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# The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

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# The Monthly Open Court

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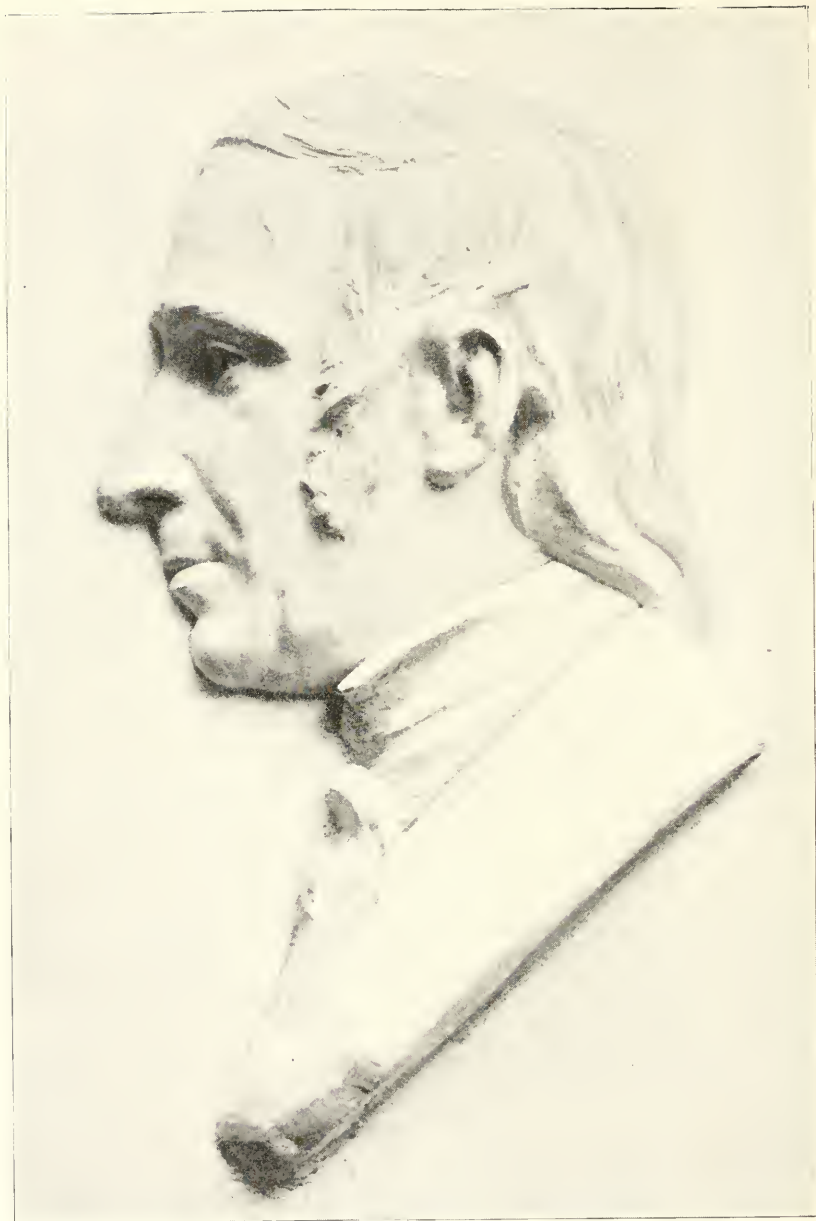
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AMOS BRONSON ALCOTT.

(1799-1888.)

*The Open Court for September, 1897.*

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## THE CANONISATION OF TWO NEW SAINTS.<sup>1</sup>

BY PROF. G. M. FIAMINGO.

THE UNCOMPROMISING among the Italian faithful, those who do not know how to accommodate themselves to a state of things resulting from the absence of the temporal power of the Papacy, and who even to-day are speaking and writing in favor of restoring the rule of the Vatican, urge as among their strongest arguments that the Vatican is wanting in the necessary liberty for completely performing all its religious and spiritual functions.

