

# Pope Saint Pius X

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## Child and Student

**I**n the little village of Riese in the Venetian plains was born on the 2nd of June, 1885, a child who was destined to leave his mark on the world's history.

Giuseppe<sup>1</sup> Melchior Sarto was the eldest of the eight surviving children of Giovanni Battista Sarto, the municipal messenger and postman of Riese, and his wife Margherita. They were poor people, and it was difficult sometimes to make both ends meet. The daily fare was hard and scanty, and the future pope was clothed, as an Italian biographer puts it, "as God willed." But both Giovanni Battista and his wife came of a hard-working, God-fearing stock, who could endure manfully and suffer patiently, and who taught their children to do the same.

Little Bepi was remarkable both for his intelligence and for his restless activity. The village schoolmaster, who at once singled him out as a pupil worth cultivating, was, we are told, not infrequently obliged to use means more persuasive than agreeable to calm his vivacity. Indeed, the seraphic element in Bepi seems to have been considerably leavened by that of the human boy. "That little rascal!" exclaimed an old inhabitant of Riese when he heard of Cardinal Sarto's elevation to the papacy, "Many a cherry of mine has found its way down his throat!"

It was not long before Bepi had mastered the rudiments of reading and writing, which were all that the village school could offer. He became an efficient server at Mass, and such was his influence over his companions that at the age of ten he was appointed leader of the somewhat unruly band of acolytes who served in the village church. The young master of ceremonies proved himself perfectly equal to the occasion. There was such a serene good temper and such a merry wit behind the somewhat drastic methods of Bepi that his authority was irresistible and unquestioned.

To most boys who serve daily at the altar the thought of the priestly life will sooner or later suggest itself; to some it comes as an overwhelming call. Giuseppe's vocation seems to have grown up with him, to have been, from his earliest years, the very centre of his life. About half a mile beyond Riese stands a chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, containing a statue known as the *Madonna delle Cendrole*.<sup>2</sup> Here young Bepi loved to come and pray, pouring out his joys and sorrows at the feet of the Mother of Christ, and perhaps she was the first confidant of his desire to consecrate his life to God. Certainly this sanctuary was especially dear to him in after-life, as one round which clung the happiest memories of his childhood.

At twelve years old the boy made his first communion. Did he think the time was long in coming, and was it the memory of the desire of his

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1. Joseph, Beppo, Beppino, Bepi and Beppe are all diminutives of this same name.

own childish heart that moved him in after years to shorten the time of waiting for the children of the Catholic world?

Anything that tended to the knowledge of God seemed to have an irresistible fascination for Bepi. Never was he known to miss the classes where the parish priest, Don Tito Fusarini, and his curate, Don Luigi Orazio, taught Christian doctrine to the children of the parish. So quick was his intelligence and so remarkable his aptitude that Don Luigi, who at the time was teaching Latin to his own younger brother, took Bepi also as pupil. The boy's progress soon convinced his tutor that he had the makings of a scholar, and the two priests determined to prepare him for the grammar school at Castelfranco.

Distant about four miles from Riese, Castelfranco, with its medieval and romantic atmosphere, its ancient fortress and picturesquely crowded market place, is not the least attractive of the old Venetian cities. Here, in 1447, was born Giorgione, and here, in the beautiful old cathedral, is to be seen one of his most famous Madonnas. On either side of the Virgin Mother, seated on a throne with the Divine Child in her arms, stand St. Francis of Assisi, and St. Liberialis, the patron saint of Treviso, a young knight in armour. Many a time must the boy Giuseppe have slipped into the quiet cathedral to pray before the Madonna. Did he ask for the strength of the warrior and the humility of the friar, to be loving like the Christ and pure like His Mother? Those who knew him in after-life could bear witness that these gifts were his.

Day after day, in all weathers, the boy tramped the four miles into Castelfranco, his shoes slung over his shoulder, and a piece of bread or a lump of polenta in his pocket. In the fourth and last year of

Giuseppe's school life he was joined by his brother Angelo, and as the financial affairs of their father had slightly improved, the two brothers were promoted to a rather ramshackle donkey-cart.

