses (knocked down in order to open up the King's Avenue), and heard the boys' confessions. It was already almost night when he left the Trastevere, wherein at rare intervals oil lamps faintly lighted up the dangerous, encumbered street. At an early hour on Sunday morning he returned to say Mass, comment on the Gospel of the day, give them Holy Communion, and instruct them in religion generally. Shortly afterwards, on March 1st, 1889, he had them enrolled in the Apostleship of Prayer, introducing also the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

As, with growing surprise, he noted the piety of some of the children, he thought of uniting them into a sodality of the Sacred Heart, and of devoting himself especially to those who were the best in the school, as also to those who were about to leave it. Having decided and established the association during the school year 1889-1890, he formally inaugurated it on April 18th, 1890. Hence, besides being the Spiritual Director of the school children, he was also the Director of the Association, that is the spiritual Father of the little band which was the nucleus from which developed later the Pious Association of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

He began to gather the members every Friday in the Mastai School, to give them spiritual conferences,

followed by Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Meanwhile other children who attended the school asked to be admitted; the little group increased rapidly, increasing with it the laborious, tireless zeal of the Director. Very soon, however, the various and important tasks entrusted to him prevented Monsignor Merry del Val from retaining the general care of the school; so, in order not to abandon his Trasteverini, but even redouble his zeal and energy, he transformed the sodality, now increased by new members, into the Pious Association of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

From that time of enthusiasm date the beautiful customs of the devotion of the Scala Santa, of retreats in preparation for Easter and the feast of the Sacred Heart, as well as their outings, their feasts, and their annual excursions to Castelli. And from that time also there shone forth in their young Director the gifts which afterwards served to define and characterise him; his humility, his charity, and the strength of character which, united to his piety and learning, would synthesize all his gracious, spotless life.

How humble he was all could see and say; how firm, yet never obstinate, all now knew and learned; but how charitable not all knew; only those knew whom he helped in secret. One of the first boys, then only fourteen years of age, and to-day a father, used to take notes of the instructions given them. These are still preserved and show how the zealous Director exercised his apostolate among them; their authenticity and simplicity make them worth reproducing in part.

1891. MONTH OF MAY

Monsignor, among other things, recommended us in chapel 'to be a little more generous in "gathering flowers" during this month dedicated to Our Lady,' and also reminded us to go to Communion every Sunday after the First Friday of each month, according to the obligation we undertake when we enter the sodality.

MONTH OF JUNE

Monsignor talked to us so well about the month of the Sacred Heart, saying that we may call it *our month*. After the month consecrated to Our Most Holy Mother comes the month consecrated to her Divine Son. He died on the Cross for our redemption; He has shed all His Blood for us. That Heart, infinitely good, pardons us the faults we have committed because we try to love Him and honour Him with prayers and good works, especially in this month. Jesus has said: 'Those who honour my Heart will receive special graces.' Let us spend this month holily as we hope to do; and let us be good for all the rest of our lives, if we wish to enjoy Heaven for all eternity!

June 9th has this note: 'When we entered the chapel to-day we were delighted to see the altar hung, by our dear Monsignor, with red stuff covered with gold stars. This is to be used on the chief feasts of our society.'

And again: 'To-day for the first time Monsignor gave Benediction with the Monstrance and in a cope.'

1892. JUNE

'Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.' It is the feast of all the hearts who love Him; we are united to them in the same faith for the same end: to give our heart to Jesus, who is asking for it, and in all our actions to work according to His holy Will, as do those who faithfully respond to His call.

Sermon and reminders for the closing of the month. Our Director said that: 'Humility is not that of the child who hangs its head when its father or mother scolds it; nor does it consist in saying that we have not done a work well when we have and others praise it. It is when, although we have done well, and others praise us, we say: "What I have done is a gift of God and therefore to Him be the praise!" Charity must not be done in order to be praised by people, but for love of God, because Christ has said: "Whatsoever you have done to your neighbour you have done to Me." If we have done good to our neighbour we shall one day hear our Lord's words.'

Here are some thoughts from the exhortations of 1893:

'If we suffer anything, or any pain which tries us, let us think of One who suffered more than we; let us think of Jesus Christ, who suffered as never a creature of this world could suffer. Let us strive not to sin, because by sinning we renew the Passion of our Lord. Let us fly from temptation; if we dally with temptation we shall fall into sin, because we are weak; a good boy who goes with bad companions will, sooner or later, be led into evil.'

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT. 'Those who are poor, and resigned to the will of God are

preparing Heaven in this world. Whoever is rich in this life, and leaves the world, and riches and pleasures in order to follow God's commandments, is not poor in money, but he is poor in spirit. We are not poor in spirit unless we are humble. Hence if we are poor in this world, let us not say: "God is against me; all the troubles fall on me!" but "God's will be done!" So one day we shall go to rejoice in Heaven.'

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY SHALL POSSESS THE LAND. 'To be meek does not mean to have naturally a peaceable disposition, which is upset at nothing; this is a natural gift. But it does mean that we acquire the virtue of meekness by fighting for it, by prayer, and by flying from the occasions in which we might fail in this beautiful virtue of which Jesus Christ said: *Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.*'

'We must be meek with God, accepting all, even trials, without murmuring at Providence, but taking them with humility and resignation. We must be meek with our neighbour and so win him to God. This is what the saints did, such as S. Ignatius Loyola, S. Francis de Sales and others.'

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED. 'All men have miseries in this world, and may be said to mourn, but not all can apply this Beatitude to themselves. Those are blessed who mourn over their faults, their sins, the sins of their neighbours who are seriously offending God. (Indeed this is one of the ends of our institution.) God does not forbid us to mourn for a temporal affliction, such, for example, as the loss

of someone we love, but we must mourn with submission to the will of God, as He did at the death of Lazarus. He who murmurs at the trials which he meets will find no comfort in this life, and he is preparing himself to mourn eternally.'

'So when we feel a certain *weariness of being brave* in life, let us take up our Rosary and meditate on the Joyful Mysteries, reflecting how our Lord spent His life at home. When we only want what pleases us, let us meditate on the Sorrowful Mysteries. And finally, when we feel we are too much attached to the things of this world, let us say the Rosary, meditating on the Glorious Mysteries.'

'The love which our Lord has for man. Jesus loves us with a love which is infinite, and constant, and therefore we ought to do all in our power to love Him. . . . But in order to correspond to this love we must pray, for by prayer we obtain all that we wish, provided that it be not sinful.'

'He used to gather the children into his fatherly arms,' writes Virgilio Signori, one of the Associates; 'by the teaching of the Gospel he cultivated in them the Christian spirit; and in order that this spirit might be always preserved in its integrity in the Association, he never allowed others to introduce into it any tone which might destroy the fruit of his teaching, notwithstanding the criticism he received in some quarters. More than once he had to repeat: "Ours is a pious Association; an association—yes; but a pious one: therefore it ought to have no object in view other than that of turning out good Catholics, good fathers of families, and excellent citizens!"'

He provided the club with a billiard table, a piano, a theatre, and a hall for all the games and gymnastics. In 1905 he secured for it a vineyard, outside Porta Portese, four kilometres from the club premises, so that the members might go out there with more freedom to enjoy themselves and be far away from sources of danger. And he went out there also, taking part in their games of tennis, archery, etc. 'We used to see him making himself completely one of us, even in his conversation; it was really as though he had no thought but ours; and for all, big and little, he had a brotherly and a fatherly word. Like S. Philip Neri he became a child with children.

'At first the boys were provided with bicycles in order to reach the vineyard more easily, but later on he supplied them with a brake drawn by two mules. Sometimes on the Via Portuense, the party would be met and passed by the Cardinal's car; then there would be a joyous outburst of greetings, the mules would be urged on so as to reach the playground more quickly, where His Eminence was already awaiting us.'

If he spent so generously to provide his Trastevere club with these things, he did it in order to keep alive and increase not only the religious spirit, but the general culture, the education of his beloved boys; in order that they might have the means of developing (preferably without noticing it) those human feelings which, when they are logical, just, and holy, produce as a consequence the improvement of the social class. But there was nothing political about the Association and the Associates. 'When,'

as Father Jacoboni recounted in his commemorative discourse, 'some young men, in a secret meeting, tried to alter the supernatural *raison d'être* of the work, he expelled them rigorously. When, under the pretext of Catholic Action, strangers offered to patronise it, he locked the doors; and when, from afar, he received pressing invitations for his boys to take part in the noisy demonstrations of protest against insults to Christ and the Church, he, who would never tolerate politics in the Association, answered them thus: "It is enough for me to make good Catholics, and good fathers; so doing I am sure of making good citizens." And to another: "The Church of Christ is defended by the prayer, the love, and the charity of Christ, rather than by street skirmishes." Nor would he let himself be coaxed or moved. Perchance he thought that shouts of: "Long live this! Down with that!" would, in some degree, lessen the serene composure of those souls, cool their fervour, loosen the bond of charity; perhaps also he reflected that his boys, so often nourished with the Bread of the strong, so thoroughly trained to the spirit of sacrifice, if the occasion called for it would feel themselves capable of renewing the marvel of that Tarcisius who, insulted, struck, never relaxed the close embrace wherewith he was defending the most holy Flesh of Christ from profanation!'

At the Cancelleria, Count dalla Torre said: 'He was everything to his Association; director, counsellor, hidden benefactor, the companion of their recreations, their father; I should rather say their elder brother, in that family which now numbers

250 sons, and which in the course of the years has seen over 1500 pass through its ranks. He was their brother because, rather than above them, he was at the side of all, even the smallest. He loved especially the simple, affectionate liveliness of these, wherewith they were wont to surround him, and call out: *Eminence!* in a manner which certainly emphasised the anachronism of the title! Yet no one perceived it; neither the Cardinal nor his little "ragamuffins," who on seeing him arrive sometimes in "the Sacred Purple," having just come from some solemnity or great occasion, far from being awed by such signs of venerable authority, had rather the air of thinking: "He has not had time to change, but we are having him all the same!"

'He was a brother, but one of those brothers who are loved above all because they understand and *read* us! admonish and do not reprimand, do not punish, but look at us, when necessary, with a look of sorrow which is the hardest of punishments. Once a misunderstanding cast a shadow over that constant family brightness. Elsewhere it would never have been noticed, but in a clear sky every veil of mist seems a cloud. The Cardinal grieved over it, but he did not breathe a word. Yet it was that silence of his which spoke; it was oppressive, exasperating! They thought of writing to him to beg his pardon. He replied simply: "Reassure yourselves. We love one another so much!"

'They all loved him dearly: how dearly! But at the same time they had such respect for him that the fear of displeasing him kept them from any act of wrong-doing. And they knew that he held firmly

to his decisions, and that they had to behave themselves, since he would never tolerate a scandal; whoever failed in that point would have been expelled for ever from the Association.

'He was all! He was even their intercessor with the officials of the Association, and the older ones who sometimes failed to sympathise with the young folk. When the confidence of Pius X called him to his side as Secretary of State, the Cardinal did not leave the Association; he even wished to be with his boys every day, as he promised on the day he was raised to the Purple. When someone expressed the fear of no longer having him in the Trastevere, he said: "Although raised to this dignity, I shall never forget my Trastevere boys. Rather I want to be with them often, and with them enjoy peace and rest after the many and wearying occupations imposed by the high office to which the goodness of the Holy Father has called me."'

And faithfully he kept his promise! On the last Sunday of October, 1928, when all together they were celebrating both his feast and his Cardinalial Silver Jubilee, he said: 'I have the consolation of thinking that I have never yet broken my promise of twenty-five years ago!'

Although he wanted them to be united in one holy purpose, for their social gatherings he always had them divided into three groups; the elder ones, those who were younger, and the little ones properly so-called. And he divided himself among them all!

When the disastrous earthquake destroyed Reggio and Messina, not a few of the older Associates

enrolled themselves as voluntary Red Cross helpers on the trains of the Knights of Malta. The Cardinal rejoiced, and later on allowed them to have a performance in their own theatre in aid of the Calabrian Relief Fund.

If from time to time there were those who donned the cassock, and to whose vocation the bearing of their spiritual Director, as they watched and pondered over it, had certainly contributed, many there were who, as years went on, founded families and proved themselves such fathers as he has said he wished to form. The coveted privilege, which everyone considered the richest of wedding presents, was to be married by the Cardinal. He systematically refrained from going to fashionable weddings, but he loved to be present at those of his boys. It was his fervent wish, and his sweetest gift to call down the blessing of God upon the beginnings of these new families.

His winning charm, his wisdom, and his kindness, added to something spiritual and indefinable which emanated from him, led those who came into contact with him for any length of time to open their hearts to him. He became, in turn, the confidant of the wives and young mothers, and he then gave them wise advice, in order that the marriages he had blessed might be happy. How he rejoiced to stand in the garden of the Association on the days when they came to performances in the theatre, and watch those families pass by whose beginnings he had blessed! And for all he had a smile, a word, and sometimes a question, a playful remark, or a hasty

word of counsel which he knew how to convey to the one for whom it was meant.

And he was with them in hours of difficulty and sorrow. 'When the country called its sons to the front,' writes Signori, 'all those youths trained, by the Cardinal's care, to goodness, to strong clear-cut Christian principles, and to sincere love of their country, left with full understanding of the duty to be done, without recriminations, and without useless flourish of trumpets. With a smile on his lips, betraying no sign of his fatherly anguish, he bade them good-bye; those loved sons! He continued to strengthen them by writing to them when they were at the posts assigned to them, and those letters were full not only of affection, but of counsel, resignation and encouragement in the hard trial.'

In November, 1916, he had scarcely heard that one was wounded than he wrote:

'I have this moment learned that you are wounded and seriously. I am deeply grieved about it, and write to assure you of my sympathy. You have nobly done your duty, and for that I congratulate you with all my heart, but my sorrow is great when I think of what you have suffered and are still suffering. I do not know where you are, and it is not in my power to help you, but if I can do anything, now or later on, do tell me. I am praying more than ever for you and your family, and trust that God will comfort and cure you.'

To another he wrote thus:

'In the hope that these lines will reach you, I am writing to tell you that I am thinking about you

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and want to comfort you. We have been very uneasy for a long time, for we had no news of you and, knowing nothing, feared the worst. You will understand the anxiety of your father and mother. I have had the joy of letting them know that you are safe. Now there remains the sorrow of knowing you are a prisoner, and perhaps deprived of everything. To-day your mother gave me your letter of the 2nd of December to read. She has sent off the parcels, but does not know whether you have yet received them. It is not possible to send all you want, for the regulations concerning them are precise, and necessarily restrictive, but all that is possible shall be done. I have interested the Nuncio to Munich, Monsignor Pacelli, in you, and asked him, if he can, to provide for your needs, authorising him to incur whatever expense is useful and necessary.

'Your father and mother are both well and we meet often. Naturally the subject of our conversations is always Virgilio! All your companions in the Association are interested in you and often talk about the dear prisoner; and also of those who are at the Front. Of some, however, we have heard nothing since October, and have reason to fear that they have fallen. Of Pierini, Gaudenzi, Fraticelli, and Brother Alfred we know nothing and our hopes are dying from day to day. God grant that they also may be safe! Berni is home, wounded, but not seriously. Do not lose heart. Take all the care possible of your health, and put yourself in God's hands.

'I should like to know if you are kept completely

idle. Meanwhile, as you know, I do not forget you and we are near each other in thought. I am praying for you, and commending you to the protection of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of Mary Most Holy, and I bless you with all my love.'

So many were those who took part in the European conflict that, writing to one in the front line, the Cardinal says: 'Owing to the continual need for calling up more, the life of the Association may be said to be finished. There remain only the little ones and some invalids, and the thoughts of all are with the dear ones far away.'

The War came to an end, and every member, some of whom had gained their Commissions and been decorated, returned to the Trastevere; save some sad, yet glorious exceptions. And they were welcomed by the joyous, loving, and proud heart of him who during the long trial had given them comfort, advice, support, by those letters which had come from the pure spring of his own soul.

'What a fascination there was,' says Signori again, 'in the delicacy wherewith our Cardinal provided for the needs of his numerous family, in so many critical moments! A delicacy which was shown more especially to those who were more unfortunate, poorer, in greater necessity! He gave without humiliating anyone who received from him, because when he practised charity he humbled himself, and in his act there was a something indefinably noble. Perhaps it is best expressed by the phrase used of him: "He descended without lowering himself."'

If to the poor he gave money and paid the rent,

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for those in need he secured work which assured their daily bread, whilst for the sick and unhappy he provided effective, and usually expensive, care and remedies, so that they might regain their lost health. And when the trouble was irremediable he tried to lighten it by every human means. There are former Associates who remember how one of them, struck down, in early youth, by a terrible malady, was placed in a nursing-home and tended wholly at the Cardinal's expense; and how His Eminence rejoiced when he saw him cured, and then obtained for him a position which might assure his future. But the Cardinal placed many *Trasteverini*, and many there are to-day who owe to him the security of their livelihood, as also the position of consideration to which they have risen in the circles where they were called to exercise their activity.

Well indeed did the *Trasteverini* call him by that name which he so worthily bore: their pitying angel—their Saint Raphael!

To his boys the Cardinal left in his will a last holy and loving thought: 'I bless my dear sons of the Trastevere.' To his boys he gave his last steps, the last evening he went out of his house. And for five days and nights his boys devoutly watched by his body. Then they put their names beside him in his coffin, a sweet pledge of the love which had bound them indissolubly to him here below, and will endure for ever beyond!

In the hall of the Association of the Sacred Heart a tablet records the work carried on for forty years, in joy and in sorrow, by Cardinal Merry

del Val. The epitaph was composed by Don Jacoboni:

TO THE DEAR AND PATERNAL MEMORY
OF CARDINAL RAPHAEL MERRY DEL VAL
WHO FOUNDED, DIRECTED AND ENDOWED THIS PIOUS
ASSOCIATION OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS,
FOR THE TRAINING OF THE SONS OF THE TRASTEVERE;
THE MEMBERS
WHO BY THIS GREAT PRINCE OF THE CHURCH WERE
TRAINED

TO KNOW THE HOLINESS OF DUTY, AND IN THE
OPEN PROFESSION OF THE FAITH,
HOLDING IN BENEDICTION FOR THEMSELVES AND
FOR THEIR POSTERITY THE NEW PHILIP NERI, THE
LAMENTED COUNSELLOR, TEACHER, AND BENEFACTOR
WHO, IN THIS PLACE, MADE HIMSELF LITTLE
WITH THE LITTLE ONES AND REFRESHED HIM-
SELF AFTER THE CARES OF HIS MANY DUTIES,
HAVE ERECTED THIS TABLET, IN TOKEN OF THEIR
DEVOTION AND UNDYING GRATITUDE.

26 FEBRUARY 1931

THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF HIS DEATH.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE PRIEST AND THE MAN

SELDOM does it happen that the fairest gifts of soul and body are combined, in perfect harmony, in the same person; but when such is the case the result is an exceptional man. To this small, but favoured band belonged Cardinal Merry del Val, whom men who differed widely yet agreed in considering one of the outstanding personalities of our time.

Noble by blood, highly educated, of distinguished personal appearance, his natural bent for the fine arts, his superior mental gifts, the winning charm of his speech, his kind-heartedness, and his constant practice of the highest virtues made of him a rare figure, whether as man or as priest. As an English writer has justly said of him: 'His was an indescribable personality.'

The expression of his face was quite peculiar to himself; now like a caress, anon like a gentle command, his voice had a *timbre* of its own: and from his whole person there emanated a sort of fascination. His dignity was blended with a condescending kindness; his courtliness with an exquisite sense of affectionate familiarity; a nobility of heart which could make itself felt yet was never oppressive.

'To paint him,' wrote Henri Bordeaux, of the Académie Française, in his *Sunny Italy*, 'calls for

a Van Dyck or a Velasquez. He is so truly a Prince of the Church; a prince in his stature, the majesty of his bearing, his knowledge of the world, the authority of his word. But he is a priest in his gravity, and in the intensity of his interior life. He is tall, agile, rather pale; the face is long, the eyes dark and shaded by black lashes, the head very erect. There is nothing false, bitter, affected about him; but his graceful bearing is natural to him and you realise at once the disciplined spirit, wholly directed to one single purpose . . .'

The Cardinal's artist's soul rejoiced in the beauties of nature. He wrote many a poetic verse in English on Italy, and in his later years he delighted in photography and took some very fine views in Italy, Switzerland and England. His fine sense of appreciation showed itself in his successful choice of the most suggestive features of a landscape, and the finest points of a panoramic view. He heartily disliked anything in the shape of a portrait of himself, and only very rarely was he induced to sit for one. Nor would he spend a farthing upon such, saying that he had a scruple about it.

