

Friends at Court

GLEANINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR

May 19, Sunday.—Pentecost Sunday.
 „ 20, Monday.—Whit Monday.
 „ 21, Tuesday.—Whit Tuesday.
 „ 22, Wednesday.—Of the Octave. Ember Day.
 „ 23, Thursday.—Of the Octave.
 „ 24, Friday.—Of the Octave. Ember Day.
 „ 25, Saturday.—Of the Octave. Ember Day.

Ember Days.

The Ember Days are the first Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday of each of the four seasons of the year, set apart as fast days by the Church. According to the testimony of Pope Leo, they originated in the time of the Apostles, who were inspired by the Holy Ghost to dedicate each season of the year to God by a few days of penance; or, as it were, to pay three days' interest, every three months, on the graces received from God. The Church also commanded the faithful to fast at the beginning of each of the four seasons of the year, because it is at this time that she ordains the priests and other servants of the Church, which even the Apostles did; with much prayer and fasting. Thus she desires that during the Ember Days Christians should fervently ask of God by prayer, fasting, and other good works, for worthy pastors and servants, on whom depends the welfare of the whole Christian flock; she also desired that in the spring Ember Days we should ask God's blessing for the fertility of the earth; in summer for the preservation of the fruits of the field; in autumn when the harvest is ripe, and in winter when it is sheltered that we should offer to God, by fasting and prayer, a sacrifice of thanks, petitioning Him to assist us, that we may not use His gifts for our soul's detriment, but refer all praise to Him, the fountain of all good; and assist our neighbor according to our means.

GRAINS OF GOLD

THE LONG ROAD.

The road winds on, and up the lonely hill
 I take my way; thick shadows falling fast
 Obscure the light of day. Dear Lord, at last,
 Weary and footsore, sick with Pleasure's ill,
 I turn to Thee, kind Father! Curb my will.
 My passions, yea, have stained the soul's white Past
 Though beggar, I, O prithee, do not cast
 Me from Thy heart! I have a child's love still.
 The Home, by angels built, I long to see.
 The kindly years have softened my cold heart;
 And some day I shall reach the heavenly place,
 When, through Death's door, glad, slow and silently,
 I'll pass from out Life's noisy, troubled mart.
 Father, I long to see Thee face to face!

— Ave Maria.

Have death always before your eyes as a salutary means of returning to God.—St. Bernard.

They who are right can afford to pardon whether victorious or defeated.—Bishop Spalding.

Have great, great trust and great gratitude. When we see all that we have to be grateful for it will be too late.—Father Dignam, S.J.

The road to home happiness is said to lie over small stepping-stones. So small sometimes are the causes of our unhappiness that we wonder the consequences can be so great. One great palliative is the determination by every member of the family not to dwell on the circumstances, whatever they may be, which are alike sad to all. If it be poverty let it be cheerfully and silently borne; if it be the ill-temper of grandpa try to make a joke of it. If it be something infinitely worse and also hopeless accept it bravely; do not talk of it. Try in the family circle to ignore it. Accept every little enlivening circumstance. Let in all the sun and air. Work on cheerily and hopefully, knowing that there is the ray of sunshine somewhere that has only to be looked for to be found.

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The Storyteller

THE OLD SOUTANE

Some years ago there lived near a poor village in Auvergne one of the poorest missionaries that had ever penetrated the defiles of the cavennes. The meaneast peasant employed in searching the bowels of the mountains for antimony and coal would not have envied the humble cottage which was his dwelling.

Built against the end of a little gray stone church surmounted by an iron cross, it might have been taken for a hermitage, or for one of those hospitable asylums raised on the high places far from the beaten paths of travel; to guide and succor the perishing wanderer. From the level on which it was situated the eye fell upon the fertile basin of the Limagne, traversed in its longest extent by the Allier, shining like a silvery ribbon. Behind the church on the slope of the mountain were some nuts, rising one above the other, and at a distance, reminding one of a caravan ascending a steep road. From this point the sight ran from rock to rock along the chain to which belong the Puy de Dome, the Plomb de Cantal and the Mont d'Or.

Such was the kind of the abid inhabited for more than ten years by the venerated priest of ——. (The reader will easily understand the scruple that hinders us from writing here the name of the village, as well as our reluctance to alter the accuracy of the least details in this simple narrative by adopting the commonplace expedient of a fictitious name.) He was a man about sixty, with spare, active, erect figure, and a countenance beaming with mild benevolence. His entire simplicity of heart did not exclude either the refinement or the elevation of a powerful intellect, nor did the austerity of his own life diminish in anything his indulgent consideration for others' weaknesses. His faith was ardent, and his zeal for the poor people committed to his charge knew no other bounds than those which nature had imposed on his physical strength, so that his charity in their regard made him almost accomplish miracles. The winter had no cold so rigorous no snow so thick, the mountains had no ravine so deep, nor had any night a darkness so profound as to deter him from the exercise of his arduous and painful duties. And all this done quite simply, without the most secret motion of vanity, and with an air of sincere interest and good nature which removed the very idea of personal sacrifice.

One evening in summer, it might be eight o'clock, the cure, after having finished the reading of his breviary, was seated in silence near a low window which looked out towards the village. Returned late and fatigued from a long journey, he inhaled with a sense of enjoyment the refreshing air that breathed into the room. Margaret, his housekeeper, was arranging on the shelves of an oaken dresser the simple requisites that had been used at her master's frugal supper, for as his frequent excursions to the distant and various localities under the control of his ministry often detained him from home to an advanced hour, he had adopted of necessity as well as by choice the primitive hours of the country people. Besides the piece of furniture we have just mentioned, the room contained a dining table, which also served as a card table during the long winter evenings, when the good cure would now and then gravely dispute the chances of a game of piquet or of chess. In front was an old walnut-tree chest, and at the end of the chamber, near a small door, the principal article of all, the cure's bed, arrayed with the most patriarchal simplicity. A magnificent ivory crucifix, the gift of a noble and pious lady, was placed above a prie-dieu of plain black oak. In one of the angles formed by the projection of a vast chimney stood one of those long boxes, variegated with squares of different colors, much like the case of an Egyptian mummy, over which appeared the dial of a rustic-looking clock. Some chairs of coarse straw completed the furniture, on the description of which we have dwelt thus minutely because the entire household is the perfect and severe type of a class including the greater number of the dwellings of the provincial clergy in poor and remote districts like this.

Margaret, a respectable aged matron, with a short, round figure and an important air, who had entered the service of the cure several years before, was the real sovereign of this little realm. The legitimate ruler had by degrees abdicated in her favor the entire executive authority. And, saving an occasional abuse of power, or a fit of grumbling now and then, it must be owned this domination was in no way subversive of the