Such is the state of things in England, and it is well that it should be realized by all of us; but it must not be supposed for a moment that I am afraid of it. I lament it deeply, because I foresee that it may be the ruin of many souls; but I have no fear at all that it really can do aught of serious harm to the Word of God, to Holy Church, to our Almighty King, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Faithful and True, or to His Vicar on earth. Christianity has been too often in what seemed deadly peril, that we should fear for it any new trial now. So far is certain; on the other hand, what is uncertain, and in these great contests commonly is uncertain, and what is commonly a great surprise, when it is witnessed, is the particular mode by which, in the event, Providence rescues and saves His elect inheritance. Sometimes our enemy is turned into a friend; sometimes he is despoiled of that special virulence of evil which was so threatening; sometimes he falls to pieces of himself; sometimes he does just so much as is beneficial, and then is removed. Commonly the Church has nothing more to do than to go on in her own proper duties, in confidence and peace; to stand still and to see the salvation of God.

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 Cardinal Newman: The Biglietto Speech

It used to be the custom that one who was about to be created Cardinal would take up residence in Rome and wait for the Pope to publish his appointment to the Cardinals gathered in secret consistory. The Cardinal-to-be would, at this time be waiting for the messenger from the Vatican to bring the biglietto announcing his creation. Via the Newman Reader, one can read about Cardinal Newman’s reception of the biglietto.

On Monday morning, May 12, Dr. Newman went to the Palazzo della Pigna, the residence of Cardinal Howard, who had lent him his apartments to receive there the messenger from the Vatican bearing the biglietto from the Cardinal-Secretary of State, informing him that in a secret Consistory held that morning his Holiness had deigned to raise him to the rank of Cardinal. By eleven o’clock the rooms were crowded with English and American Catholics, ecclesiastics and laymen, as well as many members of the Roman nobility and dignitaries of the Church, assembled to witness the ceremony. Soon after midday the consistorial messenger was announced. He handed the biglietto to Dr. Newman, who, having broken the seal, gave it to Dr. Clifford, Bishop of Clifton, who read the contents. The messenger having then informed the newly-created Cardinal that his Holiness would receive him at the Vatican the next morning at ten o’clock to confer the berretta upon him, and having paid the customary compliments, his Eminence replied in what has become known as his "Biglietto Speech" as follows:—

Vi ringrazio, Monsignore, per la partecipazione che m'avete fatto dell’ alto onore
che il Santo Padre si è degnato conferire sulla mia umile persona—

And, if I ask your permission to continue my address to you, not in your musical language, but in my own dear mother tongue, it is because in the latter I can better express my feelings on this most gracious announcement which you have brought to me than if I attempted what is above me.

First of all then, I am led to speak of the wonder and profound gratitude which came upon me, and which is upon me still, at the condescension and love towards me of the Holy Father in singling me out for so immense an honor. It was a great surprise. Such an elevation had never come into my thoughts, and seemed to be out of keeping with all my antecedents. I had passed through many trials, but they were over; and now the end of all things had almost come to me, and I was at peace. And was it possible that after all I had lived through so many years for this?

Nor is it easy to see how I could have borne so great a shock, had not the Holy Father resolved on a second act of condescension towards me, which tempered it, and was to all who heard of it a touching evidence of his kindly and generous nature. He felt for me, and he told me the reasons why he raised me to this high position. Besides other words of encouragement, he said his act was a recognition of my zeal and good service for so many years in the Catholic cause; moreover, he judged it would give pleasure to English Catholics, and even to Protestant England, if I judged it would give pleasure to English Catholics, and even to Protestant England, if I

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