The day's work was far from over when the lads came home from school. There was plenty to be done in the house and outside it. Both the cow and the donkey must be attended to; there was work in the garden and work in the fields. It was Bepi's delight to help his mother in the care of the house, and to look after his baby brothers and sisters, that she might have a little sorely needed rest. His merry nature and thoughtful unselfishness made him a general favourite, while the younger members of the family looked up to him almost as much as to their parents.

From the beginning of his first year at Castelfranco Giuseppe Sarto had shown himself a hard-working and brilliant pupil, qualities which do not always go together. At the end of his fourth year, in the examinations held at the diocesan seminary of Treviso, he came out first in every subject. The two priests of Riese were justly proud of their scholar, and dreamed of great things in the future. Education, however, costs money; and the Sarto family were not only poor, but had eight children to provide for. That Bepi had a vocation to the priesthood was evident to everyone who had had to do with him. The next step was obviously the seminary; but who was to pay the expenses? The stipend of an Italian parish priest leaves no margin for such undertakings. Don Tito Fusarini therefore went to Canon Casagrande, prefect of studies at the seminary, who had examined the boys of Castelfranco; he would surely interest himself in the brilliant youngster who had passed with honour in every subject.

Now it happened that the patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Jacopo Mon-



ico, was himself the son of a peasant, and a child of that very village of Riese. Distinguished no less for his love of letters than for his zeal for religion, it belonged to him to name the few students who were entitled to a free scholarship at the seminary of Padua.<sup>3</sup> That his heart would be touched at the thought of his young fellow townsman, like himself a child of the people, and unable to continue his priestly education for lack of means, was a likely surmise. Don Tito applied to Canon Casagrande, begging him to plead Giuseppe's cause with the patriarch, a request which met with a prompt and hearty assent.

At Riese all was suspense and hope. The postman was a man of firm faith, whose trust in God had never failed him; Margherita prayed unceasingly. As to Bepi his whole future lay in the balance; the dearest hopes of his heart depended on the patriarch's answer. At last the letter arrived. Canon Casagrande announced to Don Fusarini that Giuseppe Sarto had been proposed and accepted as a student at the seminary of Padua, and that the patriarch had himself written to the bishop of the diocese recommending young Sarto to his care.

Giuseppe's joy was not unmixed with sorrow at the thought of leaving for the first time the humble village home with all its dear associations. In the dusk of an early November morning the fifteen-year-old boy packed his few belongings into the country cart, in those days the only means of conveyance for the poor, and, bravely choking back the tears that could hardly be repressed, bade farewell to his family.

If the medieval charm of Castelfranco had influenced the young student so profoundly, there was enough and to spare in the city of Padua to satisfy his love of beauty. Famous throughout the world is

the basilica of Il Santo, built in the thirteenth century, and dedicated in honour of the great St. Antony. Sculptures by Donatello, bas-reliefs by Lombardi and pictures by Mantegna, Veronese and Giotto adorn its walls. The cathedral, partly destroyed in the twelfth century, was rebuilt by Michelangelo. The university, founded in the thirteenth century, and counting among its students such men as Vittorino da Feltre, the great educator, and Giovanni da Ravenna, the friend of Petrarch, was famous throughout the Middle Ages for its schools of medicine and of law.

The seminary, founded in 1577 and greatly enlarged a century later, boasts a handsome church and a noble library rich in precious manuscripts. It was probably the first library that Bepi had seen, certainly the first of which he had had the freedom, and one can imagine the delight of the young student as he wandered through its lofty halls, and realized that its treasures were henceforward part of the endowment of the new life that was now his.

