

' IL VENTI SETTEMBRE '

THE sixtieth anniversary of the breach of Porta Pia through which the Italian army, under Victor Emmanuel, King of Piedmont, entered Rome on September 20th, 1870, sees at long last some fulfilment of the prayer with which the noble President of Ecuador, Gabriel Garcia Moreno, terminated the official protest of his government and himself at this final outrage to the Holy See. The whole Catholic world had seen with consternation and amazement the invasion of the last strip of Papal territory by the King of Piedmont and Sardinia in spite of his protestations of loyalty to the Sovereign Pontiff, in spite of his formal assurance to the French Emperor who, involved in the conflict with Prussia, had been obliged a month previously to withdraw his garrison from Rome. But even then Christendom was hardly prepared for the climax; the seizure of the Capital itself, and the virtual incarceration in the Vatican of the saintly and beloved Pontiff, Pius IX. The Chancelleries of Europe, indeed of the entire world, had nevertheless remained dumb in face of this flagrant injustice, contenting themselves with filing in their archives the formal remonstrances of the Holy See. Earlier in 1848 the voice of Pius IX in exile at Gaeta had evoked the assistance of Austria, of France, of Spain, but now Isabella Segunda was dethroned and in exile, Napoleon about to surrender to Prussia, Austria still quivering under the recent defeat of its armies and no other Power able, or at any rate willing, to defy the ' Brigand of Savoy.'

America was far distant in those days and the Republic of Ecuador little known, though since 1861 it had enjoyed an era of peace and prosperity under the able administration of Garcia Moreno, then in the second year of his second Presidential term of office.

But Ecuador raised itself then to the highest rank of nations by voicing publicly and alone the outraged conscience of the faithful. It was on the 18th of January, 1871, that the Government of Quito published its official and formal protest addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the 'King of Piedmont,' for President Moreno, on receipt of the news of the invasion, had at once broken off diplomatic relations, and refused to recognise the new Kingdom of Italy. Beginning, 'In consequence of the unexpected and deplorable events which have occurred in the capital of the Catholic world on the 20th of September last,' the document went on to recite the facts and then continuing, 'as up to the present the voice of no one of the powers of the old world has been heard in protest and as Rome continues to be occupied by the troops of King Victor Emmanuel, the Government of Ecuador, feeble though it be relatively, and at an enormous distance from the theatre of events, feels itself bound to protest and does herein protest before God and the whole Universe in the name of outraged justice and especially in the name of the Catholic people of Ecuador against the iniquitous invasion of Rome; against the restrictions imposed on the liberty of the venerable Sovereign Pontiff; and finally against anything which has arisen, or in the future may arise, to the prejudice of His Holiness, the Holy See, and the Catholic Church, through this ignoble use of force.' The eloquent and dignified document ended with prayers to Heaven that King Victor Emmanuel 'may be led to a noble reparation of the deplorable effects of his temporary blindness.' To-day the intercession of this brave and fervent Christian ruler—soon, we hope, to be raised to the altars of the Church—seems indeed not to have been entirely in vain.

The illustrious President in forwarding to the various Governments the formal protest of Ecuador ear-

Blackfriars

nestly invited their co-operation and concurrence in an endeavour to obtain the withdrawal of the 'sacrilegious and a thousand times infamous, occupation of Rome.' His appeal met with no response where it did not even meet with derision, but nothing daunted Garcia Moreno declared publicly that 'the voice of even a feeble child must be raised in clamour when it becomes necessary to seek redress for his father.'

Nor did he cease from his efforts. On the opening of Congress in 1873 he solicited from the Chambers in his presidential speech a supplementary vote of ten thousand dollars as 'a national tribute to the august Prisoner of the Vatican.' It was enthusiastically granted, and the Deputies in their address to the Papal delegate begged his acceptance of this 'feeble offering from our little Republic to the heroic Pontiff, Pius IX.' The President's replies to the marks of approbation which the generous Pope did not fail to bestow on this loved son are instinct with filial devotion and a marvellous humility. After he was hacked to death in the public square of Quito on August 6th, 1875—the hired assassins of the Lodges had decoyed him from his adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the Cathedral of Santo Domingo under pretext of urgent public business—a medal of the Pope which he wore around his neck was found saturated with his blood. Few rulers, none in modern times, have left behind them a more brilliant record of true patriotism, capable administration and unfaltering courage in difficulties, combined with a truly steadfast devotion to the Church and its Head.

FRANCIS MONTGOMERY.