Now, if anything is true it is this: that if the presence of the Italian Government at Rome has really put a stop to the feasts and religious processions in the streets, and has therefore operated as a moderating influence upon religious ceremonies, nothing has been more beneficial to Catholicism itself than that very fact.

The religion of Jesus Christ, which grew up slowly in the spirit of the Semitic race even before Christ came into the world, was in the nature of a reaction against the voluptuous worship of Syria, and was characterised by a great simplicity of ceremony, by the complete absence of temples, etc.

It is quite certain that Jesus Christ had no knowledge of the worship and the pompous and corrupt civilisation of the Greeks and Romans. But his religion being a spiritual movement of protest and reaction against the corruption and fanaticism of Judea, even if it was not called forth by them, was in striking contrast with the magnificence and the worldly, aristocratic, and imperial splendor of the Greek and Roman civilisation. And it is due to this contrast between the pietistic and simple nature of the religion of Christ and the barbaric and vainglorious spirit of that civilisa-

<sup>1</sup> Translated from the manuscript of Prof. G. Fiamingo by I. W. Howerth of the University of Chicago.



tion, that the new religion on being brought into contact with it disseminated itself with great alacrity; it responded to the conscious need of those who felt and suffered the influences of that brutal civilisation.

Unfortunately, however, the religion of Christ on being brought to Rome, instead of reacting and correcting the evils of that unscrupulous, corrupt and voluptuous civilisation was little by little embodied in it, and when the Empire of the Cæsars fell the Church, already established at Rome, received its moral and intellectual legacy. Consequently the history of the Church of Rome during the Middle Ages is just as odious as that of the Roman Empire. The Christian religion lost that purity and simplicity which it had received from Mount Sinai, and took upon itself all the formality, all the ridiculous rites and superstitions, and all the pompousness which had belonged to Paganism.

This sickening excess of the external manifestations of worship and religious ceremonies was refined somewhat it is true by the progress of the arts and the artistic sentiments, but in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it became especially complicated and tended to become more and more pompous and even entirely theatrical. Gregory XV., like Pius IV. before him, felt the need of restraining and limiting the pompous and burdening system followed in the funerals of the Popes. He declared that during the nine days from the funeral of a Pope to the opening of the conclave the expenses ought not to exceed the sum of nine thousand ducats, which reduced to the value of money to-day would correspond to about ninety or one hundred thousand francs. Alexander VIII. in 1690 fixed these expenses at the sum of ten thousand *scudi*, which to-day would be equivalent to fifty-three thousand francs. And not only this, but he thought proper in his prohibition to descend to particulars, and fixed the maximum expense of a Catafalque at two thousand *scudi*. He even wished to be more economical by providing one for permanent use. These good intentions of Pius IV., of Gregory XV., and of Alexander VIII., did not always have the approval of the other Popes who followed them and consequently they were not often carried out.

Christianity brought into Italy and Rome lost little by little all its simplicity, and came to be powerfully affected, even misled, by the influence exercised upon it by a people quite different from those who had seen it brought forth. In one of the journeys of Jesus Christ from Jerusalem into Galilee, he stopped at Bir-Ga Koub where the women of Sychar came to draw water. Jesus

asked one of them for a drink. The demand made a strong impression upon the woman, for the Israelites ordinarily avoided all relations with the Samaritans. The woman attracted by the conversation of Jesus recognised in him a prophet and said to him: "Sir, our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Jesus said unto her: "Woman, believe me the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father, but the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Now this sublime parable is the solid foundation of external religion, of pure worship. Without regard to country, without temples, without specific times is the worship of elevated souls, of all who truly feel the spirit of worship. But one will seek in vain in the religion of Christ after it was transplanted in Rome for a trace of religious principles so wonderfully humane and pure. For many centuries Rome had no other goddess than that of brutal force. The most ferocious military spirit dominated all the Romans even when they had become weak and disorganised. The sentiment of enmity, of hatred toward those who were not Roman, as well as the struggle among the social classes had waxed almost into paroxysm. And also, before the Republic and after the Empire, the worship of the artistically grand, of worldly splendor was developed in the continuous rendering of honor to victorious military leaders, and to the gods who must always be propitiated.