The intelligence and cheery good-humour of Giuseppe, joined to the charm of manner that seems to have been his from childhood, soon made him a general favourite both with boys and masters. "His mind is quick," wrote one of the latter to Don Pietro Jacuzzi, who had succeeded Don Orazio as curate of Riese and was a firm friend of Bepi's,

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3. The Seminary of Padua, founded in the late sixteenth century and enlarged thereafter, counted among its chief treasures a library of ancient theological and patristic texts. Young Sarto, entering its cloisters from a world of toil and silence, found there his first true encounter with the tradition of the Church in its written form. The breadth of Latin scholarship available to him—particularly from the Fathers—formed both the style and substance of his later magisterial teaching.

"his will strong and mature, his industry remarkable." The somewhat strict discipline of the seminary presented no difficulties to a boy who had all his life been accustomed to self-denial; a willing and intelligent submission to authority was indeed characteristic of Giuseppe Sarto throughout his life. "In order to command," he was to say hereafter as pope, "it is necessary to have learned to obey."

At the end of his first year at Padua, Giuseppe was first in all his classes. The home-coming to Riese was an unclouded joy, both to the young seminarist and to his family. The holidays were spent in the company of the friends of his childhood in the country that he loved. To Don Jacuzzi and Don Fusarini he was as a beloved son, and much of his time was spent either at the presbytery or in long rambles with the good curate. Neither could studies be altogether neglected, although it was holiday time; and the autumn days passed quickly enough.

Back again at Padua, Giuseppe set to work vigorously, without a presentiment of the sorrow that was so soon to overcloud his happiness. In the month of May his father died after a few days' illness, leaving his wife and large family in very straitened circumstances. The thought of the struggle which his mother was waging against poverty lay like a weight upon Giuseppe's heart. He was the eldest of the family and would have come to her assistance, but not for worlds would the good Margherita have allowed her son to give up his priestly career. She was full of courage, and the other boys were growing up; they would soon be able to help to support the family. A second grief followed upon the first. Don Tito Fusarini, who had been like a second father to Bepi, and whose failing health had caused him for some time past to rely more and more upon the devotedness of his curate, was at last obliged to give up his work at Riese.

Don Pietro Jacuzzi, who succeeded him as rector, had been, from the day of his arrival in the village, Giuseppe's firm friend and chief adviser in all his boyish difficulties. The lad looked up to him as the model of everything that a priest should be, and corresponded with him continually from Padua. To him he owed the love and the knowledge of music that was to prove so valuable in after years, for had he not assisted at the transformation that had taken place in the village choir under the able tuition of Don Pietro? He had been witness, too, of the rector's unselfish and untiring devotion to his priestly duties which had won him the love and reverence of his parishioners; but within a year Giuseppe was to lose this second friend also. Don Pietro was transferred to Vascon, to the grief of the people of Riese.

When Giuseppe came home for the autumn holidays in 1853 the fullness of his loss became clear to him; Riese was hardly Riese without Don Tito and Don Pietro. The new parish priest, whose somewhat morose character formed a striking contrast to the genial kindliness of his two predecessors, was not popular. He did not like sick calls in the night, and told his parishioners so plainly from the pulpit. But sickness and death have a knack of not considering the convenience of the parish priest, or indeed of anybody else; and of this the inhabitants of Riese were fully aware.

By his very position as a church student Giuseppe was bound to be on friendly terms with the presbytery. On the other hand, mixing as he did with the people of the place, he could not avoid hearing some severe criticisms of their pastor. While forced to admit to himself that the methods of the new arrival were a little singular, the boy's loyal and upright nature forbade him to discuss matters with his friends.

In this difficult and awkward position the lad of seventeen showed a tact and discernment which would have been admirable in a man of experience, "These holidays have been perfectly miserable," he wrote to Don Jacuzzi, who had learnt from other correspondents how things were going on; "I shut myself up in the house as much as I can and try when visiting the members of my family to keep off dangerous subjects."

"No greater grief than to remember days, Of joy when sorrow is at hand," he quotes, for he knew his Dante well. "Even the singing has gone down. I long for my little room at the seminary and the quiet life of study."

