

AUGUST 19, 1893.

THE POPE AS A POET.

We Shall Soon see Another Volume of Leonine Verse.

Leo XIII. belongs to the family of extreme classics, writes "Innominate," the Rome correspondent of the New York Sun. Like Goethe and Rivaroli, he refreshes himself from his labors and his cares in the cultivation of the muses. An event, a death, a joy, a grief, a deception, each one with him takes the form of verse. D'Aguesseau said that a man should rest from one care by taking up another. Often in the night when only his lamp is burning in all the Vatican, when nervous indisposition keeps him captive in his chamber, Leo XIII. turns his heart and his thoughts to poetry. Mr. Dana of the Sun long ago had a peculiar opportunity to appreciate the enthusiasm of the Pope for classic poetry. The literary world will soon have the good fortune to receive another volume of Leonine verse. While awaiting this treat let us take a glance at the poetical career of His Holiness.

Leo XIII. is not, as one might well imagine, the first or the only one in the series of Popes who has devoted his leisure time to the Latin muse. In that, as in everything else, he has had his predecessors. The most celebrated is the Florentine, Urban VIII., Maffeo Barberini, who reigned from 1623 to 1644. He was a literary man of high culture. He had such a thorough knowledge of Greek that he gave him the name of the "Attic Bee." He was fond of Latin verses, and he wrote many, both sacred and profane, or almost profane.

Through Urban VIII. Leo XIII. is brought into line with the humanist Popes of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, of the Italian Renaissance. He is the successor of Pius II., Nicholas V., Aeneas Sylvius and Parnassius. There is room for a curious study of this church literature from the *Dias Ivoe*, the chant of the dead, in which we know not what the obscure monk of the Marches or of Umbria, what Nicholas or Thomas de Foligno, has put

of the *In pace*, down to the prose of the holy sacrament into which St. Thomas Aquinas himself, with the rigorous and infallible certainty of his theology, has put all the splendors of eternal life. All these Popes and priests who have given their poems to Christianity and have endeavored to soothe by letters the sorrows of the Pontificate, or to display its grandeur, owe to Pius II. I will not say the worship, but the veneration and the love of Virgil. Some pieces of Aeneas Sylvius might be signed by Gioacchino Pecci. They have the same discreet and gentle manner of seeing and rendering the scenery of middle Italy, the country of both of them, the vast extent of lands sown with ruins, the chains of mountains, and in the background and all around, the verdure of the forests and the vivid reflections of lakes, which seem almost within reach.

This lamentation over the fall of the Villa Adriana, near Tivoli, is it 400 years old, or does it date from yesterday? "Here time has mutilated everything. The walls, which formerly were covered with threads of gold, are now covered with a mantle of wild ivy. Briars and thorns grow upon the places where formerly the tribunes, and serpents have made their homes in the apartments of queens. Thus perishes everything upon this earth."

It belongs to the fifteenth century, and is the work of Pius II.; but Leo XIII. would not have expressed himself differently. The thought belongs to a Pope; so does the form; and the conclusion bears the Papal stamp. Thus passes the glory of this world. *Sic transit gloria mundi.* More than any other humanist, Pontiff and poet, Leo XIII. resembles Pius II. It is not certain that he has not, like him, made a pilgrimage to the shores of the Mincio to salute the house of Virgil.

The learned man who wrote the preface to the Udine edition, Father Enrico Valle of the Company of Jesus, strongly insists upon this point. "It seems to us," he says, "that the real character of His Holiness is precisely the Virgilian, and that, too, not only by the method of leading his phrases, which belongs rather to the style than to the poetic temperament, but still more by the grandeur of his conceptions, the choice and the division of his ideas, and the elegant and delicate facility with which he brings them into light by the gentle, concentrated and majestic movement of the Virgilian period. It is evident that Virgil is the favorite classic author of Leo XIII., and the sovereign master in whose school he is trained."

