

Friends at Court

CLEANINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR

- December 5, Sunday.—Second Sunday in Advent.
 „ 6, Monday.—St. Nicholas, Bishop and Confessor.
 „ 7, Tuesday.—St. Ambrose, Bishop, Confessor, and Doctor.
 „ 8, Wednesday.—Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
 „ 9, Thursday.—St. Eutichian, Pope and Martyr.
 „ 10, Friday.—Octave of St. Francis Xavier.
 „ 11, Saturday.—St. Damasus I., Pope and Confessor.

St. Nicholas, Bishop and Confessor.

St. Nicholas was Archbishop of Myra, in Asia Minor, in the early part of the fourth century. 'He is called particularly the patron of children,' says Butler, 'not only because he made their instruction a principal part of his care, but chiefly because he always retained the virtues, the meekness, the simplicity without guile or malice, and the humility of his tender age, and because, from his very infancy, he devoted himself to God by an heroic piety.' His feast was formerly kept with great solemnity in many of the schools and colleges of England.

Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Her Immaculate Conception was the first of the privileges by which the Blessed Virgin was prepared for the dignity of Mother of God. This privilege signifies that Mary never contracted the stain of original sin; that her soul, in the first moment of its union with her body, was pure and spotless. She was thus excepted from the universal doom, in virtue of which every member of the human race enters the world stained by Adam's sin. This doctrine, so admirably in keeping with what the holiness of Mary's son required, though expressed more or less explicitly in every age of the Church's history, was not formally defined until the year 1854.

GRAINS OF GOLD

THE LAW OF CONTRADICTION.

Forgive, O God, my unbelieving heart—
 Not that weak doubt of Thee has entrance there,
 For now as erst I see Thee everywhere,
 And am content to live because Thou art.
 But yet, unfaithful soul, I stand apart
 From Thee, seeking what is good and fair
 And finding nought more real than empty air—
 No life that can escape the fatal dart.
 O Father, look in mercy on Thy child,
 Who yearns for love and yet turns not to Thee;
 Who longs for rest, and yet is still beguiled
 By passing shows and foolish vanity;
 Who would be pure, but is all sin-defiled;
 Who would be free, and yet from God doth flee.

—BISHOP SPALDING.

Not to enjoy life, but to employ life, ought to be our aim and aspiration.

He who overcomes and captures his enemy with love is the greatest of all conquerors.

A wise man will desire no more than he can get justly, use soberly, distribute cheerfully, and leave contentedly.

Human nature loves a compliment. The greatest are not above it. When well deserved the enjoyment of it carries no wrong. With the good-will of our fellow-men we can sleep more sweetly.

The object of all virtues is to bring us into union with God, in which alone is laid up all the happiness that can be enjoyed in this world. Now, in what does this union properly consist? In nothing save a perfect conformity and resemblance between our will and the will of God, so that these two wills are absolutely alike—there is nothing in one repugnant to the other; all that one wishes and loves, whatever pleases or displeases one, pleases or displeases the other.—St. John of the Cross.

St. John Chrysostom is justified in saying that just as a city which is not fortified with a strong wall is easily taken, because it cannot resist the attack of the enemy, so the soul which is not protected by prayer is easily brought into the power of the evil spirit, who leads it into every kind of vice. The devil does not dare to approach a soul which is protected by prayer, because he fears the fortitude and firmness which prayer has given to it. Prayer strengthens the soul more than food the body, and St. Augustine calls prayer the key by which we can unlock the treasury of Heaven.

The Storyteller

THE WORTH-WHILE THINGS

Deacon John drove his plough straight forward through the furrow, and tried to keep his mind to his work. But it was impossible. Black trousers and a white shirt were torturingly uncomfortable, and even if he could have forgotten why he was wearing them he could not forget the tall brick church at his back. There was something else—something sad and portentous—that he did not want to forget. He had dressed up, notwithstanding the working day, just to show that he remembered. It was hateful to have that same sad and portentous thing testified to by the brick church. And yet it was to the church that everything now had come.

When he turned at the end of the furrow he could not help seeing that squat spire, finished only as high as the belfry, and the peaked front, surmounted by its glittering cross. Several specks were crawling up the broad steps. The people were beginning to arrive.

Deacon John halted at the bush where he had left his coat, collar, and necktie. With a jerk he unhitched the surprised team—it being not yet 11 o'clock, the horses were looking for at least another sweltering hour before resting—and watched them crop their way slowly homewards along an unploughed strip of sod. Then he dusted the soil from his trousers, mopped his forehead with a clean handkerchief, put on the rest of his Sunday raiment, and sat down on the stone wall that separated the farm from the highway. He even reached to his coat-tail pocket, found a pair of black cotton gloves that he had worn the last time he was a pall-bearer, and put them on. But he kept his back to the church. He would not bow the knee to Baal. But neither would he, on the other hand, work during the hour of Hannah's funeral.

A deep-toned bell from the tower let fall a heavy stroke, startling, awful—breaking ruthlessly in on the stillness. Deacon John shuddered. He had been to so many funerals in his long life that the mere burying of the dead had lost much of its unnaturalness. But this funeral was unprecedented. Friends and relatives he had seen laid away—'like Christians,' he thought to himself. But he dared not follow, even in imagination, the rites and ceremonies that were now preparing. And to think that Hannah had looked gladly forward to all this!

The deacon's farm was the first to be encountered on leaving the town. The Catholic church was the first house of worship one passed coming in. Providence had arranged it thus, so that the Protestant elder and she whom he called the Scarlet Woman might be brought face to face. The Elder, long before attaining the title, had learned to fear and hate the Woman, hurling at her all the condemnatory speeches in the Bible. The Woman retaliated with a maddening indifference.

When John was a boy he never passed the church—then an ugly wooden building—except at a gait which would have taken him in safety past the worst of haunted houses. Age had added to his boyish terror the deep, passionate convictions of a narrow, earnest, and naturally religious mind. He could give plausible reasons and quote emphatic texts for the aversion that was in him, and the Presbyterian prayer-meeting was never so lively as when Deacon John was lashing the Pontiff.

Yet these tirades always ended lamely. 'Of course, some good people are Catholics,' he would say. 'May the Lord show them the light of his countenance in place of their idols made with hands.'

This was his covert tribute to Hannah, whom he regarded as the great exception. She had married his own farm hand—had set up housekeeping in a corner of his own pasture—yet stood ready during the dark years of the hard times to lend her savings without security, enabling Deacon John to pay the mortgage interest and stave off ruin. When Bobby came; when the deacon had typhoid fever; whenever sorrow or trouble, or even joy in too great measure to be borne alone, had invaded his life, he had counted on the plain, quiet little woman who spoke English with a brogue, and who went to the—

But this was no time for hard thoughts. He had never been able to consider some of these things without choking, and now, as they came over him in one burning flame of recollection, the rubbish in his heart threatened to take fire. She had been that miracle of God—a good woman. And yet—yes, an Irish woman and a Catholic. The ways of Heaven were past finding out.

The poor old deacon turned his head as the bell tolled another pitiless stroke. An eternity seemed to have intervened since the first, and the metal vibrated with some of the unexpectedness of death itself. There was quite a crowd crawling up the steps now. The church would be comfortably filled, notwithstanding Hannah's humble station. He was glad of that.

With a twinge of conscience John turned so as to face the cross that glittered so conspicuously above the doorway. There was no need to carry disrespect too far at such a time, and the cross, although he mistrusted all