The religion of Jesus Christ as it arose and developed in Galilee responded to the need of the spirit of that population, which had none of the characteristics of the Romans. In Judea Christianity was a movement of the soul entirely spontaneous, hence it had no written or dogmatic formulæ. He was a Christian who looking forward to the Kingdom of Heaven adhered simply to Christ. The perfect idealism of Jesus was the highest rule of a disinterested and virtuous life. He created, as Renan says, the Heaven of the pure soul where is found that which is sought for in vain on the earth, the perfect nobility of the sons of God, the absolute purity, the total abstraction of the filthiness of the world, the liberty which modern society excludes as an impossibility and which can have an application only in the domain of thought. It was impossible that this religion, so pure and so humane, could be transplanted into the pompous and coarse environment of Rome, refined, as it was apparently, by the cultivation of art.

After the third century when it was recognised by Constantine as the official religion, the religion of Christ underwent at Rome a

profound perversion, and hence became through all the successive centuries an ally of the Government in holding in subjection and poverty the mass of the population. Meanwhile in the fourth century the Doctors of the Greek Church entangled Christianity in the most subtle dogmatic and metaphysical disquisitions, thus anticipating the scholastics of the Middle Ages. And all this in spite of the fact that Jesus Christ carefully refrained from uttering any dogma.

At Rome the Christian religion ceased to be pure "Ebionism," that is, the doctrine that the poor alone will be saved, and although its adherents continually declare that the kingdom of the poor must come, they do nothing to hasten its advent. For the pure and mystical worship of Christianity is substituted the admiration and worship of artistic religious productions, and pompous ceremonies performed with the greatest display.

When in 1870 the Italian Government had taken possession of Rome, the Pope, at first Pius IX. and then Leo XIII., proclaimed himself a prisoner of the Italian Government, paralysed in every action, and prohibited festivals in St. Peter's, that greatest temple of Catholicism. Pius IX. even wished that none of the furnishings of the Vatican should be renewed, and preferred to let everything go to rack and ruin in order to make it appear that the Vatican was suffering from the loss of power. Leo XIII., however, had ideas quite opposed to those of Pius IX. He wished to have all the furnishings of the Vatican renewed in accordance with what was suitable to the Royal Palace, and had all the magnificent Borghian apartments restored in a magnificent manner. He badly concealed his worldly sentiments. In other times he would have been a great patron of artists.

Thus we see that while with Pius IX. the presence of the Italian Government at Rome put a powerful check on the grandeur of religious ceremonies, even in St. Peter's with doors closed, Leo XIII., little by little, urged on by his worldly sentiments and by the traditions of the Roman Church, had these showy religious ceremonies performed, and brought back to the Roman people the magnificent festivities in St. Peter's just as they had been before 1870. If there is anything in these modern festivities different from those celebrated in St. Peter's before 1870,<sup>1</sup> it is perhaps

<sup>1</sup>The only particular, and that is of no liturgical importance, is the absence of the religious processions through the streets of the city. This was prohibited after 1870. Especially important was that of the *Corpus Domini*. In the feasts of the Canonisation the procession with the Pope went out from one gate of St. Peter's, passed through the archway of the Piazza, and returned through the other gate. But this ceremony has been suppressed in the recent Canonisations.



their greater expense and luxury. The new times, the new social conscience, appear to have exercised no influence whatever.