Another of his masters, according to the same authority, is Catullus; while the want of grace and finish of Urban VIII. betrays the imitation of Seneca and of Statius. However, in these subtle distinctions and in this judgment of a profound connoisseur, there is certainly no flattery of the Pope in the admission that his poems are not wanting in grace and in finish, that it is toward Virgil that these qualities bring him, and that he really has grandeur in his conceptions, a great deal of order in his ideas, great facility of expression, and harmony of numbers and movement.

How far we are here from the Latin verses of our colleges, pounded out painfully from the Thesaurus by stupid and fastidious toil, a pendant exercise of dislocation and dullness in a foreign language, in which we were taught, in one way or another, to ride and prance over syllables almost void

of sense, or, at least, void of inspiration; a lame and unruly Pegasus! Without flattery, we can say that in the verses of Leo XIII. we have more than good mode's. We feel that the Pope is speaking.

HIS OWN NATIVE LANGUAGE: that he has something to say; that the instrument is in tune, and that he knows how to play it. The keyboard is there before him, from the first to the last octave. To bring out the music he has only to run his fingers along the keys. Just as we were ignorant of the language, we were ignorant of the rhythm. In hexameters, pentameters, dactyles and spondees, spondees, dactyles, pentameters, and hexameters, and the cesura after the second foot, our compositions travelled along inanimate and dull, two by two like policemen or oxen, to borrow the phrase of a true poet. One short, one long, one long, one short, two long, no doubt; but the syntax, the cadence, the balance, which with five or six adjectives, verbs or substantives juxtaposed, make a sacred music; where was the poetry in those so called poetic essays?

The verses of Leo XIII. are Latin. They are verses, which is no small praise; learned verses, and of all the rhythms in which the ordinary distich precedes or follows the strophe, the slow Alexandrine, the rapid iambus, verses of an agreeable murmur, still more so than those of Urban VIII., who received the splendid name of the Attic Bee for lines which, in effect, possess something like the light buzzing, the little wings and sometimes even the little stings of the bee.

In the poetry of Leo XIII. the lines are larger and higher. None of his poems, perhaps, are better than his epigrams. I read somewhere, probably in one of the prefaces of R. P. Enrico Valle, that the Pope considers Martial too conceited and profuse. The principal quality of the epigram certainly is to go fast. It is the arrow of the mind, and an arrow that lingers on the way is no arrow. It is also necessary that it should strike the right spot.

THE EPIGRAMS OF LEO XIII. are quick, pointed and well aimed. They have a point, but, as they never go without a thought of moral or religious correction, the points are, so to say, steeped in balm, and heal of themselves the wounds that they may make. Consequently these epigrams, having for their object the confession and the repenting of the sinner, attack ugly subjects, impelled by the aim in view, sustained by the Christian sentiment of its most elevated point, the sentiment of pastoral duty. The Pope walks along the brink of abysses, sure footed and with the candid boldness of an ecclesiastical soul.

The common groundwork of these little satires is made from little city stories. The summer coat of Nardus in the month of December, the senile passion of Gallus, are all put skillfully and learnedly into Latin verse with the fervor of an apostle and the naivete of a seminarist. But those are only the small change of the poems of Leo XIII., only the products of his familiar vein, a recreation, the only one that he takes. In this exercise, in which he excels, the Pope considers that every subject is good. The true artist is the one who makes something out of nothing, who can turn a pebble into a splendid stone. Actually, as we say, has no terrors for him. On the contrary, it excites his wit, and upon new inventions he likes to make antique verses.

But it must be observed that an invincible tendency leads Leo XIII. to see everything from above, to lift himself above the subject, and always toward a noble ideal of moral and Christian perfection. Nowhere is this more remarkable than in the pieces written by him when he was bishop of Perugia to his favorite scholars, to those who became later on "the Peruginians," among others the one who was destined to be Cardinal Rotelli. The bishop, looking backward, traces for a young man his life, and encourages him in these terms:

"Let one of the nine muses come down from heaven and deck thy brow with the Apollonian foliage. Let rhetoric, powerful in the word and abstruse mathematics greatly desire thee for a servant and dispute for thy possession. Finally, at a ripper age, when thy springtime years shall have flown by, drink deep draughts at the sacred fountains of philosophy. Learn through them to suffer patiently, to be determined, and with the uplifted head to touch the summits of heaven."