From his boyhood he worked much at fretwork and produced some charming objects. He regretted that among the many things he had been taught at school drawing had not been included, but he taught himself and, by dint of practising during his holidays at Rieti, he succeeded in turning out some very creditable water-colour sketches, especially of different views in the Abruzzi. He would have destroyed them as worthless, had not some intimate friends prevented him.

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'Nature was always a feast to him,' said Count dalla Torre. 'In it he admired the reflection of the Divine Artist and Creator. Everywhere it sang to him, raising his thoughts, so used to the lights of contemplation. At Subiaco, Monte Cassino, in hallowed valleys, on the Alps, faced by the eternal snows, on summits which seem to bring mortal man nearer to Heaven, he would spend hours, as though in an ecstasy of delight. With loving care he recorded every detail, every panorama, by means of his camera, as though he were adding pages to his meditation book. In the souls of the humble and the lowly, in their simple virtues, he saw mirrored that clear sky, that cloudless light; he felt there the healthy breeze of innocence. And he loved them; happy to be with them, despoiled of state, far from all grandeur; to pray in their little churches, to help them often as, like an unforgettable vision, he passed by doing good. Many were the bells up yonder which, at the news of his death, sent him a greeting once more; which uttered a sob of pain in the silence of the forests and meadows; whilst the folk of the mountains gathered together to say the Rosary around the altars where they had so often said it with him.'

On September 2nd, 1925, he visited the celebrated caves of Postumia, and though strictly incognito he was recognised by some visitors, who at once informed the director of the works, Cavaliere Andrea Perco. He greeted the Cardinal and accompanied him personally on the interesting visit, asking him at the end to leave him some impression of the natural wonders. The latter willingly did so, and

wrote these words: 'To me the Cave of Postumia seemed like an immense archives, extending over an incalculable period of time, wherein God has written irrefragable documents of His creative omnipotence, and where He has gathered together precious masterpieces of the progressive history of His wondrous works.'

He was a very gifted musician, and from childhood had studied with great delight and profit. He played the piano brilliantly and performed from memory. His musical culture was wide; he knew the works of the great masters well, especially those of the Italian and German schools. The celebrated baritone, Mattia Battistini, one of his warmest and most devoted admirers, loved to sing to him from the great operas at his villa of Collebaccaro near Rieti. The Cardinal used to recognise the composer at the first notes, to the great surprise of those present. He had a very sensitive musical ear, and his voice was not only tuneful and pleasing, but sufficiently powerful to make itself heard in every part of the Basilica of S. Peter's. It was known that sometimes the choir deliberately pitched the note very high to see whether the Cardinal could reach it, but he never failed their rather mischievous test!

He gave proof also of his ability to compose. 'His beautiful, mystic motet, *O Salutaris Hostia*,' wrote the Cavaliere Silvestrini, who copied the Cardinal's music, 'has been sung several times in different Roman churches, and has always won warm and unqualified admiration.¹ It was sung by the *Cappella Giulia* in S. Peter's at the inauguration

¹ It is traditional that the music in S. Peter's remains in MS.

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of the new organ,¹ before a very select audience, including members of the Diplomatic Corps, and of the Roman aristocracy, as well as the correspondents of various Italian and foreign newspapers. Its success was complete, spontaneous, and unanimous. The following day the papers spoke in high praise of it, dwelling on the talent of the musical cardinal. His other motets are not inferior, so that it is very hard to express a preference. We remember the *Ave Regina Cælorum*, the *Panis Angelicus*, two settings for the *Ave Maris Stella*, a *Tantum ergo*, a *Veni Creator*, and—the last composed and performed before his death—the *Beati Mortui*. All are written for four voices and with organ accompaniment.

‘If his many and heavy duties had allowed him, he would certainly have produced works on a larger scale, but what he did achieve suffices, in our opinion, to throw light at once upon his personality and his artistic powers. In the spring of 1925, Pius XI kindly permitted the celebrated pianist, Ignaz Paderewski, to give a recital in his private library. Paderewski had formerly been President of the Polish Republic, and as Apostolic Nuncio in Poland the Holy Father had had very cordial relations with him. Cardinal Merry del Val was invited and, after the splendid performance, the Pope chatted pleasantly with those present. Drawing

¹ The Cardinal had all five of the organs thoroughly overhauled and modernised. There are two at the side of the Papal Altar, two in the chapel of the choir, and a small one in that of the Blessed Sacrament. They are all comparatively small instruments, since they are only intended to accompany the Liturgy.

Paderewski's attention to His Eminence, he said : “ This is Cardinal Merry del Val, who may be called the Paderewski of the Sacred College.” ’

The many convents of nuns whose zealous Protector he was, found that he did not like to be given presents on special occasions ; so they confined themselves to giving him pictures, leaflets, or painted miniatures, with a list of the Communion, Rosaries, Stations of the Cross, etc., offered for him. He used to be very pleased with these spiritual tokens of esteem, which he preferred to any others whatsoever.

He would never have anything in gold for his personal use, excepting only his crosses and rings. Only after the strongest insistence was he induced to wear a little pair of gold sleeve links on occasions of great solemnity or importance. He always used the commonest watches with the metal chain of the kind called ‘ S. Peter's Chains ’ and indulged. When he kept his Episcopal Jubilee in 1925, his Trastevere boys wanted to give him a gold watch, hoping that if it were offered him under these circumstances he might be persuaded to use it. But he warned them that on this point he would make no exception, and he accepted a silver one, artistically engraved by one of the Associates, but with the ordinary chain. He prized this gift from his loved spiritual sons and always wore it afterwards. Again, he wore shoe buckles of white metal, or at best silver plated, having only one valuable pair for great ceremonies.

During the Great War he wished to do a special act of charity and, not having all the money needed, he had a valuable episcopal ring sold for him in

London, making use of his friend Monsignor Bidwell. Needless to say the Cardinal's name was not mentioned in the transaction.

He was a complete stranger to all desire of worldly goods, and held as a principle, upon which he always acted, that the money derived from the official or ecclesiastical charges he held must be expended in good works, excepting only what was strictly required for his personal needs. When Pius X raised him to the Purple he handed him, in a closed envelope, the sum of 25,000 lire, intended to cover the expenses incurred by his elevation. The Cardinal's assurance that his parents had provided for all his needs availed nothing. The Pope would not allow him to return the money, because ever since his nomination as Secretary of the Sacred College he had received no remuneration whatever. So the Cardinal put aside the 25,000 lire to pay for the installation of central heating in the permanent quarters allotted to the Secretary of State on the first floor of the Vatican.

Although for more than eleven years he was Secretary of State, President of the Administration of the Finances of the Holy See, and Prefect of the Apostolic Palaces, at the death of Pius X Cardinal Merry del Val had only a few thousand lire, and as Archpriest of S. Peter's he had then to repair his future home, the *palazzina* of Santa Marta, which had fallen into a deplorable state of dilapidation. He had also to furnish it suitably, and provide accommodation for his large library. His father then came to his assistance, placing at his disposal a preliminary sum of 100,000 lire.

When, in 1922, the Cardinal's mother was in Rome, she noticed that her son's cardinalial robes needed renewing, but knowing that for him, with all his works of charity and beneficence, such an expense was too great, she took thought for all herself, even giving him a new ermine *mozzetta*.

In the administration of the funds of the Holy See, and especially of the Peter's Pence, he was conscientious to the point of being scrupulous. Never did he touch a lira of it throughout the time that he was Secretary of State, even in cases where help was asked not of him but of the Pope. For these needs—and they were everyday affairs—he always provided from his own purse as far as he could. One who was intimate with him pointed out that these exigencies were part of his office, and that the Holy Father had himself authorised him to use the general funds, at his discretion, under such circumstances. It was all of no use! Whenever the requests were such as he did not think he ought to mention in audience he gave the help from his own means.

In 1908, when Pius X appealed to the generosity of Catholics on behalf of those who had suffered in the great earthquake in Calabria and Sicily, the offerings—which exceeded six million lire—all passed through the Cardinal's hands. He himself drew up the list to be submitted to the Holy Father together with the money, and often he added what was required to bring it up to round figures.

This disinterestedness distinguished him throughout his life. After the death of Pius X, when offerings towards the erection of the monument in

S. Peter's flowed in from all parts of the world, he personally answered and thanked all the donors, and himself paid the by no means small sum for the postage. He would never accept official gifts under any form, since he was convinced that as those who make them cannot but have a private end in view, so he who, in certain positions, receives them loses his prestige and his independence.

He could never understand how people could spend their lives absorbed in amassing material goods. When it happened that ecclesiastics, even those in high positions, but belonging to very poor families, died leaving handsome fortunes to relatives, he, as also Pius X, was not only disgusted but really sad and distressed, especially if the defunct had left nothing to the Church.

He was naturally charitable, and always drawn to sympathise with, and relieve the sufferings and trials of others. Not only did he never refuse help when asked, but often he smoothed away difficulties without being asked and, as far as possible, without even letting it be known that he had done so. In 1929, hearing from the Provincial of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary that one of their houses was in distress for money, 'he took out his purse and emptied it completely, with an air of apologising because it did not contain more, and there were 600 lire!' To Monsignor Celso Constantini, when he was Delegate in China, he gave, as his personal offering, 8000 lire for the Chinese Bishops, on condition that his name should not be revealed.

An elderly foreign lady, belonging to a once very wealthy family, suffered such severe losses

in consequence of the War that she was in the most distressing circumstances. Her husband, a distinguished man, begged the Cardinal to obtain a considerable reduction of the ordinary terms of a religious institute in Rome, which had a home for ladies, so that she might be admitted for the small sum which she could afford. The Cardinal summoned the Superior, told her to accept the boarder with the slender payment she could make, and undertook to make up himself what was lacking, requiring the Religious to keep the secret. Shortly afterwards he received grateful thanks for having so quickly secured the desired reduction, but neither the lady herself, nor her husband—now dead—ever knew of the Cardinal's generous act.

Many a time, accompanied by Monsignor Canali, and dressed all in black, he entered wretched hovels, anxious to give his help in person. One winter evening, with the weather at its worst, he wandered far afield on foot, searching for an obscure street, to take an alms which had been asked for a pitiable case earlier in the day. At last he found the address and climbed a long staircase in semi-darkness. Scarcely was the door of the miserable dwelling opened, than he contented himself with handing in the envelope and saying: 'This is the answer to your letter of to-day,' and went off, hastening to close the door himself.

One day he went to visit a young man very seriously ill, whose family were in very straitened circumstances, and, without its being noticed, he slipped under the pillow an envelope containing a generous sum. Next day the recipients found it, to

their surprise, and thanked him. Good-naturedly he replied: 'But you do not know who it was! In any case, thank God who has remembered you.' His liberal hand was outstretched in the poorest districts; those of San Lorenzo, the Garbatella, but especially in the Trastevere and in the parish of S. Peter's. Monsignor Salvatore de Angelis, parish priest of S. Peter's, wrote on October 21st, 1930:

'It seems to me that among the rare virtues which adorned the much-loved Cardinal, that which shone out most brightly was his charity and compassion for the poor; and what distinguished his charity was its hidden-ness. He used to place the alms in an envelope, writing on it the name of the person for whom it was intended, and courteously ask the parish priest of the suppliants to see that it reached them. I was often the intermediary of his charities, which were prompt and generous, for the smallest offering was 50 lire. But when there was question of families formerly well-to-do, who had fallen upon evil days, he would give hundreds and hundreds of lire, as also in cases of poor widows, orphans and students. I know that, besides the large alms he lavished on the poor of my parish, he liberally assisted poor people of other parishes, in Rome and outside it.'

His generosity ceased only with his death. A few weeks before he died, by means of a contribution of some thousands of lire, he was able to save from ruin, and final closing, a private provident institution, providing work for women, wherein many poor girls were finding both material occupation and moral training. In the very month of February

which was the last of his life, he had ordered an orthopædic apparatus of special make for an unfortunate man, poor and with a large family. He wished to see the design of this himself and be assured that it was working perfectly. On Sunday, February 23rd, three days before he died, by means of a distinguished ecclesiastic he had given 1000 lire to the Conference of S. Vincent de Paul in the Parish of S. Peter's.

And while he gave much to others he allowed little to himself. His mortifications and abstemiousness were more than monastic. At table he was perfectly indifferent as to the food he ate, and limited himself to what was strictly necessary. His intimate friends testify that they never heard him say whether he liked a dish or not. He would never give orders or make suggestions about his food; he took and ate, with equal satisfaction, whatever was given him. During meals he never remarked upon the food, so that one who shared his table was able to declare that he did not seem to notice what he ate. If he lacked anything at table he did not ask for it. As Secretary of State he never gave private dinners or entertainments, confining himself to giving those customary at the creation of new cardinals, and those to the Diplomatic Corps. As a private individual he invited only near relatives or intimate friends, and he would never make any change in the usual frugality of his table. Likewise he did not accept invitations, or go to receptions, excepting such as his official position obliged him to attend, or where his absence would have been misinterpreted.

His soul was crystalline in its uprightness, and

he detested anything which savoured of dissembling. He was not spared either the world's criticisms or its lack of comprehension. Under his purple there beat a heart which, whilst tender and compassionate for others, knew how to bear in silence, and with unruffled exterior, thanks to its goodness and nobility, many a trial and sorrow. His interior virtue and secret heroism, which he kept jealously hidden from the world, constitute the most admirable and interesting side of his great, grand character. Of this private life, its resignation and complete dedication to the will of God, Sister Clara Vazques, one of the nursing Sisters of the institute of the Handmaids of Mary, who nursed the Cardinal through influenza in January, 1929, and again, a year later, on the last night of his life, thus wrote in her reminiscences of him :

'I had always the greatest veneration for Cardinal Merry del Val. What always struck me was his modesty, the submission he showed. I, who observed him at such close quarters, having nursed him during influenza in January, 1929, and then a year later, can attest that never have I seen him other than completely master of himself—a very difficult thing to be in illness—and it was the fruit of his great virtue. Every time I admired him more. His simplicity and goodness were unique. He was most obedient to whomsoever was nursing him ; he never asked for anything, and he refused nothing. Only sometimes, if it were something which gave him particular disgust, he would say : "Must I take all this ?" When the answer was "Yes," he took it immediately. Everything done for him was

according to him, well done, and he never made the slightest remark. One day I complained to him because he did not tell me what he liked, so that I might look after him better. His only reply was : "Everything is so well done that I could not wish it otherwise." He was perfectly indifferent to food, and I had the impression that he did not care at all what he ate.

'He was very grateful for all that was done for him, and always thanked me for the smallest service. During his convalescence I had the opportunity of hearing his Mass some mornings. He said it with such fervour that it even overflowed into me ; but the words of the *Pater Noster*, especially, left a deep impression.

'On the last night of his life, when the doctors declared that an operation would be necessary, he made no objection, nor even any reply, but remained as tranquil as though nothing serious had happened ; and that not because he did not realise his state, for he had done so from the first visit of the doctor. He said to me himself : "When the doctor made me apply ice, I said nothing, but I understood at once what was the matter."'

In all he saw the will of God, ordering events thus, and he submitted as a victim to the sacrifice as he showed up to the last moment of his life, saying : 'We must die once !' That was why, when celebrating Holy Mass, he used to say : *Fiat voluntas tua* with such earnestness.

During that unforgettable night his temperature was taken frequently, but he never asked anyone what it was, although he well knew that the whole

question of the operation hung just upon the temperature. Ill as he was, he was very thirsty but he never asked for a drink. Only once he remarked: 'My mouth is very dry.' 'He thus mortified and disciplined himself in everything. His was a great soul. It seemed insensible, but in reality it was far otherwise, as was evident from his delicate thought for others.

'On Wednesday morning, February 25th, the last of his life, he received Holy Communion with such great devotion that it brought the tears to my eyes; afterwards he remained profoundly recollected with his Lord. Who knows whether he had not some presentiment?'

The other nurse, Sister Rosario Zabalda, speaks in very similar terms:

'I had occasion to observe him carefully, and note both his bearing and the way in which he practised many and solid virtues, but in my opinion his humility and simplicity shone out beyond all. His self-mastery was such that it was evident in all his actions, and I was deeply edified. As for food or medicine, it seemed as though likes or dislikes did not exist for him. Never did I hear him proffer a word about either.

'And it was clear that he did not practise mortification only in illness, or on special occasions, but habitually. Indeed, one day when I asked the cook what he liked, she replied: "Sister, I do not know. Although I have been a long time in his service, I may say that I have never heard His Eminence make the slightest remark either about the food or the cooking. Whatever we give him he takes it

without saying a word." I saw plainly that it was not that he did not notice things, but that he practised continual self-denial.

'The Cardinal made a good recovery from influenza in 1929, but a year later, in the month of February, I had the indescribable sorrow of looking upon his lifeless body. It was the saddest day of my life. Although the temperature had fallen sufficiently, the doctors decided not to operate on the morning of the 26th, as had been decided on the previous night; and this alone would have been enough to keep the patient preoccupied and agitated, seeing that they were undecided and said nothing. But he did not show the slightest outward sign of impatience, or utter the least complaint, which—humanly speaking—he had just cause for doing. When I took his temperature, he did not ask me what the thermometer registered, although he could not but have known that it was high. His mouth was parched with fever, yet he never opened his lips to ask for a drink of water. One could see that he was profiting by all these trials for his greater penance and mortification.

'At last the time came for the operation, and the surgeon told him that he would be put under a general anæsthetic. Up to then nothing had been said to the Cardinal, and he had asked no questions. A little impressed by the doctor's announcement, he asked: "Would not a local anæsthetic suffice?" "No," replied the surgeon, "you could not resist with only that local one." It must have been a terrible moment for His Eminence, to find himself in this uncertainty between life and death and with

full understanding ; but without another word, he lowered his eyes, and bending his head a little, as though in sign of submission, he answered : " Let them do it, then." These words made me think of the *Fiat* of Gethsemane !

' From the aspect which his whole person then took on, I understood that, in that moment, more than ever, he gave himself wholly to God, to fulfil His holy will in everything, not concealing from himself that that might happen which unfortunately did happen. From that time I have felt certain that that great and generous soul went at once to receive from its Creator the recompense of the just.'

This side of him, which throws so clear a light on his interior life, did not escape those who watched him closely. René Bazin, of the French Academy, thus wrote of him, in the *Révue des Deux Mondes*.

' During his lifetime, widely differing judgements were passed upon Cardinal Merry del Val, and this on account of the great part which he played in the religious and political affairs of his time. Only now that he is dead are men beginning to know him better. As those who were associated with him in his private life and activities speak of what they saw and felt—now of some wise decision, or some expression of sorrow, then of some word of encouragement and help, we perceive the real man, without need of documented history, or rambling recollections that would fail to give a just portrait of him. The death of this great Cardinal revealed to many the hidden secret of his marvellous spiritual life, as the sweet perfumes enclosed in a vase escape when it is broken.'

He who would write the story of his life finds

himself unexpectedly faced with a doubt and a surprise, namely, which was greater, the life of action of this man who played so large a part in one of the most fruitful, and one of the stormiest, pontificates in the history of the Church, as was that of Pius X ; or the hidden life of the spirit, jealously concealed from the world's indiscreet gaze. Truly, as Bazin wrote, he was a mystic, a man of intense interior life.

Some glimpses of his private life, and his home, may fitly close this chapter.

In the private rooms of the *palazzina* of Santa Marta he lived with a modesty which was that of a poor man. He ordinarily wore a simple black cassock with no sign of high rank, and his neglect of himself was such that the faithful Monsignor Canali and the servants had to remember to provide him with necessary personal effects. He never summoned even a servant, save in cases of extreme necessity. The arrangement of the house revealed the twofold aspect of his personality ; that of the Cardinal, who knew what was required by his high dignity, and that of the priest who humbled himself before God in voluntary poverty.

The residence of the Archpriests of the Basilica, Santa Marta, then stood beneath the shadow of the dome, watched over by the great mass of S. Peter's. Here, in December, 1914, after the death of Pius X, the Cardinal retired, dedicating himself entirely to God in a life of silence, of labour for the Church, and the practice of every virtue ; a life wherein trials were not wanting.

The two floors of the house expressed, as it were,

his double personality; the Prince of the Church who, with the dignity befitting his rank, received the small and the great in his state apartments, and the devout and mortified priest who, in his private rooms, wished to live far from luxury in simplicity and poverty.

On the first floor were two antechambers, the reception room, the throne room, the rich library, and the study. All these were furnished with dignity combined with perfect taste, but without anything pompous or too rich. All contained souvenirs of Pius X, busts or pictures, and in a corner of the reception room, in a glass case, were the last white cassock worn by the Pontiff and the papal stole. These were the gifts of the sisters Sarto, and are carefully preserved in England at Ushaw College, to which the Cardinal left them in his will.