The first Canonisation of Saints was in the eighth or ninth century. Mngr. Rocca, pontifical sacristan, in his Commentary *De Canonizzazione Sanctorum*, and other authors with him, assert that the first Canonisation was that of St. Sivitberto, celebrated in Verdun in 803 by Leo III. at the instance of the Emperor Charlemagne. Others maintain that the first Canonisation was that of St. Ulric, Bishop of Arduin, celebrated in the Hall of the Lateran Council, by John XV. in 993.

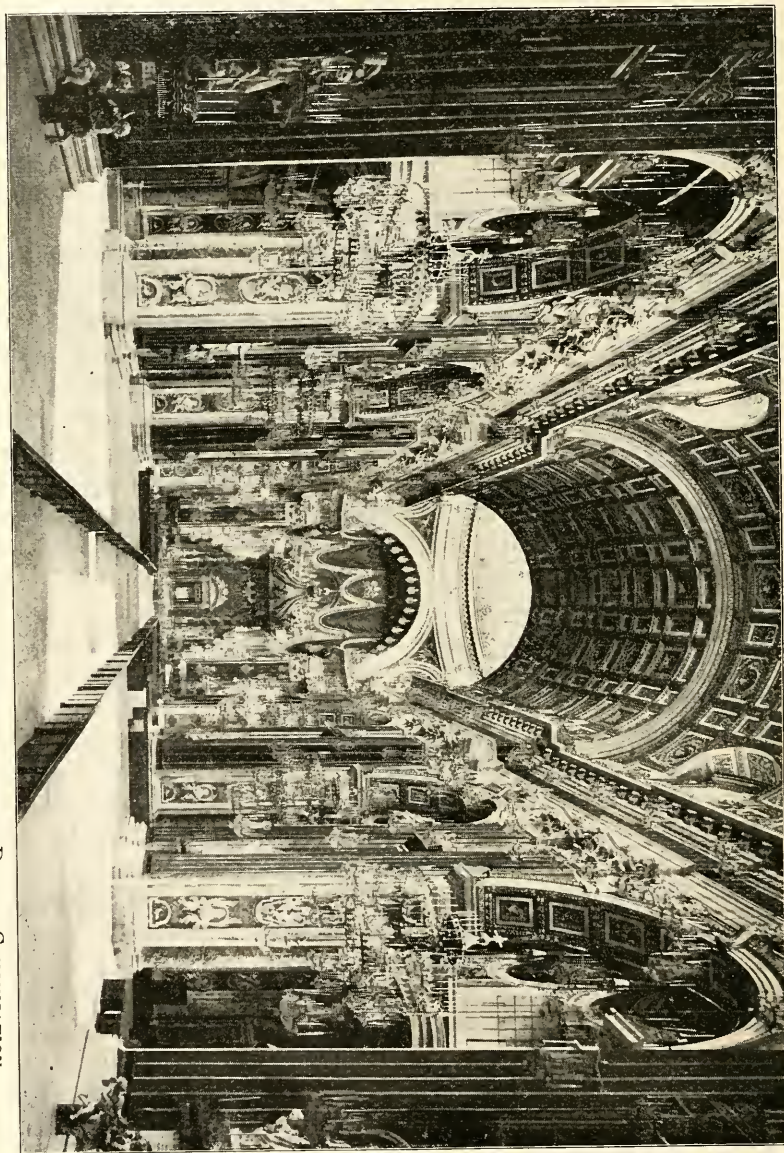
Few Canonisations are recorded outside of Rome, and there are few which were not celebrated in St. Peter's. That the Canonisation must be made at Rome and in St. Peter's was indeed explicitly decreed by Alexander VII. Benedict XIV. in his Bull of December 23, 1741, *Ad sepulcra Apostolorum*, solemnly confirmed what had been already established by his predecessors, and then, as if the first Bull were not sufficient, issued another, *Ad honorandam*, dated March 27, 1752. The constitution of Benedict XIV. is still followed in the procedure which has been instituted by the Congregation of Ceremonies in the Beatification of the Servants of God and in the Canonisation of the Beatified as well as in the ceremonial of Canonisation itself.

