

Friends at Court

CLEANINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR

December 18, Sunday.—Fourth Sunday of Advent.
 " 19, Monday.—St. Urban V., Pope and Confessor.
 " 20, Tuesday.—St. Josaphat, Bishop and Martyr.
 " 21, Wednesday.—St. Thomas, Apostle.
 " 22, Thursday.—St. Deusededit, Pope and Confessor.
 " 23, Friday.—St. Columbanus, Abbot.
 " 24, Vigil of the Nativity. Fast Day.

St. Josaphat, Bishop and Martyr.

St. Josaphat, a native of Poland, displayed, while still in his boyhood, such piety and fraternal charity as to excite the admiration of all who knew him. After having been for some years a monk of the Order of St. Basil, he was raised to the dignity of Archbishop. The zeal and success with which he preserved his flock from heresy and schism drew upon him the hatred of some sectarians, who compassed his death in 1623.

St. Thomas, Apostle.

This Apostle was a Jew, and probably a fisherman. From the refusal of St. Thomas to believe that Christ had appeared to the other Apostles, Our Blessed Saviour took occasion to afford an irrefragable proof of the reality of His Resurrection (Gospel of St. John, c. xx.). After the Ascension, St. Thomas, according to a very ancient tradition, preached in Persia, and also in India, where he suffered martyrdom.

GRAINS OF GOLD

WHEN DARKNESS COMES.

When darkness comes—

When ling'ring shadows length'ning,
 Are woven in the sable web of night
 And earthly cordials lost their powers of strength'ning,
 We ask Thee, Lord of Lords, will there be light?

When darkness comes—

When friends assemble 'round us,
 And close our eyes, now dim, that erst were bright;
 Or, sobbing, gently speak of ties that bound us,
 We ask Thee, Lord of Lords, will there be light?

When darkness comes—

When we with naught to vex us,
 Lie still and palsied, mute and cold and white,
 And when earth's conflicts can no more perplex us,
 We ask Thee, Lord of Lords, will there be light?

When darkness comes—

When books and Bibles vanish,
 And earthly ministrants are lost to sight,
 And when death's touches, chill, all feelings banish,
 We ask Thee, Lord of Lords, will there be light?

When darkness comes—

The sounds from heaven streaming
 Will drive away the fears which now affright,
 And mother's voice, while mother's smile is beaming,
 Will softly say, 'My child, here is the light.'

Do not let us waste our time in wishing that we were like others—that we had the things God has given them; we cannot have these. Each must use what God has given to himself. Let us be content to live day by day as God leads us, making good use of every moment, without looking beyond it.—Fenelon.

If men and women forgave in the same measure that they seek or desire forgiveness, the world would be a vastly different place from what it is. Life would be brighter and happiness more general. Love, which is the great leaven, would triumph where now it is trampled upon by the false pride which so often keeps us from exercising our divine power of forgiveness.

There are but few persons leading earnest lives who do not feel that they fail thoroughly to realise even the most limited of their aims, and if they are unhappy enough to be sensitive as well as earnest, it cannot be prophesied how much real good a hearty word may do them in times of mental trouble. Then it is that a true friend will think it well to tell them something encouraging, something strengthening and reviving, that they ought to know.

Be patient with your critical friends. They are neither omniscient nor omnipotent. They cannot see your heart, and many misunderstand you. They do not know what is best in you, and may select what is worst. Their arms are short, and they may not be able to reach what you ask. What if they also lack purity of purpose or tenacity of affection? Do not you also lack these graces? Patience is your refuge. Endure your criticising friends, and in enduring conquer them, and if not them, then at least yourself.

