

## Friends at Court

### GLEANINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR

- December 3, Sunday.—First Sunday in Advent.  
 „ 4, Monday.—St. Peter Chrysologus, Bishop, Confessor, and Doctor.  
 „ 5, Tuesday.—St. Martin, Pope and Martyr.  
 „ 6, Wednesday.—St. Nicholas, Bishop and Confessor.  
 „ 7, Thursday.—St. Ambrose, Bishop, Confessor, and Doctor.  
 „ 8, Friday.—Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.  
 „ 9, Saturday.—St. Eutychian, Pope and Martyr.

St. Martin, Pope and Martyr.

St. Martin, a native of Tuscany, succeeded Pope Theodore in 649. Owing to his uncompromising hostility to the Monothelite heresy, he was seized by order of the Emperor Constans, and conveyed to Constantinople, whence, after being treated with the utmost indignity and barbarity, he was banished to the Crimea. He died in 655, having suffered with heroic constancy the rigors of imprisonment and exile.

St. Ambrose, Bishop, Confessor, and Doctor.

St. Ambrose, son of a Roman magistrate, was born in France about the year 340. In 374 he was consecrated Archbishop of Milan. His administration of this important archdiocese extended over twenty-three years, and was one continuous victory over paganism and heresy. Completely forgetful of his worldly interests and personal comfort, St. Ambrose was always at the command of anyone who sought his assistance and advice. Though full of tenderness and compassion towards all, he knew how to be firm and unyielding when the interests of religion were at stake. His theological writings and sermons have gained him a place in the foremost rank of the Doctors of the Church. St. Ambrose died in 397.

The 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; and 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

#### A BEACON.

Led by a wondrous Star,  
 The Magi, from afar,  
 Came unto Him.  
 O Mother, let thy light  
 Stream out—a beacon bright  
 That ne'er grows dim.

Humble work is often the most valuable, and its reward is the surest. Men fret at being tied to a clerk's desk. Surely, they say, anyone could direct these envelopes, copy these letters, cast up these interminable columns: and yet, in their contempt for their life-work, they fail to see it is giving them a better opportunity of cultivating punctuality, patience, fidelity, and similar passive virtues, than they would have if they played a more conspicuous part in the world's life, or in spheres where certain other conditions nerve to supreme efforts, which in their case can only be called forth by lofty principle. At the end of life's brief day we shall be rewarded according to the faithfulness with which we have endeavoured to do our duty, in whatever sphere.

## The Storyteller

### ANTONIA'S LOVER

The olive buds were putting forth their sheaths of tender green under the darker background of their shining leaves; rows upon rows of tall Easter lilies were swaying gently in the afternoon breeze. Two girls, young and pretty, Antonia Barcas and her friend Victoria Vidal, sat under the sweet-scented locust trees in the old California garden. Each had a bit of embroidery in her hand, but they were not sewing. Something far more interesting was engrossing them.

'Who told you of it?' asked Antonia, toying with her gold thimble as she gazed absently into the orchard. But this apparent unconcern was assumed to conceal the interest she felt in the announcement Victoria had just made.

'It was Gregorio Nunez,' replied Victoria. 'He came down from the city the day before yesterday, and stopped at our place for supper. Alfredo will be here to-night.'

'But I thought he was not coming here again until the winter—so he wrote, at least,' said Antonia.

'He writes to you, Antonia!' exclaimed the other, in a tone of astonishment and well-feigned disapprobation. 'I would not have thought it of you—to receive letters from a young man, Antonia!'

'Nor have I,' rejoined the other calmly. 'It was to my father he sent the word—with some other business.'

'To ask for your hand, maybe,' said the other laughingly.

'I do not think so,' replied Antonia, holding herself well in hand. For she long had divined that Victoria Vidal had more than a passing interest in the handsome young rancher from Monterey.

'Antonia,' resumed Victoria bluntly, 'are you fond of Velasquez?'

'A strange question to ask me Victoria,' replied Antonia, her olive cheek growing a shade more crimson. 'Should any young girl allow herself to become fond of any man until she knows whether she is agreeable to him?'

'Pooh!' rejoined Victoria, snapping her fingers. 'That is an old-fashioned way, and our Mexican way, but the Americans are different.'

'We are Mexicans,' said Antonia. 'And our way is a good way.'

'I will tell you something,' continued Victoria. 'You may let a fine chance pass, with your pride and mousy little ways. I believe, Antonia, that Alfredo Velasquez is coming this time to look for a wife and that you may have him for the taking. He is the finest and the richest of all the rancheros of the North—that my father has said often. I would not hesitate if he wanted me. Shall it be a race between us?' she continued laughingly.

Antonia shrank back in surprise. 'Victoria,' she said, 'if we had not been so long neighbors, and almost sisters, if your heart were not so kind I could almost not like you; you shock me—often. But—'

'But,' repeated Victoria, rising to her feet, 'you seem so indifferent. This is war—not love. It would be a shame to let so good a man slip from our hands—when he is so willing. If you want him he is yours to take, I admit. But if you are so slow in the taking do not blame me if I put out my hand to pluck the fruit within my reach—for so it shall be should you despise it. He likes me very well, Antonia.'

As she finished, from behind the old abandoned well, almost hidden by its screen of high cedars, a young man approached smiling, in his fingers a pink Castilian rosebud.

'Well met, señoritas!' he exclaimed, bowing courteously to both girls, though his eyes sought those of Antonia, and it was in her hand that he softly dropped the rosebud, as he gently pressed the slender fingers. Her eyes drooped under his gaze, while the dark orbs of Victoria grew darker, emitting a flash it was not pleasant to see. But the others did not observe it. Victoria was the first to speak.