

The monk did as he was told. St. Bernard desired him to look into the pitcher and tell him what he saw there.

"I see nothing, Father Abbot."

"Are there no slugs, or insects, or dirt of any kind?" asked St. Bernard.

"No, it is perfectly clean; the water has washed it and prevented anything sticking to the bottom," said the monk.

"That is just what your weekly confession does to you, my son," replied the abbot; "it washes your soul and keeps it pure, and prevents sin and imperfection cleaving to it."

POPE BENEDICT

DISCUSSES WORLD'S ILLS

PHILIP GIBBS WRITES OF PRIVATE AUDIENCE GRANTED BY HOLY FATHER

On Oct. 20, Philip Gibbs, the well-known war correspondent, cabled from Rome to the N. Y. Times the following report of an interview with His Holiness, Pope Benedict XV.

Whatever faith or lack of faith a man may have, he cannot be untouched if he has any spiritual sense at all by the presence of the Christian tradition that lives in Rome. Here in Rome stones speak of the agony, courage and faith of the men and women who, in the earlier days of Christian worship, suffered tortures and a dreadful death for the Master's sake.

This is history, whether we like it or dislike it. But there is still a living power in the world. The church of Rome maintains its ancient faith; the Pope is today acknowledged by millions of men and women as the supreme head of their church, though the prisoner of the Vatican, as he is called. His spiritual power is recognized not only by the people of his own church, but by many who are Christians, though not Catholics.

It was in acknowledgment of this, for instance, that President Wilson, when he came to Rome, asked for an audience with the Sovereign Pontiff, who has the spiritual allegiance of many millions of people in the United States, and for 20 minutes he sat in private audience with Benedict XV.

POPE OFTEN ACCUSED

By a rare chance I have been honored with the same privilege, not often given to men of insignificant like myself, and still less to a man of my profession. When I made my petition for an audience it seemed to me that I should do well if I could get some sort of message from the man who represents to so many millions the supreme authority of Christendom.

It would be enormously interesting, anyhow, I thought, not only to myself but to the whole world to get even the first few words from the Pope about the social problems which have surged up out of the ruin and agony of war. During the war he was called pro German by many people in the allied nations, impatient because he did not denounce our enemies, and probably by the Germans pro ally, because he used his influence as best he could on the side of mercy in France and Belgium; and neither side listened to his appeals for peace.

What was the truth of all that? To talk with the Pope directly and simply about these things, especially about the state of the world now that society is reshaping itself, would be surprising and interesting to any student of life. So I was glad and surprised when word came to me that the Pope would receive me in private audience for 20 minutes at 11.45 o'clock on Monday morning.

APPROACH IS IMPRESSIVE

The approach to the Pope is impressive. It is the approach to a sovereign presence guarded by men at arms, surrounded by the formal etiquette of a royal court dwelling in the palace built by noble craftsmen and decorated by great artists in an era when the world was stirred by the sense of beauty and strove to realize it by all magnificence.

In the entrance hall of the Vatican which stands to the right of St. Peter's, there was a white vista of marble walls and columns and the only color there, rich and vivid, was that of the officers and men of the Papal Guard were grouped on either side. Coming into this white hall out of the modern traffic of Roman streets it was as though one had stepped back into the Middle Ages. The halberdier at the entrance, in his slashed doublet and hose, his breeches broadly striped in red, yellow and blue, might have belonged outside the door of Leo X, when Raphael painted his glorious frescoes on those very walls. Other guards reclining on stone benches with those flames of color about them were like living pictures that had stepped from the frames of the Renaissance paintings.

The officer of the guard saluted me, glanced at my passport and pointed to a stairway, leading out of the hall. I went up a long flight of stairs on which have trailed the robes of many popes and cardinals, whom I saw about me in imagination, though I was alone there. At the first landing another halberdier grommled his pike at my appearance and pointed to an ante-chamber. I passed through room after room, glancing quickly at the fine painted tapestries and painted ceilings. In each room there were other guards, who rose as I entered. Some of them were in three cornered hats and blue swallow tail coats; others wore caques like Roman helmets with red plumes behind. I found my knees getting stiff from fright as I returned the salute of the Swiss

guards. I was only an insignificant fellow among so many gentlemen-at-arms and besides, somewhere was the Pope, with whom I should have 20 minutes alone. What could I say to him to make the most of those 20 minutes?

