#### THE TRUE WITNESS AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

# An Impressionist Sketch of Pius X.

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Under these changed circumstances it seems curious that the pomp and circumstances of the daily life of the Vatican should be the same. In a strange unreasoning way the mind expects some radical difference. Can all go on as usual undisturbed by the great change which has over it ? Surely only a few short. weeks (instead of years) must have elapsed since we left, to find it so all unchanged to-day.

The sunshine is pouring through the great half-open doorway of the Porta di Bronzo; the Swiss sentinel, halberd in hand, still guards gateway of the apostolic palace,but for another Pope. Inside, on the bench of the window overlooking St. Peter's, the remainder of the guard sit awaiting their turn of sentry duty, springing up at intervals like a well-ordered piece of mechanism to salute a passing dignitary Unmoved, they motion one silently upwards at the magic word of "audienza." Do they realize that means an audience-and not with Leo XIII ? How familiar , seems the environment, yet with that lurking sense of disquietude and unrealidogging one's every step through the Cortile di San Damaso and the broad marble stairway of the papal palace, when the light strikes brilliantly through the grand stained glass windows representing St. Peter with his keys.

Instinctively one glances upwards familiar vet ever imposing work of art. On this occasion suggests an altogether new significance, as the picture of the Pontiff of all time, whom his successor, no matter what their personality, but symbolize or represent. Here for the first time comes a thought more reassuring-the point connecting the past with the present, the realization, notwithstanding the inevitable sense of loss, that whether in . the person of Leo XIII or Pius X, one has come to kneel at the living Pe- ter absence of grandeur in this tem ter to receive the blessing of Christ's Vicar on earth.

Upwards and still upwards one mounts, pausing instinctively on the second landing, on the threshold of the Sala, Clementina, the former ante-chamber of the pontifical apartments, till recalled to oneself by the Swiss Guard at the door. His imperturbability relaxes for a moment into a faint smile, as recognizing the natural mistake on the part of a former visitor to the Vatican he motions us still further upwards. The apartments at present inhabited by Pope Pius X are on the third the Vatican, immediately floor of above the portion of the palace occupied by Leo XIII. After what ms an almost interminable number of stairs one reaches the first pontifical ante-chamber, passing thence through the second into the third ante-chamber, there to await one's turn for an audience. The unfamiliarity of these temporary pontifical apartments brings more forcibly to the mind the change that has transpired since our last visit to the Vatican. These smaller and more simple apartments form striking contrast to the subdued vet below, where Leo XIII held his daily official receptions. Yet one feels glad that the first glimpse of the

Noble Guard, with clanking sword and brilliant uniform; or groups of ladies in the black court dress of the Vatican, with graceful face mantillas on their heads, and strings of jewelled rosaries on their arms. On this occasion it is curious

note the look of expectation on faces of those not belonging to the papal household, as they pass in. ome of these privileged visitors en ter the presence of the Pope for the first time. Some, like ourselves, have seen Leo XIII. frequently years gone by, and for the latter the ordeal is the more trying in a sense, for one feels that in the presence a new pontiff there may be a sense of incompleteness, induced by that strangest of all thoughts that has come again to Rome and to the Vatican without seeing Leo XIII. In another instant, however, doubts and fears are alike forgotten as a Chamberlain appears on the threshold, beckoning us to advance.

As prescribed by the etiquette of it. papal receptions, we pass through two more ante-chambers before reach ing the audience chamber. The officers of the Swiss Guard are on duty in the "anti-camera" where we have been waiting. The second is occupied by a detachment of the Palatine Guard, drawn up in two " lines across the passage way and in the third and last the officers of the Noble Guard guard the entrance. Unheedingly one moves through' this vista of ante-chambers with their long lines of papal soldiers until the final phalanx of glittering uniforms is passed, the last of the open door ways crossed, and almost suddenly and unexpectedly we find ourselves in the presence of Pius X.

A little group of the priests of our party are already being presented to His Holiness by Bishop H .-. , so that standing almost on the threshold, owing to the narrow limits of the room, awaiting our turn to approach; we can mentally take a photograph in colors of the scene and its surroundings.

A plain apartment, the least pretentious reception room ever visited in the Vatican, a room whose sombre scheme of color is scarcely re lieved by the heavy brocade hangings of the wall and the brocade curtains of the one window. There is an utporary pontifical apartment, nothing, in fact, which could be said to give effect or create a background for a sovereign pontiff. Indeed at the first glimpse of the quiet white figure, seated in a red velvet arm. chair at the further end of the room a figure with an almost impercepti ble but characteristically sensitive droop of the head, now turned away in profile, one almost wonders a second what there can be in the mere sight to make the heart beat faster; to cause that atmosphere of subdued tranquility and restfulness which pervades the small grey apartment, raising it instantaneously the dignity of the most stately

A gentle dignity of bearing charac terizes the Sovereign Pontiff. an almost appealing sweetness which attracts and disarms; a humility

outward appearance, that inscorable betrayer of what he would fain hide, still shows how bevers must have been the trial which left the 30vo-reign Pontiff to considerably aged. Native keenness, strong powers of observation, and knowledge of the

world of men and things, are indi-cated in the slight veiling of the eye lids at the corners of the frankly kind and honest eyes, with their ful direct glance of wordless enquiry The nose is straight, but rather rounded than classical, giving a loo of great kindness and sympathy But in the mouth, sweet and bene volent, lies much of the character of the face; lips not full but well-shap ed and firmly set together, a mouth where spontaneous cheerful lurks-could the shadow of unaccus tomed melancholy be lifted,-but mouth nevertheless which makes on feel that Pius X, having once come to a decision, and that the right one, would not be quick to change

One after another we knelt before the Pope on our presentation, and each one received a few quiet words of welcome and heart-felt blessing, spoken with earnest feeling, on account of his own personality, but for the sake of One whom Pius X represents, to every Catholic pilgrim who kneels before him. The Holy Father's manner is quiet reserved rather than expansive. al most the manner of a shy and retiring person. He has not the stant ready flow of conversation, the quick personal interest and enquiry, with which Leo XIII was wont draw out the most timid stranger. making him feel at ease in the pre sence of the Pontiff, no matter what his nationality. Naturally in speaking to foreigners His Holiness somewhat hampered, for in his own language Pius X speaks with much ease and fluency. However, ' Hi Holiness' manner is so uniformly gentle that it wins all hearts instantly. Only once during our au-dience did the grave, almost melancholy, thoughtfulness relax from the Holy Father's face, when speaking in Latin to one of the priests of the party as he knelt before him. Then a smile so ineffably winning

MONTREAL WHOLESALE PRICES transforming lit up the quiet face for an instant that it seemed literally a revelation of what the kindly cheery nature must have been before the great and sudden elevation which has shadowed it. Notwithstanding his humility and visible shrinking from the signs of outward sovereign homage paid to his person, and his strong dislike of pomp and state. Pius X embodies the perfect ideal of a sovereign pontiff. His own great goodness and single-heartedness of character enable him to realize the very utmost the dignity of his high office, communicating it all insensibly to those who approach him For in every gesture, every move ment, His Holiness is pre-eminently the Vicar of Christ. As we have seen even at the first glance the

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