Up to to-day there have been registered one hundred and ninety-four Canonisations.

Pius IX., predecessor of the present Pope, although he held the Pontificate longer than it had ever been held in the history of the Popes, participated in only two Canonisations. These were in 1862 and in 1867. The latter was celebrated in St. Peter's on the 29th of June, falling on the centenary of the death of St. Peter, and on this occasion twenty-five saints were proclaimed. Among these was that famous Peter D'Arbues, whom Ferdinand Gregorovius in his *Diari Romani* called "infamous." Perhaps in this accusation Gregorovius exaggerated a little, and yet Gregorovius was undoubtedly a conscientious historian. In 1867 twenty-four Cardinals, six Patriarchs, two Primates, ninety-eight Archbishops, three hundred and fifty-seven Bishops, innumerable Prelates and Priests, came to Rome from every part of the world for the express purpose of participating in the function. The festival was celebrated with great pomp.

There was nothing extraordinary in the two Canonisations celebrated by the present Pontiff in 1882 and in 1888 respectively. These were not held in the Basilica Vatican, but in the so-called

Hall of the Benediction, reduced now to the Hall of the Beatification and Canonisation, situated above the Atrium of the Basilica



INTERIOR OF THE BASILICA OF ST. PETER'S AT ROME, AS DECORATED FOR THE RECENT CANONISATION.  
From an actual photograph.

Vatican. It seems, then, that the Basilica Vatican, in spite of the Bull of Benedict XIV., had lost the privilege of Beatification of Saints when Leo XIII., caring little for the presence of the Italian



government at Rome and offering as a reason his desire to have as large a number as possible present at the ceremonies, wished that



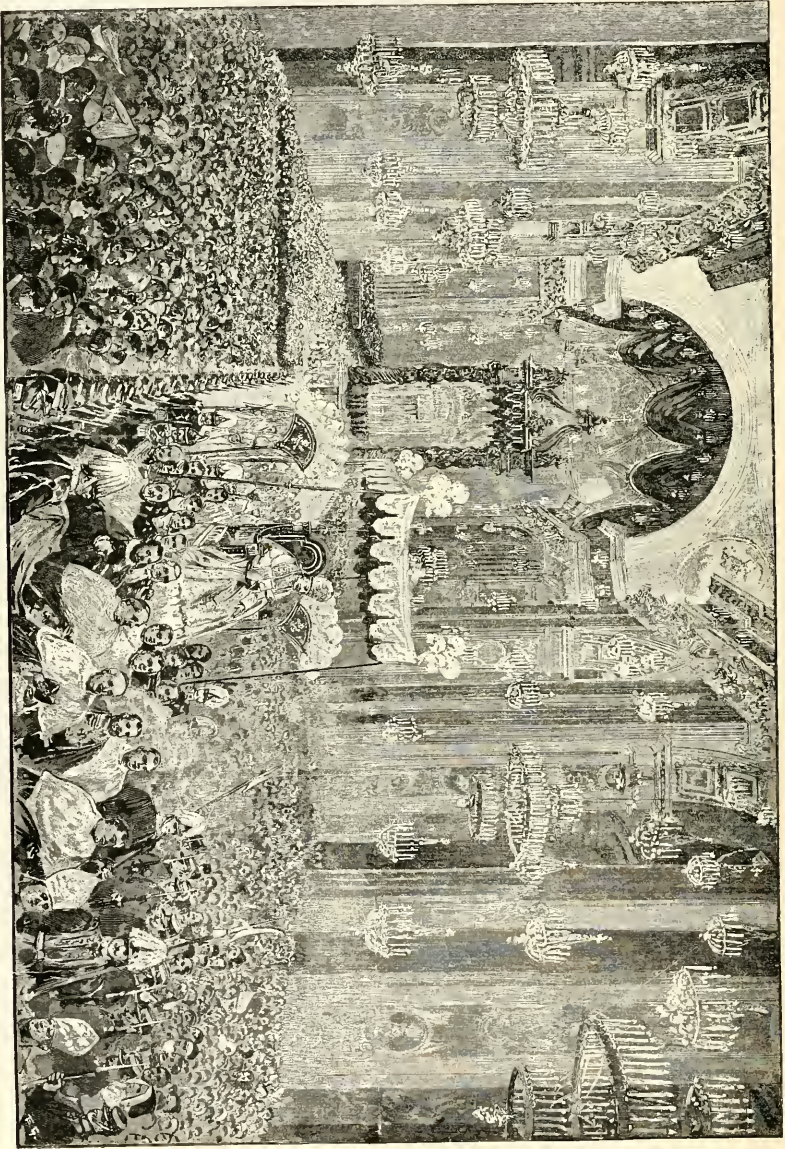
THE PAPAL PROCESSION IN THE BASILICA, DURING THE CEREMONY OF CANONISATION. From an actual photograph.