On the upper floor were his private rooms. Of these he reserved for himself only two, which communicated with each other by means of a very simple sitting-room. On the walls of this latter were a picture of the Descent from the Cross and one of Our Lady with S. Francis of Assisi, photographs of the Cardinal's mother and of Pius X, and the portrait of the Servant of God, Contardo Ferrini, of whose cause of Beatification he was *Ponente*. It was in this room that the Cardinal was operated upon and died.

His bedroom contained none but the necessary furniture; an old japanned iron bedstead, of Franciscan plainness (the same he had used as a student); a prie-dieu beside it; a cupboard with a little alarm clock; a small table and a stand for

hanging clothes. Only in the last years, urged by the household, did he consent to add a wardrobe with a long glass, which was necessary when he had to put on his state robes. Above the bed hung the picture of Our Lady of Sorrows of Santa Maria in Trastevere, given him by a former Canon of S. Peter's. On the walls were a photograph of Pius X, some religious pictures, and relics. Pius X, whose portrait kept watch in every room, was here again, guarding the sleep and the waking of his faithful minister!

The little study, very characteristic and very dear to the Cardinal, was formed out of a corner of the house, and was shaped like the letter L. The shorter side held his ordinary roll-top desk, with on it a bust of Pius X. On the wall were photographs of his father, mother, and brothers, of Ushaw College, and of his Association in the Trastevere. In the longer portion were an open bookcase and a very ordinary straw chair, of the kind found among the country people. The former contained the books in use, and specially books for spiritual reading and meditation, and of these preferably such as treated of the Passion of our Lord.

The dining-room was in an erection on the roof resembling an observatory, and was a little square room containing only the necessary furniture, and that of studied simplicity, with suitable pictures. The same simplicity marked the two rooms set aside for guests; they were spotless, convenient, and in good taste, but there was nothing luxurious. The same might be said of the rooms, a bedroom and study, assigned to the Cardinal's secretary.

The voluntary mortification of the master of the house was evident in the choice of the furniture, curtains, even the picture-frames, which were of the plainest, but all in harmony without any startling colour contrasts. They reflected his own spirit. There was one exception to the general plainness, and the contrast was so striking that it was evidently intentional; the elegance and richness of the private chapel. The altar was adorned with beautiful hangings; rich old-gold damask covered the walls; carpets, chairs, all were in exquisite taste; and for the chapel he had chosen the finest room on the floor and the only one which was really handsome. The cupboards were filled with rich vestments and linen, and the hangings shone with richness. Here, early every morning, he said Mass, after having made his mental prayer, and said part of the Divine Office in the little study. The remainder of the Office he used to recite with Monsignor Canali. Here during the day he made his visits to the Blessed Sacrament and prayed; here he betook himself to seek counsel of God in difficult matters, and resignation and *abandon* to the Divine Will in hours of trial and sorrow. Here he said his last Mass on the feast of S. Matthias, 1930. All remained as he had left it until the day when the *palazzina* of Santa Marta was demolished. The contents of both his rooms are preserved with loving care by the Spanish Sisters, the *Dame Catechiste*,¹ in their house in

¹ Founded by Mother Dolores Sopeñas, the Institute was approved by the Holy See in 1907, and represents one of the first of the several modern foundations of religious working among the people without any distinctive habit, and under a flexible form of constitution differing from those of older con-

Rome; and they are happy to possess these precious reminders of their Protector and benefactor, who might better be called the co-founder of their flourishing institute.

gregations. It began work among the Spanish working-class; had a house at Barcelona and, as well as other Spanish foundations, has opened houses in Latin America and in Rome. Cardinal Merry del Val was its first Protector, and Pius X took a great interest in it. In 1909 after the 'tragic week' of July at Barcelona, a group of three Spanish workers, all of them anarchists converted by the *Dame Catechiste*, went on pilgrimage to Rome. All persevered as exemplary Catholics, and one, formerly Secretary-General of the Spanish Anarchists, died a very holy death. There is some variety in the spelling of the name of the institute; the above is the simplest form used. In Spain they are known as the *Damas Catequistas*.

CHAPTER IX

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION AND INTERIOR LIFE

WHEN Monsignor Merry del Val was appointed Cardinal Secretary of State by Pius X, the congratulations offered him were innumerable. One person only, in high society, who knew his secret aspirations and fruitful apostolic labours, said to him a little sadly: 'What a heavy cross our Lord has laid upon your shoulders!' He answered promptly: 'I can assure you that you are the solitary person who has told me the truth!' The person in question, as she afterwards acknowledged, was afraid that with his elevation the high spiritual flight of the young prelate, who was radiating truth and goodness all around him, might be arrested. She recognised that she had been mistaken.

The truth was that his sacred ministry was as necessary to him as was his daily bread, and although, owing to his heavy duties and responsibilities in the government of the Church, he had to restrict the field of his spiritual activities, he never ceased to labour in it most zealously, and that until the eve of his death; whether at his work among the youth of the Trastevere, or for the conversion of non-Catholics, or with the spiritual direction of the many souls who had placed themselves under his guidance. The English nursing Sisters of the Little Company

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of Mary enjoyed the Cardinal's spiritual help during many years. He often preached them Retreats, gave them spiritual conferences, and received the vows of several of them. He was also their ordinary confessor, helped and advised them on many occasions, and of some, especially the older ones, he remained in after years their highly appreciated director.

One of the Sisters thus speaks of him:

'As a spiritual Director he inspired souls with his own high ideal of the holiness of Religious. He was rather rigorous at first as a confessor, in order to avoid any slackening in the striving after perfection; at the same time he insisted upon the greatest simplicity, especially with regard to external practices of piety or penance, beyond those prescribed by the Church or the Rule. One nun asked his permission to do some corporal penance during Lent. She was nursing a sick person, and she did not obtain the permission. He would only allow her to practise a little act of mortification at table. At the end of Lent, when she told him she had done what he had told her, he gave her leave to do the penance which at first he had forbidden. That incident is characteristic of his direction. The ordinary things must first be done, and done scrupulously well, and then we might think about the extraordinary.

'At the same time, there was nothing rigid or hard in his character. He liked to be remembered. It had become traditional that one of the Sisters who had nursed him through the serious typhoid of 1900, should send him annually on the feast of S. Raphael some very plain scapulars, black, brown,

and blue, and he appreciated this little attention even when he was Cardinal Secretary of State. The Sister died in 1928, and the last scapulars she had made for him were found in the Cardinal's private desk after his death.'

Another religious of the same institute writes :

'In 1895 the Cardinal preached the Lenten course in English at San Silvestro in Capite. His sermons were crowded by the English colony as well as by many society people who knew the language, and they left a memory still vivid in the minds of those who are yet living. His sermons were always on subjects of high spirituality, and impressive above all were those he preached on the Passion, and on the Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin. Although I have forgotten his words, the sight remains still! I can still recall that tall, slender figure, the calm face, the great dark eyes, the beautiful voice, and simple gestures, which made me think of S. Aloysius Gonzaga. More than thirty-five years have gone by, but the remembrance will never fade.'

To one of the community he wrote on July 24th 1898 :

'I see you are still in the grip of what threatens to become a chronic tendency to lose heart, against which you should battle energetically. It is a bad fault and rarely compatible with real virtue. When will you learn to think of failure as the safest path for you? Success is a danger to most souls; few are able to bear its weight; it is a great danger for you. Your earnest yearning for success should go no further than trying all day and every day to do

your best in God's eyes. When you have done that you have already achieved success, and if insuccess follows, at least outwardly, thank God, who is protecting you from the disaster which would probably follow if you had cause for priding yourself, or taking pleasure at your good success. Take then as your special subject of examination acts of thanksgiving in outward failure, especially when that failure is coupled with a particularly earnest effort on your part to do well. You see, I do not mean you to sit with arms crossed, in the mood of a Quietist, but to try, to try again, and to fail and then rejoice, because God has kept it all so safely for eternity.'

Another fruitful field for his apostolate was the convent of Marie Réparatrice, in the Via dei Lucchesi, especially during the years 1893-1903.

'Many were the conversions,' wrote Mother Raymond, in her memoir, 'which the grace of God brought about by his means, especially when he was at the Accademia. As he lived near our new monastery in the Via dei Lucchesi, he was able to come every day to give the necessary instructions to converts who were preparing for reception into the Church. He helped these until the great step was taken, and always followed them up with devout and fatherly care. He wished to have the consolation of himself presiding at the moving sacred ceremonies which gave new members to the Church. One of the first of these was the reception of an old lady of seventy-four, never baptised. Not infrequently he had the joy of converting husband and wife, mother and children, together. Those were really feast days for him!

'The zeal and interest wherewith he looked after his new converts were wonderful. He held weekly conferences for them during the winter months, in our chapel, in order to direct and establish them in piety and faith; and he gave them many Retreats, also in our convent, in which he faithfully followed the method of S. Ignatius. Afterwards he completed his work for souls in his confessional, which was always much frequented. His heavy correspondence is an eloquent proof of the great charity and intense zeal which always inspired him.'

A lady, held in great respect, who though a foreigner spent nearly all her life in Rome, devoted to good works, and who knew the Cardinal intimately, wrote of him after his death:

'He was brief, concise, strong. In time of trial he did not sympathise with empty words of comfort, as he said that these served only to weaken the souls which he wanted strong. When need called for it, he was not sparing of his time; one might knock at his door always, without fearing to inconvenience him, for he always received one kindly.

'Even when he was Secretary of State, if he knew that his advice was needed he never refused it. He would receive you with that gracious way of his, always cordially; then he gave precisely the counsel required, without the slightest hesitation, and such was his practice till the last. For him they were only souls, without excluding the lowliest. He was so far removed from all merely human considerations, and you felt such an elevation of soul just in his presence, that you ascended on high because he carried you with him, into a wholly

supernatural region. He was always seeking to do good. He guarded his own interior life jealously, but in the intercourse of soul with soul you saw the beauty of that truly chosen soul which was his, and you ended by understanding it.

'Very spiritual, he required that the first-fruits, the best of us, should be given to God; all the rest was secondary, even the greatest works. His direction was solid. He used to say: "It is just when a soul no longer feels any enthusiasm or pleasure, that then it works purely for God, and begins to merit!" He left liberty of spirit to all, allowing each to follow his own path. He knew how to mortify self-love and, if he seemed not to credit, or to doubt what was told him, afterwards he gave proof of his esteem and full confidence. Busy as he was, he weighed what was said carefully, and listened with his whole attention, without haste, and very patiently and calmly, as though he had nothing else to do, even if many people were waiting. He had that rare quality of knowing how to listen!

'For all his reserve and prudence, when he was sure of a soul he was indescribably simple, perfectly frank, speaking straight from his heart, and revealing his own thoughts without fear of indiscretion. This proof of unlimited confidence bound one more than all recommendations. One touching incident may be mentioned. Like the mother of S. Francis de Sales, so also his mother wished to make a general Confession to her priest son. He thought it his duty to grant her request. Mother and son possessed an equally admirable spirit of faith!

An English lady, whom he directed for long years,

writes : ' His direction was always of the practically spiritual kind which did away with scruples ; encouraging, clear, far-seeing. His penetration into character was marvellous, and not less so were his gentleness and goodness. At the same time there was a *tonic* quality about him, an infused joy, which put courage, strength, and freshness into the souls he guided. His language was simple, and when necessary he could reprove severely, whilst still preserving his fatherly gentleness. Many were brought to a sense of their duty by the readiness and willingness with which he bestowed his generous help.

' In his eyes no natural gift was too insignificant to be used for the glory of God, and he always taught his penitents that the means of sanctification are to be found in each one's sphere of life. " Only to stay in peace where God puts me ! Only to do His will ! Never to look beyond our little sphere."

' To a casual observer he might have seemed to be above human sorrows, but such was not the case. He had personal experience of suffering and affliction. He felt and he suffered acutely in a very sensitive nature. One of his special devotions was to *Our Lady of Sorrows*.'

His submission, his resignation, his very acceptance of life were so perfectly natural just because for him they represented nothing other than the Will of God and his ardent thirst for souls. So in a wonderful way his great and ardent soul reigned supreme over his body, which he always used to its last limit in God's service ; and the weight of the charge he bore so admirably protected his body !

Scarcely a month before he died, he thus wrote to one whose life was overshadowed by a foreseen sorrow :

' The years are passed now, and one must be ever ready for the call of God. If there could be any sadness in Heaven it would be that there is nothing more to do for Jesus !'

But the spiritual beauty of his soul shines clear and radiant, above all in his letters and in sentences, chosen here and there, from his manuscripts.

The following lines occur in a letter to one of the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary, in 1928 :

' I am very grateful for your remembrance of me on the 24th inst. [his feast] and for your much valued prayers. I find it hard to realise that I am so old. Forty years a priest, twenty-five a bishop, and twenty-three a cardinal ; and how different my life has been from what I hoped and prayed ! May God's Will be done !'

The remaining extracts are from letters, in different languages, to people in differing states of life, and call for no comment.

' I am hastening to answer your letter of the 18th inst. As I told you by word of mouth, and after having carefully considered the reasons for and against, I think that there can be scarcely any doubt as to your vocation to the religious life. You have been thinking about it for a long time, and during these years have not lacked opportunities for knowing the world, and examining your feelings with respect to an entirely different decision. You are no longer a child, and you are as perfectly able

to decide your future in one direction as in another. To prolong further this period of transition and doubt seems to me useless and harmful. Your motives for believing in a call from God seem to me serious, and if by chance—which I think improbable—they be less well founded than I think to-day, the noviciate will let you know it, and the matter will be settled once and for all. You tell me that the opinion has been expressed that “you have no real vocation, but that it is a *fixed idea*, and that you ought to distract yourself by amusements and novels, etc.” Since when has there been a vocation which does not suppose a *fixed idea*? For my part I cannot conceive how anybody can have a vocation without a very well-fixed idea, and a very fixed will! They talk of distracting yourself with amusements and novels. Is that to say that they want to do all they can to take from you a vocation which you may have? By these means one might succeed in distracting a professed religious, and make him lose his recollection, and destroy his vocation. There are many religious who would run the risk of losing their vocations, were they to be launched into the world where God has not called them; it is more likely still that a vocation may be lost in the case of one who is at the beginning. Vocation is a gift of God and a grace: it is well to take reasonable time, in order to question our heart, and recognise that there is a real vocation, but we must not push things too far, and set to work in such a way as to lose a grace which we may have received. We may put our health to the test in order to try our strength, but I do not think anyone would think of endanger-

ing his life in order to prove that he had good health! Such are the thoughts which occur to me as I read your letter. You did not leave school yesterday, and have not lacked opportunities to test your resolutions within prudent limits. I see no need to delay longer. It is obvious that you will have your difficulties in the religious life, as has every other who decides upon a life of sacrifice, and since you must work to attain to perfection in this state, it must not be imagined that this perfection should be reached before your entrance into the convent. I am sure your good parents, who desire only your happiness, will not hesitate to make a sacrifice which will be very meritorious in the sight of God, who will not fail to bless them. I am praying to our Lord for them and for you, and bless you with all my heart.’

‘MY DEAR CHILD,

‘I was very anxious to have news of you, and I rejoiced to have your letter of this morning. . . . I quite understand how this last stage of the sacrifice is making you suffer, and I sympathise with all my heart. But if I can understand and feel with you, how much more must our Lord understand, and open His compassionate Heart to you! Notwithstanding all your weakness, your fears, your repugnances, you are very near to Him now, but it is a Calvary, and on Calvary we suffer without sensible consolation, and without any light on the human side; but we love with a pure and supernatural love which prepares us for the ineffable and eternal joy of union with God. Look ceaselessly at the Blessed Virgin

at the foot of the Cross, and you will understand. Suffering passes away, but the fruits of suffering endure for all eternity. Take courage. All souls who give themselves to God must pass through this trial, which purifies and tempers our hearts; and the better we give ourselves the more we suffer. Yet our Lord is always at our side, and He calls us to trust all our sorrow to Him, and make our complaints to Him, so that He may bless and help us. I am praying for you every day . . . remember me in your good prayers. . . .'

'Forgive me for writing to you on a typewriter, but by this means I can send you at least a few lines, and thank you for your letter, your good wishes and your prayers. Yes, thank you especially for your prayers, for I need them so much, I who have now so little time to pray, unless it be by trying to pray by all my actions, my occupations and my cares! With all my heart I rejoice that you are happy, and you are so because you are seeking your happiness in the love of our Lord. Take care never to seek it elsewhere, ever in times of trial. Then, above all, turn to Him, for it is in such moments that He waits to tighten around you the bonds of His love, and cause you to gain merit which He is in haste to crown. What strikes me specially in your Retreat resolutions is the one not to fear committing some faults and being corrected for them. That is truly the way to conquer self-love and profit by our weaknesses. It goes without saying that there is no question of being careless, or encouraging a *don't care* attitude, but whilst doing your best not to fail in your duty in anything, you will have a holy

liberty of spirit, of energy in your actions, a prudent and permissible initiative, and lastly a thousand opportunities of practising humility when you fall. The saints acted thus, and their faults and mistakes became the milestones in the road of perfection. Do pray the good God that, if it be His will and for His glory, I may soon be relieved of the burden of this office and free to seek close union with Him in another way.'

'I congratulate you on the silence and solitude which are reserved for you to-day. What more enviable and more useful! Thank God for it. It is a grace to be able to stay in your Carmel! When, by reason of our ill-health, God allows us to be laid aside, or set apart from the usual course of the active life which is going on around us, oh, how privileged we are! To live more completely in God and for God, to increase the spirit of prayer and self-effacement, renounce more, from hour to hour, both outward satisfactions and sensible distractions; what ineffable joy, what peace without idleness! What an apostolate also to exercise for souls in our life of prayer, without the fear of putting obstacles in the way of God's working in us and in others, by the mistakes of our exterior activity, so often moulded by our self-love and our too human spirit! Thank God for it! I bless you with all my heart, and I bless all your intentions.'

'I received yesterday your letter of the 17th. I have read it attentively and re-read it, and it does not seem hard to answer, for I see clearly what you ought to do. As for suffering, if it comes from God it is a salutary trial and a sign of His love;

and then accept the trial willingly, close your eyes, and go on, moment by moment, trusting yourself to the mercy of Jesus, without seeing, without discussion. Your virtue will be far more solid and profitable than in times of consolation. Let Jesus work in your soul as He wills; remain at His feet, resigned and content to be good for nothing.'

'My child, above all you must not think for an instant of receiving Holy Communion less often. Rather, the more you feel the suffering, the more you are in darkness and affliction, the more you must seek relief at the fount of the Eucharist, where every day Jesus is waiting for you, although He hides Himself and is silent. Believe that the trial which you are undergoing at present is sanctifying, and of the greatest value, an opportunity of meriting, and a pledge of love. Be of good heart. If God calls you to this struggle, in itself so arid and with few comforts, it is a sign that He judges you capable of facing it, and that He will give you the grace to endure.'

'Our Lord never lets Himself be vanquished in generosity, and He rewards the efforts you are making to go to Him.'

'Trample energetically on thoughts of pride and vainglory; pay no more attention to them than you do to the noises in the street.'

'Every day give God the first place in your heart, for it is the only one which befits Him.'

'Pray slowly, but if you notice that you have said a prayer hastily or distractedly, do not repeat it, but ask God to give you the grace to do better another time.'

'Mortify your will by gladly giving in to that of others. Mortifications please God because of the love He has of our perfection.'

'You should not do good in order to gain the world's esteem, but neither should you omit to do a good deed for fear of being noticed. Act simply and for God alone and under His eye. Answer remarks with a smile, and do not let yourself be overcome by human respect.'

'When you see you have failed, at once make an act of the virtue contrary to the fault.'

'God gives His graces at the moment when we need them. We must not torment ourselves beforehand, foreseeing sacrifices which at the moment He is not asking of us. And we must not doubt that God will give us strength to do what He demands of us.'

'Seek to mortify your will, yielding to that of others and anticipating the wishes of those around you; renouncing what you like, abstaining from saying what would turn to your advantage. Try to be kind with others, to have no human respect, and to please our Lord, in a spirit of mortification.'

'Do not forget that unless you crucify yourself you will crucify Jesus Christ!'

'Ask for the grace of holy gladness. Sadness comes from looking too much at earth and its persecutions. Dilate your heart in the thought of the eternal joys, and in the joyful acceptance of sufferings which last such a little while and pass away.'

'Avoid discussing religion and holy things with those who are not well disposed. If you cannot

do them any good you may offend God with these discussions.'

'We must accept the dispositions of Providence promptly and with entire submission, and see in all the Will of God. He knows better than we do what is good for us, and will change them into a grace still greater than that of which He seems to deprive us.'

'Have a great devotion to Our Lady. The more you have the nearer you will get to our Lord. No one can be devout to Mary without loving our Lord more.'