In 1856 Giuseppe distinguished himself more than ever, He had now only two years more to spend at the seminary. His brilliant successes as a student left him modest and humble as before, whilst his cheery kindliness and sympathy made him a powerful influence for good amongst his young companions. Such was the trust reposed in him by his superiors that he had for long been prefect of discipline in the general study room. "My masters call me '*Giubilato*'," he wrote to Don Pietro. "I wish I could do more to show my gratitude for their kindness." Nevertheless he greatly appreciated the private room allotted to him during his last two years at Padua. "Here I read and work," he wrote to the same dear friend, "and prepare myself for the life of solitude and study that will be mine as a priest." His favourite studies were the Bible and the Fathers of the Church. The pastoral letters and papal encyclicals of later years bear witness to the fact that this predilection lasted throughout his life.

His knowledge and love of music had obtained for him the direction of the seminary choir. "I have worked so hard at the music for the feast

of St. Aloysius," he wrote in the June of 1857, "that I am fairly dried up."

On the 27th of February of the same year he was ordained subdeacon in the cathedral of Treviso, and on the feast of the Sacred Heart went to Riese to preach. "Last Sunday I went to Riese to give a little discourse on the Sacred Heart," he writes to Don Pietro. He does not mention that the little discourse was so striking and so eloquent that the enthusiasm of the congregation knew no bounds.

At the end of August, 1858, Giuseppe Sarto's seminary life was over. As he was only twenty-three, and the canonical age for ordination is twenty-four, the Bishop of Treviso wrote to Rome to obtain a dispensation. The young cleric had finished his last year as he had finished his first, with honours in every subject. The record of his triumphal progress is still to be seen in the books of the seminary of Padua, the professors united in praising the qualities of his character no less than those of his intellect. In September the dispensation arrived, and with it the day so long desired, when Giuseppe Sarto was to be for ever consecrated to the service of God. The Bishop of Treviso was then at Castelfranco, and it was here that the ordination was to take place.

An autumn mist lay like a veil over the familiar landscape as the young man drove along the road which led from Riese to Castelfranco. The horse trotted swiftly, yet the way had never seemed so long. How often had he tramped it in the old days through dust and mud and snow, barefoot to save the shoes that were such a heavy item of expense in the Sarto family. And it was the thought of the day which at last had dawned, a day that seemed then so far away and so impossible, which had been the inspiration and the strength of that life of hardships,

making everything easy to bear. The supreme happiness that now possessed him blotted out all the past. The first glimpse of the ivied walls of Castelfranco made his heart beat almost to suffocation. "Today I shall be a priest," was the one thought that possessed him; and when, a little later, he knelt at the altar of the cathedral where he had so often prayed as a child, to receive the sacred laying-on of hands, it seemed to him as if earth had nothing more to give.

On the following day the newly-made priest sang his first Mass in the parish church of Riese. Who shall describe the joy of his mother as that beloved voice, clear and resonant as it remained even to old age, yet tremulous with the joy and fear of the moment, pronounced the words of the great Mystery? The Mass ended, the congregation flocked to kiss the hands of the young priest whom they had known and loved from childhood – hands that had touched today for the first time the Body of the Lord. To say that it was a feast day in Riese but feebly expresses the general jubilation.

A few days later Don Giuseppe received a letter announcing his destination. The Bishop of Treviso had appointed him curate to Don Antonio Costantini, the parish priest of Tombolo.

## Curate and Parish Priest

**T**he village of Tombolo, in the province of Padua and the diocese of Treviso, is surrounded by hilly and well-wooded country, watered by the tributary streams of the Brenta. The parish church, St. Andrew's, stands in the centre of the little township. Tombolo boasts of no commercial industries; it is a pastoral country, and the greater part of the population is occupied in dairy farming and the rearing of cattle. The people have clearly marked characteristics; strong and robust in build, hardened to sun, rain, and wind, rough-voiced and somewhat ungente in manner, they have, nevertheless, good hearts and are in their own way religious.

But the Tombolani have one vice – or had when Don Giuseppe became; their curate. They swore systematically and profusely at everything, at each other, and at the world at large. "No offence is intended to Almighty God," they explained ingenuously to the horrified young priest. "He certainly understands. Just go to market, and try to sell your beasts and your grain with a 'please' and a 'thank you,' and you will see what you will get!"