the Sanctification of the Blessed Zaccaria and Fourier should be held in Saint Peter's.

For the festival of the 27th of last May the furnishings of St.



Peter's were very showy. The excessive adornment was a continuation of the artistic traditions of the sixteenth and seventeenth



THE PAPAL PROCESSION IN THE BASILICA.  
 Drawn from the preceding photograph by E. Limmer for the *Illustrirte Zeitung*.

centuries, and at first glance they produced an extraordinary and indescribable effect. The Catholic journals were pleased to report

the figures representing the outlay: eight kilometres (in round numbers, five miles) of material were used to adorn the archways and the columns of St. Peter's, eighteen thousand candles burned during the ceremony, and other figures were in similar proportions. But the mass of the people are not satisfied with delicate artistic works which they do not understand. They are struck with pompous display, and this the Church of Rome has always aimed at in the construction of its great temples, such as St. Peter's, furnishing them as it did St. Peter's on the 27th of last May. All that ungraceful but extraordinarily abundant adornment was like the *mise en scene* for a spectacular show. Of the thirty or forty thousand persons (fifty thousand according to some) who were present at that ceremony there were very few of the true believers. All that great crowd had gone to St. Peter's to enjoy a very great display which is repeated only at long intervals and which takes place in an environment absolutely unique. Many people from all parts of the world come to Bayreuth to enjoy Wagnerian music. But the so-called song of the angels, which angels are a hundred or more eunuchs collected under the dome of St. Peter's, the blast of the silver trumpets which accompanies the entrance of the Pope, the uncertain light of twenty thousand candles which reflect a reddish glow from the walls furnished so profusely, this artistic combination is so extraordinarily grand that the spectacle of Bayreuth is not in the least worthy of a comparison. At the show in St. Peter's were collected all kinds of people who could in any way secure tickets. Ministers of the Italian Government and men of every religious sect were there. It is said that the Guards of the Pope who took up the tickets were instructed to prevent the Grand Master of Italian Masonry, Signor Nathan, from attending the ceremony. This festival cost the Vatican at least three hundred thousand francs, while the whole expense for the funeral of Pius IX. and for the conclave which elected Leo XIII. scarcely reached the sum of sixty thousand francs. Very few of the displays in St. Peter's have been so pompous and showy as this last one.

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Now, in all this religious ceremony there is nothing at all mystical. To be sure, a part of the procession which preceded the entrance of the Pope was majestic and imposing. The clergy in sacred vestments, the Prelate Commander of *Sancto Spirito*, the Bishops, Archbishops, Primates, Patriarchs, Cardinals, etc., all the personages who assist the Pope, and finally Leo XIII. under the Canopy held up by different dignitaries and surrounded by



others, all this part of the procession was imposing, and majestic; and a feeling of awe took possession of that vast multitude as it witnessed the passage of the Pope, who with an effort waved them his benediction. But while the procession of the regular clergy, secular clergy, etc., was passing by the people showed little interest. Many ate the provisions which they had been careful to bring with them, others were tired and yawning, while still others were evidently impatient at being kept from their dinners. A gentleman was heard to say: "I see passing before my eyes as in a vision a plate of macaroni." The people around him laughed.

