

Friends at Court

CLEANINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR

March 20, Sunday.—Palm Sunday.
 „ 21, Monday.—Of the Feria.
 „ 22, Tuesday.—Of the Feria.
 „ 23, Wednesday.—Of the Feria.
 „ 24, Thursday.—Holy Thursday.
 „ 25, Friday.—Good Friday.
 „ 26, Saturday.—Holy Saturday.

Wednesday in Holy Week.

On this and the two following days the Office of Tenebrae is chanted in those churches in which the presence of a sufficient number of priests is obtainable. The Office consists of a number of Psalms, with lessons from the Sacred Scriptures, and the writings of the Fathers of the Church appropriate to the season. The name of Tenebrae (darkness) is given to the Office because, at its close, the lights are extinguished to express the mourning of the Church, and to represent the darkness which covered the face of the earth on the death of Our Blessed Lord.

Holy Thursday.

For a short time to-day the Church puts off her mourning. At the Mass her ministers are vested in white, the bells are heard, the organ peals forth. For a moment she desists from her meditations on the sufferings of her Divine Founder to contemplate the tender love which led Him to institute the Blessed Eucharist on the very night before His Crucifixion. In cathedral churches the Bishop consecrates the Holy Oils which are used in the administration of certain Sacraments, and also in some ecclesiastical functions.

Good Friday.

This day is called 'Good' because on it we were liberated from the dominion of Satan, and the happiness which God had in view in creating us was placed once more within our reach. We must not forget, however, by what means this was accomplished, and that the day so pregnant with blessings for us was marked by unspeakable sufferings on the part of Our Divine Redeemer, Who for our sake yielded Himself to a shameful death. This should be the subject of our meditations to-day. We cannot enter the church without being reminded of it. At the morning office the celebrant and his ministers are vested in black, and the history of the Passion is chanted. When the ceremonies are over, the altar is bared of its ornaments. The statues and images of the saints remain veiled. The crucifix alone is uncovered—a striking reminder of the intensity of God's love for man, and in particular an emblem of hope to the repentant sinner.

GRAINS OF GOLD

ALTAR GIFTS.

'Hearts of silver and hearts of gold
 Men had brought in days of old
 To Thy shrine for offering,
 Lord My King!

Gold and jewels, incense rare,
 Roses with their heart's blood fair,
 Saints and martyrs had Thee given,
 Christ My Heaven.

Rose nor incense, blood nor gem,
 Have I for Thy diadem;
 Worthy of Thy smallest thought
 Have I naught.

Poor and common are my flowers,
 Worthless all my days and hours,
 Yet beneath Thine altar's shade
 Be they laid.

—Ave Maria.

There is no day too poor to bring us an opportunity, and we are never so rich that we can afford to spurn what the day brings. Opportunities for character always bloom along the pathway of our duty, and make it fragrant even when it is thorny.

The plain, homely sayings which come from a soul that has learned the lesson of patient courage in the school of real experience, fall upon the wound like drops of balsam, and like a soothing lotion upon the eyes smarting and blinded with passion.

As from studying a great picture we may feel the soul expressed, or in hearing a great symphony, we may feel the spirit which inspired it, so in the contemplation of nature we may feel the spirit which moves it and of which it is an expression. In children this is a mere feeling, but later it becomes a conscious realisation; and when this consciousness begins to develop in the little ones, let us nurture it very tenderly, and be ever ready with response and sympathy.

The Storyteller

STORY OF A ST. PATRICK'S CROSS

The day was gloomy and threatening. 'What a typical March day!' said young Mrs. Loughlin, glancing beneath the curtains of a dressing-room window, which was now further muffled by the haze of the warm atmosphere within.

Only a sense of maternal duty assisted the lady in this her unaccustomed effort at early rising, for, notwithstanding all the luxurious accessories of fleecy gown and furred shoulder wraps, her imagination persuaded her that the chill of the outer world must certainly be noticeable within the shelter of her luxurious home. The gilded timepiece on her dresser told her that it still lacked some minutes of seven, and she had promised—in fact, proposed—that at seven o'clock she would be ready to take the nurse's place by the bedside of her own small son, now convalescing from a tedious illness. 'Miss Keating had been so self-sacrificing while dear Gerald really needed her,' Mrs. Loughlin explained to her husband, 'that I could not but offer to do this when she spoke of wishing to go out early this morning, and yet being unwilling to have Gerald perhaps wake up during her absence.'

'I should think Winnie or the new maid could have taken her place if you had arranged it so,' remarked Mr. Loughlin, accustomed to his wife's partiality for late rising.

'They were going out, too; I forgot to ask them why, but I know it was to church, and I am sure I heard them pass downstairs before daylight. This is not Sunday. What is it, Jim?' With her hand on the door knob Mrs. Loughlin waited her husband's reply, and in the instant's pause realised, too, that she was perhaps breaking a settled rule of her married life, which was never to recall to his mind the religion or religious observances he had apparently committed to oblivion since their wedding day.

His hesitation in answering her question was no affectation.

The Hon. James Loughlin, capitalist and politician, had managed to forget many things with which Jimmie Loughlin, the bright-faced Irish immigrant of twenty years before, was pleasantly familiar.

'Let me see—yesterday was March the 16th, was it not? This is the 17th. Oh, this is Patrick's Day—an Irish holy day; the girls like to go to church, I suppose.'

'I should say they did,' thought Mrs. Loughlin, as she hastened through the dim hallway to her boy's apartment; 'they must like to, or they would never venture out such a morning as this.'

Pretty Miss Keating, the trained nurse, was a Catholic, too, and always during Gerald's illness arrangements were made for her attendance at Sunday Mass. Now she stood outside the door of the sick room, drawing on her warm gloves while she waited for the mother's coming.

'I am sure he will not trouble you any,' she whispered. 'He may not wake before I come in, but I thought it was best to be certain.'

'Oh, of course. I shall enjoy sitting with him now that I am really awake. But must you go to your church this cold morning? Would not the afternoon do? I can take your place then just as well.'

'Thank you for the offer. It is not at all compulsory for us to go to church to-day; but father and mother—they are both dead now,' said the pretty nurse, sadly—'liked to keep this day as it was kept in their old home. They always went to Mass, and took us, too, and now I like to offer a holy day Mass for them.'

Mrs. Loughlin did not quite understand, but she said no more, only when sitting idly beside the sleeping child, whom even the rustling of the morning paper might disturb, she continued the train of thought started by the simple evidence of her employee's devotion to their parents' faith. Why did it mean so much to them and apparently nothing to her own husband? Was it because worldly success and riches sufficed as substitutes? Not in all cases, she knew, for there was their neighbor—Judge Grace—moneyed, influential, with the added prestige of descent and inherited position; and he was the acknowledged pillar of that same little church frequented by Winnie, the cook, and Margaret Keating. Indeed, she had heard the former refer casually to Judge Grace 'taking up the Sunday collection' there, and it was well understood that from his private purse were supplied the deficiencies of the church income. It was true, she reflected, that her Presbyterian father, whose helping hand had assisted young James Loughlin to his sudden rise, might have refused his daughter to an aggressive Catholic, as was Judge Grace, for instance. In her heart she owned that it would have been embarrassing during the days of courtship and engagement to introduce into the gay circle where she moved a lover of such straight-laced tendencies as Catholics must needs possess.

'Jim' had been simply perfect in this light, never mentioning religion that she could recall, and since their marriage he was equally satisfactory. Only once, she remembered, when Gerald was so extremely ill, the father had spoken some incoherent words, in which mention of his own sins and his boy's baptism were strangely mixed; but