LEO XIII.'S BUSY HOLIDAY...

A Clever and Entertaining Sketch, By A. Diarista, Rome.

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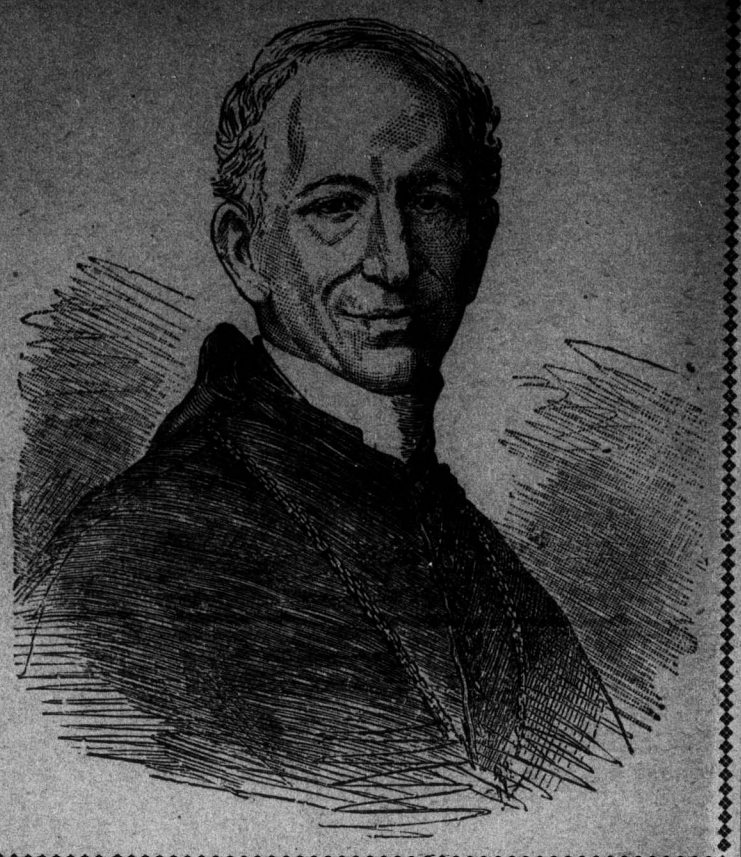

THOSE who give heed to such things will remember that two years ago, when Pope Leo XIII. made the last of his extensive summer outings in the Vatican gardens, the newspapers fathered a pathetic little episode in which the Pontiff was made to forecast in epigrammatic terms that never more would he leave the solid walls of the Vatican Palace. The inference was that ere another summer should have come the dissolution of the venerable ecclesiastic would have taken place. Yet two months ago Leo XIII. started out again for his summer holiday at the Leonine Villa, brimful of spirits and, according to the accounts of those who saw him, more buoyant and youthful in appearance than two years previously.

As a matter of fact the pathetic little story alluded to was probably the outcome of the imaginative journalist's brain, for Leo XIII., though in certain serious discourses he has not infrequently alluded to the necessity of his paying, at no lengthy date, the great debt of nature, is in the ordinary course of his life extremely optimistic, and when he prophesies at all, counts on distant dates which even the most hopeful of his admirers could hardly encourage themselves to believe he will live to see. It may be remarked, by the way, that all that is published in the secular press as emanating from Rome and characterized as Vatican news is very far from being trustworthy. In fact, Rome of all cities at present seems the most plentifully supplied with the class of journalists whose chief characteristic is nowadays described as of the yellow or jaundiced hue. Some years ago "fake" news in Europe was frequently referred to as "Brussels news;" but Rome news has now put the Belgian capital's brand of intelligence in the shade.

The Vatican is extremely conservative in the matter of giving out items of news. It has no need to curry favor with the press of any country by being generous in indiscretions. The journalist in Rome who is in search of interesting items, and who is somewhat lacking in experience, may at intervals apply to some of the administrative departments for items of information. If he sees a subordinate in any of the various offices in the Vatican or in the Sacred Congregations, he is invariably given to understand that the divulgation of all news must proceed from the cardinal who is at the head of the office. At the office of the Pontifical Secretary of State, for instance, he is told that Cardinal Rampolla alone is competent to give information on a given subject. Possibly he will endeavor to see the Cardinal Secretary.

