

SOME NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF THE CARDINALS' RINGS.

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It appears most probable that the use of the ring was granted to the Cardinals about the twelfth century, but no precise mention is to be found of the first grant. In the *Ordo Romanus XIV.*, attributed by Mabillon to Cardinal Gaetani, nephew of Boniface VIII. (1294), in the description of the Consistory, in which the Pope opens the mouth of the new Cardinal, we find that—

“*Papa singulis novis Cardinalibus in consistoriis, die quo eis os aperit, dare consuevit titulos et annulos in fine consistorii.*”

But this custom of giving a ring to the new Cardinals, when their titles were assigned to them, was in those days considered to be an old custom, as the following passage from the *Ordo* will show.

“*Norma vero quæ antiquitús consuevit servari in aperi-tione oris novorum Cardinalium, et assignatione titulorum, et datione annulorum, est inírascripta.*”

The titles and rings may be conferred upon the new Cardinals out of the Consistory. (*Sac. Cær. Rom.* p. 42).

In the wills of Cardinals we frequently find legacies of their rings. John Miroglio, a Cardinal priest, in his will, dated 1397, enumerating his effects, mentions “*aliquos annulos non ascendentes summam ducentorum francorum.*” (*Baluzzi, Vit. Papar. Avig. tom. iii. p. 1101.*) Baluzzi also gives the wills of other Cardinals of that period, in which their rings are disposed of under the title of jewels.

It was the custom to bury Cardinals with their rings. Nantiporto relates, that when the body of Cardinal D’Estouteville was being carried to the Church of St. Augustine (Jan. 24, 1483), an assault was made on the corpse, and the rings were stolen. (*Apud Muratori, tom. iii. pt. ii. Script. Rer. Ital.*)

Michael Canensis mentions that the grave of Cardinal Louis Scarampa Mezzarota was violated in the night time by his familiar Antonio de Tocca, who robbed the body of the mitre, the robes, and the rings. (De gestis Pauli II. p. 41.)

On the tombs of Cardinals, when there is a representation of the full figure, the rings are also introduced. As examples I may cite the tomb of Cardinal Adam Eyston, Titular of St. Cecilia, who died on the 15th August, 1398. He is buried in the left aisle of his titular church at Rome. On his right hand is represented a ring on the annular, and another on the third, finger. The left hand I was unable to see. Cardinal Ardicini della Porta, the younger, died in 1493. On his tomb at Rome there is a representation of his full figure, arrayed in his vestments. On this figure Gabrielli says (Crypt. Vat. p. 172),—

“Unum tamen animadversione existimavi dignum, scilicet, marmorea hæc imago quatuor habet annulos, tres quidem in dextra, alterum in pollice, alterum in digito medio, tertium in auriculari seu minimo; quartum vero in medio lævæ digito.”

The figure over the tomb of Cardinal Armellinus Medices, Titular of Sancta Maria in Trastevere, who died in 1524, and who is buried in that church, has two rings on the right hand, one on the auricular or little finger, and one on the index.

A Cardinal's ring is set with a sapphire. Sarnelli says that the sapphire denotes the high priesthood and the regal dignity; hence Cardinals wear it since they “regibus æquiparantur.” (Litt. Eccl. vi. p. 86.)

On receiving the ring, a Cardinal has to pay a fine of 500 ducats of gold. This is an old custom, and I am unable to trace its origin. There exists in the Archives of the Confraternity of St. Anne, in Rome, a *motu proprio* of Paul IV., dated August 5, 1555, granting permission to the heirs of Cardinal Jerome Veralli to pay to the Camera Apostolica the 500 ducats which the deceased had not paid. The revenues arising from these fines were paid to the Camera Apostolica up to 1564. In that year Pius IV. assigned them to the support of the fabric of the Lateran Basilica, with this proviso, that the surplus should be otherwise invested. In the life of Pius V. it is stated that he gave 10,000 scudi, and also the fines from the Cardinals' rings, to the Nuns of St.

Dominic, whom he had removed from the convent of San Sixto, and established on Mount Magnanapoli. This grant was confirmed by Gregory XIII. in 1572. But at a later period this Pontiff allotted these fines to the German College, then newly established by St. Ignatius of Loyola. The date I have not ascertained. In 1592 Clement VIII. restored these funds to the Lateran Basilica, and Paul V. confirmed the donation in 1609. Finally, Gregory XV. assigned these annular revenues to the College of the Propaganda Fide, *in perpetuum*, which is recorded by the following inscription in the College Church :—

GREGORIUS . XV . PONT . MAX .
CONGREGATIONEM . DE . PROPAGANDA
F I D E .
PRIMVS . INSTITVIT .
PRIVILEGIIS . AVXIT .
PERPETVO . EX . ANNVLS . CARDINALITIS . CENSV .
LOCVPLETAVIT . A . SAL . MDCXXII.

Until, however, the new Cardinals have paid the fine, they do not receive the three briefs by which they have the privilege—

1. Of making their wills.
2. Of making an allotment of half of their pension, or 2000 dollars.
3. Of disposing of the paraphernalia of their private chapel, which otherwise would at their death fall to the Sacristy of St. Peter's.

Cardinals always wear their rings. On Good Friday, however, they lay them aside as a sign of the mourning in which the Church is placed for her spouse.

My Dactyliotheca contains the ring with which the late most worthy Cardinal Frasoni was invested, on being raised to the Sacred College in 1812 by Leo XII. During his lifetime Cardinal Frasoni consecrated no less than seventy Bishops and Archbishops.