There may have been some truth in this; and intention, no doubt, goes a long way; but the argument did not satisfy Don Giuseppe. For the moment he dropped the subject, but he had not done with it.



The rector of the parish, Don Antonio Costantini, was habitually ailing. Devoted to his people and wholly desirous to do them good, his ill-health was a constant impediment. He had many tastes in common with his curate, notably the love of music and of biblical and patristic studies. He soon learnt to look upon Don Giuseppe as a son, and highly appreciated his good qualities.

"They have sent me a young man as curate," he wrote to a friend, "with orders to form him to the duties of a parish priest. I assure you it is likely to be the other way about. He is so zealous, so full of common sense and other precious gifts that I could find much to learn from him. Some day he will wear the mitre – of that I am certain – and afterwards? Who knows?"

The good rector nevertheless did his best to fulfil his commission. "Don Bepi," he would say to his young curate, "I did not quite like this or that in your last sermon." When the church was empty he would make Don Bepi go into the pulpit and preach, criticizing and commenting the while both on matter and method; comments well worth having, for Don Antonio was a man of wide learning and an excellent theologian. Meanwhile Don Bepi, whose sermons were already becoming famous throughout the countryside for their zeal and eloquence, would listen humbly and promise to try to do better.

The income of the young curate was next to nothing, for Tombolo was a very poor parish; but he had not been used to luxury. He had planned his priestly life before his ordination, and was busy carrying out the scheme. To study deeply in order to fit himself more fully for preach-

ing; to do as much good as was possible in the confessional and in the pulpit; to help his people both materially and morally, to visit the sick, to succour the poor and to instruct the ignorant – such was the programme, and with all the vigour of his soul he threw himself into the work.

The widowed niece of Don Antonio who kept house for her uncle used to see a light burning in the window of Don Giuseppe's poor lodging the last thing at night and the first thing in the morning.

"Do you never go to bed, Don Bepi?" she asked at breakfast one day, for the curate took his meals at the rectory.

Don Bepi laughed. "I study a good deal," he replied. He confessed later that he slept for four hours, and found it quite sufficient for his needs.

"He was as thin as a rake," said the good lady when pressed in after-life for reminiscences, "for he scarcely ate enough to keep body and soul together, and was never off his feet."

In the morning he would often ring the church bell for Mass, in order not to disturb the sacristan. Then he would go to fetch Don Antonio, having prepared for him all that was needed. Sometimes he would find his chief unwell and unable to rise.

"What is the matter?" he would ask in his cheery way "another bad night?"

"I am afraid I cannot get up," would be the plaintive answer.

"Don't try to; stay quiet, and do not worry yourself I will see to everything," the cheery voice would continue.

"But you have already one sermon to preach today, my Bepi."

"What of that? I will preach two."

During the days of sickness Don Giuseppe, as well as doing double duty, would himself nurse the poor invalid. How he managed it was known to himself alone.

He had not forgotten – there was no chance of forgetting – the deplorable language of his parishioners. The curate mixed with them as much as he could, making friends especially with the young men and the boys. He interested himself in their work and in their play, treating them with such a spirit of friendly comradeship that they would crowd to talk to him whenever he appeared. One day some of them lamented that they could neither read nor write.

"Let us start a night school," proposed Don Bepi, "and I will teach you."

"It would be too difficult," objected another; "some of us know a little, some less, and others nothing at all."

"What of that?" replied the priest. "We will have two classes – those who know something, and those who know nothing. We will get the schoolmaster to take the upper class, and I will teach the alphabet."

"Why shouldn't he teach the alphabet?" protested a loyal admirer of

Don Giuseppe.

Bepi laughed. "The alphabet is hard work," he answered, "I had rather keep it."

"But we can't take up your time like that for nothing," declared another. "What can we do for you in return?"

"Stop swearing," answered Bepi promptly, "and I shall then be more than repaid."