'Our will is like a rock in the sea. The waves may wash around it and even submerge it, but there it remains, immovable; and when the sea dies down after the storm it leaves it intact. So despite all our feelings, our will may remain firm through all the temptations which may assail us.'

'Let us have confidence. God will direct all for the best. We see only one page of the great book which He has written for us. He knows all; He can do everything; He loves us. *Fiat!*'

'Let us accustom ourselves to consider our soul as a battle-ground, on which we must fight and conquer for love of our Lord.'

'Upon this cross, which our Lord is offering you to-day, offer also your sacrifice, and be assured that it will bring you still nearer to His divine Heart.'

'At the moment of death what is needed is calmness. Think of passing from this life to the other as through a door which opens to lead to God.'

'You must not be afraid of death, or of the temptations which may assail you at that moment. Leave

that thought to our Lord and His Blessed Mother. Trust in their tenderness. They will dispose of your last moment. Leave it to them, and do not think of it, so as not to torment yourself. Ask S. Joseph to obtain for you a childlike trust in our Lord.'

'Remember that Jesus is the priest *par excellence*. He may permit that we do not have the helps of religion at death, but He is near us, and above all near to those who in life have been united to Him. We need never fear that God will forsake us at the hour of death.'

'Silence and solitude form the atmosphere of the Cross, and without the Cross we cannot live. It is our Lord's gift to those whom He loves.'

'You ought to make a little cell in your heart; then nothing will disturb you. Day by day, you will go forward in grace. There may be external things which will disturb you, but you can always recollect yourself in that inner cell.'

'God is so good to those who truly seek Him!'

'If we had nothing to put up with we should have no merit.'

'We can do no more than open the way to the light which comes from above, and remove the obstacles; but it is a glorious task to work for God and with Him for the salvation of souls. We can, and we ought always to be tolerant with those who are blind, and have not the grace to see; but we cannot be tolerant with the error and falsehood itself. That would be to betray Him who is the Truth, the Way, and the Life. How often good people confuse courtesy towards the persons who are in darkness with tolerance towards the darkness itself!'

'In my sad moments I must always remind myself that I have one, single intimate friend who never fails me : *God!*'

How much peace and sweetness are in these principles! What comfort and encouragement for souls who are growing weary in scaling the shining heights!

On March 28th, 1921, speaking to the Probandists¹ in the mother house of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, the Cardinal said :

'The duty of the Probandists is to apply themselves to prayer and the study of the Constitutions. After this they will go to spread the light, since it is to the souls of religious, in especial, that our Lord said : *You are the light of the world.* We are not the light for ourselves, but we must reflect, like mirrors, the light of Him who is the true light, and the mirror must be clear and polished. And this is what the Probandists are doing ; studying our Lord in order to reflect Him by their example.'

To the same on April 19th, 1926 :

'Do not forget that our Lord knows each one of you, and takes thought for her as though each were alone in the world. He knows you then and gives you His graces accordingly. He does not do as a king, who on the day he comes to the throne scatters largesse to the crowd, without knowing whom he may rejoice or console ; or as you yourselves, who might place an alms in a poor man's hand without

¹ Those preparing for their final Profession.

knowing him. Jesus knows you and chooses for you that whereof you stand in need. Therefore, put yourselves well under His eye ; into His Heart ; abandon yourselves to Him.'

On July 14th, 1927, to those about to make their final Profession :

'You are going to take the cross. You must *carry* it, not drag it ; this longed-for cross ! You will notice that it is not a crucifix. Our Lord leaves that place for you ; it is you who have to be crucified. Every morning when you put on the cross, you ought at the same time to renew the resolutions you made as a Probandist, that you will follow our Lord, in perfect indifference as to place, persons, duties, means ; the indifference which is not merely the basis of the *Exercises*, but of all solid spiritual life. And this cross needs a pedestal, *your heart.* And in order that it may be more worthy to be a new calvary, strive to make it ever more and more like the divine Heart of Jesus, by imitating His virtues.

'Then, as says S. Paul, you will be victorious even in this world ; for you will know how to overcome yourselves, and advance daily in union with our Lord, in perfect uniformity with His divine Will.'

On November 14th, 1929, the last time he addressed them :

'You do not come to change your way of life, but to perfect it ; to seek our Lord, and be ever more united to Him. To this end, as the Prophet says, you must remove the obstacles, since they

come from ourselves and sometimes it is a question of a very little thing. A bubble of air can hinder the water from running in a tube ; likewise a little unfaithfulness stops the flow of grace in the soul which, owing to it, is not completely given to God. You must always work to get rid of these obstacles, without ever being discouraged. There may be weaknesses, but you must at once rise above them.

'Our Lord sees our will to strive, even when we fall, and if we arise we may seem to have been overcome but we have made progress. There may be exterior successes, but these do not count in God's sight if we have not acted for God. The essential is to work for God, for His glory, for souls.'

Nor did he confine his spiritual help to religion. Thus, in 1921, he wrote to a lady in trouble :

'I should like to see in you a gentler resignation in your legitimate sorrow. Do not aim so much at *stifling* your heartache, as at gently sanctifying it with our Lord. You have a treasure in your hands ; precious material for practising virtue in a high degree ; do not waste it. Your pain is legitimate but you must uplift it, transform it, not stifle it by your natural strength. Otherwise you run the risk of being alone with yourself, instead of being, as you desire, alone with Jesus. Do not pity yourself, hugging your grief, but sweetly offer it all to Him ; praying Him to be your comfort, and to accept the sacrifice, without allowing yourself to be dominated by the personal sorrow by recalling all the details too often. I bless you and pray for you.'

The following is from a letter written in September, 1903 :

'I do not wish to let your feast day go by, and the dear feast of Sunday, without sending you a couple of lines to wish you everything good. I do not forget you in my prayers, and in these days of trial for you I have asked our Lord to bless you in a special manner. So on Sunday I shall say Mass for all your intentions. For me it is the most beautiful of Our Lady's feasts, because it is the feast of the great sacrifice of our Mother, in which we have the compendium of all her virtues. *Mother of Sorrows*, yes, but ever fair, ever great, ever immaculate. *Nigra sum sed formosa*. Serene in her martyrdom, true handmaid of the Lord, how intense was her love for us ! I am persuaded that you also will have suffered during these days, and that your love for Jesus will have been put to the proof. You will have had struggles, temptations. Let the storm pass. Love the Cross. Be, now and always, the handmaid of the Lord. Offer all to the Heart of Jesus by the Hands of Mary, Mother of Sorrows, and pray for poor sinners, for those who do not know our Lord, and hence do not love Him. I hope to see you soon in Rome, and I hope that it will be granted to me to abandon this office, which is so little in accordance with my desires. But God's will be done !'

A letter of 1913 contains the following lines :

'My occupations have not permitted me to write to you before ; I do so now to thank you for your good wishes, and to assure you that I do not forget

you in my prayers, and to follow your steps in the religious life. I am really comforted to see that God is leading you sweetly, and with infinite love, in the fulfilment of your duties, and sustaining your vocation. Amidst the storms of my present life, I think, not without envy, of your peace, and I bless Jesus for it. Doubtless He sends you some cross, and so it must be; and you should be glad of it, for you need material to work on and prepare your throne in Heaven, and to enter ever more into the sanctuary of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Pray for me. I bless you with all my heart.'

Similarly in a letter of October, 1916:

'I am a little late in answering your welcome letter of the 27th, as I have been very busy during these days. Thank you for your wishes for my feast, and thank you especially for your prayers for me. And now to answer you concerning what you wrote to me:

'By what means do you expect to go to our Lord, and to Heaven? With roses? You do not see these around His head or around His Heart! With what material do you want to work? Perhaps with pleasant and delightful things, which do not hurt self-love? How do you propose to climb up? Perhaps by a ladder without rungs?'

To one subject to depression he wrote on June 25th, 1917:

'Perhaps I am indiscreet, but reading your letter I feel I want to say something. This morning, in the chapel, I was watching the lamp burning before the Blessed Sacrament, and I saw the wick was not

always burning well, but sometimes flickering, smoking, sputtering, and, as it were, consuming itself without giving any light. No one concerns himself with it, and for some hours no one looks at it. Nor is its usefulness appreciated when confronted with the candles, which are more beautiful, with the bright flowers, the gilded candlesticks, the precious vases. Yet who would say that it is "a very useless thing"? Of the rest one may prescind that, but not of the wick, no, so long as it fulfils its humble mission, all made up of faithfulness and constancy; the symbol of a love, defective indeed, but never withdrawn; with little charm, but more pleasing to God than other gifts, more obvious and admired.

'I thought of you. Perhaps I did not do so badly, and I do not think our Lord will blame me; He who looks at our hearts, knows how to value our dispositions, as He knows how to have compassion on our wretchedness, and to reward the humble efforts of our good will!'

To another correspondent in 1925:

'I am sorry you have been ill again, and I can well understand that you must be suffering morally also. Take up the cross which our Lord is giving you. It is not *our* cross but *His*; that which He chooses for us. Let us by love make it become ours! I hope soon to be able to send you a little book which will comfort you. Meanwhile, pray also for me. I need it just now, when I have received very sad news of my mother, who is about to leave this world. God's will be done!'

Similarly in September, 1926 :

'I have received your letter and thank you warmly for your good wishes and prayers, on which I am counting. You are wrong to let yourself be discouraged at the sight of your unsuccess. To know our failings, and see our defects, is a grace of God which saves us from so many illusions. Let us leave it to our Lord to see the good, and rejoice in humiliations, in the recognition of our nothingness ; and let us work in the field He assigns us without troubling ourselves about the visible harvest, which will be gathered, and which it is better for us not to know. Be of good heart, and trust in the immense goodness of God.'

To Mother Veronica Giuliani, of the religious of Marie Réparatrice, he wrote on November 13th, 1928:

'I am deeply grateful to you once more for your valued prayers. May God help me to do more and better in the service of His church, for as long or as short a time as is His Holy Will. God bless you !'

A last citation from a letter to a religious dated October, 1929, four months before his death :

'You have received much from God, and now you must show your gratitude by a more fervent religious life, calm, positive, and fruitful, seeking in all the Will of God, under the guidance of the Rule, and the will of your Superior. Say often to our Lord : " May your good pleasure be my pleasure, my passion, my love ; that, indifferent to all that which passes away, I may love what is yours ; but you above all, my God, *You !* "'

From these letters we feel proceeding something of the fragrance which breathes forth the spirit of a Charles Borromeo, a Francis de Sales, or a Leonard of Port Maurice ! The celebrated archæologist, Giambattista de Rossi, by arranging in order more than a hundred fragments scattered through corridors and fields, recomposed and restored, to the joy of the learned, the famous inscription of Pope Damasus in the crypt of the Popes in the cemetery of Callistus. Another master's hand, like that of the famous scientist, would be required to reconstruct, by means of the thoughts chosen here and there, the beautiful ascetic and mystical figure of Cardinal Merry del Val. His zeal for souls, his words of comfort for the sorrowing and tried, the sureness of his direction, could not but be the reflection of his own soul. To many he might appear but a great cardinal ; the truth was that all his gifts were but the veil which hid a soul utterly given to God ; a heart aglow with the love of Jesus Christ ; a devout, humble, holy priest, who before pointing it out to others was intent upon seeking and securing for himself that way to Heaven, through interior renunciation and crosses. Hence he laboured to model himself after the pattern of Christ, and especially of Christ crucified.

Here are some of his maxims, reflections and rules of spiritual life, taken from his own prayer book : *The Prayers of S. Gertrude*, which he used daily for many years until his death, and in the blank pages of which he wrote both his own thoughts and others, culled from his spiritual reading books and applied to himself.

'To find God in the sanctifying prose of daily duty.' (From the French.)

'Silence and recollection: Prayer and work: Sacrifice and love.' (From the French.)

'To pray and labour for souls.'

'O my soul love Love, who hast loved Thee from Eternity!'

'To suffer passes away. To have suffered endures eternally.' (From the French.)

'Contradictions place us at the foot of the Cross, and the Cross places us at the gates of Heaven.' (S. John-Baptist Vianney.)

'To believe and to pray: To work and rule one's self: To love and sacrifice one's self!' (From the French.)

'When we are at the feet of Jesus we are near to His Heart.' (Lacordaire.)

'To die is to close our eyes, consign our own soul to our Angel Guardian, and fall asleep to awake in Heaven.' (From the French.)

'Suffering is king here below: sooner or later every heart is ruled by his sceptre.'

'If the poor man sees the priest come to him respecting his wretchedness and understanding his suffering, he will have no difficulty in recognising truth beneath the garment of love.'

'O to die to myself. . . . To love—O to go to God!' (S. Augustine.)

'It is only by the help of the grace of silence that the saints carry such heavy crosses. A cross for which we have received sympathy is far heavier than it was before. Silence is the proper atmosphere

of the Cross, and secrecy its native climate.' (Faber: *At the Foot of the Cross.*)

'Why then fearest thou to take up the Cross which leadeth to the kingdom? In the Cross is salvation, in the Cross is life, in the Cross is protection from our enemies.' (*Imitation*, B. II., c. 12.)

'Let us learn to love the Cross, to accept it as our heritage and as the norm of our whole life.'

'It is profitable for me that shame hath covered my face, that so I may seek consolation in Thee, rather than in men.' (*Imitation*, B. III., c. 50.)

'Thanks be to thee because thou hast not refrained from punishing my sins, but hast chastised me with bitter stripes, inflicting pain and causing anguish, both within and without.' (*Ibid.*)

'O sweet Jesus, my joy and my all, only a God could love as Thou hast loved, and cause that the fall of the first man should become as a fount of blessing! Jesus, my hope, the world's renown shall have no part in me. Like Thee I will seek a crown of thorns, to love Thy Sacred Heart!'

'Do well everything that you do; do it for God; for God alone: and your life will be the first strophe of an eternal hymn: it will be the dawn of a happiness which will know no setting.'

'O Lord, here cut, here burn, here destroy in me all that is not Thine.'

'Teach me silence,
dearest Jesus,
When in sorrow and in pain.
For to hide in Thee my suffering,
Makes me love Thy cross again.

'Teach me patience,
dearest Jesus,
When all day my heart is tried
By those tiny teasing crosses,
Welcome friends that crush my pride.'

'You are never less alone than when you are alone with God.'

'Sin is more contrary to the sanctity of God than is nothingness to greatness.'

'Generosity in the service of God means serving God at our own expense.'

'The love of Jesus and the love of the world are opposed one to the other; the love of our Lord is the chariot of Elias which carries us to Heaven, the love of the world is the devil's carriage, which casts us into the abyss of hell!'

'O most merciful Lord, weary not of speaking to my poor soul; if to-day I hear Thy voice give me the grace not to harden my heart!'

'Humiliation is the penance of the spirit; mortification is the penance of the heart.'

'Change my heart, O Lord, Thou who hast been brought to nothing for love of me! Reveal to my spirit the excellence of Thy holy humiliations. Enlightened by Thy light, may I begin to-day to destroy this portion of the old man which is wholly alive in me! This is the source of my miseries, the standing obstacle which I oppose to Thy love!'

'Lord, I am nothing but this nothing adores Thee!'

'Lord, I am my own enemy when I seek peace in myself and outside of Thee.'

'There is always a danger for our salvation in commanding. There is none at all in obeying, as is befitting. It is difficult to defend ourselves from feelings of pride when we impose our will on others; there is none at all in preserving humility when we bow to the wishes of Superiors.' (From the French.)

'After having fulfilled during the day the duties imposed upon me, in the evening I take my rest without thinking of what others have done or not done.'

'I will always offer myself to suffer much for our Lord and for the Church, even to die for Jesus who died for my love.'

'O most loving Word of God, teach me to be generous, to serve Thee as is Thy due; to give without counting; to combat without fear of wounds; to work without seeking rest; to spend myself without looking for any recompense, other than that of knowing that I am doing Thy Will.' (From the French.)

'Let nothing disturb thee,
Naught fright thee ever,
All things are passing,
God changeth never.
Patience e'er conquers;
With God for thine own
Thou nothing dost lack—
He sufficeth alone.'

(S. Teresa's Bookmark.)

'Talk little when with many people.
Speak with quiet cheerfulness to everybody.'

Never ridicule anything.

Never excuse yourself except in grave matters.

On no account mention anything to your own credit.

Never affirm anything of the truth of which you are uncertain.

Unless charity requires do not obtrude your opinion unasked.

Do not reflect on other people's faults, but on their virtues and your own defects.'

(S. Teresa's Maxims.)

'There is no need to make it a rule to choose always what is most disagreeable to us: whether we like a thing or not is of no importance in itself: what is necessary is to know where lies the Will of God, His glory, our duty, and to decide on those grounds.'

'Let us not make consolations our end, but take them only as a means given by God to encourage us: let us not make an obstacle of our crosses, but sanctify them by resignation and offer them to God.'

'Never act with a view to pleasing the world. Let us have the courage to bear the world's criticisms and disapproval, and have no human respect. Provided that God is satisfied, what matters the rest?'

'All in the will and not in the feelings: the will can remain strong and unmoved, despite all we may feel.' (From the French.)

'Let us accustom ourselves to see in the crosses which God sends us the proofs of His love for us;

the means to repay Him, and satisfy our debts. Let us learn, moreover, to fear rather than desire dignities and authority, since for him upon whom they are bestowed they must mean only an increase of work and trials. We should see in them only a long and painful martyrdom. A priest suffers them; by no means does he seek them.'

'Life here below is not the true life. Death is not the end of life, but the gate which opens into life eternal.'

The following, written in Latin, bears the date of his birthday (October 10th, the feast of S. Francis Borgia, whose name he bore).

'Adoro Te, O Jesu, in praesepio recubentem, adoro Te in cruce pendentem et morientem, adoro Te praesentem in Sanctissimo Sacramento. Ad Te, confugientem, poenitentem et dolentem, me, bone Jesu, suscipe. Fac ut, tuo adjumento, Deum meum Te Potentem, cuncta bona largientem, omnia suaviter disponentem amem ardentissime. Et da hanc, quaeso, gratiam ut, dum in vita maneam, Te amare nunquam desinam. O Jesu mi dulcissime, meditatus sum nocte cum corde meo.'¹

'Open to me Thy Sacred Heart, O Jesus, and show me its charms. Unite me to It for ever. Grant that every aspiration, and every beat of my heart which

¹ 'I adore Thee, O Jesus, lying in the manger; I adore Thee hanging and dying on the Cross; I adore Thee present in the Most Holy Sacrament. O good Jesus, receive me who fly to Thee in repentance and sorrow. Make me, by Thy assistance, to love Thee ardently, my God, All-powerful, Giver of all good things, sweetly disposing all things. And grant me this grace, I beseech Thee, that while I live I may never cease to love Thee. O sweetest Jesus, I have meditated in the night with my own heart.' (Ps. lxxvi, 7.)

cease not even while I sleep, may be to thee a witness of my love and say to Thee: Yes, Lord, I am all Thine; the seal of Thy alliance is on my heart, never to be effaced! Receive the little good that I do and deign to give me the grace to repair all the evil, in order that I may bless Thee in time and in eternity. Amen. (From the French.)

The Cardinal also composed a prayer entitled *A Morning Offering to Almighty God*, which he was accustomed to recite daily:¹

My God, my Father and my All; my first Beginning and my last and only End; Father, Son and Holy Ghost, One God in Three Persons; prostrate before the throne of Thy ineffable majesty, I, the most abject, wretched and sinful of Thy creatures, adore and magnify Thee with all the powers of my soul and body.

I *believe* in Thee, O self-subsisting and essential Truth; I *hope* in Thee, O Omnipotent Mercy; I *love* Thee, O infinite Goodness and Beauty!

At the sight of my utter nothingness I implore the help of Thy merciful power, the assistance and protection of Mary, Thy Mother and mine, and that of all the Angels and Saints who stand in Thy sight, in order that I may thank Thee in some measure for all the gifts and graces which, in Thy might and Thy goodness, Thou hast deigned to grant me from the first moment of my existence until this hour.

I thank Thee for having vouchsafed to think of me, a poor worm of earth, from all eternity; for

¹ The words in italics in this and the following prayers are underlined in the Cardinal's manuscripts.

having freely decreed my existence in preference to so many other possible beings, and especially for having granted me another day, wherein to love and serve Thee.

I am on this earth solely to serve Thee and save my soul, and all else whatsoever, great or small, within me or without, must disappear and be in my eyes as though it did not exist, from the moment that it ceases to be for me that for which thou did create it, a *means* to the great *End*.

