The Diary of Pius II:
Memoirs of A Renaissance Pope

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A great deal still awaits the researcher in Philippine history, particularly in the economic and social fields. A general work of this type, however, will always be welcome, and we hope it is the forerunner of much to come.

NICHOLAS P. CUSHNER

THE DIARY OF PIUS II


The present volume is a popular abridgment of THE COMMENTARIES OF PIUS II, a five-volume translation from the original Latin published by the Smith College Studies in History. After many years of literary detective work by the renowned historian, Pastor, the original manuscript was finally attributed to its real author. The English translation is based on the original Vatican Codex Reginensis 1995, and contains many interesting passages which had been excised from previously printed editions of the Latin. In the present abridgment, these passages are italicized and often contain some of the most personal and pertinent comments of Pius II, not all of them edifying.

It is not often that one has as a source the personal diary of a pope. That is precisely what this work is, although it is couched in the third person narrative form. Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini of the noble clan of Siena of that name, grew up in the turbulent world of the Renaissance and his quick and active mind soon brought him into prominence both as a literary figure and an astute politician. Already a well-known humanist, he turned up in the schismatical Council of Basle as secretary to the anti-pope, Felix V, and as a defender of the conciliar theory. But his perceptive political intelligence soon showed him that he had started out on the wrong foot, and when opportunity presented itself, he accepted the offer of the Emperor Frederick III, thereby withdrawing himself to a safe neutral position in ecclesiastical affairs.

From that point on one witnesses the gradual transformation of the career diplomat and humanist into the zealous pope and churchman. The document itself is frank, revealing and highly personal even to the point of prejudice. His regard for his own abilities and opinions is almost naive; equally clear is his contempt for those who oppose him—for the growing merchant class, as well as for the enemies of the papacy.
The overly pious reader will no doubt shrink at the recital of the intricate maneuverings which took place in the consistory which finally elected Aeneas Silvius to the papal throne. Not a trick or argument is left untried to deflect votes from the hated Cardinal of Rouen. Although these human qualities never left him, as the problems of the Church and Christendom grew more complex and the danger of the Turk became more threatening, the spiritual force of the pope came to the fore. To weld the disparate nationalistic forces of Europe into a single army against the enemy was the obsession of his closing years. He failed in his purpose, but in his failure the real calibre of the man of God emerged, purified in great part in the crucible of physical suffering and frustrated purpose.

If there is one lesson to be derived from this warmly human document, it is the realization that God often uses very human instruments to guide the destinies of His Church. Their very humanity is one of the surest guarantees that the Church itself is sustained by that divine power which gave it origin and will remain with it till the end of time.

SAMUEL R. WILEY

PRIZE STORIES


The Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature began in 1950. "It has been the best thing to happen to Philippine Literature," says Mrs. Tuvera in her introduction to this volume. The volume under review contains the winning thirty stories in the annual contest from 1950 to 1955. Fifteen of the stories are in English, fifteen in Tagalog. The editor, Kerima Polotan (Mrs. Juan C. Tuvera), is herself one of the prize winners, whose story "The Virgin," published under the pseudonym of Patricia S. Torres, was reviewed at length in the first issue of this Quarterly (Vol. I, No. 1, June 1953).

Two other stories in the present collection have also been reviewed in these pages: "Children of the Ash Covered Loam," which won second prize in 1952, and "Lupo and the River," which also won second prize in 1953. Both stories are by N.V.M. Gonzales and are included in his CHILDREN OF THE ASH COVERED LOAM AND OTHER STORIES, which was discussed in these pages in March 1956 (Vol. IV, No. 1).