

Friends at Court

CLEANINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR

January 6, Sunday.—Feast of the Epiphany.
 „ 7, Monday.—Of the Octave.
 „ 8, Tuesday.—Of the Octave.
 „ 9, Wednesday.—Of the Octave.
 „ 10, Thursday.—Of the Octave.
 „ 11, Friday.—Of the Octave.
 „ 12, Saturday.—Of the Octave.

Feast of the Epiphany.

This festival is set apart to solemnly commemorate the coming of the three wise men from the East, guided by a miraculous star which appeared to them, and directed them to Bethlehem, where they found Christ in the stable; here they honored and adored Him and offered gifts to Him.

The Octave of a Feast.

The octave of a feast is the period of eight days assigned for its celebration during which is repeated every day a part of the office of the feast, as the hymns, antiphons, or verses, with one or several lessons referring to the subject. On the eighth day, the octave properly speaking, the office is more solemn than that of the preceding days. Generally the most solemn feasts, like Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, the feast of the patron saint, are accompanied by an octave.

GRAINS OF GOLD

GREETING, NEW YEAR.

Greeting, New Year, upon the threshold standing!

You find us quiet—in the year just fled,
 So many things we might have done and said
 Whereby the sad world had been comforted.
 You bring us pages of unfolding days,
 Bound round with pain and patience, prayer and praise—
 Some joy (we see it in your smiling eyes)
 Because the One Who sends you is so wise.

Greeting, New Year, upon the threshold standing!

In God's dear Name, unworthy though I be,
 I reach my hands for all you bring to me,
 With one fixed thought, to serve Him faithfully.
 Come in, New Year, and may the while we spend,
 Go, purposeful, unto a fitting end,
 So when you stand where stood the vanished year,
 I speed you with a smile and not a tear.

The most fatal wreck that can overtake you in times of sorrow is the wreck of faith. When things go against us, when our loved ones are taken from us, that is not a call to bitter weeping, but to new duty.

Behave as at a banquet—take with gratitude and moderation what is set before you, and seek for nothing more. A larger and diviner step will be to be ready and able to forego even that which is given you.

With common diseases strength grows decrepit, youth loses all vigor, and beauty all charms; music grows harsh, and conversation disagreeable; palaces are prisons, or of equal confinement; riches are useless, honor and attendance are cumbersome, and crowns are burdens, but if diseases are painful and violent, they equal all conditions of life, make no difference between a prince and a beggar, and an attack of neuralgia puts a king on the rack, and makes him as miserable as the meanest, the worst, and the most criminal of his subjects.

In ancient times there stood in the citadel of Athens three statues of Minerva. The first was of olive wood, and, according to popular tradition, had fallen from Heaven. The second was of bronze, commemorating the victory of Marathon; and the third of gold and ivory—a great miracle of art, in the days of Pericles. And thus in the citadel of time stands man himself. In childhood, shaped of soft and delicate wood, just fallen from Heaven; in manhood a statue of bronze, commemorating struggle and victory; and, lastly, in the maturity of age, perfectly shaped in gold and ivory—a miracle of art!

The Rev. J. J. Malone, P.P., Daylesford, and the Rev. W. Ganly, P.P., St. Kilda West, leave shortly for Europe. They will probably be absent about twelve months.

The Storyteller

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

(Concluded from last week.)

An hour later he was ushered into the sick-room. He was more deeply moved than he would have cared to acknowledge. A veritable tempest of emotion swept over him, and in the midst of it all he found himself marvelling that time had dealt so kindly with her whom he had treated so cruelly. True, the ravages of dread apyphoid were only too evident, but they could not conceal the fact that in health the victim had been a handsome, well-preserved woman.

As Durant slowly advanced to the side of the couch, she extended a trembling hand, saying:

'Herbert—let me call you by the old name once more—you were surprised to receive my message, but I could not at this hour forget the promise I made to your dear mother. She asked me, as her dying request, to urge upon you the necessity of being true to your religion, which she discovered you neglected after you became a successful broker. To her last wish let me add my own. Will you not, in consideration of our old friendship, promise me on my deathbed to do this? It will destroy much of the pain of death to know that I have not been altogether a faithless messenger of your mother, although I delayed so long the delivery of her message. She is praying for you this Christmas Eve, and I feel that you cannot remain indifferent to her prayers.'

The effort was too much for the invalid. Her head sank upon the pillow. Durant vainly tried to conceal his emotion. Speak he could not, so deeply touched was he by the words of his former fiancée, bearing a message from the grave. In a few minutes the sufferer regained her strength.

'Herbert,' she repeated, 'my moments here are numbered, and you must answer now. Do you refuse the only request I ever made of you?'

The battle was won. Durant, moved to the innermost depths of his soul, was only too eager to retrace his steps—to begin all over again. He had succumbed. With his first step over the threshold of the sick-room, he had felt the aims and aspirations of the recent past slipping away, and the spirit of the earlier, happier days returning. This appeal from the other world, transmitted by one whom he believed to be on the verge of eternity, obliterated the last remnant of his powers of resistance.

'No, Clara,' he replied, and there was a world of tenderness and regret in his tone; 'I do not refuse. The sight of your face has brought me to my senses, and I realise now my mistake. Money came to me, but not happiness. Yet I should not complain, for I received no more than I deserved. I grant your request. Will you not grant mine? Don't give up. Make an effort to live, for while there is life there is hope. Live to help me undo the past. The doctor orders me to leave you. Before I go let me return what was once yours.'

And as he spoke he took from his pocket-book a ring, which he slipped upon her finger. And she! What a transfiguration! Amazement, unutterable joy—these were the feelings expressed in the wan countenance. And they were his only answer. Stooping, he reverently kissed her brow and withdrew—a changed man. Not to his home, but to St. Agnes' rectory were his steps directed. The pastor had just come from the confessional, and Durant was closeted with him for an hour. Then he started for his home. He had not gone far before he decided that, as he was happy, he would try if it were possible to make some one else happy. He returned to Mr. Deberg's and requested that gentleman to convey to Clara the intelligence that his Christmas Holy Communion would be offered for her recovery.

Then, knowing that Mr. Deberg was president of a Conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, he asked for the name and address of some poor family, and was directed to the most destitute family on the list. For at least a quarter of a century he had been unfamiliar with scenes of poverty, and was not prepared for the spectacle that greeted him on the upper floor of an old tenement. Here a woman and five children made their abode. The room was almost bare, there being no fire and but a few pieces of furniture to relieve the desolate scene. He asked but few questions, and then called the oldest boy, a manly little fellow of twelve years, to go with him to the nearest department store, where he purchased an oil stove and a basket of provisions, which they carried in their arms, as nothing could be delivered that evening.

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