He proceeds to the Vatican Palace at 8 or 9 o'clock in the evening, the time at which His Eminence gives audiences and holds receptions. If after passing the St. Damasus court-yard he is privileged to go as far as the Cardinal's private suite of apartments, and if he gets beyond the liveried servants in the outer ante-chambers, he is brought to a halt by the Cardinal's secretary, Don Filippo, who must learn all about his business and his credentials. In nine cases out of ten Don Filippo, with honeyed words, will send him away; but if for some special reason it is deemed advisable to allow him into the presence of the Cardinal himself, then, when his turn comes, he is advanced from the outer room, where the Cardinal's red biretta lies on a table in front of a crucifix, into an inner chamber where the Cardinal himself, after a brief colloquy with Don Filippo, receives the visitor. And the journalist who will draw information and items of news directly from Cardinal Rampolla will be a phenomenon indeed.

The Cardinal's very appearance is enough to abash the boldest interviewer. This tall, ascetic man, of superb build, with features youthful in appearance and of tremendous strength and impressiveness, is exceedingly affable and simple in manner, even, it would seem, straining to put the visitor at his ease, and allow him to forget the princely dignity and overpowering magnetism of the sphinx-like countenance and entire bearing of the great priest. Cardinal Rampolla will possibly interview his visitor and show a certain interest in whatever information he is equipped with, but he will give away none himself. The journalist retires empty-handed, and if he is fashioned after the majority of those of his calling who have residence in Rome, he will proceed to the Journalists Hall which is attached to the General Post-Office at the Piazza San Silvestro, in the heart of the city, and there, in conference with some of his confreres, he will think out a solution of one or more of the problems that are known to be interesting the Vatican and of which editors abroad will be eager to be informed. And so the foreign reader, taking up his morning paper and perusing detailed and interesting information regarding what the Pope and what Cardinal Rampolla think, say, and are about to do concerning any fact or topic of public concern, is often impressed by the news, little doubting that it is a pure fabrication of the imagination, and not suspecting that the Vatican authorities, differently from other potentates and influences on this earth, are very rarely concerned to contradict the false and erroneous news that is published regarding them.

And so it is, despite the fact that the world has been warned by the journalists that Pope Leo XIII. never more intended to leave his Vatican prison, not even to the extent of going forth into the gardens adjacent thereto, that on a Thursday morning about two months ago he was carried out in his sedan chair by four of his chamberlains. And accompanied by his nephew, Count Camillo Pecci, a member of the Noble Guard, by two soldiers of the Swiss Guard and Monsignor Bisleti, one of his secretaries, he proceeded along the Vatican Library and was deposited outside the gate which gives entrance to the Vatican Museum. Here a carriage awaited him; but the Pontiff preferred to remain afoot, and, walking up the beautiful avenue that divides the gardens, stopped at intervals to admire the flowers, to examine the vines along the hedge-row, and to put pertinent questions to the gardeners whom he met concerning the freedom of his model little vineyard from phylloxera and other grave diseases which have, for several years past, ravaged the choicest vines of Southern Europe.

In a grove of trees on a hill stands the famous little villa constructed several centuries ago by Pope Leo IV. This exceedingly interesting miniature palace, which Leo XIII. has rendered celebrated as his holiday residence, has walls of extreme thickness, a circumstance which causes it to retain a cool and equable temperature even during periods of the greatest heat, and its tiny windows temper the glare of the Italian sun and allow only a dim religious light to penetrate. One of the windows belongs to the little chapel of the building, and here, during the week or two that he remains abroad in the garden, Leo XIII. often celebrates his daily Mass.

The only large hall of the villa is modestly furnished with leather-covered chairs, sofas, and foot-stools, and in one corner of it is the Pope's bed, cut off from view by Japanese screens. In another is his famous pillowed arm-chair. This pillowed arm-chair was made especially for the Pontiff, and is so arranged that whether reclining to the right or the left his head reposes softly on one or other of the two cushioned projections which are termed the pillows of the arm-chair. The roof of the hall is covered with a fine fresco by Seitz, representing the deep blue of the sky, studded with stars. From its centre descends a superb crystal chandelier. The little summer residence is equipped with all modern appliances — telephones, electric lights, elevators, and the like.

