

CARDINAL HAS SWING IN HIS VILLA GARDEN

Merry del Val, Papal Secretary,
Also Golfs and Owns
a Motorcar.

AND ALL ROME GOSSIPS

Other Princes of the Church Mingle
with the World in a Manner
Unknown in Leo's Time.

Special Correspondence THE NEW YORK TIMES.

ROME, Oct. 8.—The new spirit of energy lately noticed at the Vatican has spread to the most conservative of the Cardinals, and this year, for the first time since 1870, they have not only indulged in long villeggiature, but many of them have been abroad, though no one of them can cross the frontier without the Pope's permission, which requires some red tape to obtain. During the last Pontificate the Princes of the Church were supposed to stop at home, thus sharing their master's "imprisonment," but with the advent of the present Secretary of State all that has been changed.

Why should not less conspicuous Cardinals do as they like when His Eminence Merry del Val not only owns his own automobile, but climbs mountains, plays golf, swims, and—owns a nest in the country? It is really curious when one thinks that only five years ago there was great commotion in the Vatican because Cardinal Gibbons had arrived in coat and trousers and a white straw hat!

Rome differs from other large centres in that one cannot do the least thing without the knowledge of the whole town, so it is now public property that Cardinal Merry del Val owns the most picturesque villa in the clerical world, outside of Rome, in the Campagna Romana. His desire to keep this fact private arose merely from his dislike of publicity and curiosity, but the daily trips of his motorcar, always in the same direction, gave rise to comment, and the discovery of what is called his "Petit Trianon" in the sense of a retreat for relaxation and privacy.

Outside the Portese Gate, about one and a half miles in the direction of the sea, is a road called Via della Valtellina, which is quite closed in by high walls and vineyards and at Number 11 is a little rose-colored villa, with a miniature tower, from which one can see the Campagna, bare and majestic, and Father Tiber on his way to the sea. On the facade is a graceful image of the Virgin, with her never-extinguished light, seen by the passerby only through the iron gate, as the little property is surrounded by high thick walls.

Formerly it belonged to the nuns of the Sacred Heart, but is now in the hands of Merry del Val. Inside the walls is a wilderness of beauty; the little house, which contains a few small rooms modestly but daintily furnished, white predominating, is covered with climbing roses, honeysuckles, and other fragrant flowers, while around it is a garden and vineyard of a certain size. The most conspicuous object is a rectangular space, well leveled and smooth as a billiard table, and in a corner ten or twelve balls; evidently bowls is the favorite game here. At the other end is a swing—yes, a swing! Explanations seem necessary, as for a reverend Cardinal and his friends to use a swing is unthinkable. I learn that his Eminence is in the habit of having here occasionally, under his own eye to play and enjoy themselves, the boys from the various church schools. The swing is for them.

On the other side of the villa is a generous Summer house, where once or twice a fortnight, when the weather permits, the Papal Secretary of State reunites his friends at an *al fresco* luncheon or dinner. However, he really enjoys his little country place when he goes there alone. Then he throws off the cares of State and its pomp, and may be seen examining his grapes, removing dead leaves from his plants, even weeding among his flowers, caressing his dog, stroking his cat, or consulting his caretaker on methods and plant foods. He always leaves with a happier face than he arrived with.