I desire, and firmly resolve to-day to use all created things only in so far as they help me to reach my End, and hence to be in a disposition of holy indifference with respect to all those circumstances which depend upon my free choice, and to which I am not bound by any obligation. I am *ready* to accept indifferently from Thy hands, and in the form which pleases Thee, health or sickness, riches or poverty, a long life or a short one, friendship or hatred; and so in everything, choosing finally only what is most conformable to Thy glory, my last End.

Grant that my intellect, my memory, and my will may be thine *forever*.

I consecrate to Thee, my God, every beat of my heart, every breath, every word, and every movement of my body; and I desire with all, and with each of them, to sing to Thee a long hymn of praise, of expiation of my sins, and of thanksgiving for Thy benefits.

O Jesus, I hail Thee as my eternal King and Saviour, and enrol myself beneath Thy standard, ready to follow Thee whenever Thou shalt call me;

and if Thou art so good as to call me to imitate Thee more closely and more intimately, in poverty, shame and suffering, I am ready, dear Lord! Speak, for Thy servant heareth, but help Thou my weakness!

I desire to love Thee so much, O my Master, and so to abase myself before Thee in humility and obedience, as not only to prefer any evil whatsoever, including death, to sin, whether mortal or venial, but to prefer that loss and suffering even in cases when Thy glory and honour are equally promoted.

I detest and bewail my past sins and negligences, which rise before me like a great mountain, and over against them I set the Passion of my Lord.

I mourn the sins and iniquities of the whole world; the indifference shown to Thee, the sacrileges committed against Thee in the Sacrament of Thy love. I desire to make reparation and to expiate all these faults. I desire to live with Thee spiritually in the Tabernacle; there to wait on Thee, to adore and to receive Thee spiritually wherever Thou abidest beneath the Sacramental veils, and so to live and die at Thy feet.

I pray for the Propagation of the Faith; for the conversion of England and of the world; for the Church and for Thy Vicar; for princes and rulers; for the young and for the old; for priests and religious; for the intentions recommended to me; for N.N.; for the souls in Purgatory.

O Jesus, I love Thee, I love Thee, and wish to love Thee ever more and more! Mary, my Immaculate and Sorrowful Mother, lead me to

Jesus! My Angel Guardian, and my holy Patrons, pray for me!

He wrote the following resolution concerning the practice of the presence of God and the direction of his intention:

'I have promised with His grace not to *begin* any action without remembering that *He is witness* of it—that He *performs* it together with me, and *gives me the means* to do it—never to *conclude* any without the same thought, offering it to Him as belonging to Him; and in the course of the action, whenever the same thought shall occur, to stop for a moment and renew the desire of pleasing Him.'

His *Act of Spiritual Communion*, originally written in French, was translated into several languages, published with the ecclesiastical *Imprimatur*, and Indulged.

'At Thy feet, O my Jesus, I prostrate myself and offer Thee the Sorrow of my contrite heart, sunk in the abyss of its own nothingness and in Thy holy presence. I adore Thee in the Sacrament of Thy love, the ineffable Eucharist. I desire to receive Thee into the poor dwelling that my soul offers Thee. Awaiting the happiness of a Sacramental Communion, I wish to receive Thee in spirit. Come to me, for I come to Thee, O my Jesus, and may Thy love inflame my whole being for life and for death. I believe in Thee; I hope in Thee; I love Thee. Amen.' (300 days' indulgence for each recitation. A plenary indulgence, on the usual conditions, once a month if recited each day of the month. S. Apostolic Penitentiary. March 7th, 1927.)

His *Angelus in Gethsemane* was printed in the original English, and translated into French and Italian with ecclesiastical approval. The person responsible obtained the original from the Cardinal with some difficulty, and only on the condition that the authorship was not revealed.

'The Angel of the Lord came to minister unto
Jesus :

And He was comforted by the Holy Ghost.

Our Father :

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I implore
That I may love Thee ever more and more.

'Behold my Agony : may this chalice pass from
me :

But not my will but Thine be done.

Our Father :

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I implore
That I may love Thee ever more and more.

'The Word Incarnate was nailed to the Cross :
And He suffered for us.

Our Father :

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I implore
That I may love Thee ever more and more.

'Plead for us, O Jesus,
That we may be made worthy of Thy con-
solations.

Let us Pray.

'Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace
into our hearts, that we, for whom Christ Thy Son

offered up His Agony in the garden, may, by His
Passion and Cross, be brought unto the glory of His
Resurrection, through the same Christ our Lord.
Amen.'

Every day, when making his thanksgiving after
Mass, he used to recite the *Litany of Humility*.

O Jesus, meek and humble of heart ! Hear me.
Jesus deliver me.

From the desire of being esteemed
From the desire of being loved
From the desire of being sought after
From the desire of being honoured
From the desire of being praised
From the desire of being preferred to others
From the desire of being consulted
From the desire of being approved

From the fear of being humbled
From the fear of being despised
From the fear of suffering rebuffs
From the fear of being calumniated
From the fear of being forgotten
From the fear of being ridiculed
From the fear of being injured
From the fear of being suspected

Jesus, grant me the grace to wish :
That others may be loved more than I.
That others may increase in the opinion of the
world and I diminish.

That others may be employed and I set aside.
That others may be praised and I overlooked.

That others may be preferred before me in everything.

That others may be more holy than I, provided I am as holy as I can be.

The happiest hours of his day were those he gave to prayer, to the celebration of Holy Mass, to his daily visits to the Blessed Sacrament in his private chapel, to the recitation of the Divine Office. As has been said, he reserved to himself the honour of looking after the sanctuary lamp; he visited the Blessed Sacrament before leaving the house and on his return, and with a last visit he unflinchingly closed his busy day.

Throughout his life the Cross was his ideal and inspiration. He had ever felt its attraction and he loved it secretly but passionately. He bore a tender and ardent devotion to Christ crucified and to the Mother of Sorrows, and he sought to make others love what he loved.

When he was Secretary of State, he suggested to the Jesuit, Père Rouvier, that he should write a book on Christian suffering with the title *Savoir Souffrir*. The latter published the work, which had a wide circulation and was translated into other languages; but the Cardinal would not allow it to bear his name, nor to be dedicated to him. In his own copy, among other passages which he has marked in the margin, is this thought from Bossuet:

'When we humbly bear suffering which God sends us, it is blood which we give to our Saviour: our resignation takes the place of martyrdom.'

Shortly before his death, he wrote:

'What matters is to prefer God to all else; to be ready to sacrifice all, rather than commit one sin.'

'Each of our sins was one more thorn in our Lord's crown; one blow the more to His scourging.'

'By His sufferings He willed to teach us the worth of suffering. With His sufferings He has won for us patience in our trials. Let us love, or at least let us accept, sufferings, for His love who sends them to us out of love! Let us ask the Blessed Virgin, Queen of Martyrs, to help us. She said *Fiat* to all sufferings.'

His life was woven of great gifts of nature and of grace, which found in him full and ever faithful correspondence. In his private life, he was perfectly familiar with the prayer to which spiritual writers give the name of *contemplation*. Those who saw or, better still, surprised him unawares in his private chapel, had the impression of seeing the living image of a soul in contemplation. For many years he much prized a metal crucifix, heavily indulged, before which, kneeling on the floor, he used to say the last prayers before going to bed, as also to pray in hours of sorrow and strain.

His unexpected death revealed secrets of his virtue and mortification which he would otherwise have caused to disappear so that none might suspect them. When, the morning after his death, the officials of the Vatican City were looking for his will, they had a surprise. In the last drawer of his desk in his little study, at the bottom beneath other papers, they found a parcel wrapped in ordinary brown paper. When it was opened, there appeared

to their astonished eyes, two hairshirts and a discipline. Monsignor Canali was more surprised and impressed than the others because, though he had lived for so many years on familiar terms with the Cardinal, he had never known of or noticed anything of the kind.

The two 'hairshirts' were made of thickly intertwined iron wire, with protruding, sharpened points, and in one of them an evidently inexperienced hand had added, in three places, twisted pieces of sharpened wire of quite a different kind from that of which the instrument of penance had been made. The discipline, worn with use, was all dark with dried blood, especially at the ends of the thongs, which were furnished with sharp points. At first the thought occurred to them that these might be relics of some holy person which had come to the Cardinal, but this supposition fell to the ground at once. Brother Eugenio Gallastegui, an old Trinitarian Lay-Brother, when speaking one day of Cardinal Merry del Val with a certain Monsignor, let slip the remark that he knew a secret about him, but could not divulge it because the Cardinal had made him promise never to reveal it. Induced to speak by high ecclesiastical authority, however, Brother Eugenio related how, many years previously, when the Cardinal had been a Papal Chamberlain, he, the Brother, had made him a *cilicium* at his request, for his personal use, promising never to speak of the matter to anyone. When asked whether he would know the instrument again if shown it, he answered: 'Certainly, since I made it myself.'

He was then shown the two and, affirming his statement on oath, he declared that the older of them, which bore the marks of long use, was the identical one which he had made for the Cardinal. A corroborative proof was furnished by two silk ribbons which, at a later period, had been attached in order to fasten the *cilicium*, which had become too narrow. They were ribbons which had been tied round some books presented to him and were fastened into slits in the edges of the coarse linen upon which the wire was mounted, by means of a very curious knot known to be characteristic of the Cardinal.

With respect to the discipline, we have the evidence, also confirmed on oath, of the two Lay-Sisters, Aniceta Huarte and Modesta Iraola, of the *Dame Catechiste*, who went every week to clean the Cardinal's private rooms and the chapel. Both declare that, in the early days of his residence at the *palazzina*, in his private study where the discipline was afterwards found, they discovered blood-stains on the floor, door and skirting-board. They always wiped them away but they re-appeared, until after some time—the Cardinal having doubtless noticed and removed the marks himself—they no longer found them.

Hence it is not surprising that so many souls, moved by a secret impulse which cannot be explained by human reasons, have felt themselves impelled to gaze upon and tell others of those shining heights of divine love which he had reached in his unceasing and tireless striving after perfection.

'To make the holy Cardinal known,' wrote

Father Peruffo, S.J.; on August 9th, 1931, 'is to bring souls to God; to carry out his programme *Da mihi animas!* It is an indirect means of seizing them, of arousing enthusiasm for our Lord! And can we imagine anything His Eminence would desire more eagerly? And how sweet it is to pause to breathe the fragrance of his virtues, to gaze upon his venerable figure, to plumb the depths of his prayers, *saturated* with Jesus Christ!'

Another writes: 'It is a fact, and not pious imagination, that when speaking of Cardinal Merry del Val, I notice that people's faces light up, as at the remembrance of something in the nature of a vision; something spiritual, immense, great with a greatness not of this world, which creates a sweet bond. The same effect is produced by the memory of Pius X.'

Certain it is—and the fact calls for no surprise—that the general impression of the Cardinal's holiness continues to become ever more general, and to rouse deep devotion. Death, which for him opened the gate of eternal happiness, laid open to the world the secret, so jealously kept, of a life spent wholly and uninterruptedly in the love and faithful service of God.

Father Alisiardi, S.J., who was the Cardinal's confessor from the time he was Secretary of State, has left written:

'During many years I had the good fortune to know intimately His Eminence Cardinal Merry del Val, who made use of me as his confessor, and I knew him always as a man who was pious, absolutely upright, of very delicate conscience, zealous; a

model as priest, bishop and cardinal. Unfailingly every Saturday he went to Confession; every day he attended carefully to his spiritual duties: meditation, prayer, examination of conscience, etc.

'He possessed true charity towards God and his neighbour; he was aglow with intense love of the Church, and he was very dear to our Holy Father Pius X, who chose him for his Secretary of State. I am firmly convinced that the Cardinal is saved, and that he has great glory in Heaven.'

TIMOTHY SMITH¹ wrote to us in December of 2023: "This Christmas time, I had the chance to sit down and play through the hymns in the *Brébeuf Hymnal*. I'm by no means a concert organist, but most of the Catholic hymnals I've played through have arrangements that are clunky and non-intuitive. But having sat down and played through the hymns in the *Brébeuf Hymnal*, I can happily say that it has the best arrangement of hymns since the *New Saint Basil Hymnal*. They are both beautiful and accessible. You have gathered the best from Catholic hymnals throughout the world, and **it has done wonders promoting congregational singing in our church since we have adopted it**. Thank you for all the hard work and dedication that went into making the hymnal, as well as making it so easy to use—for both the singer and the pew-sitter. Merry Christmas!"

¹ We redacted his real last name, but Timothy directs music at a Catholic Church and teaches in the diocesan school system.



CHAPTER X

LAST YEARS AND DEATH

AT the outbreak of the War in 1914, Pius X, who stood out at once as the only light to which men could look with confidence in that dark hour, addressed to Catholics all over the world a sorrowful message summoning them to prayer. He had foreseen the terrible storm with a keen and, seemingly, prophetic eye.

In a conversation with 'Velabro', of *La Croix de Paris*, Cardinal Merry del Val, after talking of the goodness and spiritual sensitiveness of the Holy Father, which made him suffer with those who suffered, and rendered him lovingly anxious with all who turned to him, thus spoke: 'Some years before his death, during the daily audiences I had with him, Pius X often said that we were moving towards a war—a great war—and that 1914 would not pass without it. All this is nothing,' he would say, retreating to some piece or other of bad news: "All this is nothing compared to what the coming war will bring us." How often, when I returned to my study after the audience, I have asked myself: "But why does the Holy Father speak of this war so insistently and, above all, so precisely? And what reason has he for believing that it will be in 1914 rather than in another year?"'

In May, 1914, Pius X spoke of these fears of his to the Brazilian Minister, His Excellency Doctor Bruno Chaves, when he received him in farewell audience. The Holy Father highly esteemed this diplomat and took a kindly interest in his family. 'You are fortunate,' he said, 'to be leaving Europe now. You will not see all the horrors which are about to be let loose upon her.'

The Minister, likewise, wondered why the Pope spoke thus, but a few weeks later the War broke out! And on August 20th, the holy Pontiff, the first victim of the War, gave up his great soul to God. His last earthly greeting was for his faithful Secretary of State. His lips had closed forever but his mind was still clear, and he took the Cardinal's hands into his own, held them tightly and gently caressed them, turning upon him a long, loving look of gratitude and farewell. And in that fatherly handclasp the Cardinal felt preserved, as it were, a sacred heritage of affection.

On the same day which saw the election of Benedict XV the Cardinal left the Vatican, retired provisionally to the Hospice of Santa Marta, and three months later took possession of the Archpriest's house, the *palazzina* of Santa Marta, and there began that life of dignified retirement and good works which continued for sixteen years until his death. As Archpriest of S. Peter's and Secretary of the Holy Office, he was continually occupied, but he knew so well how to arrange and economise his time that he never failed to be present, and to speak, at the meetings of the several Congregations and Pontifical Commissions of which he was a member.

Moreover, his judgement was so highly appreciated, and so closely listened to, that one old cardinal was heard to say: 'Cardinal Merry del Val was born a teacher.'

He always enjoyed exceptional health and vigour. Although in childhood, and even in youth, he had been very delicate so as to cause anxiety in his family, subsequently he became so much stronger as to be sturdy and able to endure even great fatigue and work. In 1901, at the beginning of July, he developed typhoid seriously, was in bed for a whole month at the Spanish Embassy, and nursed back to health by the English nursing sisters of the Little Company of Mary, whom he edified by his patience. He emerged from the illness stronger than previously, but in the early days of the pontificate of Pius X he suffered from sciatica for a considerable time. From this also he was completely freed after undergoing treatment, two years running, at the baths of Vicarello near Bracciano. Early in 1929, a year before his death, he had a bad attack of influenza, but from that, likewise, he recovered without suffering any after effects, and he never had any organic malady. His valuable life was cut short unexpectedly, at the early age of sixty-four, by a sudden and violent attack of appendicitis.

If therefore, after the death of Pius X, before going to the Dolomites he used to spend a few days at Montecatini, it was, as he said himself, more to keep Monsignor Canali company than for any need of his own. Doctor Grocco, the director there, who had no sooner come to know him than he became his

ardent admirer, found him 'in the health of one possessing the gift of perennial youth,' and was much pleased, since his presence shed a lustre on the health resort. After his death the directors wrote to Monsignor Canali, expressing their sympathy and adding:

'When we tell you that the death of His Eminence, Cardinal Merry del Val, is a great loss to us, you must understand that we are not alluding at all to the material loss—though that exists, since the baths gained a reputation from the fact that he came to them—but that we are expressing a very keen and deep sense of sorrow.'

During his summer holidays he made some short stays in the Tyrol, in Austria, and in Switzerland, where he went also in September, 1929, to spend some days in the celebrated abbey of Einsiedeln.¹ But he usually made these journeys when leaving the Dolomites, whither he loved to retire in summer time, for a short period of rest in the picturesque and peaceful village of Arabba.

Here is an account, from a tourist's newspaper of the Upper Adige district, in the summer of 1931, in an article entitled: 'Recollections of Cardinal Merry del Val.'

'Every summer he came to spend some weeks in a little hotel at Arabba, a country village nestling in a green shell between the Dolomite passes of

¹ He thus wrote, in English, of an island on the abbey property; 'Ufnau! a tiny peaceful island on the Zurich lake—with trees that cluster all around. Two ancient churches are there, enshrined like antique gems set in evergreens. I love those memories of the past, where even now God's praise resounds in the voice of bells that call to prayer.'

Pordoi and Falzarego. If his attire and his distinguished figure, so often reproduced in newspapers and reviews, had not betrayed him, in the tranquil, solitary life he led in that mountain spot he would have remained unknown to most.

'He did not spend much time in the hotel rooms, only what was strictly necessary for meals, for dealing with his letters and for prayer. Every morning he celebrated Mass in the humble village church, then, accompanied by his faithful secretary, Monsignor Canali, he liked to make long excursions into the surrounding country. He often boldly made his way to the most difficult summits of the massy rocks of the Sella, the Tofane, and the Marmolata.

'This was how I had the honour of meeting him, late one afternoon on the 'Belvedere' of the Pordoi Pass. His secretary was with him. He had a knapsack over his shoulder, and in his hand a heavy iron-shod stick. He had come on foot in one stretch from Arabba, and intended to rest for a moment before facing the return journey. There was not the least sign of weariness on his beautiful face, still so young and serene, and the last steps to reach the kiosk of the Belvedere were made with chest erect and head high. Whilst respectfully greeting him, I ventured to ask him to pose a moment for a photograph. Whilst his secretary intervened with good-natured insistence, in order to prevent him, urging the lateness of the hour, His Eminence consented at once: "Oh let him do it," he said with the gracious courtesy habitual to him, "provided that you do not publish it in the newspapers!" So there

resulted the little snapshot which we see before us to-day with infinite sorrow. He, so early torn away from the affections of the Vatican City, and all Italy, which honoured him for his superb qualities of head and heart! May the great Dead forgive and pray for us!

Once from Arabba the Cardinal made the ascent of the historic Col di Lana, formerly the scene of sharp fighting during the War. Beside a broken and fallen red cross, he saw, as though growing from the earth, some human bones. He bent over the poor remains, gathered them together, and arranged them piously; with a little military spade found on the spot he dug a deeper grave, and laid therein the bones of the soldier. Then he put up again the cross over it, and prayed for the repose of the fallen. The little spade he took away with him for a souvenir of the touching incident.

Here is how the parish priest of Arabba, Don Angelo Frena, speaks of the sojourn:

'Long awaited by great and small, he used to arrive at Arabba in the early days of August. Immediately he got out of his car he went into the church to visit our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, drawn thither with every power of his being! Then he betook himself to his modest quarters in the inn. But already as soon as he had left the car, the children had discovered his arrival, and all joyfully gathered round him, their smiles showing their delight at seeing him again. They carried the joyful news from house to house in no time.

'He loved the movement of the open air in the peace and silence of nature. Already, in the first days of

his holidays, he used to long for excursions, and soon climbed the mountains to admire the majestic and imposing panorama of the Alps, and enjoy the wonderful, stupendous beauty which God has spread abroad with lavish hand, to show His power and goodness.

'On the morning of August 20th, 1926, the anniversary of the death of Pius X, after having said Mass at a very early hour in the little parish church, the Cardinal made the ascent of the Cima Boè, together with the Marchese Paolo Dionisi, Monsignor Canali, and a guide named Erminio. On a vast plateau rises, majestic like the wall of a great cathedral, an immense rock. In front of this, the sun shining in all its splendour, in absolute silence, at an altitude of over 3000 metres, the Cardinal, who never laid aside his cassock on these walks, took off his hat and in his tuneful and powerful voice intoned the *Gloria in Excelsis*, adoring and glorifying the omnipotence of the Creator. The rock re-echoed that sweet voice. In the evening he had scarcely returned than he went at once into the church before returning to the hotel. He was not weary, and was in the best of health, and was delighted to have made the big ascent, which he much wished to do and which, I think, was the highest he made.