It was in this hall that on the first day of the Pope's descent recently he gave a luncheon to his two physicians, a fact, by the way, which escaped the knowledge of most of the journalists who reported the matter, for they placed the luncheon in the Vatican Palace itself. This luncheon was something of an epoch-marking event at the Vatican. Etiquette requires that should the Pope give a luncheon or a dinner to any distinguished guest, the Pontiff himself must, under ordinary circumstances, not only be served at a table apart, but also cut off from view of the guests by screens, which, though they do not obscure the trend of the conversation, nevertheless preserve the privacy of the Pontiff's meal. According to the Ceremoniale Romanum this point of etiquette may be deviated from when the Pope invites to his table an emperor, king, or reigning prince, to the extent of the Pontiff's not being cut off from view, but it is distinctly laid down that no woman shall ever be a guest at the table of the Holy Father, or eat in his presence, even though she be empress, queen, or his hown lood relation.

The physicians in question who enjoyed the unique honor of dining with Leo XIII., Doctors Lapponi and Mazzoni, had gained the Holy Father's good will and gratitude by their extreme devotedness and by the success of the operation which they performed about a year ago.

After the luncheon, the Holy Father, in accordance with his custom during his summer holiday, took a brief siesta, and then went out for a promenade in the garden. Dressed in his white cassock, wearing a large white beaver hat to protect him from the sun's rays, and with an ivory-headed cane in one hand and his silver snuff-box in the other, he marched about, examining the vines which he had planted with his own hands close by the villa, and discoursing again with the head gardener on the science and art of viticulture and flower-raising, subjects in which the Pontiff is a noted expert.

His promenade ended at a little grotto, where, within a sheltered nook, hewn in rough stone, a fountain of fresh water tosses itself sparkling in the air, and where myriads of little birds disport themselves in the refreshing shade. The Pontiff, it is well known, takes a rare delight in the feathered denizens of the air, though it is totally untrue, and the statement has caused pain to the Holy Father, that, as has been reported in the newspapers and in alleged "biographies," he makes a practice of keeping caged birds in his apartments and of catching untamed birds in snares and sending them as presents to those to whom he desires to do honor.

At two o'clock he is back in the villa and ready for the enormous business of his extremely responsible charge. His mail has been sorted out for him and he goes over it with his secretaries. The Pope's mail-bag is the largest of any individual in the world, though here again it would be merely a flight of the imagination to attempt to give reliable statistics, as has been done latterly by the public press. When the chief features of his correspondence are known to him, and the great facts of the news of the world, as found in the local and foreign newspapers or as communicated by special despatch, have been brought to his attention, he receives the visit of the Cardinal Secretary of State, and refers to him his instructions regarding the chief features of the public policy of the Holy See. He also gives audience, according to the day of the week, to the other cardinals who are at the head of the Sacred Congregations, and later receives visiting bishops or other magnates, or conspicuous persons who come to pay homage to him, or with whom he desires to consult.

It is all in vain that Dr. Lapponi endeavors to induce this frail and delicately constituted old man, in his 92nd year, to abstain from the enormous business and cares that his position entails. Leo XIII. is yielding, amenable, and obedient to his private confessor, and in many ways also to his private physician, but when the physician, whose aim is only to preserve the strength and vitality of his illustrious patient, gives counsel to refrain from work and indulge in lengthy sleep, Leo XIII. will make no compromise, insisting that while he has life his sole duty is to perform to the utmost of his ability the functions of his great office.

Heavy and multitudinous indeed are those functions and duties. The Pope's correspondence alone would absorb the full energy and activity of an ordinary man; but Leo XIII., even in his ninety-second year, is no ordinary man, and the total labor to which he attends is of incredible magnitude. Not Italy alone, his own beloved country, whose troubles and tribulations find the keenest sympathy in his heart, absorbs his attention; every nation on the civilized earth attracts a daily portion of his care and solicitude.

The Catholic Church of France is at this hour harassed by the machinations of an anti-clerical government, which has passed laws that practically mean the expulsion from the country of many of the great religious congregations of the church, and Leo XIII. has daily to use diplomatic means to foil his French adversaries, and threaten them with evils of a political kind should they endeavor to carry into execution their worst projects.