In one of the ante-rooms a chamberlain asked me to take a seat. His Holiness will receive you in five minutes," he said in French. The five minutes seemed long, yet too short for me to think out any reasonable thing to say or to draft any series of questions which would lead to valuable answers. I must trust to the Pope himself to talk; one does not cross-examine the Sovereign Pontiff.

MEETING THE PONTIFF

The door opened, a monk came out with a very pleasant smile about his lips, as though satisfied with the words spoken to him. The chamberlain beckoned to me. At the doorway stood Benedict XV. He was a simple figure dressed in white, not so tall as I had expected and with a scholar's look, little austere at the first glance—only at a glance, for after my first salute and when I asked him for permission to speak in French, he laughed in a genial way and said in French also:

"In that language we shall understand each other."

Then he took me by the hand and led me to a chair close to his own, so that we sat side by side. He asked me about America first, having heard that I had been there not long ago, and then asked me to tell him about the little studies I had been making on the conditions of Europe after the war.

I spoke to him about the distress of people burdened by high prices and heavy taxation, and about the curious and rather dangerous psychology of many people in England, France, Belgium and Germany—probably in Italy too—who are in revolt against present conditions, and are disillusioned about the new world which they expected after the war.

"THE WAR WAS A SCOURGE"

The Holy Father, as he is called by Catholics, listened attentively and then cut me short, as I had hoped.

"Yes," he said, "the war was a scourge (he used that word, 'unfléau,' several times in his conversation), and the effects of it are enormous and incalculable. When it began people imagined that it would be a quick war, lasting three, four or five months. Few guessed it would last for nearly five years. That long period of strife, that terrifies courage will have far reaching and enduring results.

"People must make up their minds to endure the consequences of war. They must steel themselves to suffer. At the same time we must do everything in our power to alleviate those sufferings and to ease the burdens of those who can least afford to support them."

I noticed that throughout our conversation the Pope's thoughts seemed to be concentrated mostly upon the condition of the working classes. He spoke of the people rather than of their rulers, and of the poor rather than of the rich.

When, for instance, I referred to strikes and other symptoms of social unrest in many countries, he said: "The people have been irritated by a sense of injustice. There are many men who have made money out of this war." He made a gesture with his forefinger at the word "money" and continued:

"Those who grew rich out of the war will have to pay the burden of taxation will no doubt fall heavily upon them."

FINANCIAL PROBLEMS DIFFICULT

He spoke of the great difficulty of the financial situation in all the countries which have been at war. He seemed to think that there was no easy or quick solution of these economic problems, nor any immediate prospect of bringing down the high prices to the normal level. "It is difficult," he said, "difficult."

He referred to the question of a forced loan in Italy. That is the project by which a levy is to be made on all capital in Italy, starting at 5% on all fortunes above \$4,000 and going up to 40% on the largest fortunes—their income in addition to a graduated income tax and special taxes on war profits. The Pope did not express any definite opinion on this measure, but said that undoubtedly such taxation as that would lay a heavy burden upon the whole nation.

THE CHURCH'S RELIEF WORK

For a few minutes his mind went back to the great conflict which had caused all this financial ruin in Europe, and he spoke of what the Catholic church had done and tried to do to alleviate its miseries and agonies.

"We could do very little," he said, "in comparison with the enormous suffering caused by the war, but as far as possible we took every opportunity of relieving the sorrow of the people by works of charity. We could do not more than that and it was only small compared with all the suffering, but it did bring comfort to many poor people, wives and mothers, prisoners and wounded and mitigated some of the severities of military acts."

His Holiness mentioned briefly some of the work which had been achieved under his direction and referred me to a detailed list of charitable services done during the war by the Holy See.

Among those works that Benedict XV, particularly mentioned were the exchanges of prisoners of war,

incapacitated for military service, following his telegram dated December 31, 1914, to the sovereigns and heads of the belligerent States and the liberation and exchange of civilians prisoners.

