

THE CATHOLIC SPIRIT IN "QUO VADIS."

"SOME men," says the Poet, "are born great, some achieve greatness and others have greatness thrust upon them." Sienkiewicz, the author of *Quo Vadis*, belongs to the second class; his is not a prolific, meteoric pen, that leaves only a mere trace on the shifting sands of time; it strikes a few bold strokes, that engrave its owner's name and genius upon the "Rock of Ages." He burnt the midnight oil, for many a long weary year; he pondered deeply and lovingly upon the mysteries of the human nature and the human heart, before he attempted to play his part, in charming the one and ennobling the other.

Too many novels of our day, emanating from a one-a-month pen, resemble the fire-fly, in the momentary flash of their artillery. Would that they were as harmless in causing conflagrations. Vapid novels set the reader's imagination on fire, degrade human nature, brutalize our hearts and lead us into quagmires of falsehood and immorality.

In this age of electricity, it is rare to find a mind, which can give a new charm to bygone days, call forth the mighty spirits of ancient Rome and bring them before us, with all their eloquence and genius; Sienkiewicz ranks second only to the authors of *Fabiola* and *Callista*, in the portrayal of early Christian life. He understands thoroughly well the real value of a work, which proposes to treat seriously most serious questions, to review great historical events and to

sketch eminent historical characters, in which millions of fellow-beings take an absorbing and personal interest. There is nothing, which men have not made a subject of pastime. There are, however, some themes and these pertaining to affairs of this world, which it is not lawful to approach inconsiderately or to treat lightly, even where the purpose is avowed; still less when there is a profession of seriousness and impartiality. The author of *Quo Vadis*, realizes that he is treating a subject which interests every follower of Christ. He makes every christian heart grieve over, admire, honor our brethern so long persecuted, worried, tormented, to strengthen that bond of charity which unites us to the church and forms by its delicate fibres, the main nerves through which the thrilling sensation of Catholic sympathy vibrates, from member to member of the mystical body of Christ.

Thackeray, one of the greatest of English novelists, was once asked if he had read a certain book—"I bake cakes," he said, "but I eat bread." Most of us have a sneaking regard for novels—a partiality for such literature which we are half-ashamed to confess. Why should we be afraid to plead guilty to the not very heinous crime of reading a really good story brimful of undeniable talent? Even the most fastidious, need not repeat "through my fault", for having read *Quo Vadis*; Sienkiewicz serves us with the literary "staff of life in its purest and most