

were a scandal to the government of the Holy City.

The day after the Pope's death the Cardinals meet, and break what is called the Piscatorial ring. This ring has a history of its own—a more romantic history, probably, than any other ring in Europe—and if it could speak, it might tell of some startling secrets about the Vatican. It is, we believe, a plain gold ring, bearing the effigy of St. Peter. Its principal use is to sign apostolic briefs; and it has been used for this purpose by the Popes from the earliest ages of the Church. Looking through the recently published correspondence of Napoleon I., a few days ago, we came upon an interesting incident. When Napoleon issued his orders for the seizure of the prayer-books and papers of Pius VII, he laid particular stress upon this ring; he wished it to be seized at all hazards; and when it could not be found, His Majesty ordered an officer of *gens d'armes* to demand it from the Holy Father. This was the crowning affront of Napoleon to the Pope; and Pius VII., hesitated for some moments whether to comply with the rude Imperial request or not. A captive however, and at the Emperor's mercy, it was impossible to resist, and at last the Holy Father, taking a little leathern purse out of his pocket, produced the fisherman's ring, broke it in two, as it is broken on the death of every Pontiff, and handed the piece to the *gend'arme*. Through Prince Borghese the broken ring was forwarded to the Emperor at Paris; but it afterwards found its way to the Vatican, and now frequently adorns the finger of the Supreme Pontiff.

The funeral of a pope is an interesting and gorgeous ceremony. It is not till the ninth day after his death that the cardinals re-assemble to elect a successor; and the Ballot Society will be glad to hear that the Pope is elected, like the member of a club, by ballot.

The right of election vests in the College of Cardinals; and this right is inviolable; nothing can touch it. It is a personal privilege, and one that survives even excommunication—the highest sentence of the Church. Neither heresy nor crime can disfranchise a cardinal; once a cardinal, always a cardinal, and,

though beyond the pale of the Church, he may present himself at the Vatican on the day of election, with his conclave, and assert his right to cast his vote with the greatest princes of the Church for the Sovereign Pontiff.

The *modus operandi* is this: The cardinals attended by their conclavists, and accompanied by a host of high officials, assemble on the election at the Vatican, and are there all locked up together, like an English Jury, till they have delivered themselves of their verdict—that is, till they have made a Pope. No name is proposed; no speeches are made; hardly a word is spoken; a Quaker meeting could not be quieter. What takes place is this: In the centre of the room stands a chalice, or what we may call an election urn. Each Cardinal in turn writes upon a slip of paper, the name of the candidate for whom he votes, and this slip of paper, doubled up, is, by the conclavists deposited in the chalice. When the votes of the College has been thus collected, the names of the candidates are read aloud, and the number of votes are announced.

The Pope must be elected by a majority of two-thirds of the College; and if any name attains this number on the first ballot, of course there is an end to the business.

But if no one gets this number, the voting papers are burned, and the people outside the college, waiting for the verdict, know when they see the puff of smoke that they are still without a sovereign. A second ballot is then taken, and, if necessary, a third. But it is understood that at the third ballot no Cardinal will vote a second time for the same candidate. If, therefore, he still adheres to his first choice, he writes *nenime* on his voting paper, which, being interpreted, means that he votes for no one, and thus, at the third ballot, by this process of casting out, a majority of two-thirds is obtained, and the Pope is made. No; not quite made; for the Courts of France, Spain, and Austria possess each, in turn, a veto upon the vote of the College of Cardinals; and they may exercise this veto without a word of explanation. It is a simple case of black-balling. We do not find that it has been very frequently exercised;