

# BITS OF GOSSIP ABOUT THE ETERNAL CITY

## The Church, the People, the Legends and the Town.

ROME—There are so many singular things that can be said about old Rome that the ordinary conversation of those who know its history makes good reading. If the newly arrived scribe is at a loss for suggestions, he has but to keep his ears open during meal time at the pension. The first time I sat at his table, the loquacious Signor Leonardo kept up a running fire of gossip which I am sure will prove as interesting to my readers as it did to me. For instance:

Roman maids and matrons insist upon having a carriage drive each pleasant afternoon, even if the family has to economize on food to afford the outing. This extravagance dates from the time when it was customary to insert in the marriage contract a clause making it compulsory for the husband to take his wife out driving for two hours each day that the weather permitted. Sometimes a compromise is made with poverty, and the Signora contents herself with appearing every other day. Two families with more ingenuity than funds, alternately use one carriage, each having a pair of doors to the vehicle bearing their ancestral coat of arms. A fashionable hotel in Rome is dubbed "The Matrimonial Bureau," because the management arranges introductions and promotes marriages between rich American girls and the broken-down nobility of Italy.

### WHEN FASHIONS WERE MADE.

Scipio was the first man to shave in Rome, thus being the founder of the barber's craft. Although he invented the trade which now affords a livelihood for so many men, I have never seen his bust in a tonsorial parlor. Ability to start fashions seems to have run in Scipio's family, because it was his daughter who boasted of her sons when other women flaunted their jewels. While the pride of motherhood is undoubtedly deep-rooted in the hearts of most women, few have ever found such an apt way to express the same. One may well conclude that the love of display is not a modern fad, for did not Augustus have 6,000 slaves? His wife, Livia, had 600 attendants to wait upon her alone. Included in her staff of domestics was a governess for her pet lap dog. The next time you see a female making over a poodle, remember how the fashion started—that the first woman to mother a dog was a slave and did not fulfill the office from choice, but was made to shower upon it the affectionate attention that is very beautiful when bestowed upon a baby, but quite disgusting when diverted to an animal.

By a strange coincidence the people of the United States are linked with the memory of the last Pope and identified with the reign of the present one. When Leo XIII was dying he was told that prayers for his recovery were being said in the protestant churches of America. The old man smiled feebly and whispered, "that is my greatest consolation." A party of American pilgrims arrived in Rome just before the new Pope was elected, and were directly in front of him when he made his first appearance in St. Peter's. They held up the Stars and Stripes to him and it was the first flag he blessed. The physical strain upon the Pope is great. Even his devotions are wearying, because in a mass which lasts half an hour he repeats 251 times the Latin words meaning: "The Holy Ghost, Jesus Christ, keep thy soul in eternal life."

### POPE DINES WITH SISTERS.

According to a long-established custom no one is allowed to eat with the Pope. Leo XIII had a brother who was a Cardinal, and although he frequently happened in at meal time, was never allowed to eat at the table, nor to even have a glass of wine. The present Pontiff broke this rule the day after his election by inviting his sisters to dine with him, and they continue to accept his hospitality at intervals. The fisherman's ring has been referred to by hundreds of writers and has been seen by thousands of callers at the Vatican. It is claimed that this relic was actually worn by St. Peter and each of his successors up to Leo XIII. It was the custom to reset it for each



THE COLOSSEUM.

Pope, but when Leo died it could not be found and is still missing.

The death of the Pope cannot be announced until a Cardinal goes into the room calls the deceased by his Christian name, and strikes the corpse a sharp blow on the forehead to see if life is really extinct. Inasmuch as the executive machinery of the church stops when there is no living head, the election of a successor is hastened whenever a Pontiff dies. The present Pope was elected after a four-days' session. On another occasion a deadlock occurred and the Cardinals were

chapel of the choir know that the organ is over 200 years old, and is in such a dilapidated condition that a mechanic as well as an organist has to be in attendance whenever it is used. The bellows and stops and pedals are all cranky and are liable to balk at any minute. Furthermore this instrument is two tones lower than the modern pitch and all the music is written to correspond. Another novelty of the performance is the fact that no matter how important the occasion, there are no rehearsals and the musicians have no knowledge of their parts until the

lore of the old one. In the Church of Aracoeli on the Capitoline hill there is a small image called the Santo Bambino (Holy Child) claimed to have been made from a piece of olive wood cut in the Garden of Gethsemane. In the old days when a child was ill this richly attired and profusely decorated doll was taken into the room where the little sufferer was confined to determine whether it would get well. If the image changed color the child would recover; if not its case was considered hopeless. The Bambino is no longer taken from the church, but annually at Epiphany it is brought to the top of the steps and held out to give its blessing to the throngs that assemble for the occasion.

### WHEN THE BELL RINGS.

Supernatural power was supposed to be vested in the statues representing the provinces of Rome which formerly stood in the ancient capitol. In those days there were no telegraph or telephones to speed the news, but around the neck of each statue there was a bell. In case an uprising occurred in any district it was certain to be noted by a tinkled warning from the image representing that province. At such times the figure would turn on its pedestal and look in the direction from which the danger threatened.