This pompous display in which was wanting any mystic element, where everything dazzled but awakened no intellectual sentiment, continued through the whole celebration of the Canonisation. Even around the altar in the Basilican Vatican where the Cardinals, the Bishops, the Patriarchs, etc., took their places near the Pope, one could see by the movements of heads that they were speaking and laughing, wearied and confused by the spectacle. Cardinal Mazzella, who they say is a very brilliant and witty man, now and then whispered to the Pope, and succeeded in making him laugh. At the celebration of the Mass, which followed the Canonisation, there was a special ceremony which consisted in the offering of wax, bread, wine, water, doves, pigeons, and other birds. All these objects are supposed to symbolise the virtues of the "Blessed Ones" who are sanctified. Thus the Pagan character of the ceremony is accentuated still more. When they brought all these little birds to the Pope, he said "Poor little things we shall soon give them their liberty."

All those who were present at the late religious ceremony of the Canonisation of Saints Zaccaria and Fourier, after having remained for five or six hours in St. Peter's, in that warm season chosen purposely in order that the delicate health of Leo XIII. might not be exposed to changes of temperature, went out bewildered and almost stupified, scarcely able to synthesise the multi-form and extraordinary spectacle which they had seen. Certainly it did not minister to their religious sentiments.

Zaccaria of Cremona was the founder of the order of Barnabites and died a natural death at thirty-seven. Fourier, a Frenchman, was a parish priest and reformed a little congregation of Canons. Could two such obscure servants of God be raised to the rank of saints by such a theatrical ceremony, a ceremony which contained nothing mystical whatever? It is such a proceeding as

this that weakens the religious sentiments. Certainly it does not strengthen them.

Le Sar Peladan a little while ago remarked that we are living in an epoch in which the intellectual classes no longer believe in saints. But this observation is such a commonplace that Le Sar Peladan deserves no merit for uttering it. Now, it is certainly not by creating new saints with a display so theatrically grotesque as that which took place in St. Peter's on the 27th of last May that the faith in saints is reinforced.

In the procession of the Sanctification there were two enormous



ANTONIO MARIA ZACCARIA, OF CREMONA.  
 Founder of the Order of Barnabites. Canonized at St. Peter's, May 27, 1897.



PIERRE FOURIER.  
 Reformer of a Congregation of Canons. Canonized at St. Peter's, May 27, 1897.

banners, one for each saint. On these two banners were painted the figures representing the miracles performed by them. There were figures of persons instantaneously cured of incurable diseases by the intercession of the young priests, at that time Maria Zaccaria or Fourier. Now to-day no one believes in miracles, because none of us has seen one, and science denies that a single case of miracles can be verified. Science explains these pretended miracles as phenomena of hallucination or of illusion, much more likely to happen in past centuries when the masses were profoundly ignorant. What prestige could the new saints Zaccaria and Fourier,

to whom were attributed miraculous deeds to-day considered impossible, acquire in the eyes of the mass of believers, at least of the more intelligent among them? The whole ceremony of Sanctification, whether it be considered with regard to the idea which inspired it, or whether it is regarded merely as a pompous, worldly display, is in conflict with the intellectual progress of the people. Catholicism which seeks to find in a perfect observance of religious traditions and of its Liturgy, the principal source of its moral and mystical force, has failed to adapt itself to the new social environment which has undoubtedly developed even in old Europe. While in certain religious ceremonies it is in perfect harmony with the spirit of former centuries, it is to-day losing faith in itself and falling into ridicule. This fact was illustrated in the Canonisation of the new saints.