

**FRIENDS AT COURT**  
**GLEANINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S**  
**CALENDAR.**

- Dec. 27, Sun.—St. John the Evangelist.
- „ 28, Mon.—Feast of the Holy Innocents.
- „ 29, Tues.—St. Thomas of Canterbury, Bishop and Martyr.
- „ 30, Wed.—Within the Octave of the Nativity.
- „ 31, Thurs.—St. Sylvester, Pope.
- Jan. 1, Frid.—Circumcision of Our Lord. Holiday of Obligation.
- „ 2, Sat.—Octave of St. Stephen. St. John, Apostle and Evangelist.

St. John was the brother of St. James the Greater, and is mentioned in the Gospels as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." He was one of those faithful few who stood by the Cross, and it was to him our dying Saviour recommended the care of His Mother. After the Ascension, St. John remained chiefly in Jerusalem, though he sometimes took long and arduous journeys for the purpose of spreading the knowledge of the doctrines and sufferings of Christ. The closing years of his life were spent at Ephesus, where he died about the year 101.

**St. Thomas, Bishop and Martyr.**

St. Thomas a'Beckett was born in London in 1117. Having embraced the ecclesiastical state, and given proof of singular ability and fervent piety, he was soon called to occupy very important positions in the Church. In 1157 he was appointed Lord Chancellor of England by King Henry II, and in 1162 was elected Archbishop of Canterbury. Though remarkable for humility and meekness, he did not hesitate to boldly defend the rights of the Church against the unjust attacks of the English King. His firmness cost him his life. He was murdered in his cathedral by four knights at, it is alleged, the instigation of the King, A.D. 1170.

**GRAINS OF GOLD**  
**THE NATIVITY.**

What was it those three Kings beheld  
 Who journeyed from afar?  
 It was a rudely builded shed,  
 But 'neath a lovely star.  
 And did they find Him Whom they sought,  
 These servants undismayed?  
 Aye, entering they found the Christ  
 Within a manger laid.  
 Now what brought they, those pilgrims grave,  
 Unto the Infant King?  
 Each gently by the pallet placed  
 A princely offering.  
 Thus gold and frankincense and myrrh,  
 The rarest gifts of earth,  
 With faith and hope and love divine,  
 Surround the Saviour's birth.  
 But we who have no golden crown,  
 No balm or incense sweet—  
 What can we bring to Bethlehem  
 The Holy One to greet?  
 Oh, bring to Him your contrite hearts,  
 And humbly kneel and pray,  
 And they will shine as kingly gifts  
 Of rich and bright array.

—MARY A. CONWAY.

**The Storyteller**

**For the Old Land**  
**A TALE OF FIFTY YEARS AGO.**  
 (By CHARLES J. KICKHAM.)

**CHAPTER VII.**

Mr. O'Keeffe's Horse Disappears Mysteriously—Sammy Sloane Pay a Second Visit to the Shrubbery and Pulls a Nosegay this Time—He Warns His Son Against Allowing Himself to be Influenced by Personal Feeling in the Discharge of his Professional Duties, and Hopes that Murty Magrath will not Hear of what Occurred.

"What's the matter with Joe?" Father Feehan asked a few minutes afterwards.

"I sent him to the forge with my horse," Mr. O'Keeffe replied. "This collared head is capital, Mrs. Slattery—no one can equal you at a collared head—but I'll try a leg of that fowl; it looks so tempting. Your fowl are the plumpest and the tenderest and the best cooked I can meet anywhere. And my friend, the Hon. Horatio Mulligan, made the same remark to me last night. We must put him in for the county, and no mistake, at the next election. The sherry, thank you, Mrs. Slattery. By the way, Father Clancy does not seem to be at all a warm supporter of the Honorable Horatio. But we must bring him round before the general election."

A scowl suddenly darkened the hard and ruddy and—during Mr. O'Keeffe's previous remarks—radiant face of the housekeeper, who proceeded to remove the tray, while Mr. O'Keeffe filiped a little bread-crumble from his vest, displaying his ring and white hand to the best advantage.

"What is the matter with Joe?" the priest, who was standing at the window, again asked.

"He thought I had the key of the gate, whatever put it into his head," replied the housekeeper, standing with the tray between her hands in the doorway, which she pretty well filled up, so that Mr. O'Keeffe went near sending the glasses and decanter flying about the hall in endeavoring to pass her. He had caught a glimpse of Joe Cooney through the window, looking wildly about him, and, with some vague fears for his new saddle, Mr. O'Keeffe hurried out to question Joe as to what had happened. That something very extraordinary must have happened was evident enough from Joe's bewildered and frightened stare.

"The Lord save us!" exclaimed Joe, "unless the ground swallowed him, I don't know what must have become of him."

"What do you mean?" Mr. O'Keeffe asked angrily through his clenched white teeth, while the delicate pink and white of his smooth face flushed crimson.

"The gate was locked, sir," Joe Cooney replied—too much amazed to notice his questioner's anger; "and I hung the saddle on the gate while I was running up for the key. An' when I came back in two minutes after I hadn't tale or tidens of him."

Mr. O'Keeffe hurried to the avenue gate which, to his surprise, was locked. But on casting his eyes upon the ground he caught

sight of the key, which seemed to have accidentally dropped from the lock.

Joe Cooney picked up the key and opened the gate, with a vague notion that the horse might be outside on the road.

"Did you try the stable and the kitchen garden?" inquired Father Feehan, who had come out on learning that the horse had disappeared.

"I tried every hole and corner, sir," returned Joe, whose amazement showed no symptoms of subsiding.

Father Clancy rode slowly through the open gate, upon his grey mare, with that satirical twinkle in his eye, of which Mr. Robert O'Keeffe stood a little in dread.

"What's the matter?" the curate asked, tightening the rein, and tapping his toe with his hazel switch, looking as if he knew beforehand what the reply would be, which Mr. O'Keeffe seemed in no hurry to give.

"This bosthoon," he answered angrily at last, "he's let my horse break away, and does not know where he is."

"Oh, he's quite safe," returned the curate.

"Where?" Mr. Robert O'Keeffe asked in surprise.

"In the Pound," Father Clancy replied, with his dry laugh. "At least I think so, for I saw Sammy Sloane leading him up Croobeen-lane."

It was pale Mr. Robert O'Keeffe turned now; and, if it were not for the presence of the two priests, that clenched white hand would in all likelihood have come into contact (unless parried) with Joe Cooney's visage, which looked rueful and penitent enough at the moment to submit to any amount of ill-usage with resignation.

"Why do you allow such a thing to happen?" Father Feehan asked, with a displeased look, but in a tone that could only be heard by his nephew himself. "I spoke to you about that before."

"I knew he had one or two decrees for small amounts," was the reply. "But I never thought the fellow would seize my horse. 'Tis very vexatious just now; for I suppose it will spread about like wild-fire."

"The sooner you settle about it the better, then," suggested Father Feehan. "Go down to Mr. Armstrong and tell him I'll feel obliged if he would come up for a few minutes," said Mr. O'Keeffe, turning to Joe Cooney, who seemed to be plucking up spirit, as he reflected that Sammy Sloane could have seized the horse just as easily at the forge.

"He's gone to fish, sir," exclaimed Joe Cooney, suddenly, after having gone some yards beyond the gate. "I saw him in the morning with his basket on his shoulder talking to Rody Flynn."

"Well, tell Rody to come up to me," said Mr. O'Keeffe, sharply. Joe started off again; but again paused, with his eyes upon the