Whenever talk turns toward church matters something is sure to be said about the rivalry existing between the Dominicans and the Jesuits. It was the prayer of the founder of the last named order that his followers should be persecuted and his wish has been amply fulfilled. Whatever may be said against them the Jesuits have really done a great deal for humanity in all parts of the world. They have been energetic educators from the earliest times, and science has been enriched by many of their discoveries, one of which was the introduction of quinine as a medicine. But they are bitterly hated by the Romans. The ill feeling against them is so common that I suppose there never was a visitor to Rome who was not told the popular legend explaining why the wind blows in the Piazza del Gesu in front of their principal church. The story goes that once while the Devil and his friend the Wind were taking their daily stroll together, the former interrupted the conversation when entering the piazza by saying: "Please excuse me a moment, as I have some business to transact with my friends, the Jesuits. I will be right back." The Wind was agreeable and said: "All right, I'll wait for you." The Devil entered the edifice but has never come out, and the Wind is still blowing around there in the long wait for him.

### TO RETURN TO ROME.

Rome is rich with fountains, and as rich with legends concerning them. One of the best known is that which applies to the one in the Piazza de Trevi. A body of Roman troops were on the march and were almost overcome with heat because they could find no water to quench their thirst. Seeing their distress a little peasant girl led them away from the highway and revealed the location of a fine spring of clear, cold water, that up to this time had been known only to the rustics of the vicinity. The soldiers named the spring the Aqua Virgo, or Maiden Water. It has retained this name for centuries, although in Rome it is more often referred to as the Trevi fountain. It is said that whoever goes to drink this water by light of the moon, afterwards throwing a coin into the basin as a compliment to the good fairy residing there, shall surely be permitted to come and drink again before his life is done. During all the ages since this rite was established many thousands have performed it. Laughing tourists do it for the fun of the thing, and Roman soldiers parting reluctantly from their sweethearts pay the tribute in all seriousness in the hope that the spell will bring them home again.

Mention has been made of the loss which literature sustained when Omar, the Mohammedan fanatic, ordered the contents of the library at Alexandria to be used for fuel in the public bath houses. That was in the seventh century and was considered bad even for those times, but Italy competed against this heathen record as late as the year 1880. When the temporal power was wrested from the Church of Italy a vast collection of books and manuscripts were gathered from the monastic institutions and brought in carts to Rome. This valuable plunder was piled in a haphazard way in an empty building and left in charge of a porter. Sometime afterward an impoverished scholar who had been to the market place found his purchase of two ounces of butter wrapped in an autograph letter of Christopher Columbus. An

(Continued on Page 6.)



ITALIAN GIRL IN HOLIDAY ATTIRE.

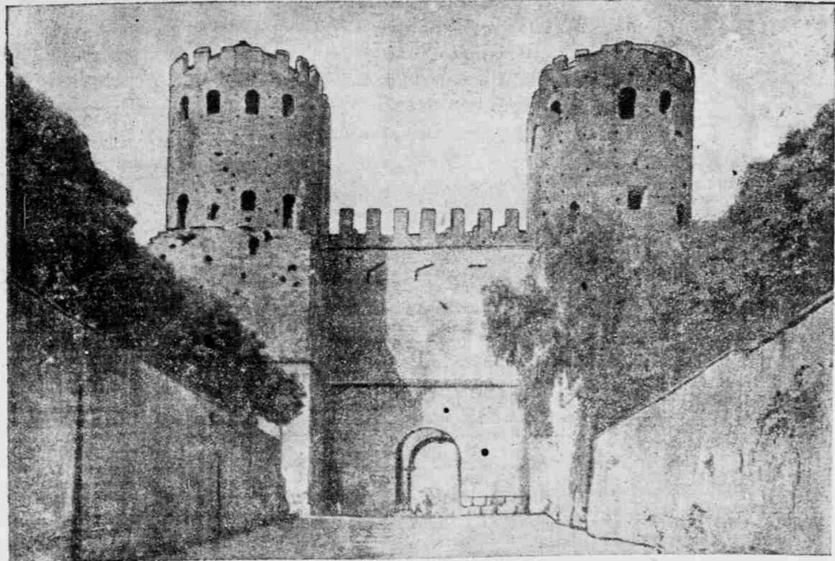
locked up for thirty-six months. So much disorder reigned during this time that the populace finally lifted the roof from the building where the electors were confined, and threatened them with violence if they did not come to a decision at once.

### ORGAN IS 200 YEARS OLD.

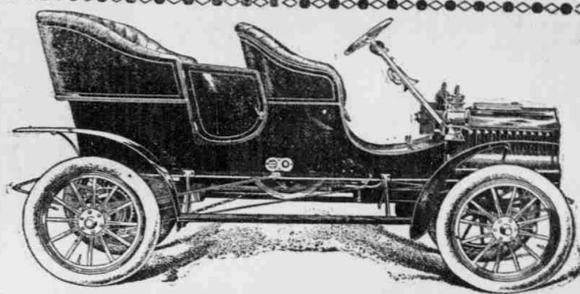
There has been much praise of the music at St. Peter's, but few people who have heard the service in the

service begins and the manuscript is placed in their hands. That they are able to read their parts at sight from torn, crumpled manuscripts, roughly scrawled in ancient characters, is a further compliment to the musical talent of the Italians.

When Christianity began to overcome paganism, the people invented all kinds of legends applying to the new doctrine as a substitute for the folk-



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