The Pope is thoroughly conscious of his dignity as a Pontiff. In his verses he has expressed this idea repeatedly and under several forms.

WITH GREAT ENERGY. far more so than in his prose works. Doubtless it is the consciousness of the verse which gives the same thought more accentuation:

"The hope of the impious is deceived. The scree of Roman Pontiffs is not interrupted. They cry out, 'Thrown down from his throne, Leo dies in prison of grief' Foolish hope. Another Leo succeeds him, who reigns and gives laws to the faithful."

Not only has the Pope a full and sovereign consciousness of his dignity, but he has also the sentiment of his duty, the gravest and heaviest duty in the world. He has engraved it on the shrine in the private chapel where is preserved the wonder-working head of St. John the Baptist:

"It is not permitted to thee, oh impious king, to infringe upon the rights. It is not permitted to thee to have for thy wife the wife of thy brother.

"John declared this in former times in a voice that knew no trembling. The same voice comes again from that skull, and cries out as of old."

Perhaps Leo XIII. intended that at the Quirinal they might bear the voice which condemns and protests in the closed Vatican. On more than one occasion he has joined his own voice to it. At the foot of his portrait is engraved this double distich:

"I have cultivated justice. I have sustained long combats, labors, mockeries, assaults, all sorts of trials. As the avenger of the faith I must not flinch. For Christ's flock it is sweet to suffer, and sweet even to die in prison."

He has remodelled, annotated and reformed, like a Christian and a Pope, the famous ode of Horace:

Si fractus illibatur orbis Impedimentum terribis ruinae.

"When anyone falls into that which is forbidden and soils himself by a shameful sin, immediately the punishment follows the sinner like a companion."

"An anxious fear takes possession of him, and dark fear gnaws his heart and keeps him restless."

"The crime that he has committed tortures him, and the conviction that the vengeance of God is forever suspended over his head increases his pain."

"But the just man reposes tranquilly; like a fresh spring running through the meadow."

HIS LIFE FLOWS ON free from cares. In silence he contemplates worldly things. In the vicissitudes of life he weighs the good and the bad.

"Let the violence of the enemy oppress, and fortune change as it will, through terror or through cunning, the face of the proud; they do not touch the stout heart of a man accustomed to despise and to crush with an unconquered foot all that is perishable."

"Whom should he fear? Virtue is an invincible shield, and in time of peril God Himself is the safeguard."

One cannot insist too much upon the moral and religious sentiment which dominates everything that he writes.

In his epigrams, in his elegies, in his odes, or his hymns to the saints, what Leo XIII. aims at is to formulate moral aphorisms, in sentences whose measure and brevity in verses are likely to become fastened upon the memory. Although a poet he does not forget that he is the supreme doctor and teacher. He is essentially didactic, although he takes good care to guard himself against a stiff and starchy style, and not to lose himself in the interminable developments of didactic.

His vocabulary is rather restricted, but well chosen. Perhaps one might find in it a little studied effort to employ only words that have been countersigned by Cicero and Virgil. The Pope makes use of a few metaphors, which ceaselessly come from his pen, and all are more or less from the Church: "The infernal serpent," "the poison" or "the plague of vice," "the sources" or "the fountains of redemption," "the agitated sea," "the tempest of the world," "tossed by the sea at the caprice of the wind and waves," "the bark of St. Peter." He does not hesitate to appeal to

his recollection of mythology, and the Helicon, Parnassus, the muses and the laurel of Apollo hold in his verses a certain place.

In vain he has been, under a Latin or Latinized name, a member of the Academy of the Arcades. He is neither a Navagero nor a Pomponius Latus. He is one of those humanists of the fifteenth century, troubled and hesitating between the pagan renaissance and the Christian renaissance. His determination was taken at once and forever, and it is in this direction that, Pontiff and poet, Pontiff even when he is poet, he dreams of leading others. The inscription which introduces the collection resumes better than anything else the whole temperament, all the talent and the poetic work of Leo XIII.