Spain, also, whose king is his own godson, is the object of his immediate solicitude, for the Carlist movement insidiously bolsters itself on the alleged encouragement of the higher clergy of Spain, and of the Holy See itself. An envoy of Don Carlos has recently been residing in Rome, and for weeks vainly endeavoring to induce the Pope to withdraw some of his antagonism to the Carlist movement in Spain, which the pretender asserts is certain of success if countenanced by the Pope.

Portugal livewise, for months past has been a source of worry and grief to the Pontiff on account of its hostility to the religious orders of the country. So determined and resolute an attitude has the Pontiff been abliged to adopt that King Carlos, being put in the dilemna of either discountenancing the anti-clerical movement or of being excommunicated, had recently to leave his own country on the pretext of showing his kingly countenance to his beloved subjects in the Azores.

Germany has been working night and day with all the powers of its diplomacy to induce the Vatican to withdraw from France the especial function of exercising a protectorate over the Catholic missions in the far East, and to concede to her formal protectorate powers over Catholic missionaries of German origin, and it has required no small thought and labor on the part of Leo XIII. to placate the German Government and retain his influence with it while refusing to accede immediately to its request.

Russia, also, which has a special minister accredited to the Holy See, takes up no inconsiderable part of the Pope's time, as negotiations of a very difficult character have for a long time been on foot regarding the reinstatement of several Polish bishops in their sees, from which they have been driven on account of alleged hostility to the Czar's authority. Significant of the kind of detail, not immediately connected with important diplomatic and religious questions, that occupies the Pope's mind, is the fact that he has just notified Count Lahnsdorff that he will confer the order of Saint Gregory on the Russian General Zerpetzky for rescuing Catholic missionaries in Mongolia during the recent disturbances, and that further he will confer gold and silver medals on the Russian officers and soldiers who distinguished themselves by their bravery.

The Church in England is at this moment occupying a share of the Pope's attention on account of the trouble that has been provoked over the question of the King's coronation oath. The Holy Father, it is said, while desiring to be conciliatory as far as it is in his power, nevertheless stood resolutely opposed to the altered form of the oath which was recently submitted to the House of Lords, his contention being that a repudiation of Catholic doctrine, in however mitigated a form, was anomalous and utterly unjustifiable in an empire that at this hour counts so many millions of Catholics, and that depends to such a large extent on stout Catholic arms for its defence.

Austria has its troubles over the Los Von Rom party, who are endeavoring to have the empire break with the Catholic Church, for which purpose the German Evangelical churches recently subscribed the sum of $100,000. In this regard the Pope is in daily telegraphic communication with the nuncio at Vienna.

Even little Switzerland is not left out of the Pope's consideration, for recently we find him taking a daily interest in the preparations by the Swiss Guard for the celebration of the centenary of its formation. His Holiness has just appointed Baron Leopold Meyer de Schauansee to the command of the Swiss Guard, made vacant by the death of Count De Courten. Baron Meyer belongs to one of the old families of Lucerne, to whom Rudolph of Hapsburgh in 1273 granted in fief the castle of De Schapansee, on the Lake of the Four Cantons. This interesting body of soldiers is so frequently mentioned in the public prints in connection with the Vatican, and with the Pope himself, that a few words on them in detail may not here be amiss.

The institution of the Swiss Guards dates back to 1503, under the pontificate of Julius II., who arranged with the cantons of Zurich and Lucerne that they supply him with a body-guard of 250 men. At the present time the Guards consist of 117 members; the conditions of admission being that the candidate must belong to either Zurich or Lucerne, be a Catholic, a celibate, not over twenty-five years of age, of strong physique, and not under five feet six inches in height. The pay is modest, the duties are light, and a pension is granted after thirty years of service. Many men of good brith are to be found among the Swiss Guard, and they not infrequently devote their leisure to painting, sculpture, and music; some even find time to take a law or arts degree at the University of Rome.