'In his wanderings he met children, shepherds, country people, and willingly stopped to talk, to encourage, to bless. These folk, used, day by day, to the hard work of the fields, were confused at first to find themselves face to face with one invested with such high dignity, but very quickly they felt

they could open their hearts to him with the fullest confidence. The Cardinal was so kind, so good. . . . So they were able to speak freely, secure of being understood, although their language was neither well-chosen nor polished. Without inspiring any sort of fear, his personality made itself felt by the fascination of his goodness. Frivolity and worldliness vanished, as though by magic, giving place to healthy gaiety and right and fitting behaviour, and that even in circles not readily accessible to the influence of the pastors.

'Though in Arabba on holiday, the most important act of each day was always for him his Mass. All the love, the thoughts, the powers of his grand soul were concentrated in this one divine Sacrifice, which is the centre of the Catholic religion. Those present, even the most sceptical, felt themselves seized as by a mysterious attraction which with hidden force drew them to devotion and recollection. His face radiating a heavenly tenderness and joy, the clear, vibrant voice, the sacred ceremonies carried out with composure and dignity, the devout recollection of the long pause after Holy Communion, made them understand: "Here a solemn and sacred function is being carried out; here God Almighty is being adored in the name of the whole human race; and all its many and great needs are being placed before Him. . . ." Oh, if all priests set themselves to celebrate the divine mysteries thus the churches would be crowded again with a believing and devout people, as they were during the hours when His Eminence offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar. For me it is a precious and

abiding memory to have served his Mass every morning.

'Arabba has had the happy privilege of hearing the word of God from his lips. He possessed very special gifts which distinguished him also in this field of priestly labour. His tall stature, his manly, sonorous voice, his graceful gestures, his studies, his profound piety, his wide knowledge of the needs of the soul, all combined to enhance and give power to his preaching. And that preaching—how convincing it was; how it went home and sank in! Those who listened to him felt their faith invigorated, and were urged on to carry out the teaching they received.

'He was dearly loved by all in this little mountain village. This was seen especially at the sad news of his untimely death. The day after the unfortunate operation, about 3 p.m., the news spread in the district: "The Cardinal is dead!" No one would believe it; it was supposed to be a mistake in the telephone message, all the more that a few days previously Cardinal Perosi had died. In any case, nobody knew anything certain, and all remained in consternation, a prey to the gloomy presentiment that, perhaps, the fatal rumour might be true after all! The people went home in silence and, of their own accord, recited the Rosary that evening for the good Cardinal.'

Another account of those days appeared on March 31st, 1931:

'Cardinal Merry del Val came to spend the month of August during five consecutive years in that little village of Arabba. He went about the moun-

tains, among the shepherds and country folk, encouraging them with his winning smile, speaking a gentle and kindly word to all, giving all a blessing and a counsel. His words did incalculable good, falling upon their souls like balm, and leaving their fragrant trace in good deeds and good resolutions.

'They all recall him with infinite pleasure and will scarcely yet believe that God has called him to Himself, to swell the number of the throng of great spirits who surround Him. They seem to have a saint on earth who is guiding them with sure hand to their final Good, the end of their course! . . . He still seems to admonish and smile at the shepherds, who all recall him enthusiastically and remember little episodes and talks with him.

'It is told how one day, on one of his accustomed walks, he came to a haystack, and stopped to chat with a poor country woman, who, seeing herself confronted with such a distinguished person, and not knowing how to show her satisfaction, offered the Cardinal a glass of milk, saying in the patois: "Lord Cardinal, will you have a drop of milk?" and how he took it with pleasure and showed he liked it. Another time, seeing the peasants hay-making, he set to work to help them with the greatest pleasure. One day he went on an excursion with a small party, including the proprietor of the hotel. During the walk he was charming to all, and took photographs of the peasants in their distinctive costumes.

'Not only at Arabba, but throughout the district, young and old, near and far, knew the striking and venerable figure of the Cardinal. All rejoiced at

the news of his arrival, and everyone wanted to be the first to see him. Joyfully they all betook themselves to the little church to hear his Mass, and before he left he used to preach them a sermon which impressed all by its fatherly simplicity and its spirit of glowing faith and piety. The last time, in September, 1929, when they kissed his ring, and he gave us his blessing before leaving, to our eager hopes of seeing him again he answered: "Oh, yes, I will come back if God wills!"

'Those were the last words we heard, as we watched his car disappear in the distance. He will return no more to our mountains, which he so loved, but his dear and holy memory will remain in veneration among us forever.'

On his way from Rome to the Dolomites the Cardinal was in the habit of making a short halt at Riese, to visit the lowly little house where Pius X was born. It had been preserved intact and unaltered, and was given to the municipality by the Pope's sisters. Usually he arrived in the afternoon and left the following morning, being the guest, during his stay, of Ermenegildo and Petronilla Parolin, nephew and niece-by-marriage of Pius X.

He liked to say Mass in the public oratory of the *Pius X Orphanage*, founded by the generosity of the same Pontiff, and entrusted to the motherly care of the Sisters of the Blessed Bartolomea Capitanio.¹ Once he also celebrated in the sanctuary of the *Cendriole*, so dear to Pius X. Every year, in memory

¹ Known also as 'Sisters of Charity of Lovere' from the birthplace of their foundress. Founded at Bergamo in the early years of the nineteenth century.

of his visit, he signed the visitors' book. The last time, in August, 1929, unlike every other occasion, after his name he added the words: *Ever mindful!* Was it, perchance, a presentiment of the end?

When he returned from the Alps he spent a few weeks of early autumn at Rieti, the charming Sabine city once the residence of popes and cardinals, now the capital of the province, which, beautifully situated in the rich plain enclosed by mountains, seems to live on its past history. The notable local families, Canali, Vincentini, Blasetti, were rivals for the honour of having him for a guest, and regarded him with deep veneration, honouring him for his devout gravity, and his aristocratic bearing which was yet so cordial.

'For him,' said the Reverend Professor Jacoboni, 'who on pious pilgrimage had visited all the Franciscan memorials from La Verna to Monteluco, near Spoleto, it was impossible to neglect the little mediæval city, at the gates of Rome, whose citizens may consider themselves almost fellow-countrymen of him who, a shining light of holiness, took refuge in those solitary, sunlit valleys, to pray, meditate, and seek inspiration for the wondrous work, destined to defy the centuries.'

'Greccio, where Francis instituted the devotion of the Crib; Fonte Colombo, 'the Franciscan Sinai,' so full of quiet peace, and the noviciate for the Roman Province of the Friars Minor, under the patronage of S. Michael the Archangel; Poggio Bustone, perched aloft like an eyrie; and La Foresta, which seems to recall the miracle of the egg; are the four convents founded by the *Poverello*, as

cardinal points of the valley. His Eminence visited them all several times, and with intense devotion, but he made his way more often to Fonte Colombo, drawn thither by the austerity of the *Santo Speco*, by the little church which so lends itself to thought and recollection, by the marvellous panorama, and by the company of the novices, with whom he was wont to talk and joke at length. Thence he always descended to visit the rock cave where, according to Franciscan tradition, Francis slept and prayed.'

In the visitors' book at Fonte Colombo, he wrote thus: 'To-day, October 10th, 1923, on the completion of my fifty-eighth year, I pay special homage to the *Poverello* of Assisi; I thank God for having granted me all these years of life, and I ask pardon of Him for not having served Him better, as was His due and my duty.'

After his death the religious recalled his visits: 'He was accustomed to come here often, usually on foot, in the afternoon, saying the Rosary with Monsignor Canali. During the ascent he would stop every now and then to admire the view of the plain of the Reatine, and the play of light and shade on this lovely mountain chain. To ferret out the little churches lost amid the mountains, to seek the quiet ways along the streams, near the lakes where sometimes he used to fish, to visit simple people and talk with them in order to hear their simple conversation, and to smile at that good humour characteristic of the workers in the fields; to help and comfort always; such was the Cardinal's day when he stayed at Rieti.'

Everything Franciscan attracted him. The

Fathers relate how on October 4th, 1929, he twice made the ascent to the sanctuary; in the morning to celebrate Mass, and give Holy Communion to the pilgrims and community, and in the evening to be present at the suggestive function of the *Transito* of the Seraphic saint. They recall also how, an hour before the ceremony, without being noticed, he betook himself to the church, and was found there alone, kneeling in a corner, so lost in prayer as to be oblivious to the things of this world. And as though he could not have enough of those places which, notwithstanding, he was visiting for the last time, he returned on October 7th, to meet there the students of the Roman Pontifical Seminary.

The good Friars, who preserve a rich chalice and other reminders of him, wished for some permanent record of these visits, in his praise and for an example; and this took shape in a memorial tablet, unveiled with reverent ceremonial on October 24th, 1930.

Moreover, he helped every good work in the city which was meant to honour S. Francis of Assisi. Such was the restoration of the wonderful crypt of the Cathedral, where the saint poured forth his soul in an ecstasy of prayer, and the statue of S. Francis, which stands to-day in the small square in front of the bishop's residence. The work, truly inspired, and widely commended, was carried out by the late Giordano Nicoletti, the sculptor, and a citizen of Rieti.

To the sisters Sarto, and the other relatives of Pius X, Cardinal Merry del Val always showed the kindest attention and care. On the very day of

the elevation of Benedict XV to the Pontificate, he asked and obtained from the new Pope the nomination of Monsignor Giovanni Battista Parolin to a canonry in S. Peter's. Pius X had always held this nephew very dear, but notwithstanding earnest insistence on the part of several cardinals, and other influential persons, he would never establish him in Rome during his pontificate. In fact, at the death of his uncle Monsignor Parolin, already for several years parish priest at Possagno, he had recently been appointed a Canon of the Cathedral of Treviso. This first act of Benedict XV, as he himself afterwards declared with satisfaction, was hailed with joy in very many quarters. The Cardinal was delighted, because thus also help and comfort was secured to the old sisters of Pius X, who were already planning to leave Rome. As Archpriest of S. Peter's, he wished personally to install Monsignor Parolin in his benefice on September 20th, 1914.

On the occasion of the anniversary of the death of Pius X, the Cardinal wrote the following note to Signorina Gilda Parolin who lived in Rome with her aunts :

'In the train for Florence, *August 19th, 1916.*

'MY DEAR SIGNORINA GILDA,

'I am sending you a line in the train, using a little travelling typewriter. I beg you to greet your dear mother warmly in my name, also the good aunts and Monsignor Battista.

'As you may well believe, my thoughts are turning more than ever in these days to the memory of our beloved and revered Holy Father, Pius X. The

months pass, the years pass, but what does not pass is the intense and ever keen sorrow of having lost him. He will surely think of us in Heaven and pray for us !

'Monsignor Canali sends his cordial greetings to you all.'

Retired, so to speak, from that public life which his office of the Pope's first minister had imposed upon him, he knew how to maintain an attitude so dignified and serene as to win general admiration. This was especially the case in the diplomatic world, and although several distinguished members of it, with whom his former career had brought him into frequent contact, would have liked to continue the same relations even in his retirement, the Cardinal courteously managed to skirmish at first in such a manner as to cut off such relations altogether subsequently. To have acted otherwise would have seemed to him to be failing in that loyalty and respect which he owed to the new Pope, as well as to his own successor in the office of Secretary of State.

So, free at last from diplomacy and politics, in his solitary and silent home of Santa Marta, he could give full freedom to the longings of his holy soul : to that delicate and sensitive piety which made him suffer when he saw God's laws broken. To hear any profane language on the street used to horrify him, and even upset him physically. Once, in a country town, he saw some porters loading sacks of grain on to a waggon ; one of these was torn, so that the contents ran out on to the road ; the porter broke out into the vilest language, even in the presence

of some boys. The Cardinal was affected for the whole day, and in the evening, in addition to his usual visit to the Blessed Sacrament, he made another and a long one. Going out for a walk one day, he met a carriage-driver in the piazza, who was uttering blasphemous words against Our Lady. He went up to him, reproved him, and, taking his number, said that he would report him, all the more that the offence was punishable by law; he was only prevented from so doing by the man's entreaties and promises. The same delicate sensitiveness made him feel for dumb animals, which he could not bear to see ill-treated, and more than once he intervened to hinder such treatment, or cause it to cease.

Although, in twenty-seven years, the Cardinal had many opportunities of *opting* for a suburbicarian see, he would never do so, convinced as he was that, living in Rome, and occupied as a member of several Congregations and as Archpriest of S. Peter's, he would be unable to assume the care of a diocese with the responsibility for so many souls. Benedict XV had scarcely been elected, when, by means of one in his confidence, he offered him the office of Commendatory Abbot of Subiaco, which office he thought at first of reviving, but the Cardinal, whilst thanking the Holy Father for his thought of him, begged to be excused from accepting.

On the death of Cardinal Agliardi, Benedict XV repeatedly offered him the see of Albano. The Cardinal's answer was that if, by a higher will, he was obliged to assume the charge of a diocese, he would willingly do so, but in that case he would request the Holy Father to relieve him of his important

duties and offices in the Curia, so that he might give himself entirely to his pastoral duties.

The fact was that, from conviction, he was strongly in favour of the reform of the government of the suburbicarian dioceses which was one of the projects of Pius X. The latter, experienced as he was in the care of souls, had already thought out the main lines of the reform, and was resolved to carry it through, despite the opposition which was aroused at the first rumour. He was already about to apply it when death overtook him.

Yet although he had not the charge of a diocese, the Cardinal never lost any chance offered him of exercising the office of a bishop. He ordained more than four hundred priests, and the bishops consecrated by him numbered fifty. And it was always with a feeling of deep joy that he laid his hands on the future labourers in the Lord's vineyard. His eye used to light up more brightly, for in the footsteps of the new workers he saw multiplying the golden harvest of souls, which would extend the confines of the Kingdom of God on earth, and increase the joy of the Father who is in Heaven.

Twice he was Papal Legate to Assisi. The first time was in October 1920, and the second in the same month in 1926. When naming him his Legate for the celebrations of the first centenary of the finding of the body of S. Francis, Benedict XV granted him the use of the Papal throne for the solemn pontifical Mass, and the privilege of bestowing the Papal Blessing with the Plenary Indulgence.

At the same time, on the fifth and sixth of October, there took place at Assisi the Umbrian

Catechetical Congress, owing to the initiative of the bishops of the Province, as though to crown the centenary festivities which the city was holding in honour of her great son, S. Francis. On the morning of the fifth, the function was opened in the upper basilica of San Francesco, with Mass celebrated by the Cardinal, and the singing of the *Veni Creator*. Afterwards, in the Sala Davidica, he opened and presided over the Congress, in which the Archbishops and bishops took part, as also many of the clergy and representatives of Juvenile Catholic Action.

Cardinal Merry del Val, 'the understanding and valued collaborator of the Pope of the Catechism, Pius X'—as said the late Bishop of Assisi, Monsignor Ambrose Luddi—delivered a discourse at the first session which, moving and full of thought, was listened to with the closest attention and followed by prolonged applause.

In October 1926, there took place at Assisi the historic celebration of the seventh centenary of the death of S. Francis, at which the Cardinal presided as Papal Legate. This celebration had an echo far beyond Italy, even over the whole world. The official departure from Rome took place on October 3rd, a special train being put at the service of the Pontifical Mission by the Italian Government. It was the first time since 1870 that such a mission left Rome in such a manner. The departure from the Termini station, and also the journey via Orte, Spoleto, and Foligno, and the arrival at Assisi, were veritable triumphs.

He descended to Santa Maria degli Angeli, where

there awaited him some cardinals, the Ministers-General of the three families of the Franciscan Order, the ecclesiastical, civil, and military authorities, and a vast cheering crowd. Cardinal Bonzano greeted him in the basilica with a few words of welcome, and he replied in an address the high tone of which was inspired by a deep spirituality, and a fatherly predilection for the Franciscan Order.

On the morning of the fourth, in the Papal basilica, the religious celebration was held with extraordinary majesty and splendour, and the sermon, preached by the Legate during the Mass, was such as befitted the solemnity of the occasion. The same evening, in the austere two-century-old hall of the Palace of the Priors, between the gonfalone of the city and the Italian flag, the Cardinal took his seat on the throne surmounted by the Papal arms. Beside him were the members of the Pontifical Mission, and in front of him the Bishop of Assisi and the General of the Conventual Franciscans. At his entrance he was met by the representative of the Italian Government, His Excellency Pietro Fedele, Minister of Education, who kissing his hand said, in a voice full of emotion: 'Eminence, I bring you the homage of His Majesty's Government and of its Chief.'

After the Mayor, Commandatore Fortini, had happily recalled the glories of Assisi, 'whereon in that feast shone such a light of love,' the Cardinal pronounced the historic discourse, in which, after expressing his thanks for the triumphal reception he had received, he went on:

'In days when the Church and Christian civilisation were threatened, the pontiffs, Innocent and

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Honorius, willed to confirm the sublime mission of S. Francis. In his dedication and loving obedience to the Holy Roman See, they recognised the indubitable sign of a divine commission, and they availed themselves of it in order to defend the Church and civil society. To-day their successor, Pius XI, happily reigning, has willed to evoke again the great figure of the Seraphic Patriarch, and to invite the faithful to turn their thoughts to him, to hearken to his words, to follow his great example. S. Francis of Assisi, born the son of Holy Church, and trained and guided by her all along the way, is one of the purest glories of that Church and of the Catholic world. To deny that is impossible; but, having said that, who can deny that he is particularly a very pure glory of Assisi and Italy? And therefore it is most fitting that Italy and Assisi should be the first to celebrate this solemn centenary of his blessed death, and I consider myself honoured and happy to have been deputed by the Supreme Pontiff to represent him on so memorable an occasion.

'I have lived in Italy many years, almost all my life, and on those grounds you will allow me to say that I have earned the right to call it my second fatherland. You, Mr. Mayor, have had the delicate and graceful thought to mark this feast by doing me the high honour of offering me honorary citizenship of this illustrious city. I am greatly pleased at this thought, which I shall always remember with deep gratitude. I thank His Lordship, the venerable Bishop of Assisi, who notwithstanding his age has honoured this happy gathering with his

presence. My especial gratitude is due to you, Mr. Mayor, and the civil authorities, who have so courteously and magnificently contributed their large share to this centenary celebration. My thanks are extended, also, to the military authorities, representing the gallant officers and brave men of the glorious Italian army.

'And my thanks go out to him who holds in his hands the reins of the Government of Italy, and who in his clear vision of realities has desired, and desires, that religion should be respected, honoured, and practised. Visibly protected by God, he has wisely raised up the fortunes of the nation, and increased her prestige throughout the world.¹

'With these sentiments, and with this expression of my gratitude, I invoke upon Assisi, upon your dear Umbria, upon all Italy, upon those present, and upon as many as are united with them in thought and affection, the blessing of S. Francis, the glorious Poor Man of Assisi.'

While the Papal Legate was speaking, the emotion which had already dominated the crowd, descended gently into hearts and minds, arousing the purest enthusiasm, and it was with a voice obviously moved that the King's representative rose to speak. In the course of his speech he said:

'When this morning, Most Eminent Legate, you blessed Italy in the name of the Pontiff; Italy, whom you well called the privileged mother of saints and heroes, I felt that over our heads, bowed in reverence, the blessing of the Pope was indeed

¹ Signor Mussolini had recently narrowly escaped assassination.

passing ; and passing beyond the valley of Spoleto than which, as you said, the eyes of S. Francis never beheld aught more joyous ; over the mountains, the plains, the seas of Italy, where the whole nation, under the guidance of our Leader, is intent upon the tasks of eager and ordered labour.

' May the divine blessing which, brought by your means from the Apostolic See, has descended upon Italy, be to her the harbinger of good. May it be propitious to the re-birth, not only social and economic, but moral and spiritual, of the Italian people, towards which the National Government is striving with all its might.'

There were those who affirmed that the Cardinal Legate had been ' authorised ' in pronouncing the historic words which raised such a wave of sympathy, and called forth such warm approval in Italy and beyond. Certain others, highly placed, spread the murmur that the Cardinal had been blamed. But Cardinal Merry del Val was too experienced and skilful a diplomat, as also too devoted to the person and authority of the Pope, to think of uttering words which he had decided not prudent, or even a little inopportune, under such important and delicate circumstances.

There can be no denying that with the meeting at Assisi dawned the reconciliation now accomplished ; for October 4th, 1926, was the first time since 1870 that a minister of the King and a direct representative of the Pope met, and that desires of peace were expressed in the official speeches. And it was exactly on that day, as was known later, that there was laid the first foundation

stone of religious peace between the Church and Italy.

