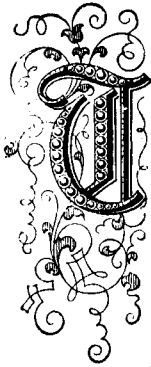


PRIEST AND SCIENTIST.—FATHER SECCHI.



THE visitor to the Memorial Hall which may some day be erected in honor of the really great scientists of the 19th century, will behold, inscribed upon the pedestals of bronze or marble busts, names the pride of many lands, and which, when the monuments telling of their greatness have crumbled away, will still be remembered. To determine all entitled to a place in this temple of fame would be difficult, but numbers there are who evidently could not be overlooked. Among these, in the foremost rank, stands a son of classic Italy—Father Secchi, S. J.,—so, at least, if we may trust the high and oft-repeated eulogiums of his brother scientists in every clime. The life of the religious is oftenest the story of duty nobly done, of services, perhaps great and numerous, rendered to his fellow men, all, however, quietly, retiringly, not for transitory honors, but for love of duty. The scientist, too, the true scientist, passes the years allotted to his cultivation in constant and arduous work, often unappreciated in his own generation. Nature grudges her secrets, so, at least, it seems until they are wrested from her. A religious, a scientist out of love for science, and personally retiring, Father Secchi expected not this world's distinctions. These, however, in his closing years, poured in upon him beyond the aspirations of the most ambitious.

Born on the 28th of July, 1818, in the quiet old city of Reggio, Lombardy, Angelo Secchi was educated in the college conducted by the Jesuits in his native place, and joined the order of St. Ignatius at the early age of fifteen. Without displaying those talents which command astonishment and admiration, the future priest and scientist was highly gifted, and studious, resolute and persevering in disposition. These qualities early attracted attention, and later brought renown to their possessor

in giving to science some of her most prized truths. Soon after entering the Jesuit order, he was called to Rome, where he finished his classical studies. His aptitudes for natural science early asserted themselves, but he was far from being limited either in taste or in success to any particular department of knowledge. At the age of twenty he was a brilliant Greek scholar and passed some time as instructor in classics at the Roman University. From 1840 to 1844 he filled the chair of physics in the college of Loretto, and whilst there published his first scientific work—a lengthy essay on the measure and intensity of electric currents.

Returning from Loretto to Rome, he began the study of theology. Naturally brilliant, possessing now a mind fully developed, and richly stored with the treasures of literature and science, and having for professors the world's greatest doctors, it is not to be wondered that Fra Secchi experienced intense satisfaction in the study of revealed science and ever after looked back with regret, personal as well as patriotic and christian, at the deplorable events which tore him away from advantages he appreciated and loved so well. The events alluded to were the series of unhappy political disturbances and revolutions, which, in 1848, drove the Jesuits from Rome and compelled the Sovereign Pontiff himself to seek a refuge at Gaëta. Exiled from the eternal city Fra Secchi was welcomed by his brother Jesuits to their famed college at Stonyhurst in England. In obedience to the call of his superiors he soon afterwards came to America, where he was named professor of physics and mathematics at Georgetown College. Here he found a small but well-equipped observatory under the direction of Father Curley, who had already acquired quite a reputation for the importance and correctness of his work. Being made instructor at the observatory, the young Italian, under the direction of Father Curley, soon became more than an enthusiastic amateur in astronomy.