

THE PRESENT POPE IS VERY DEMOCRATIC

He Has Broken up Much of the Time-Honored Ceremonial of the Vatican

(From the New York Sun.)
An eminent Roman ecclesiastic who passed through New York yesterday on a tour of this country told interesting stories about Pope Pius X. while waiting for a train to take him westward. The stories came out in reply to the question, "What are the striking characteristics of the present Pontiff?"

"Well, said the eminent divine, setting himself more comfortably, the expression of pleasure on his face evincing his delight at being able to tell about the new Pope, "First and foremost, he is democratic, and what you people here term a 'hustler'."

"His manners are amazingly democratic. To an American they would appeal very strongly, for he impresses you as if he had lived in and absorbed much of the American principle of democracy. His rise from a poor bare-footed peasant boy, with his piece of Indian meal bread in his pocket for his luncheon at school, to the highest office in the Roman church, has not in the least changed his native simplicity of manner. He is essentially a man of the people, and his popularity throughout Italy is universal."

"Everybody speaks well of the Pope. He is beloved by all, which is remarkable, in view of the many breaches of etiquette of which he has been accused since he came to the Vatican. His liberal views on such matters, however, are gradually convincing those who would wish to rule the Vatican according to the strictest form of etiquette, and today it is a real pleasure to find that when you visit the

Pontiff you are made at once to feel at home.

"While he was Archbishop of Mantua and afterwards Patriarch of Venice the Pope always went about in the simplest manner. In Venice he always rode in the gondolas and public conveyances, and could frequently be seen in the public parks, strolling among the people, chatting with them on the current topics of the day. He was friendly with the municipal authorities, and could always get what he wanted from them. For this reason he became highly successful in organizing and building up his parishes."

"His home was presided over by his three spinster sisters, who did all the cooking. At meals they sat down with the Patriarch and chatted with him during the meal. When he was elected Pope the Vatican courtiers began to feel uneasy as to what he would do."

"Then he shocked them all by having his private secretary, Mgr. Bressan, whom he brought with him from Venice, dine with him at the same table. Such a thing had never happened in the history of the Popes. It was terrible."

"We must speak to him," said the courtiers. "He does not know."

"The next day, before he had been spoken to, he ordered dinner for three and when it was served a second private secretary was asked to dine with him. This was going beyond all bounds. The courtiers spoke to the Pope. While the conversation was being delicately handled he answered the diplomats by ordering dinner for five."

"That ended the determination to

insist on the etiquette by which the Pope dined alone at one table and had no one else in the room. But the fear arose that as he had always had his three sisters dine with him this would be the Pope's next move.

"He startled the courtiers one morning by resting apartments in a new building adjoining the Vatican and installing therein the three sisters. Immediately all the other apartments in the building were rented to aspiring ecclesiastics, who now pay the greatest court to the three simple modest sisters. They are typical Italian peasant women and are wholly innocent of the possible designs of those about them, who think that by paying homage and court to them they in turn will obtain favors from their brother, whom they call to this day in their simple way 'Peppe,' the familiar diminutive for Giuseppe, the Popes' baptismal name.

"Thus far his holiness has not had his sisters dine with him, and it is not likely that he will. The only two instances of women having eaten in the pope's apartments since the foundation of the Roman Catholic church were those of Queen Christine of Sweden, who sat at a separate table and lower down than the pope at a Jigat luncheon served to her, and of the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, who after communion at the hands of Leo XIII was served with some refreshments in the pope's apartments. The pope then did not eat anything himself, so you can see that the rule is so firmly established that it will be scarcely broken by the present pontiff."

"He is fast doing away with many forms of etiquette which have endured for centuries. For instance, a visitor had always to genuflect three times upon coming into the presence of the Pope; first, upon crossing the threshold, then when half way, then at the Pope's side. You then kissed the cross upon his right slipper, and remained kneeling all the time you were in his presence."

"This Pope will have none of it. He invariably comes to greet you and will then go and get a chair for you and chat in good old fashion, making you feel at home immediately. It naturally shocked all within the Vatican, but they are getting used to it now."

"An amusing incident occurred when a diplomat called recently, expecting, of course, all the old forms. He was surprised at first by the change, but soon recovered himself, had his interview and was departing."

"In the old form you always bowed yourself out of the Pope's presence, but as Pius X. went to the door arm in arm with the diplomat, talking the while, he did not have the chance to bow. At the threshold he turned to genuflect, and to his surprise found the Pope rearranging the chairs about the room in the most matter of fact way. The Pope smiled, and the diplomat retired amazed."

"The ladies will ever be indebted to him for banishing the form of having them bow themselves out of his presence. With their long trains, this was ever a source of worry and not a little embarrassment to them. They don't have to do it with Pius X. He invariably shows women out in a most chivalrous manner."

"He has also done away with the custom of never seeing any of the civil authorities of Rome or members of the Italian government. He sees everybody who comes to see him. He has received the deputies, and senators of both houses, and all the members of the king's court, as well as Queen Margharita's court, and such people as the wives of the late Premier Rudini and Vicomte Venosta. He was very intimate with the nobility when at Venice, and was a warm personal friend of the present king. He will do much toward paving the way to a reconciliation between the Papacy and the government as time goes on."

"Another custom he has abolished is the kissing of his ring when receiving communion from his hands. It is hoped that his departure from this custom, which has been followed for centuries, will be imitated by prelates throughout the world. The Pope knows it to be a source of distraction to the communicant, and will not permit it."

"He also prefers to walk into St. Peter's or the Sistine chapel instead of being carried on the sedia gestatoria with six palafreniers and the imposing and picturesque flabella (white ostrich fans which are used to fan the pope and keep insects from disturbing his composure.)"

"This is the only custom which does not meet with the approval of the sightseers at Rome. He cannot be seen so readily as he could upon the high chair, which was carried on a dais, and tilted forward just enough to show his entire figure. Now when he comes into the sanctuary of St. Peter's he is surrounded by Cardinals and not visible to the vast audiences which gather to see him. However, as he prefers to walk about the buildings, it is not likely that he will sub-

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"Let me say right emphatically that the Pope detests all personal pomp and ceremony and will avoid it whenever possible. A good story is told of his ordering a carriage to take him for a drive through the Vatican grounds. It was soon after his election and the day was very hot. He asked the major domo for an open carriage."

"When the Pope came down stairs he was surprised to see the old closed, stuffy carriage. His face showed signs of mental irritation, but he said nothing. The next day he again ordered an open carriage. Upon coming down stairs he found the same old vehicle. He looked at the major domo."

"I told you to bring me an open carriage. Why have you sent me this old closed one?" he said.

"The major domo confusedly answered that the Popes never rode in an open carriage; it was not the etiquette of the Vatican."

"Well," said this Pope, "I am going to have what I want, etiquette or no etiquette. I don't care what the custom has been. I want an open carriage. Go and get it for me."

"The open carriage was brought. "I could go on telling such stories of the Pope. They would be of vast interest to you democratic Americans, but my time is up and I must be going."

And the eminent divine departed to catch his train.

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