

HALL CAINE AND LEO XIII.

Pen Pictures of the Pope in Public and Private—He Once Left the Vatican Since His Election.

Mr. Hall Caine contributes an article on the Pope to the Christmas number of *Household Words*, which has recently been acquired by his son. In the preparation of "The Eternal City," Mr. Hall Caine had many views, public and private, of his Holiness. Here is a sketch of Leo XIII. in the Basilica of St. Peter's:

"The effect he produces there depends entirely upon the religious bias of the observer. If you bring to the great Roman temple the spirit of Luther, of Montaigne, or of Milton, not to speak of Goethe as he reveals himself in his letters from Rome, you will probably be conscious of nothing better than the presence of a painfully feeble old man, withered, white, and emaciated, carried shoulder-high on the backs of bearers, rising and falling in a spring-bottomed chair, and lifting at intervals, with semi-paralytic gestures, a gaunt and stiffening hand to bless his shouting people. You may even see with Zola nothing but cunning in the glittering eyes and watery mouth, and the wild clamor of the frantic crowds may seem to you to be little better than the idolatrous worship of a pagan image. But if, on the other hand, you have brought to the ceremonials of the Church the devout spirit of the Catholic pilgrim, you will only be aware of a semi-supernatural presence, a saintly being more angel than man, a venerable human creature who seems to have lost all trace of the burden and influence of the flesh, and, in the spiritualizing atmosphere of the Holy of Holies, to be already half way to heaven."

Of the Pope in semi-privacy Mr. Hall Caine writes as follows:

"Leo XIII. at a private audience is a much simpler personality, and the effect he produces there is less open to doubt. If the room is not larger than the Throne Room of the library in the Vatican, and there are not too many visitors, the Pope leaves only one impression on everybody—that of the simplest and gentlest, the sweetest and tenderest of old men. He speaks quietly, without effort, and with no appearance of making a speech. If, happily, the nearest to his chair is a young student, or, still more happily, a woman, (for the sense of sex is strong in him,) he strokes the hand that rests on his knee and drops his voice—the relic of a great and glorious organ—to tones of the softest tenderness. He is fond of talking, of telling a story, and—like other old men—of looking back into the past. His memory is wonderful. * * * Visitors leave his presence with swimming eyes and choking throats. He exercises the mystic spell of the man who is great, not merely by place and rank, but nature. I have seen the Pope very many times, and such are the impressions he has made upon me. They are impressions made upon a Protestant, at least a non-Catholic, a very firm and resolute non-Catholic, who sees no human probability that he will ever allow himself to be anything else."

One of the anecdotes is of special interest, as it shows in a vivid manner the ties of kinship.

"Since the Italians entered Rome in 1870, the attitude of the Vatican has been one of protest against the power which has arrogated its sovereignty. One form of this protest has been the absolute retirement of the Pope within the limits of his territorial domain. It is held by the Catholic Party that for the Pope to go out of the Vatican for an hour, or for even so short a journey as the width of the Piazza of St. Peter's would be to compromise his claim, to acknowledge the supremacy of the usurping King, and to expose himself to the insults of an unbelieving and rebellious populace. Be that as it may, the conviction is deeply rooted in the Catholic mind that since the date of Italian Unity the Pope has never so much as set foot in the streets of Rome, and that having entered the Vatican as a Cardinal, he can only come out of it as a corpse. This is not the fact. Once at all events Leo XIII. passed through the city of King Humbert, and the occasion of his doing so was so proper, so human, and so touching, that the highest considerations of diplomacy and dignity must sink out of sight in regard to it.

"The Pope had a brother who late in life became a religious, and voluntarily took up the humblest position in the kitchen of his Jesuit order. In due course he rose to be a Cardinal, and in his latter days he occupied apartments in the Barberini Palace, now let out in suites of rooms. Old Cardinal Pecci was in his last illness in the Palazzo Barberini, while his brother, Leo XIII., was imprisoned, by State protest, in the Vatican, on the other side of the Tiber. Messages of love and sympathy passed between them day by day, the Cardinal received his last sacraments, and the end was near.

"One night late, very late, a lady was coming out of her apartments to step into her carriage on her way to a midnight reception, when a plain hired coupé drew up in the Piazza, and a venerable old man in the black cassock and black beaver hat of a simple priest got out. By the light of the lamps in the arches she saw his face. It was the Pope. With a feeble step he walked to the door of the Cardinal's rooms and passed through, and the lady went on to her reception. Next day Cardinal Pecci died."