Shortly after the election of Pius XI, Cardinal Merry del Val was named Protector of the International Union of the Catholic Women's Leagues. For him this meant a widening of the field of his fruitful activity, but at the same time an increase of work, whether it were the study of serious and complex questions or the heavy correspondence with the President-General of the Union, or the Presidents of the different national unions, who often turned to him for advice. He presided over three International Congresses at Rome, and pronounced discourses which are real lessons in religious and social subject-matter, and concern the most vital modern problems.

In May 1925, he celebrated his episcopal jubilee, and in November 1928 that of his elevation to the Purple. On the former occasion the Holy Father sent him a precious autograph letter, wherein he extolled the proofs of care, diligence, and prudence, which he had ever given in his performance of the duties of the important and difficult offices entrusted to him in the Government of the Church. This jubilee was saddened by the death of the Cardinal's mother, and in consequence of his mourning he would have preferred that there should be no external celebrations. But he had to yield to the affectionate insistence of the Chapter of S. Peter's, so after some weeks he celebrated his jubilee Mass at the Altar of the Chair. The ceremony, closed with the singing of the *Te Deum*, was not merely solemn, but impressive in its grandeur. Besides the whole

Chapter, many cardinals were present, also a number of representatives of the Sacred Congregations, the Secretariate of State, the Papal court and religious communities and institutions. After the Mass, in the great hall of the Sacristy of S. Peter's, the late Monsignor Salvatore Talamo, Dean of the Chapter, read a moving address, and presented the Cardinal with a large gold medal, of high artistic merit, specially struck by order of the Chapter, in homage to him.

In his reply he spoke thus: 'The exquisite kindness shown me, on this happy occasion, by the illustrious Chapter and the Clergy of this Patriarchal Basilica, has deeply moved me, and I feel it difficult to find fitting words to express to all, as I would, my warmest gratitude. It is not merely an empty phrase but the truth, and from my heart, if I say that I should have preferred this jubilee anniversary to have passed in silence, and that I might have remained alone at the feet of our Lord, to thank Him for the benefits I have received from His infinite mercy, and to ask His forgiveness for my failings. But since the occurrence has been celebrated by my too kind friends, I will say at once that no congratulations could have been more welcome to me than those which come to-day from my beloved Chapter and clergy of S. Peter's. . . . You, Monsignor, have been pleased to recall the years of my priestly ministry, and I thank you for so doing for they were the happiest days of my life.

'When, by a higher will, I was obliged to withdraw myself from them, in order to assume other duties, the sacrifice involved—and it was great—

could only have been compensated for by my finding myself at the side of the glorious and holy Pontiff, Pius X, and it was from him that I received the high office of Cardinal Archpriest of this famous Basilica.

'So far as in me lies, I have tried to correspond to his ardent desire, which was to maintain the dignity and splendour of this house of God, and to provide that to the magnificence of the material edifice, there should not be lacking the visible example of a clergy who should give edification by their spirit of piety and priestly virtues. The deep, I would even say the paternal affection which I feel for all without distinction, and which extends from the highest dignitaries to the humblest servant of S. Peter's, causes me to desire that nothing should be left undone which may be of advantage to them whether materially or—and principally—spiritually. I wish to see all happy, I long to see all holy. . . .

'I am confident that their prayers will not fail me, and that all united in the common desire to glorify God by the exact fulfilment of our duties, we may show ourselves not unworthy of those who have gone before us, and leave to those who follow a lasting and happy memory of the love which we profess for the Prince of the Apostles, and for the immortal Basilica which perpetuates his memory in the glorious Centre of Christendom.'

To a friend who, after the ceremony in S. Peter's, was received by the Cardinal, and congratulated him on the imposing celebration, and on the presence of so many of his colleagues in the Sacred College, he made the following reply:

'That ceremony made me think of my funeral, and these cardinals will easily be present also at my funeral!'

His cardinalial jubilee also gave occasion for sincere expressions of reverence, sympathy and loving admiration for his person and his work. By degrees that figure and work of the Secretary of State of Pius X, as they emerged from the shadows of contemporary events, were gaining by being placed in that light and that position which already the History of the Church had assigned them. He was already beyond and above men's passions, victoriously representing a whole period of energetic affirmations, an attitude of firmness and coherence, a providential pontificate of religious restoration, and vindication of the Church's teaching. Those who did not venerate him from affection could not but respect him for his unquestioned rectitude, his virtue, and for a whole accumulation of gifts which all recognised in him.

But on this latter occasion he did not wish for special exterior ceremonies. In the morning he was received in private audience by the Holy Father, who warmly congratulated him. At S. Peter's, yielding to his earnest request, the Chapter had to limit itself to a High Mass followed by a solemn *Te Deum*. The most noteworthy ceremony took place at the Pontifical Roman Seminary at the Lateran, where he was invited to celebrate his Jubilee Mass by the late Cardinal Pompili, Vicar-General of His Holiness.

So his life went on in an unceasing succession of occupations, and no one who saw him go by on foot

through the streets of Rome, with his upright carriage and rapid step, could have thought that his end was near. Yet, on the contrary, his last hour had already struck!

On February 12th, 1930, he had been present at the Papal Chapel, for the anniversary of the Holy Father's coronation. On the following days nothing happened to change his normal way of life. On the 13th after the session of the Holy Office, he went to visit Cardinal Perosi, who had recently fallen ill, and stayed with him some little time. At 7.15 a.m. on the 20th, he said Mass, according to his custom, at the tomb of Pius X, and gave Holy Communion to several persons. On Saturday morning, February 22nd, while he was presiding at the meeting of the Congregation of the Holy Office, he received the news of the death of Cardinal Perosi, and was very sorrowful about it.

He wished to visit the body at once, and spent a long time in prayer in the simple bedroom of his dead friend. When leaving, he arranged for the body to be exposed in the chapel of the Holy Office. Cardinal Perosi's death affected him very deeply, and lamenting the great loss he exclaimed repeatedly: 'It seems impossible to me that Perosi is dead!'

In the afternoon of Saturday the 22nd, he went on foot with Monsignor Canali to the Gesù, for his usual weekly Confession to Father Alisiardi. Then he made his way to his Association in the Trastevere.

He, who had been so devoted to the popes: who had consecrated all his powers to the service of the Church: who had so loved the Basilica of S. Peter's: who had given such edification by his spirituality,

was by the disposition of Providence to close his life with an act of devotion to the Pope, in the person of Pius XI, and of affection for the Basilica. Actually his last act was to write a letter on Tuesday morning—the eve of his death—thanking His Holiness for the gift of a valuable ring, which Pius XI had sent him, that same morning, in memory of the Baptism conferred by the Cardinal upon the baby girl, Maria Pia Persichetti-Ugolini, the Holy Father's grand-niece.

Three days before he died, on Sunday, February 23rd, he went twice to S. Peter's in the course of the morning. In the afternoon he went to the Trastevere to be present at a dramatic rehearsal. On Monday—the feast of S. Matthias—he celebrated his last Mass. During the morning he received several prelates, and all went on as usual through the day. About 4.30 p.m., after having recited Vespers and Compline and, as always, made a visit to the Blessed Sacrament in his chapel, he went out with Monsignor Canali for their customary walk. He was very well; he even walked faster than usual, so that Monsignor Canali begged him to slacken his pace, as the scirocco was blowing and he might become overheated. That was his last visit to his dear Association. He was specially fatherly and affectionate to the boys, gaily taking part in their games.

When he returned home, he was about to say Matins and Lauds for the next day when he complained of some discomfort, saying to Monsignor Canali: 'I have a slight symptom of some internal disturbance.' That evening, towards 10 p.m., before

going to bed he went to the chapel and paid an unusually long visit, absorbed in fervent prayer, his head in his hands.

On Tuesday morning, the 25th, although the slight internal pain had not disappeared, he wished to rise, though later than usual. In the afternoon it was discovered that he had a slight temperature, and Doctor Milani was summoned. He pronounced the trouble to be an attack of appendicitis, slight as yet but requiring to be watched, since the malady was insidious. In the meantime he prescribed applications of ice. His Eminence, who had heard the doctor's opinion, expressed thus plainly without the slightest circumlocution, remained as undisturbed when he heard that he had appendicitis as though the case did not concern him in the least.

Since he absolutely refused to allow any of the household to be disturbed for the night nursing, two of the Spanish nursing Sisters, the Handmaids of Mary,¹ were sent for; the same who had nursed him through influenza a year previously. Dr. Milani paid another visit later, and stated that an operation must be performed, if not that night on the following morning. Before leaving the Cardinal's house, he telephoned to the physician of the Swiss Guard at the Vatican, to warn him in case it should be necessary to call him up during the night. Then, on second thoughts, realising the perplexity of the household, he telephoned to the specialist, Professor Giuseppe Bastianelli, who came, examined the Cardinal, and confirmed his colleague's diagnosis.

¹ Founded in Madrid in 1837, by Mother Soledad Torres y Acosta.

During all these discussions, the patient remained quite calm and undisturbed, showing really surprising self-possession.

The night passed in intense anxiety for the others, though the Cardinal did not complain of pain and himself reassured Monsignor Canali and the nurses. So dawned the sad February 26th, which was to be the last day of his life.

Faced with the necessity of the operation, Dr. Milani had proposed, as operating surgeon, Professor Raffaele Bastianelli, and made arrangements with the latter's brother. On the morning of the 26th the temperature had fallen to 98.6 F., but by 10 a.m. had risen again to 101, and by 1 p.m. to 102.4. In view of the increasing gravity of the situation, Dr. Milani telephoned several times to Professor Bastianelli, who had promised to come immediately, if necessary, and perform the operation, which would be under ether.

These facts are learnt from a report, signed by all three doctors and dated March 2nd, 1930. From this it appears also that they were satisfied as to the condition of the heart, and that the operation was begun at 3 p.m. and proceeded normally.

The painful events of those last hours are told by Monsignor Giuseppe Pescini, formerly private secretary to Pius X:

'On Wednesday, February 26th, about 6.30 a.m. I was just going to say Mass, when I was told that I was wanted at the telephone. It was Monsignor Canali, who begged me to come to the *palazzina*, as the Cardinal had to undergo an operation as soon as possible on account of an attack of appendicitis.

I rushed to Santa Marta at once, and on the steps the first person I met was Monsignor Canali, a prey to the keenest anxiety. He took me to the Cardinal's bedside and left me. A little surprised at my early visit, he greeted me kindly and calmly as usual: "It was good of you to come. I am so pleased. Do stay with Monsignor Canali, because he is too much upset about it."

'After a moment's silence, he went on: "Just see what they want to do; they say that I must have an operation, but I do not know. Do I really need it? I do not feel very ill."

'I said a few words of encouragement and silence fell. I sat down beside the bed. His Eminence seemed preoccupied and, looking at him closely, I had the impression that he was affected with a certain uneasiness, which he was carefully repressing with that perfect self-command which was characteristic of him, and which had rendered him so grand in moments of anxious conflict. After I had stayed some time in the room, as it seemed to me that he wished to rest, I went out. However, it was decided to ask him whether he did not think of receiving Holy Communion, so I returned to the room and, very quietly, without letting me finish my sentence, he answered: "Oh, yes, indeed; I was just thinking about it. I want Holy Communion."

'Monsignor Mancini set off immediately to the Gesù, in search of His Eminence's confessor, Father Alisiardi, S.J., whom he brought back almost at once and took to the Cardinal's bedside. After hearing his confession, the same Father gave him

Holy Communion. He was then left in peace and became absorbed in prayer, so remaining until the doctors arrived for another visit, nearly half an hour later.

' When I re-entered to tell him that they wished to see him, he was still lost in prayer. His hands were folded and he still wore his stole, which I removed just as the medical men came in. They questioned him at length as to the phases of the attack. Dr. Bastianelli sat beside the bed and, as the patient answered his questions, made notes in a pocket book. I did not know this doctor, but he seemed to me very thoughtful and preoccupied. Dr. Milani, also, who remained standing all the time, seemed affected by a certain nervous restlessness. Then the two went out to discuss between themselves whether the operation should take place at once or later.

' When they had gone, the Cardinal looked at me with a certain characteristic smile of his, and said, a little distrustfully: "If only one might know what these gentlemen want! What are they doing? Is this operation to take place, or is it not?"

' After more delay, the doctors returned and told him that they had decided to postpone the operation for a few hours, in the hope that the fever would abate. (The temperature was, indeed, rather high.) The Cardinal only replied with some word of assent and—resignation! With his usual courtesy, he bade the doctors good morning, and did not speak further.

' It was 10 a.m. and I took leave of him, telling him that I was going to say Mass and would pray

much for him. He was surprised that I had not yet celebrated and said some words of sympathy. When I saw him again later I found him still tranquil. Once I asked him whether he were suffering, and he repeated to me what he had said to the doctors: that he felt scarcely any pain in the region of the appendix, but that he was suffering a little from thirst, and a painful aching in the bones which pointed to rheumatism. This was perhaps due to the fever which, instead of abating, was becoming worse.

' Towards three o'clock in the afternoon, Monsignor Canali, who by a miracle managed to restrain his emotion, entered for the last time before the operation. Neither the Cardinal nor he spoke, but they looked at each other with an indefinable look which, to me, was heart-rending. Was it a presentiment?

' In the adjoining room, transformed into an operating theatre, everything was ready. At five minutes to three, Dr. Milani came in and told His Eminence that it was time for the operation. The doctor was extraordinarily nervous. Very quietly (at that moment he was the most composed and tranquil of us all) the Cardinal asked: "Are you going to give me chloroform?"

"No," replied the doctor, "we have decided to give you a few drops of ether, to save you pain and be safer. We do not wish Your Eminence to have too much to suffer."

' The Cardinal made no answer. An attendant from the Bastianelli nursing-home came in to lift him on to the operating table. He had to make an

unusual effort to raise him, as the patient was not in the right position to be lifted. He noticed it at once, however, and settling himself in the correct position, said smilingly: "Am I too heavy? I know it."

'I kissed his hand, saying some encouraging words, and he thanked me. With the Sister, we arranged the sheet in which he was completely wrapped, and I accompanied him to the door of the operating room. I did not dare to insist upon going in, on account of the limited space. Dr. Bastianelli was awaiting him, with two assistants and two of the nursing Sisters, belonging to the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, from the doctor's own nursing-home, as well as Dr. Milani.

'I stayed a little while, waiting outside the door by which the Cardinal had been carried in, and from which I had seen him laid on the table. After some moments of silence, I heard sounds from the patient as he was put under the anæsthetic; then silence again. I was seized with an extraordinary uneasiness. I rose from where I was, and noticed that the Sister who had been attending the Cardinal all the morning was praying earnestly, her Rosary in her hands. As I heard that Monsignor Canali and other friends were reciting the Rosary in the adjoining chapel, I wanted to go and join them.

'It was not given me to follow their prayers. I made my way to the glass door of the improvised theatre, and at this door I found Monsignor Mancini waiting anxiously. After a few minutes, lo and behold, Dr. Milani came running out like one distraught, his hands in his hair, and in a choking

voice I heard him say: "His Eminence is no longer breathing!"

'In an instant the terrible news spread to all. Controlling himself wonderfully, Monsignor Mancini ran into the chapel, took the Holy Oil and, forthwith, entered the operating-room. With my assistance he administered Extreme Unction to the Cardinal, who was lying lifeless on the table. Notwithstanding my indescribable distress, I noticed that Dr. Bastianelli was applying artificial respiration, whilst the others, with the Sisters, were hurrying over the last requirements after the completed operation. I went out bewildered, to attend to my poor friend, Monsignor Canali, who had fallen to the ground, stunned with grief, unable to believe in so tragic an accident. Meanwhile, with the utmost care and loving attention, the Sisters and the Cardinal's faithful servant, Mariano, had taken away the venerated body and laid it on his bed.

'On his face shone a wonderful smile; a smile of Heaven! Everyone noticed it, and it made us think: *Behold how the just man dieth!*'

The news of his death was telegraphed immediately to the Cardinal's relatives, who had previously been informed of his illness. It was also at once told to the Holy Father, who had repeatedly sent the dear invalid his special blessing; the heavy sorrow which had befallen the Sacred College and the Church afflicted him deeply.

Following upon the news that the Cardinal's death had occurred whilst he was under an anæsthetic, a rumour spread that he had been choked by

an artificial dental plate, which had fallen into the throat; but, as the *Osservatore Romano* stated on April 24th, 1931, he had no artificial teeth. No accident of the kind caused his death, which was due to suffocation whilst under ether.

CHAPTER XI

IN PACE

THE news of the death of Cardinal Merry del Val fell like a thunderbolt, causing a general sense of bewilderment and bitter sorrow. Only two days previously he had been seen walking in the Roman streets, with his rapid step. No one even knew he was ill, and already Death had covered him with her sable mantle.

The body, clothed in purple cardinalial robes, was exposed in a room in his house, converted into a *chappelle ardente*. In his hands were placed the crucifix to which he was formerly so attached, and the Rosary of Our Lady's Sorrows. Not even the austere pallor of death seemed to have banished the characteristic winning expression of the countenance, and all around him there seemed to reign an atmosphere calm and peaceful as of a bright, serene eventide.

Forthwith there began to flock to Santa Marta a throng of visitors of every age, condition, and social class. Cardinals, bishops, priests, diplomats, members of the Roman nobility, young men, soldiers, nuns, religious, and even working men in their working clothes; and all, visibly moved, remained to pray. The students of the ecclesiastical colleges, especially those whose Protector he had

been, took it in turns to watch through the night, with the Conventual Franciscans and his boys of the Trastevere. Next morning, in the adjoining room, which had been turned into a chapel, many Masses were celebrated at all hours for the holy soul of the illustrious Porporato.

On Friday, February 28th, there took place the ceremony of the reading of the *Rogito*,¹ in presence of distinguished persons belonging to the Vatican City, and the Chapter of S. Peter's. On Monday, March 2nd, in the office of the Governor of the Vatican City, there was read his will, which he had made on July 15th, 1929.

'In the Name of the Most Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—with an act of love to the Sacred Heart of my Jesus, our Saviour, true God and true Man; under the protection of my Immaculate and Sorrowful Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and that of my holy Patrons; in the full use of my faculties, I make this day my legal testament and declaration of my last will.

'I name and leave my universal heir the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, for poor missions, exclusive of any other object.

'I have no immovable goods, and beyond the sums in my possession in the City of the Vatican, and in Rome, whether in bonds or in cash, I have only those sums deposited or invested in London, in England, in the National Bank.

¹ The account of the life and career of the deceased, a copy of which was placed in the coffin. It closed with these words: 'Vale iterum vale, bone miles Christi; tuarum virtutum recordatio nobis exemplo, incitamento, solatio erit; ad Superos translatus, pro Republica Christianorum ora.'

'I name as my executor my dear and faithful friend, Monsignor Nicola Canali. I can never sufficiently express the affectionate and deep gratitude I owe him for all that he has done for me, in days of joy as in days of sorrow; who has suffered with me, and often, without any fault of his own, suffered for his fidelity to me, with absolute disinterestedness; charitably correcting me, without ever flattering me; and helping me, at all times, with inexhaustible devotion and affection. I leave him as a legacy. . . .

'I desire to be buried with the utmost simplicity. If it be granted me, I would wish my body to rest as near as possible to my beloved Father and Pontiff, Pius X, of holy memory; and if this may not be allowed me—and I understand that I am unworthy—in my titular church of Santa Prassede, if the requirements of the civil laws permit of it.

'I desire that on my tomb there should be written only my name, with these words: *Da mihi animas—cætera tolle*, the aspiration of my whole life.

'I leave . . . for Masses for the repose of my soul.

'I leave to the reigning Pope my pectoral cross, set with amethysts and the cameo of the Madonna, with the chain, given me by Leo XIII; as a token of my unreserved loyalty to the Vicar of Jesus Christ, and to the See of Peter.

'I leave to my loved aunt, Laura de Zulueta, who has been to me more than a mother, and to her daughter Maria, my cousin, and failing them to the eldest of my brothers, the ivory crucifix, with the case, given me by the Duke de Montpensier; and to my brothers the picture of the Communion

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of S. Teresa, that of Our Lady of Sorrows, and some object of value to be chosen by themselves.'

Legacies follow to each of his servants; then it goes on:

'I leave to Ushaw College the complete collection of gold medals of Pius X, with the stole and cassock of the same.

'To my sister, Maria, I leave the portrait of my mother, and the bust of S. Madeleine-Sophie Barat. I leave to the Basilica of S. Peter's my chalice, used at the marriage of my parents, and to Santa Prassede my best vestment. The solution of any doubts as to my intentions shall remain to my dear friend, Monsignor Canali.

'I ask forgiveness of all whom I may have offended, and implore the mercy of God, grieving that I have not served Him better.

'I bless my dear sons of the Trastevere, and the communities whose Protector I am, and recommend myself to their prayers.