Then the Pope mentioned to me the work done under his direction for endeavoring to discover the whereabouts of missing men. Soon after the war began letters began to pour into Rome mostly addressed to the Holy Father himself, imploiring news of missing combatants. The Pope read them, took notes and ordered inquiries to be made and toward the end of 1914 he instituted a special bureau with branches afterwards at Paderborn, Fribourg and Vienna.

It was an American, Bellamy Storer, former ambassador for the United States at Vienna, who first undertook the task of all this clerical work and afterwards an American priest, Father Reuter, developed it.

"In many cases," said the Pope, "we were able to give news to poor anxious families, but of course, in many other cases there was disappointment. More than 100,000 letters were sent to families of Italian soldiers who were captured or missing."

His Holiness also mentioned the work done after his prolonged negotiations with the powers to secure a refuge in Switzerland for sick and wounded and especially for consumptive cases.

"We used our influence," he said, "wherever possible, to commute the death penalty of people condemned by military law in Austria and Germany. In a number of cases this was successful."

It was owing to the Pope's intervention that over 100 French hostages from Roubaix were liberated and among many other people, Princess Marie de Coy, the friend of Edith Cavell, who was condemned to ten years' penal servitude for having concealed French and Belgian soldiers, owed the mitigation of her punishment and other concessions to the Pope's intercession. It was no doubt impossible for him to act in the case of Miss Cavell, owing to the rapidity and secrecy of her execution.

His Holiness made only passing allusions to these services, and said again: "It is very little. We did all that was possible, but it only touched the great anguish of the war."

He made no mention of the enormous sums of money sent by the Holy See to Belgium, Poland, Montenegro, and other countries for the purpose of feeding the starving populations, nor of his repeated protests against the brutalities of war by whomsoever committed, nor of his three appeals for peace, the last of which dated August 1, 1917, contained concrete proposals for the beginning of negotiations very similar to President Wilson's 14 points, which came later.

MUST SOLVE PROBLEMS LAWFULLY

I tried to induce the Pope to continue on that line of conversation, but he came back suddenly to the conditions prevailing after the war, and expressed his hopes that the disillusionment of the people and the inevitable rise in prices, owing to taxation and financial distress, would not lead to violence or anarchy.

"It is the duty of all men," he said, "to endeavor to solve the social problems in a lawful and peaceable way and so that the burden will be fairly shared with good will and charity."

Speaking about the relations between capital and labor, he referred several times to the encyclicals and other writings of Leo XIII. on those subjects, which, he said, expressed very clearly and in great detail Christian principle regarding the right of working men and of employers, as well as the rights of the State.

He expressed the hope that these writings might be popularized as they bore directly upon the problems of modern social conditions. "Some passages out of these works of Pope Leo XIII. repeated his desire that they might be made more popular and widely read."

"All their teaching," he said, "may be summed up in two words, justice and charity. If men behave justly and with real Christian character towards each other, many of the troubles of the world will be removed, but without justice and charity there will be no social progress."

POPE LIVES IN SIMPLICITY

When I left the Vatican, past the papal guards again, I was impressed by the thought that within the splendor of that palace and in spite of the ceremonial etiquette of the papal court, Benedict XV, himself, like many of his predecessors, lives in simplicity, and from that confinement which has been imposed upon the Pope since 1871 looks out upon human life and upon its sea of troubles with an anxious and discerning gaze, receiving from all quarters of the world reports upon the turmoil and progress of the people and directing the vast organization of spiritual power which does undoubtedly achieve great works of charity and faith.

The words that the Pope had spoken to me were not sensational. After all there is nothing sensational to say; and he spoke about the prob-

lems of the time simply and frankly without oratorical effect or big-flow phrases, but with keen common sense.

Many people will see nothing but platitudes in his remarks but they are platitudes based upon the authority of old and wise tradition, and upon Christian faith, and such platitudes spoken by Pope or pastor, may fall strangely upon the ears of a world deafened by loud and confused cries after a war in which such a phrase as Christian charity was mocked by hatred and cruelty.

These two words now at this present day in this Europe, which I see so full of suffering, revolt and passion hold perhaps the truth toward which mankind is groping desperately in all manner of ways and with diverse philosophies. They overthrow the pagan world when Peter came to Rome and still have power.

The flowers we love best are not those with the brightest colors but those with the sweetest fragrance.

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