The Storyteller

SEVEN HUNDRED MILES FOR A PRIEST

It was the 25th of February, 1900, the eighth day since the grim Boer commandant, General Cronje, had been surrounded by the British forces in the Modder River. He had some 4000 troops all told, whilst Lord Roberts had 50,000 men. Some of these were composed of crack Canadian and English regiments. Lord Roberts's artillery consisted of 150 pieces. After the third day of the grand defence of General Cronje and his heroic band, the British General determined to crush him at all hazards. On the south bank of the river he placed in position, at a range of 2000 yards, the Eighteenth, Sixty-second, and Seventy-fifth field batteries and two naval twelve-pounders. On the north bank, and enfilading the whole river, were placed the Sixty-fifth Howitzer battery, the Seventy-sixth, Eighty-second field batteries, and three naval 4.7-inch guns. A terrible scene followed.

The British guns simultaneously poured shot and shell on the Boer position, which was about a mile square. The lyddite shells raised great clouds of green, nauseous smoke which filled the bed of the river, while shrapnel burst on the edge and down the sides of the river banks, into which the Burghers had burrowed, and from tunnels they had dug, often poured a return fire, which laid many a British soldier low. On that day alone the British lost 800 men in killed and wounded.

Thus the long line of British batteries belched forth death the whole day long, and on each side of them lay two battalions of infantry whose maxims sounded petty beside the roaring big guns. There were many dumb animals, oxen, and horses in that whirlpool of shot and shell, and many Boer women with suckling babes and many tiny tots and many grey-haired men, but that did not stop the firing; not even during the night. The earth shook under the detonation of the fearful cannonading and the soaring grape-shot and the bursting shells crossing each other and bursting in the midst of the Boer laager made a pyrotechnical display never to be forgotten by those who witnessed the fearful battle of the Modder River. The stubborn resistance of Cronje at first angered, then awed, Lord Roberts.

One of the Shropshire regiments contained some Irish sharpshooters. That night the Shropshires were ordered to relieve the Gordons. They crawled on their stomachs to the trenches. But somehow one of the rifle bullets of one of the Boers found its mark. Shot through the abdomen, a young Irish Shropshire sergeant ceased his crawling and lay helpless. His comrades dragged him by his feet slowly and painfully to the rear, where the white tents of the Red Cross, each decorated with the symbol of mercy, shimmered in the flickering light of the assault. 'It's a blamed treacherous wound,' said the cool surgeon as he examined the man; 'he may live three days and a little longer, but there is no curing him.' Gently the nurses placed him on a cot. The poor man had heard the blunt surgeon's remarks. He knew his time had come; and amidst the terrors of war and the black veldt there arose in his mind the green fields of Ireland and the stillness of his little parish church and the benign face of the Soggarth Aroon, the dear priest.

The head nurse had been admitted to Lord Roberts's field tent. He was about to retire. Standing upright at the small table, he listened attentively to what the nurse had to say. 'Sergeant Mc—will not admit that it cannot be done, my lord. He knows that the next Catholic priest is seven hundred miles away. But he says that he cannot believe that you would refuse the request of a dying man. We have fought with him on every possible ground. He will not listen.' The British General looked to the ground in silence. 'What shall I say, my lord, to the man?' insisted the nurse. Lord Roberts went to the opening of the tent. 'Call Engineer Headly,' the General said to the orderly, who was waiting outside.

A trim, wiry, stocky little man appeared, bronzed like a Florentine statue, with eager eyes, restless and keen, and stood at attention.

'Headly, is the train in readiness?'

'It is, my lord.'

'How long will it take you to ride to Kimberley and back?'

'Four days, my lord.'

'Call Captain MacDonald.'

The orderly saluted. Tall and with quick steps the captain entered.

'What of the last report of the condition of the road?' asked General Roberts.

'The last telegrams indicate, my lord, that the road is well guarded, and up to this hour no break is reported.'

'Engineer Headly, you will proceed to Kimberley at once.'

Then Lord Roberts sat at a small writing table and dashed off a few lines. 'Give this to Major Dudley.' And then the man saluting, the nurse bowing, left the tent of the commanding officer. Soon the light of Lord Roberts's tent was extinguished.