The school of singing made rapid progress in his hands. Don Antonio, who, like his curate, was an ardent lover of Gregorian music, warmly seconded all his efforts. The somewhat unmelodious, if extremely powerful, vocalization of the village choir became quiet and prayerful under his tuition. If one of the acolytes showed signs of a vocation to the priesthood, Don Giuseppe would teach him privately until he knew enough to go up for examination at the diocesan seminary.

On one point Don Antonio and his curate could never agree. Everything that could be saved out of Don Giuseppe's tiny income went straight to the poor. They knew it, and when he went to preach in a neighbouring village would lie in wait for him as he returned with his modest fee in his pocket. It sometimes happened that when he reached home not a penny would be left, and Don Antonio would remonstrate.

"It is not fair to your mother, Bepi," he would say; "you should think of her."

"God will provide for my mother," was the answer; "these poor souls were in greater need than she."

Invitations to preach in other parishes became more frequent. What he said was always simple, but it was full of teaching and went straight to the heart. The young priest had, moreover, a natural eloquence and a sonorous and beautiful voice. It was so evident that he spoke from the fullness of a soul on fire with the love of God that his enthusiasm was catching, and his sermons bore fruit. It happened on one occasion that a priest who had been invited to preach on a feast-day in the neighbouring village of Galliera was prevented at the last moment from coming. There was consternation at the presbytery. What was to be done?

"Leave it to me," said Don Carlo Carminati, curate of Galliera and a friend of Don Giuseppe; "I promise you it will be all right," and jumping into the presbytery pony-cart he took the road to Tombolo.

It was a Sunday afternoon and the hour of the children's catechism class. Don Giuseppe was at the church door, about to enter.

"Stop, stop," cried Don Carlo, "I want to speak to you." Don Giuseppe turned.

"You must come and preach at Galliera," said Don Carlo; "our preacher has fallen through."

"What are you thinking of?" exclaimed Don Giuseppe. "I cannot improvise in the pulpit!" and he turned once more to go into the church.

"You have got to come, your rector says so, and there is not a minute to lose," replied his friend; and, laying hold of the still expostulating Don Giuseppe, he packed him into the pony-cart, bowed to Don Antonio who stood smiling at the scene, and whipped up his steed. Arrived at Galliera, Don Carlo conducted his victim to an empty room, provided him with pencil and paper and left him. An hour later, having been set at liberty by his triumphant fellow-curate, Don Giuseppe vested and entered the church. The sermon that followed was so eloquent and so appropriate to the occasion that what had threatened to be a calamity became a cause for rejoicing. "Did not I tell you?" exclaimed Don Carlo.

Don Giuseppe's energy was boundless, and to him no labour was amiss. "Work," he used to say, "is man's chief duty on earth." When the presbytery cook fell ill, he both nursed him and took his place; for in his eyes any kind of work was a thing to draw men nearer to the Christ who was "poor and in labours from His youth."

Whether it was preaching, teaching, playing with the village children, visiting the sick, helping the dying, hearing confessions, catechizing the young or studying theology, it was all the same to him – work for the Master, and as such ennobling and honourable.

So the time passed, until Don Giuseppe had been eight years at Tombolo. Much as Don Antonio loved and appreciated his curate, or rather because of this very love and appreciation, it distressed him to think that his talents should have no wider sphere than a little country parish. He spoke of this one day to one of the canons of Treviso. The two curates of Galliera who were present joined enthusiastically in the praise of their friend. The canon became thoughtful.

"Do you think he could preach in the cathedral of Padua for the feast of St. Antony?" he asked after a moment of reflection.

"Most certainly, Monsignor," was the answer.

"Well," continued the canon, "if you will be responsible for his accepting, I will see to it that he is asked."

The feast-day sermon was naturally a topic of much interest in Padua. "Who is to preach?" was the question on everybody's lips on the morning of the great day.

"Don Giuseppe Sarto, a young priest who is curate of Tombolo," was the reply.

Now it was customary on the feast of St. Antony to ask a preacher of some distinction to occupy the cathedral pulpit.

