

Besides, on this day,—the 3rd of May—they are celebrating in Rome the death of Garibaldi, his apotheosis, or deification, as the liberal journals call it. The various revolutionary clubs are in the streets with flags, and emblems, and garlands, and there are to be grand processions. But should Leo XIII's carriage appear in the streets, or should he, by some stealthy way, appear in St. John Lateran this day, Heaven only knows the consequences which would follow.

No; the prisoner of the Vatican could not venture into the streets of Rome,—not even to officiate publicly in the Church of St. Peter's; how much less safely could he pass through all Rome to pontificate in his own cathedral, or to assist at the joyous celebration of to-day! So we shall go to the Vatican, and spend as much as we can of this same Feast of the Ascension with that venerable man of seventy-seven, who bears so courageously the tremendous weight of an administration which knows not its equal on earth.

Here we are in the vast square of St. Peter's. The two great fountains within the opposite semi-circles of the colonnade are throwing high into the sultry morning air their flashing waters—the symbols of the increasing light for the mind and strength for the will, which flows from that Holy Spirit ever abiding in the Church. . . . Our carriage makes the circuit of St. Peter's and lands us in the interior court of St. Damasus. We alight, and as we prepare to ascend story after story of the magnificent marble staircase leading to the Pope's apartments, we meet our friend Monsignor Macchi, the *Maestro di Camera*, or high chamberlain to His Holiness. Spare and tall, he greets us, as he does everybody, with the pleasantest words, and we ascend. The soldiers of the Swiss Guards, with their picturesque costume and mediæval halberds, draw up to salute the high court dignitary. You will notice how grand, how solid, how massive everything is in these stairs and corridors. Up we go again, another long slight of the same stately dimensions. All is vast in this palace of the Vatican, where such large hospitality has often been dispensed by the Popes; all is magnificent in its elegant simplicity. Was this not built to last forever, as long as the peaceful principality of the Papacy itself? There are beautiful frescoes here and there which amateurs take leisure to examine. But we are hurrying to the Pope's early Mass in his private chapel, and so may not tarry to gaze about us.

We enter the Guard Room, spacious, lofty, gorgeously frescoed. The officers and guard at once rise to receive Monsignor Macchi, and we are in the ante-room, quite close to the Throne Room, the door of which is open. The attendants, in rich costumes, take our hats and the tickets of invitation, and we pass into the comparatively small chamber which opens into the little private oratory. It is a great feast, and a number of distinguished persons have requested the honour of being present at the Holy Father's Mass and receiving Communion from his hand. Folding-doors open out in front of the little altar, on which everything is ready for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice. The priestly vestments are laid on the altar itself, and the Missal stands open at the Epistle side. We are ushered to seats in the middle of the room, where we can best see the Pope during the celebration. All present are absorbed in their devotions, no one seems to notice those who enter.

But where is the Pope?

He is still at his private devotions. This is for him a season of unusual fatigue, if one can so speak of a man who never knows, from year's end to year's end, any cessation from overwhelming labours and wasting cares. After his long, weary days of never-ending occupation, his encyclicals, discourses or letters have to be written in the quiet hours of the night. And has he not been found, by his faithful old valet, in the morning, with his head on his work-table, where sheer fatigue had brought on unrefreshing sleep.

Leo XIII. is an early riser. His valet awakes him at a stated and early hour. The aged priest has not changed the simple habits of a lifetime because he is Pope. He is soon dressed in his cassock of white, and spends a few moments in adoration at the altar of his private chapel. Then there is a brief hour spent in meditation or mental prayer on some of the great Gospel truths or mysteries. This over, one of his chaplains recites with him the three first morning "Hours" of the canonical office—and

THE HOLY FATHER IS READY FOR MASS.

Around his private apartments, meanwhile, all is silence. The wearied spirit of him who is Vicar of Christ soars aloft to the throne of grace to meditate there, in the divine light, on his own needs and the needs of his wide-spread flock. Prayer is to him a bath of life, from which he comes forth refreshed and strengthened for the day's labour before him. But prayer is also a preparation for the great priestly rite which is, and ever has been, Leo XIII.'s supreme comfort—the Mass.

We were also thinking of *The Presence* on yonder lighted altar, when there was a slight commotion in the chapel. All of a sudden every one had knelt as if moved by some common electric impulse. A white figure stands before the altar, with his face turned to us and the right hand holding a silver aspersory, sprinkling holy water on the assembled worshippers. It is but an instant that he remains fronting us. The face is of alabaster whiteness, and transparent almost, and the eye are all radiant with the fire of pity and fatherly kindness. The words of blessing were scarcely audible. It was as if some of Fra Angelico's glorified saints had walked out of the canvass, or come down from the frescoes on the wall, and shone upon us a moment, lifted his hand in blessing, murmured low words of love and greeting, and then turned away.

Leo XIII. then genuflected before the altar and retired a little to our left, to read with his chaplain the psalms and prayers before mass. There is in the Pope's pronunciation of the Latin something uncommonly sweet and distinct. His utterance is slow and measured. Every word is given out as if the speaker were weighing its deepest sense and enjoying it. No man I ever saw at the altar so impress me with the idea of one who is face to face with God and uttering every word with infinite reverence and feeling. Every now and then some verse in the psalms moved him more powerfully, and his deep grave voice sounded more clearly. Is there not a quiver in the aged voice? "Have mercy on me, O Lord; for I have cried to Thee all the day. For Thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild, and plenteous in mercy to those that call upon Thee."

When he came to recite alone the beautiful prayers after the preparatory psalms the silence in the chapel was painful. It was as if every heart there held its own pulsations to throb in that of the great High Priest of the Church pleading before the mercy seat, and now the slender white form is again before the altar; he kneels a moment, rises, and stands ready to be vested. His chaplains assist him, evidently feeble and seemingly fragile as he is, with a respect all mingled with tenderness. At last he is vested and

BEGINS THE MASS.

As Leo XIII. stands before us in his full priestly vestments, it is painfully apparent how aged is that frame on which rests the awful burden of such responsibility, care and toil. The shoulders and head are slightly bent, as if in reverence to the tabernacle. Beneath the white skull cap or beretta is a circle of the snow white hair. Every tone of the priestly voice is now fuller, more measured and distinct with deeper feeling.

One who has written of Leo XIII. the most unkind and untruthful things ever put in print about him, has also recorded that it is impossible to be present while he celebrates mass without feeling that this man is nearer to God than anyone else, and speaks to him in a tone of deeper love, reverence and adoration. We who have spent within a few years of half a century in priestly ministrations are bound to say that nothing ever so powerfully moved our soul as to see Leo XIII. at Christ's altar, his whole soul lifted up as if the beatific vision held it, and made it plead there and supplicate with great heart-cries for the church whose dangers, trials and needs, are his especial care. The holy rite occasionally seems to be too much for him. His frame is so shaken that you fancy he will fall if not supported by his chaplain. One could have wished that a person apparently so feeble and so over-worked as the Holy Father should not have to give communion to the large numbers of strangers and pilgrims who are occasionally admitted to hear the Pope's mass. But that is the consolation of Catholics to receive Christ's divinest gift from his hand who is vicar of the Giver.

At length the mass is over. They bring an arm-chair to the Epistle side and the Holy Father is seated, and all present come to kneel at his feet whose very face and air and all about him remind you of Christ the Lord receiving little children.