'I lovingly accept death, when and how God shall will, in expiation of my sins, and adoring His decrees.'

This will was found on the morning following his death, by the Magistrate of the Vatican City, Monsignor Canali and some other intimate friends; and it was found in the second right-hand drawer of his private desk, placed in a large envelope, left open, on which he had written: *Mio Testamento*. The freshness of the ink showed that these words had been written recently, and the only explanation of the detail lay in the conclusion that on the day before his death, when he had remained alone for a

short time in his bedroom, he had got up to go into his little study. There he had put the will into the envelope, written the words on it, and then left it on top of some other letters, so that it was seen immediately upon opening the drawer. Was it, again, a presentiment?

His filial desire to be buried in the crypt of S. Peter's so humbly expressed, was at once communicated to the Holy Father, who deigned to receive it favourably and immediately ordered the necessary steps to be taken for choosing the place of burial.

On Monday, March 3rd, the body was brought into the Basilica, amidst a wonderful crowd of high ecclesiastical and civil dignitaries, as also of the faithful from every quarter, all anxious to pay him a last tribute of affection and veneration.

There followed the solemn rites, in the vast transept of SS. Processus and Martinian, in the presence of many cardinals, the high officials of the Papal Court, the Diplomatic Corps, Roman prelates and nobles, Superiors of Religious Orders, and a vast throng. The catafalque on which the body was placed was surrounded by the traditional hundred candlesticks of wrought iron, containing yellow wax candles, and four torches. At the feet was placed the Red Hat. Around stood four guards of honour in the family livery, and four Sampietrini, all bearing wax torches.

The Pontifical Requiem was sung by His Excellency Monsignor Agostino Zampini, Bishop of Porfirio, Vicar-General of His Holiness for the Vatican City, and Vicar of the Chapter of S. Peter's.

At the conclusion of the Holy Sacrifice, Cardinal Vincenzo Vannutelli, Dean of the Sacred College, pronounced the solemn Absolution.

The grand and solemn strains of the *Messa Grande di Requiem* of the Maestro Perosi seemed, in their mournful austerity, to gather up and express all the emotion of the multitude which, massed around the coffin with a loving sense of profound grief, implored light and peace for the great Dead.

When all was ended, the body, borne on the shoulders of the young men of the Trastevere Association, aided by the Sampietrini, was carried down, by way of the Confession stairs, to the crypt, and laid close to the tomb of Pius X, where the provisional arrangements for the burial had already been made. With the mournful procession there followed the late Cardinal's brothers, Alfonso and Domingo, his nephews, Monsignor Canali, and a few intimate friends, to impress upon the coffin a last sorrowful kiss.

In the months of March and April, Solemn Requiems were celebrated in the Basilica of Santa Prassede, formerly the titular church of the dead Cardinal, since 1903; in the Vatican Basilica, on behalf of the Chapter; in that of the Holy Apostles, and in Santa Maria in Trastevere; in the churches of Sant' Agata, S. Andrea delle Fratte, S. Francesco a Ripa, S. Silvestro in Capite, the Gesù, and S. Michele in Borgo; in the chapels of the Spanish College and the Association of the Sacred Heart in the Trastevere, the convent chapels of the Dame Catechiste, the religious of the Sacred Heart, the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Dame Inglesi),

and many others of men and women whose Protector he had been.

Requiems were sung for him also at Bologna, Rieti, Fonte Colombo, Arabba, and Westminster Cathedral; and many were the Masses offered for him besides, in the Vatican crypt and the English, Canadian, and Belgian colleges.

The Press, both in Italy and abroad, was unanimous in extolling the exceptional intellectual and spiritual gifts of the deceased, remarking upon the deep and luminous traces of good which he had left in his rapid passing by.

April 1930 saw the solemn Commemoration ceremony at the palace of the Apostolic Chancery (Cancelleria) when Count dalla Torre, in presence of a large audience, magisterially threw into relief the noble figure, and the many-sided and great work of the unforgettable Cardinal.

In a noble panegyric, delivered on the first anniversary of his death, during the Requiem in Santa Prassede, Monsignor Ruffini spoke especially of his hidden virtues, revealing to the great and mourning congregation the ascetic side of his character in all its marvellous beauty. Both discourses were printed (the former was also translated into English) and had a wide diffusion, as has also two other printed addresses, delivered by Monsignor Jasoni, and Signor Virgilio Signori, at the Commemorative meeting of the Association of the Trastevere.

In the assembly hall of the same Association, where he had scattered profusely such rich treasures of goodness and generosity, on March 1st, 1931, was

unveiled a memorial tablet, to hand down his great and revered name to posterity. On October 24th, 1930, the Friars Minor of the sanctuary of Fonte Colombo, near Rieti, had already unveiled a large tablet, set in the outer wall of the church, as a pledge of their everlasting gratitude to their great benefactor. On both occasions the speeches were delivered by Professor Don Jacoboni.

But the monument which, with its simple inscription, will send down to the most distant future generations the holy longing of the whole life of Cardinal Merry del Val, will be the artistic and precious tomb—designed on the simplest lines by Beltrami—of massive onyx from the quarries of the island of Majorca in the Balearic group, which Catholic Spain, his distant fatherland, wished, in its pious affection, to give him for his last sleep. On the front, in the centre, it bears—according to his wish—only the words:

RAPHAEL CARD. MERRY DEL VAL
'DA MIHI ANIMAS CÆTERA TOLLE'.

On the wall, to the left of the tomb, may be read the following inscription, composed by Father Lorenzo Rocci, S.J.

*Quo memoriam Raphaelis Merry del Val S.R.E.,
Card. Tit. S. Praxedis Vaticanæ Basil. Archipr.
honore prosequerentur ex Hispania amici A.D.
MCMXXI post obitum primo sepulcrum pii et
desideratissimi Civis Onyche Maioricensi exornan-
dum curaverunt.*

On the right side of the wall is the following, from the will of the lamented Prince of the Church:

Desidero di essere seppellito colla massima semplicità. Sulla mia tomba sia iscritto soltanto il mio nome con queste parole: 'Da mihi animas—cætera tolle,' l'aspirazione di tutta la mia vita.¹

The monument was unveiled on July 11th, 1931, in presence of many cardinals, ambassadors, high ecclesiastical dignitaries and laity. Cardinal Pacelli, Archpriest of the Basilica, pronounced a touching discourse, in the course of which he said:

'This tomb is hidden in the same shades which make this ancient crypt an object of veneration; the place of rest, until the Resurrection, of so many pontiffs, cardinals, and princes, over whose bodies the sacred remains of the first Vicar of Christ, Foundation and immovable Rock of Catholic unity, breathe the selfsame hope. And in the circle of these sepulchres the tomb of Cardinal Merry del Val inspires in the mind a reason for remembrance and veneration proper to itself, on account of its nearness to that of the Pontiff Pius X, of holy memory; at whose side he suffered, fought, and prayed, in such wise that it was said that, rather than the minister, the Cardinal appeared as the faithful and intimate collaborator of his government. These two, as we may justly hope, have already met in the joy of the Lord, in the reward of their joint work, whilst in History their names will be for ever linked

¹ I desire to be buried with the utmost simplicity. On my tomb let there be written only my name with these words: *Da mihi animas—cætera tolle*; the aspiration of my whole life.

together in the radiance of light, of truth and of peace which, in the first decade of this century, the Roman Pontificate shed over the world. But it is also a beautiful and holy thought that their tombs should be placed here together, wrapped in the same august sleep, since for so long they shared a common life and toil.

'Yet, as though suffering no rest, even in this tomb the lips of Cardinal Merry del Val are not silent. Conquering and passing beyond death, behind the letters written on his sarcophagus, he still cries out to God : *Da mihi animas—cætera tolle !* It is the cry of his faith and his zeal ; by it *defunctus adhuc loquitur*. It is the thirst for souls which burned in his heart, and enlarged it to embrace all, near and far, in truth and virtue ; a thirst which, even in the austerity of the Purple, led him among the little ones, and the sons of the people ; a thirst which would perpetuate itself at last in this cry, and make known to all who approach this cold stone which hides his heart, now stilled, how that heart was aglow with the spirit of Christ, who in His Passion and in His Blood, had taught him the inestimable price of souls ! Here the man disappears in the shadow to live in the light of faith : *Habitanti in regione umbræ mortis, lux orta est ei :* under the seal of that greatness which Catholic Spain would perpetuate through the centuries by means of this noble monument, in witness of that chosen soul which, on fire with love for God, for His Vicar, for His Church, quickened the body now enclosed here, awaiting a blessed Resurrection.'

On the same day there was unveiled in the

entrance of the Sacristy of S. Peter's, a further memorial. The design consists of a frame of green marble, surmounted by an ogee of the same, and an ornament of gilded bronze. It was given by a group of English Catholics, who had accepted contributions also from Italy, the United States, France, and Belgium. Above, under the ogee, is a portrait in profile of the Cardinal, on a medallion of Gandoglia marble, presented by the Works of the Duomo of Milan. The stone bears the following inscription, also composed by Father Lorenzo Rocci, S.J. :

MEMORIÆ ET LAUDI

RAPHAELIS MERRY DEL VAL S.R.E. CARD.

TITULO S. PRÆDIXIS

QUI EX HISPANIA CLARO GENERE ORIUNDUS

LONDINI NATUS A.D. MDCCCLXV

OPTIME DE RE CATHOLICA MERUIT

PRUDENS PII X P.M. A PUBL. NEGOTIIS

PER XVI AN. VATICANÆ BASIL. ARCHIPRESBYTER

CHORI ASSIDUITATEM PIENTISSIMUS COLUIT

MARMOREUM PAVIMENTUM AD B. PETRI CINERES

ÆRE SUO REFICIENDUM CURAVIT

OPES OMNESQUE CURAS

IN PROXIMORUM SALUTEM CONTULIT

A.D. MCMXXXI POST OBITUM PRIMO

TANTÆ VIRTUTIS ÆSTIMATORES

POS.

When the veil fell from the memorial, Cardinal Pacelli delivered a second address, in which, after

having recalled how the dead Cardinal had longed for a vigorous renaissance of the Catholic Faith in England, still bestrewn with the accumulated ruins left from the unfortunate religious separation from Rome, he continued :

'The late Cardinal's thoughts were ever turning to his brethren who had wandered from the truth. For them he prayed and made the boys of his loved Trastevere Association pray: for them, by his public exhortations, by his private conversation, by his writing, he laboured to remove obstacles, to smooth the road for their return to the centre of unity of Faith. Under his wise and fatherly guidance, how many souls were brought back to the fold of Christ! So his effigy, which adorns this *ambulacro* is, at once, a memorial both of him and of his work, and a monument of the gratitude of as many as admired his charity in going in search of souls and bringing them back to God, and of those who knew his paternal tenderness and wise counsel.

'But this medallion, set here, where so many times he appeared in the majesty of his priesthood, whilst it portrays him, as it were, on the way to the greatest sanctuary of Christendom, to which this *ambulacro* is the entry, reminds us again whither gazed his active faith; whither soared his hope; whence his charity went out to reach the longing for souls which consumed him, the longing to uplift them all in an infinite embrace and bear them away, beyond the cupola of Michelangelo before the throne of God. How often, on the altars of this sacrosanct Basilica, his ardent prayer for the land of his birth must have risen to Heaven, a plea for

pardon, a longing for light, a prayer of love, confidence of victory!

'It was a loving and fitting thought, therefore, which procured that, among the memorials of Sovereign Pontiffs and Cardinal-Archpriests, this marble figure of Cardinal Merry del Val should perpetuate his memory and the veneration felt for him. Here the children of that England he loved so well, who come to Rome, may pause in affectionate and grateful admiration of him, and carry away with them the impression of the features of their great fellow-countryman, on which they have gazed; of him who was a glory of their land and of the Catholic Church, who, in the peace of the tomb, still calls down over their souls the hour of grace and of mercy.'

On September 21st, 1933, Riese associated for ever the name of Cardinal Merry del Val with that of its great citizen Pius X, by giving the Cardinal's name to a new road, and unveiling on the outer wall of the house of Gildo Parolin, a marble tablet recording the many visits paid by the Prince of the Church to the native place of the holy Pontiff. Monsignor Jeremich, Bishop-Auxiliary of Venice, delivered an eloquent address on the occasion.

On October 14th, 1933, the city of Assisi, which in 1926 had conferred honorary citizenship upon the Cardinal, led by the worthy Podestá Fortini, placed a large portrait in oils in the Sala del suo Comune, and named after him the street which runs past the church raised over the tomb of S. Francis. So, in sight of the celebrated basilica remains fittingly, ever living and watchful, the reminder of

the great Porporato, whose personality and virtues had won for him so great a reputation in the Church and in the world.

But his fairest memorial has been that set up in the world of souls, who beholding realised in him an ideal of spiritual life, not frequently found, think of him as assumed into the same luminous atmosphere as that which surrounds the figure of the holy Pontiff, Pius X. At his tomb, adorned with lights and flowers, there is a continuous succession of the faithful who come to pray, confident in the efficacy of his intercession before God, or already to thank him for special favours which they declare they have received through his means. Indeed there are many for whom—as His Excellency Monsignor Costantini, Bishop of Luni, happily expressed it—‘His beautiful figure is looming larger on a background of supernatural light, and is taking on the serene loveliness of the Saint.’

One more look: the last. As in a symphony, the dominant note is continually recurring, albeit with differing strength and tonality, so this Soul, orientated towards the heights, succeeded ever in reproducing the note of the Supernatural, and that with marvellous fidelity. The holy Cardinal knew how to respond so promptly and enthusiastically to the loving touch of grace, that when the heart whose spiritual rhythm had thus in secret been so wonderfully quickened, ceased to beat, there was a unanimous chorus of admiration; of wonder at the progress he had silently made in the love of God.

Only in the light which comes down from on high

had he appraised men, and human changes and chances. Only to uplift souls to dwell in this supernatural light had he never flinched from responsibility, fatigue, and suffering, which he always succeeded in hiding beneath an exterior habitually cheerful and calm. And this is why he becomes grander, whatever be the background against which he is studied; be it beneath the sumptuous vault of S. Peter's, beside the Papal throne; on the lofty peaks of the Alps, in sight of the eternal snows; amidst a rejoicing people, or among the poor and needy. This is why wherever he passed he left innumerable admirers who never ceased to praise his exceptional spiritual elevation and numberless good deeds; who followed him with their hearts and retained an indelible impression of his gentle bearing. This is why at his unexpected death there arose, from near and far, a deep and universal mourning.

His day of intense and sacred toil is ended. Wrapped in the mystic silent shades of the crypts of S. Peter's, he rests close to Pius X, with whom—as said Father Sales, O.P.—‘he shared the few joys and the many sorrows of the pontificate.’ But his figure, ‘blessed by all who intensely love the Church and the Pope,’ will remain a perennial and shining example of noble thoughts, strong purposes, and holy deeds; a wonderful incentive to look far, never forgetting that the things here have meaning only for him who tenaciously aspires to what is beyond. So, even from his tomb, in a sublime gesture of his ardent, apostolic spirit, he will never cease to hold aloft the torch of faith and divine love

wherewith in days of yore he lighted up the dark path of life for so many souls!

Meanwhile, as time does him justice before human judgements, and shows that he was great for what he accomplished in life and greater still for what his death has revealed to us, the heart takes comfort, and the spirit regains peace, at the thought that he rests there beside the dust of the First Pope. From the day when the chief of the Apostles was buried in the little cemetery on the Via Trionfale, near Nero's Circus, that forgotten corner on the outskirts of Rome became the sepulchre ambitioned by the new believers. Here were buried the successors of Peter, and here it was men's desire, and pride, and reward to be buried, and find peace in the church which arose over the primitive cave. Only to have one's name carved on a little stone of that cemetery became an imperishable monument of greatness; the witness and recompense of glorious services rendered to the Church.

And for Cardinal Merry del Val the reward, the sure testimony of the work he accomplished for the Church, is to lay him there, at the feet of his chief, Pius X; in that same act of submissive love wherewith he served him in life; here in this venerated crypt. The golden chain of the Church's great and faithful servants has in Cardinal Merry del Val a precious link in its unfailing continuity, and his great name remains a true and pure glory of the Catholic Church.

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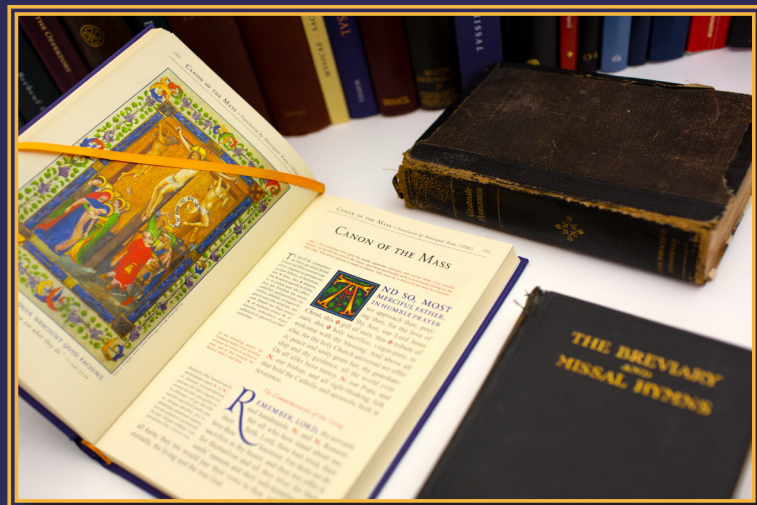
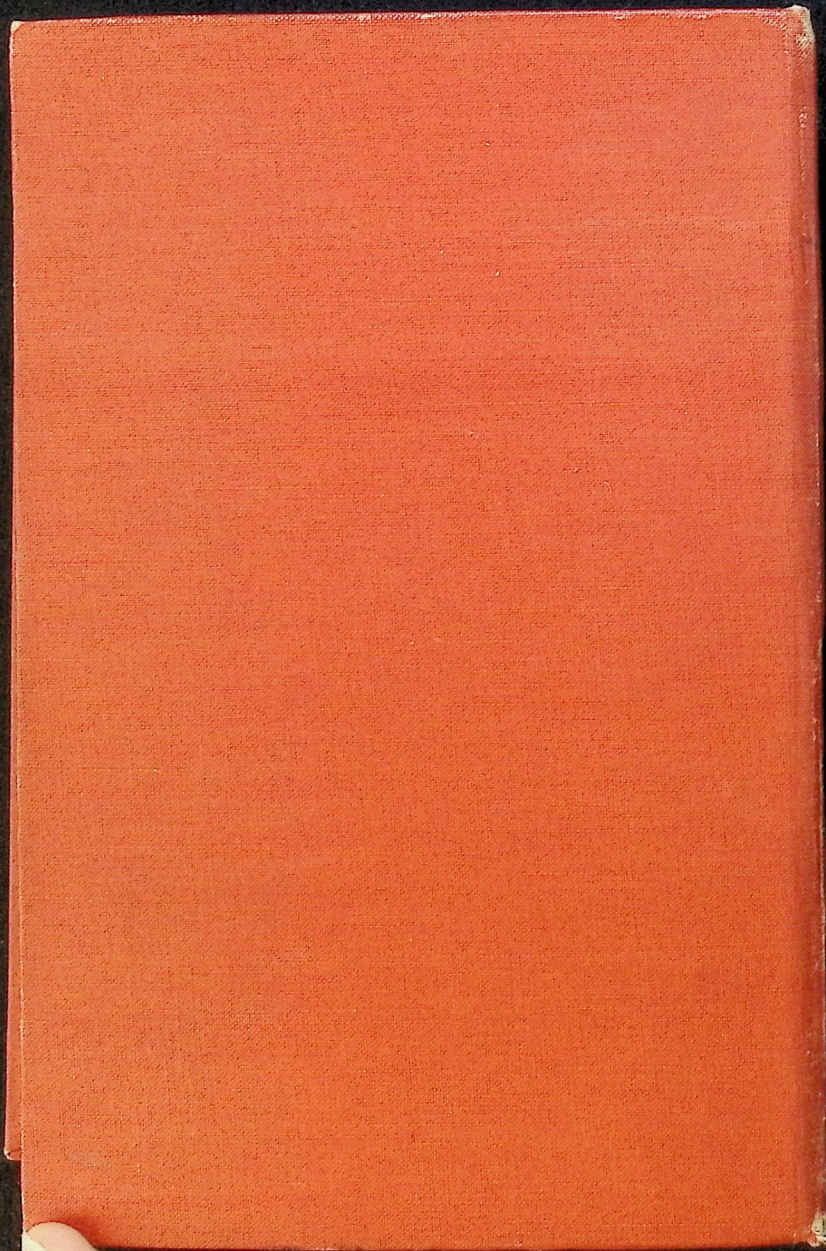
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