Even Protestant Scotland monopolizes a portion of the Holy Father's time during the period of his so-called vacation. A letter was recently forwarded to "the most Holy, the most Reverend, and the most Learned man, Leo XIII., from the entire University of Glasgow, the chancellor, the rector, the professors, the graduates and the students," informing the Pope that they are about to celebrate the 450th anniversary of the foundation of the institution, which was established by Pope Nicholas V. in 1451, thanking the Holy Father for the fact that to a predecessor of his they owe the origin of the learned faculty, and requesting from him for themselves, although Protestants, his blessing and an expression of his sentiments of regard and encouragement. To this letter the Pope returned with his own hand an interesting and characteristic reply in Latin, which gratified and fluttered the university authorities in a marked degree.

The United States has also latterly occupied a large share of the Pope's attention. The question of the Philippines in particular has been a matter to which he has given long study, and concerning which he has held long colloquies with Archbishop Chappelle. Other subjects which immediately interest the Pontiff in this country are the University at Washington, concerning which he has recently forwarded a highly interesting letter to Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore; and also the movement of missions for non-Catholics, which was promoted some years ago on a small scale, but has latterly acquired enormous development, and has the most flattering encouragement and cordial blessing of the Pontiff.

Italy itself is naturally a matter of important consideration for His Holiness. The anti-clerical party there never grows weary in its attacks upon the church, and the latest development in this regard has been the proposal of laws according and facilitating divorce in the Kingdom of Italy. To this the Pope has made most vigorous opposition, and with such effect, it is said, that Signor Zanardelli, the present Prime Minister and author of the proposed law, will be forced to withdraw it at an early date. The poverty and misery of the Italian people, consequent on the maladministration of the civil government and on the maintenance of an extremely expensive and utterly needless army and navy of vast proportions, have stirred bodies of peasants in many parts of the country to almost open revolt and promoted the organization of anarchist, socialist, and other subversive groups whose aim is to overthrow the present order of government. The Pope himself is broad-minded on social questions, and while never willing to encourage anything which savors of violent subversion of government, he gives his hearty endorsement to the formation of movements among the people that tend to the betterment of the condition of the workingman, and to the closer harmony and brotherhood of labor and capital.

The enormous range of the Pope's interests in foreign politics and outside does not preclude the fulfilment of all the details of his office as a priest. Following his thanksgiving act after Mass, he breaks his fast with a up of chocolate or hot milk and a biscuit, and then proceeds to recite a portion of the holy office of the Breviary. After his lunch a further portion thereof is recited, and, during his outings in the Vatican gardens, the Holy Rosary is said at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, all servants and attendants who are present in the villa taking part. When supper is over His Holiness finishes the day's quota of the Breviary, generally reciting it in common with Monsignor Angeli, his Secretary for the Latin Letters, who afterwards reads to him a few pages of some ascetic or spiritual work.

It should be obvious to even the most unthinking that the colossal energy and mental activity of Leo XIII. requires a large amount of sustenance. Here again, however, the Rome journalists, the majority of whom are never allowed to put their foot within the residence portion of the Vatican Palace, enliven the world with accounts of Leo XIII. living on a single egg a day, or practically discarding bodily nourishment. As a matter of fact, and Pio Centra, the Pope's body attendant, is authority for the statement, Leo XIII. is a good eater. His food is of the widest variety. Fish, flesh, fowl, and eggs in a multiplicity of forms, milk, chocolate, coffee, and cheese are freely partaken of, the Pontiff exercising but little choice, and accepting whatever it has pleased the cook to prepare for him.

The first refection is taken shortly after his Mass, around 8 o'clock, His Holiness being then up about an hour. At 10 his breakfast is served, his lunch about 1, and his evening repast between 6 and 7, according as his immediate occupations permit.

Sometimes when his business labors, between the end of his spiritual exercises and his midnight hour for retiring, have been particularly onerous, the Pope will take a cup of beef tea or of hot milk. This particular practice is not always viewed with satisfaction by the Pope's attendants, as the warm food often revives him to the extent that he will remain up another hour indulging in his favorite pastime of composing Latin verses. It is said that at present he is engaged on a classical composition addressed to the University of Glasgow.

In spite of the unending labors of his long life the Pope's eyes, singularly enough, have never given him trouble. He still reads without spectacles, holding the book or manuscript about six inches from his eyes and in a slightly slanting position. A tendency to rheumatism in the articulations during the winter months has given the Pontiff a somewhat jerky and spasmodic gesture, and often leads the visitor to apprehend weakness or physical collapse. Such apprehension, however, is usually dispelled at the first sound of the Holy Father's voice, which is firm and sonorous, though with a slightly nasal accent.