"The curate of Tombolo!" was the apprehensive comment. "Oh dear! A country curate from an out-of-the-way village!" The cathedral was crowded for the high Mass. When the slight young figure of Don Giuseppe mounted the pulpit stairs there was a gasp of astonishment, which gave place to an expectant silence.

"His intelligence and culture were no less remarkable than his eloquence," wrote one of the congregation to a friend. "His imagery was beautiful, his style perfect." The sermon lasted over an hour, and no one thought it too long.

In the May of 1867 Don Giuseppe was appointed rector of Salzano. A wail of lamentation arose from the little parish where he had worked so faithfully for nearly ten years. "He was our father, our brother, our friend, and our comfort," cried the Tombolani. In the heart of Don Antonio grief for his loss contended with joy at the thought that the merits of his beloved Don Bepi had been recognized at last.

Salzano is a small country town in the province of Venetia. It has a handsome church with a graceful campanile and a somewhat imposing presbytery. The country is fertile, and the people, who are wholly given to agriculture, are quiet, steady and hard-working. The new rector arrived on a Saturday evening in July. At Mass the next morning, in spite of the heat, the church was crowded, for the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages had assembled in force to hear the sermon of the newly appointed parroco.

The result was a delightful surprise. "What was the bishop thinking of," they asked one another when Mass was over, "to leave a man like that buried all these years at a place like Tombolo?"

As for Don Giuseppe, he set to work at once to visit his people. His frank simplicity, his understanding sympathy and zeal for their welfare gained their hearts at once. As at Tombolo, he gave special attention to the instruction of children; and, not content with this, inaugurated classes in Christian doctrine for the adults. "Most of the evil in the world," he would often say, "comes from a want of the knowledge of God and of His truth."

In spite of the large parish and the handsome rectory, Don Giuseppe's habits were as frugal as ever. There was more to give to the poor, that



was all. His sister Rosina kept house for him.

"Bepi," she said one day, "there is nothing for dinner."

"Not even a couple of eggs?"

A couple of eggs there were, and on these they dined.

But there was always a welcome at the rectory and a share of anything that was going for any old friend who dropped in. Don Carlo came one evening for a visit, and found Don Giuseppe in the kitchen playing games with some little children. They were sent home with a promise that the game should be continued on another occasion, and Don Carlo was pressed to stay. The next morning he was accosted by Rosina.

"Don Carlo, you are an old friend, and a very kind one," she began hesitatingly; "there is a man coming tomorrow who sells shirting."

"Really?" answered Don Carlo, rather at a loss to connect the statements.

"Yesterday my brother got a little money," continued Rosina, "and he has hardly a shirt to his back. Now if you were to try to persuade him to buy some shirting, I think he perhaps would do it. Will you do your best?"

Don Carlo promised, and took the first opportunity of broaching the subject.

"Nonsense, nonsense," was the answer, "there is no necessity at all," and the plea was cut short.

But Don Carlo was not so easily beaten; he knew the sunny nature of his friend, and determined to have recourse to strategy. On the arrival of the pedlar, he examined his materials, selected what he considered suitable, and set to work, after the manner of his country, to bargain. Having agreed on what he considered a fair price, he ordered the required length to be cut off, and turned to Don Giuseppe who had been innocently watching the transaction. "So many yards at such and such a price," he declared. "Pay up, Don Giuseppe!"

The rector was disgusted; but there was nothing to be done but to obey. The bargain had been made and the shirting cut off. "Even you come here and plot to betray me," he complained.

As for Rosina, her delight knew no bounds. "God bless the day you came, Don Carlo," she said, meeting him outside the door. "If you had not been here today, tomorrow there would have been neither money nor linen!"

Salzano was a large parish, and the rector had to keep a conveyance. It was not much to look at, but it did hard service, being at the disposal of everybody who appealed to the well-known charity of its owner. The horse came home one day with both knees badly damaged.

"I am very sorry," pleaded the borrower, "an accident . . . ."

Don Giuseppe swallowed hard. "Never mind, never mind," he said; "it is all right."