RULES OF LIFE FOR THE PONTIFICATE.

I. In the mortal life that remains to thee it is decided that each day, after having offered up the expiatory sacrifice, thou shalt attach thyself more closely to God. Thou shalt attend more carefully to thy duties, and each day thou shalt work with a more vigilant spirit for the eternal salvation of men.

II. Come! come! Arouse thyself, O Leo! Undertake with confidence arduous tasks; suffer with courage hard trials. Fear nothing. The decline of thy age is already come, the hours of thy life are almost finished. Detached from perishable things and full of contempt for them, craving in thy soul for higher things, aspire constantly to the celestial land.

The Chinese pay their doctor only so long as he keeps them in health. They believe in preventing rather than curing disease. This is the sense, and one of the strongest recommendations of Ayer's Sarsaparilla, a medicine which not only cures diseases but prevents them.

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The Reasonableness of the Practices of the Catholic Church.

By REV. J. J. BURKE.

CONCLUSION. XVIII.

"If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments" (St. Matt. xix. 17).

When Jesus Christ died on the cross for us He did so in order to lead us into life, to open heaven for all mankind. How important our salvation must be, then, for which Christ shed His precious blood. If it is important, He must have taught us how to attain it. This, too, He did by the words, "keep the commandments."

To assist us in keeping the commandments He left a representative on earth. His Church, whose ministers were to teach all nations, is this representative. To her He said: "He that hears you, hears Me."

The night before He died He instituted the adorable Sacrifice of the Mass, saying: "This is My body."

This is My blood which shall be shed for you. He then gave the apostles and their successors power to do what He had just done: "Do this in commemoration of Me." He also gave them power to baptize, to forgive sins, to bless, to be "dispensers of the mysteries of God." He gave them power to confer these powers on others. "As the Father sent Me (i. e., with the same power), I also send you." To these apostles and their successors He spoke when He said that He would remain with them until the consummation of the world. To them and the Church He said: "He that hears you hears Me." What the Church teaches, then, Christ teaches.

As the natural order man is born, grows to manhood, is nourished, and if sick needs proper food and remedies; so, in the supernatural order, there is a birth—it is baptism; there is a manly growth—it is confirmation; there is a nourishing food—it is the holy Eucharist, the Bread of Life; there is a medicinal remedy against death—it is penance; and there is a balm to heal the wounds, the scars, of sin—it is extreme unction. These are some of the channels through which God's grace flows into our souls to assist us to keep the commandments.

The practices of the Church naturally flow from her teachings. She teaches that there is but one God, the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth and all things; that man by his reason alone can find out this truth; that the order, beauty, and harmony of the works of nature show God's work; but that there are some truths which the deepest intellect of man can never fathom. Hence she teaches that God has revealed certain truths—such as the mysteries of the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation and the Blessed Sacrament. When we know that God has revealed these truths we are acting reasonably not only in believing them, but also in manifesting our belief by practices of respect, adoration and love.

The Church teaches that we must not only believe but practice our religion; for faith alone will not save us. "Faith without works is dead." To have these works we must "keep the commandments." We must love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves. All the commandments are comprised in this. In fact, the essence of Christianity is charity.

Where will you find charity practised in reality except in the Catholic Church? If you wish to see the truth of this visit our larger towns and cities, and you will find hundreds of hospitals, asylums, schools and other charitable institutions in which are thousands of the children of the Catholic Church, who have left everything to alleviate every ill that flesh is heir to, and follow the meek and humble Jesus in His mission of love.

The Catholic Church alone teaches, as Jesus Christ taught while on earth, the duty of penance. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me." According to this teaching of Christ, the Church sets aside the penitential season of Lent and other times of mortification.

The Church also teaches that we must not only be faithful in the observance of the practices of religion, but that we must also live in peace and love, and charity with all mankind, and justice and a hope beyond the grave. If we love God we will faithfully observe the practices of the Church; these practices will assist us in keeping the commandments. And if we wish to enter into life we must keep the commandments.

