

Friends at Court

GLEANINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR

July 26, Sunday.—Seventh Sunday after Pentecost. St. Anne, Mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
 „ 27, Monday.—St. Veronica Juliana, Virgin.
 „ 28, Tuesday.—St. Victor I., Pope and Martyr; St. Innocent I., Pope and Confessor; Saints Nazarius and Celsus, Martyrs.
 „ 29, Wednesday.—St. Felix II., Pope and Martyr.
 „ 30, Thursday.—St. Martha, Virgin.
 „ 31, Friday.—St. Ignatius Loyola, Confessor.
 August 1, Saturday.—St. Peter's Chains.

St. Martha, Virgin.

St. Martha was the sister of Lazarus, whom Christ raised from the dead. The family resided at Bethany, near Jerusalem, where they received frequent visits from our Divine Lord. According to a French tradition, Lazarus became first Bishop of Marseilles, while the tombs of Martha and her sister Mary are still venerated in Provence.

St. Ignatius of Loyola, Confessor.

St. Ignatius was born at the castle of Loyola, in the north of Spain. He was at first a soldier, but feeling himself called to more perfect life, he began, at the age of 33, to study Latin, with the object of becoming a priest. He completed his studies at the University of Paris, where he gained the affectionate esteem of several young students, who were afterwards the first members of the religious Order which he founded; and which is known as the Society of Jesus. St. Ignatius was its first Superior, and held that office from 1541 to 1556.

GRAINS OF GOLD

A PRAYER.

Life seems to be a long, entangled thread;
 I gaze upon it with a helpless dread.
 To unravel it would seem a task in vain,
 Entailing much of sorrow and of pain.
 But one must live, and time drags slowly on;
 What will the thread be like when youth is gone!

Lord, thou canst help me, take my tangled life,
 With all its knots of pain and weary strife.
 Thy magic touch will make it smooth again,
 Thy loving aid my drooping soul sustain.
 Courage and power Thou giv'st if we but ask;
 So, full of trust, I bend me to my task.

Little self-denials, little honesties, little passing words of sympathy, little nameless acts of kindness, little silent victories over favorite temptations—these are the silent threads of gold which, when woven together, gleam out so brightly in the pattern of life that God approves.

Life is a building. It rises slowly, day by day, through the years. Every new lesson we learn lays a block on the edifice which is rising silently within us. Every experience, every touch of another life on ours, every influence that impresses us, every book that we read, every conversation we hold, every act of our commonest days, adds something to the invisible building.

Home is the place of the highest joys; religion should sanctify it. Home is the sphere of the deepest sorrows; the highest consolation of religion should assuage its griefs. Home is the place of the greatest intimacy of heart with heart; religion should sweeten it with the joy of confidence. Home discovers all faults; religion should bless it with abundance of charity. Home is the place for impressions, for instruction and culture; there should religion open her treasures of wisdom and pronounce her heavenly benediction.

An effective home education is provided by a father and a mother united by mutual love and directing all their activities to the fostering of the child and preparing it for the paths on which it should travel, and which are always bristling with perils of a nature to make parents not only solicitous, but eager to undergo any sacrifice rather than send out the child into all the dreariness of the world unequipped for its life's journey. The child's claim and right to be harmoniously and successfully developed throughout all its faculties and activities, is one of the chief reasons why God has given to marriage the two essential qualities of unity and indissolubility.

The Storyteller

ALESSANDRO

Alessandro—the strength of the sea in the erect, superb carriage of his body, tanned to a glowing warmth by the sun of Southern Italy—Alessandro, as I remembered him of old, met me as I stepped off the puffing, snorting little train. Two years had made no perceptible change in the joyous figure before me.

I rejoiced that Alessandro should be the first to welcome me; somehow it seemed a good augury of the future. My content increased as the minutes flew by, for did I not find my rooms in old Giuseppe's house waiting for me—the very rooms I had occupied two years before. Giuseppe, one of the few men spared by the cruel sea, had passed the number of years allotted to man, and was yet as hale and strong as a man of sixty. The old man's joy at my return well-nigh equalled my own, though it was much more voluble.

'The Signora is pleased to be content with little,' he courtously said. 'Had Maria not gone to the saints, things would be much better. Or,' he added regretfully, 'had she only left me a daughter. Man is not made to care for himself.'

'But you are an exception,' I answered. 'Few women can keep house and cook as you can.'

'The Signora is kind; but—it is not man's work.'

'You should have married again, Giuseppe. It is hard to live alone.'

'To marry twice! The Signora is pleased to jest.' The old brown eyes looked reprovingly into mine, and I felt duly humbled.

The little town had a strangely peaceful look to one who had fled from the turmoil of a great city. Among all the changes of two years, however, Alessandro alone remained unchanged. He had not married, and I wondered why. He had thought once of emigrating—of going to America—and had asked my advice.

'No, no,' I cried eagerly, 'you must not go. You would not be happy. It would be worse than the very worst that you could imagine.'

He nodded gravely and accepted my decision, and ever since I have felt a moral responsibility for his welfare. It was just after this talk that I thought how suitable it would be for him to marry Annunziata. That Annunziata had other views I soon discovered, and when she married Marco Santo I felt more heartbroken for Alessandro than he felt for himself.

Alessandro's sturdy, blunt-prowed boat, with its enormous sail, that to my land-faring eyes looked dangerously risky, was beating out to sea. The sky was dull and lowering, the waves, as they broke at the foot of the old sea-wall, held a sullen menace in their roar. The little street had lost its glowing color, and to-day looked grey and old. A group of women chatting by the fountain caught my eye, their brilliant garments making a riot of color against the dull day. Annunziata, her dark eyes eloquent with joy, hurried forward to meet me.

'And the bambino is well?' I asked, after her own many inquiries.

'Yes, Donna Lisa; he is well and so beautiful.'

'You have forgotten to tell me his name,' I began.

'The Signora must pardon. The joy of seeing her again made me forgetful. The name is Marco Stefano Lucia Speranza.'

I gasped—then inquired faintly: 'Why Lucia?'

'Because he was born on the festa of Santa Lucia; Marco, because it is his father's name; and Stefano—Marco wished Stefano because it was he who made possible our marriage. You remember, Signora, he took him in his boat when no one else would.' The dark eyes overflowed for a second at the thought of those unhappy days. 'And Speranza is because we—Marco and I—desired him to have your name.'

I murmured my thanks. 'But what do you really call him?' I queried.

'We call him Speranza. There is no other of that name in la città.'

'Tell me of Marco—he is still a shoemaker?' I asked.

'Yes, Signora.' Then rapidly, in her native tongue: 'Look at that water, that sky, there——' making an excited gesture in the direction of the women, gazing across the grey stretch of sea. 'They are all suffering, praying for their men—mine is on land.'