

THE BRITISH MISSION TO THE VATICAN

On November 24, 1914, it was announced that Sir Henry Howard, formerly British plenipotentiary to the Netherlands and delegate of his government to the Second Hague Peace Conference, was appointed special envoy to Pope Benedict XV. His instructions state that the appointment is made for a twofold purpose; namely, to congratulate the Pope upon his election, and at the same time to lay before him "the motives which compelled His Majesty's Government, after exhausting every effort in their power to preserve the peace of Europe, to intervene in the present war," and to inform him "of their attitude towards the various questions that arise therefrom." After pointing out that Great Britain had done all in its power, both by means of its representatives to neutral countries and by the circulation of diplomatic documents, to enable the neutral governments to understand the case of Great Britain and of its allies by removing conceptions of misunderstandings, to reach "the unbiased judgment of public opinion in these countries," it is next pointed out that it was impossible to lay before the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church statements of the British attitude and motives which led Great Britain to take part in the present war, "owing to the want of a representative of His Majesty at the Vatican." Sir Edward Grey then instructs Sir Henry Howard, on behalf of the British Government, as follows:

You will, therefore, in presenting your letters of credence to His Holiness and offering him the cordial congratulations of His Majesty the King on the occasion of his election, intimate to him that his Majesty's Government are anxious to put themselves into direct communication with him for the purpose of demonstrating the motives which have governed their attitude since the first moment that the normal relations between the great Powers of Europe began to be disturbed, and of establishing that His Majesty's Government used every effort to maintain the peace of Europe which His Holiness's venerated predecessor had so much at heart.

From this brief summary of the instructions, it appears that Great Britain has had three purposes in mind in appointing a special envoy to Pope Benedict XV: (1) to congratulate him upon his election to the papacy; (2) to explain the motives of Great Britain in taking part in the war; and (3) to supply His Holiness with exact information of events as they have occurred and which may occur during the period of Sir Henry Howard's mission.

This is a very important action on the part of the British Government

and merits more than a word in passing. It has been usual for the sovereigns of Catholic countries to maintain a representative at the Vatican. Some Protestant countries with a large Catholic population have found it convenient so to do. Great Britain, however, has held aloof from entering into official relations of this kind with the Vatican, and the announcement of the appointment of a special envoy was received with displeasure and in some cases with protest by Protestant organizations in England. It is a fact that within the last few years there has been apparently a growing friendliness between the British Government, on the one hand, and the Vatican, on the other. A brief and summary statement of these relations is contained in the sketch of Leo XIII in the last edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Thus:

In Ireland he [Leo XIII] condemned the "Plan of Campaign" in 1888, but he conciliated the Nationalists by appointing Dr. Walsh archbishop of Dublin. His hope that his support of the British Government in Ireland would be followed by the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the court of St. James and the Vatican was disappointed. But the jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887 and the Pope's priestly jubilee a few months later were the occasion of friendly intercourse between Rome and Windsor, Mgr. Ruffo Scilla coming to London as special papal envoy, and the Duke of Norfolk being received at the Vatican as the bearer of the congratulations of the queen of England. Similar courtesies were exchanged during the jubilee of 1897, and again in March 1902, when Edward VII sent the Earl of Denbigh to Rome to congratulate Leo XIII on reaching his ninety-third year and the twenty-fifth year of his pontificate. The visit of Edward VII to Leo XIII in April, 1903, was a further proof of the friendliness between the English court and the Vatican.

It thus appears that the idea of establishing official relations between Great Britain and the Vatican is of comparatively long standing, and that little by little the interested parties have been coming together. Sir Edward Grey has evidently taken advantage, in congratulating the present Pope upon his election, of the opportunity of establishing the official relations which Leo had at heart. It may well be that a special envoy would not have been accredited to the Vatican for other than purely ceremonial reasons unless the present unfortunate war had broken out. This is, however, a matter of conjecture. The important fact is that Great Britain is apparently to be represented at the Vatican by a special envoy, thus reversing the policy which has obtained since the reign of Queen Elizabeth, except during the short reign of James II. The appointment of an envoy does not involve the recognition of the Papacy as a state. It does, however, recognize the importance of *friendly and confidential relations with the Pope as the head of the*