We have seen that the various ceremonies and practices of the Catholic Church are dictated by right reason; that they are the rational deduction from Christ's teaching; that they obtain for us divine grace, excite pious thoughts, and elevate our minds to God; and that a true Christian is one who not only believes but also practices the teachings of Christ and His Church. The observance of these pious practices in fact as well as in name. They assist us to keep the commandments and to live in accordance with our faith. By faithfully observing them we show that we are not ashamed of being followers of Christ. And if we follow Him Who is the way, the truth, and the life we will not walk in darkness, but will enter by the narrow way into the presence of truth itself in the regions of eternal light.

THE END.

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ST. JOHN GUALBERT—JULY 12th.

A Christian Hero.

For the CATHOLIC RECORD. The fair city of Florence echoed with sounds of mourning. Hugo Gualberto, one of her bravest knights, had fallen beneath the sword of a foe. Beside the bier of the murdered one stood two figures, a man and a boy.

"Giovanni," said the former, as he placed his hand on the boy's head, "this, thy brother, has been murdered by an enemy of our household. Swear that thou wilt avenge his death!"

Placing his hands upon those of his silent brother, the youth repeated after his father, words which bound him to take the life of him who had slain the heir of his ancestral home. As years passed and Giovanni kept that one purpose before his mind. He was brave, generous and courageous, and saved for the revengeful intent nurtured in his breast, was as pious as the majority of his companions at arms.

One day, riding down a narrow, rocky pass, Giovanni met his victim. Neither could retreat, nor could they pass. Giovanni drew his sword, but Pedro, his opponent, threw himself on his knees, and, stretching out his arms in the form of a cross, begged for mercy. "It is Good Friday, Giovanni," he cried, "the memory of the death of Christ who suffered for us both. For His dear sake, spare thou the fallen foe."

One moment Giovanni paused—and lo! a silver peal from the great monastery on the hillside rang out on the air. The hour was 3—that hour when Jesus pardoned sinful man, and yielded up His spirit for our guilty sake. The struggle ceased; the long-cherished revenge was torn from its throne, the sword tossed aside, and Giovanni embraced the fallen knight, and called him friend. Then, seizing his sword, he hurried up the mountain-side, to a little chapel.

Prostrate before the crucified Jesus, for whose sake his enemy had been pardoned, he waited his sins; then, lifting his eyes to the blood-stained, pain drawn face, he cried: "For Thy dear sake I pardon my bitter foe. I pray Thee pardon me!" And as he gazed the sculptured eyes shone with a light divine, and burned into his soul; the thorn-crowned head bent low in token of assent unto his prayer, and in his heart a heavenly fountain gushed. Giovanni Gualberto was an altered man. He left that sacred spot with one only purpose—to live, to die for Christ.

In spite of the opposition of parents and friends he entered a monastery, and soon became the founder of a religious order. His was a life of sanctity and zeal, and in a ripe old age God called him to receive a great reward in heaven.

What a lesson is conveyed in this beautiful history! How one great, heroic act of virtue will pave the way to conquering every passion, and how one evil design nurtured in our bosom will deprive us of the grace of years! If our Catholic youth would imitate the true heroes of the past, and represent men would fill our cities, and represent the Church of God! Where can we find greater or more illustrious men than an Ignatius, an Augustine, or a Gualbert? With all that is noblest and best in the human race is associated the name of Saint.

A. SAN JOSE.

A Bad Mixture.

From the Pilot. Rev. D. Powell Chockley, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Flushing, N. Y., was pleased to remark, in a balcony shop, the other day, that:

"The Catholic Church is an abomination, and I shall spend my whole life in holding it up for the execration of the world. There is going to be a war between Protestants and Catholics and I will be in the front ranks. I have a shotgun at home, and if that is hot good enough I will change it for a rifle. Now, sir, the Catholics won't grow in the United States. They must be wiped out. I'd rather be an Anarchist or a Nihilist than a Catholic. From the bottom of my heart I thank God that we live in a free country."

It is a curious fact that nearly all the persons who indulge in such Christian utterances as the foregoing belong to the Baptist denomination, and yet we are quite sure that the water isn't to blame for it—perhaps it is what they put in it.

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