To the present writer Dr. Lapponi, the Pope's private physician, has declared that all the organs of Leo XIII's body are in perfectly satisfactory condition, and that — although, given the Pontiff's great age, accident would be particularly to be feared, and an eventuality of any kind, however regrettable, should cause no surprise—there is absolutely no perceptible reason why Leo XIII. should not live to be one hundred years old. So that despite the prognostications, pathetic and otherwise, of the sensational journalist, the spiritual children of Leo XIII. are encouraged in the hope that for several years to come he will be able, as in the present year, to go abroad in the Vatican gardens for a summer holiday, and will be spared to direct the fortunes of the church and lead civilized men from scepticism and infidelity to paths of rectitude and light.

HOW THEY WERE COMFORTED.

Shortly after the close of the Civil War, two photographers from up near the Canadian border line went down south to secure pictures of some of the places in which battles had been fought, and, also, of anything else that came in their way. At this time there was a special interest taken in the South, and pictures of that section were selling rapidly.

The two young men were Protestants—both strong and sturdy, with no dread of going into the South, though they knew that it was not easy to get along in some places, because the war had made the people suspicious of every one.

They had a quiet journey and were successful in reaching a place from which they might easily move around to different points of interest. The town was small and accommodations not easy to get, but after some searching they were taken into a very plain habitation, with a good deal of reluctance and some suspicion, it seemed to our young men.

The cottage was rude and had nothing to recommend it from a hundred others, but our travelers were glad to be taken in, knowing that any one who sought shelter in those times and places could not be too particular.

They did not fail to see and feel the reserve with which the family treated them, but they thought that the day might make their position more agreeable.

When evening arrived instead of the reserve becoming less it seemed to have increased. After supper, as the fami,y sat around the homely sitting room, the guests endeavored to be sociable. They talked of photography and the North, and of everything they could think of, but conversation with the people was impossible.

The evening dragged along in this way until it was time to retire. By this time our travelers had begun to grow suspicious; they could not understand those people.

The host conducted them to their chamber with a silence that seemed to them a foreboding of anything but good. When he returned to the sitting room he took the light with him.

Now was a time for consultation; they were here and must remain for the night any way. They seated themselves on the side of the bed, this being the only furniture the room afforded, and talked over the situation. Both were of the opinion that they were likely to have trouble before the night was over, and they made up their minds that they would not undress, but would lie on the bed, and, if trouble came, would sell their lives dearly.

The family remained in the sitting room, where they had spent the evening and seemed to be conversing. Part of the time they used quiet, conversational tones, but the guests thought that most of the time they were talking in secret and in whispers.

They listened, but at first could distinguish no words.

Suddenly the family moved into the room directly under where our guests were sleeping and commenced talking in loud and animated voices, and all seemed to be speaking together. What could it mean? Surely their time had come and, though they were by no means cowards, their hearts sank, and if they had ever prayed they would have done so then, so much were they in fear of their lives. Some people know so little of prayer that even at the approach of death, they do not know how to turn their faces toward God.

The older of the two, a little braver than the other, got down carefully on the floor and listened with all the attention possible for some few seconds, and, it seemed hours, before he was able to catch any of the words. When at last he was able to understand any words, what were they but the words of the Holy Rosary! Truly, it was a holy rosary to the young men.

The listener arose and was no longer afraid to speak aloud to his companion:

"We can retire in perfect safety. These people are saying the Rosary."

"What is that," asked his companion.

"It is a prayer which only pious Catholics say, and when you hear people praying like this you need have no fear."

It is needless to say that they never spent a happier night, and ever after each had a great respect for Catholics who said the Rosary. —Winifred Murphy, in the Sunday Companion.

MARRIED.

STANFORD-SHEA—On the 24th September, at St. Patrick's Church, by the Rev. Martin Callaghan, J. S. Stanford, of Montreal, son of the late Mr. J. S. Stanford, to Alice Gertrude Shea, second daughter of Walter J. Shea, of Westmount.