

## NEW YEAR'S RECEPTIONS AT THE VATICAN.

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THE USUAL RECEPTIONS which the Pope holds at the beginning of the year are now over. It is customary for the Pontiff to receive, in the first place, the Sacred College, the dean of which reads a congratulatory address containing allusions to the principal political and religious questions of the day, to which the Holy Father replies, returning the good wishes expressed by the Sacred College and commenting on the political and religious situation. The New Year's receptions, inaugurated by the Sacred College, continue during the subsequent days, when the Pope receives the homage and good wishes of his noble guards, of the Roman aristocracy, and of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See.

The greatest importance is attached to these ceremonies by the Vatican, by whom they are surrounded with unusual solemnity, and when some important political or religious question is on the *tapis*, the Pope's answer to the address of the Dean of the Sacred College is always awaited with no slight degree of impatience. Leo XIII., however, is fond of imitating, also in this particular, the reserved attitude of reigning sovereigns, and usually prefers to hint at important subjects, merely to show that he takes an interest in them, without openly expressing an opinion. His Holiness piques himself greatly on being an able diplomatist, and therefore makes it a point of scrupulously observing those two elementary principles of diplomacy, reserve, and diffidence.

There is only one question on which Leo XIII. never tires or hesitates to express a decided opinion, namely, the question of the Temporal Power. Regularly every year, on the occasion of the New Year's receptions, at fixed intervals of twelve months, His Holiness indulges in the same lament to the Sacred College on the

arbitrary imprisonment of which he is the victim, or the damage caused to the whole Catholic Church by the absence of temporal power, and on the necessity of vindicating the rights of the Holy See. Although he always clothes his sentiments in an elevated form of speech, Leo XIII. sometimes makes use of violent expressions, but as a rule his allusions to this painful subject take the form of a mere lament. Last year the Holy Father was concise and forcible in his vindication of the liberty of the Church, which, he asserted, was threatened by the suppression of the temporal power, while this year his speech has been of a far more peaceful nature. It would be difficult to explain the reason of these oscillations in the papal allusions to so trite a question, but there is no doubt that Leo XIII. is perfectly aware of the absolutely Platonic value of his protests, as also of the great exaggeration in his statements concerning the damage which the Catholic Church has suffered from the absence of temporal power.

Shortly after the reception of the Sacred College, the Holy Father receives the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See. Now this diplomatic body is the last remaining vestige of that temporal power which no longer exists. At first sight it appears absurd to have a diplomatic corps accredited to a personality not having true and proper political interests in connexion with the nations represented, for where there is no actual possession of a state no right of representation can exist. When the law of guarantees was being discussed by the Italian Parliament many years ago, it was first intended to limit the Pope's right of sending and receiving ambassadors, with a view to allowing only diplomatic relations of a strictly religious character, but the opinion afterwards prevailed of not placing any restriction on the papal right in this matter.

And this explains why the Vatican attaches so much importance to its prerogative of having diplomatic representatives of different countries accredited to the Holy See. In a certain sense it is the last poor mirage of temporal power to which it clings so tenaciously.

The Vatican is extremely grateful to the French Government for giving the good example to other European countries by keeping a minister accredited to the Holy See, and would be overjoyed if England were to follow her example. When the British envoy extraordinary, Monsignor Errington, came to Rome several years ago for the purpose, it was alleged, of definitely arranging, in conjunction with the Vatican the ecclesiastical hierarchy in India, but

in reality with the object of inducing the Vatican to adopt a more friendly attitude towards the British Government in the Irish question an earnest attempt was made by the Holy See to persuade the Foreign Office to transfer Monsignor Errington's temporary mission into a permanent one.

But the strangest instance of this policy is to be found in the Vatican representative accredited to the Sublime Porte. The Apostolic Nuncio at Constantinople, as a matter of fact, is nothing but a dependant of the French Ambassador to the same court, and the Christians of Crete and Armenia in vain awaited, through him, an energetic protest of the Holy See against the Turkish massacres and the shamefully apathetic attitude of the European powers. Leo XIII.'s protest never came, as the policy which his Nuncio was obliged to follow at Constantinople, conforming himself almost servilely to the attitude of the French Ambassador, forbade it.

If the results of having an official representative at Constantinople are negative in the extreme, it cannot be said that the Vatican reaps any advantage whatever from its being represented at Washington. As the Government of the United States could not possibly recognise an official representative of the head of the Catholic Church, Monsignor Martinelli was sent to Washington in 1896 not as Apostolic Nuncio but simply as Apostolic Delegate, only recognised by Catholics. But, as a matter of fact, not even the latter have really recognised him. The Catholic clergy of the United States enjoy certain privileges and liberties which they do not wish the Apostolic Delegate to abolish or even to change, so that, whenever any important question arises concerning its relations with the Church of Rome, the United States' clergy completely forget that there is such a thing as an Apostolic Delegate, representing the Vatican, at Washington, and, ignoring his very existence, they address themselves directly to the authorities at Rome, to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide or to the Cardinal Secretary of State.

After the negative results which have attended Monsignor Martinelli's installment at Washington it is not very probable that Leo XIII. should contemplate sending another Apostolic Delegate to Ottawa. It is a fact that while the Vatican aspires to increase the number of its Apostolic Nuncios accredited to the various powers, even Catholic countries refuse to receive these representatives of the Holy See. For instance in 1877 the Federal Congress of Switzerland decided to recall its representative in Rome, thus

necessitating the recall of the Papal Nuncio at Berne, and in spite of the repeated offers and attempts on the part of the Vatican to reopen diplomatic relations, the Swiss Catholics themselves, strange to say, always opposed the idea. The reason of this diffidence on the part of governments towards Apostolic Nuncios may be sought in the fact that the latter not only deem it their duty to exercise their functions towards the governments to which they are accredited, but think it right to exercise a great influence on all the bishops and Catholics in general of those countries, and this attitude is diametrically opposed to the *jus canonicum* itself. In short, the Apostolic Nuncios really usurp the Papal authority in the countries where they are accredited, and in so doing it is easy to understand that they become intolerable to the Catholic populations themselves, all the more as they are generally ignorant not only of the social and political conditions, but also of the language of those countries. This is chiefly due to the fact that the pontifical diplomacy is almost exclusively composed of Italians, with an insignificant sprinkling of foreign prelates. There is no doubt that the latter possess a far greater culture, especially in the knowledge of languages, than their Italian confrères, and it may be said with perfect truth that the papal diplomacy of to-day is far inferior to that of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, when its members were recruited in a far more cultured *milieu* than that from which the Apostolic Nuncios of our times are derived.

On the other hand, the representatives of the different governments accredited to the Holy See may be said to exercise their diplomatic functions only in so far that they bring the influence of their country to bear at the Vatican or try to obtain a favorable attitude towards their respective governments, but also through this limited action the Vatican loses a great deal of that liberty of action which ought to characterise all its policy in the face of the Catholic world.

From the foregoing statements it will be easy to see that the diplomatic body accredited to the Holy See, and the system of Apostolic Nuncios, this diplomatic make-believe which is the only spar of the temporal power to which the Vatican clings so tenaciously, is, after all, far from useful or beneficial to the Catholic cause. But the Vatican does not appear to benefit from the undoubted proofs of this fact, and boldly persists in demanding the reintegration of the whole temporal power!