

Friends at Court

GLEANINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR

- March 2, Sunday.—Quinquagesima Sunday.
 „ 3, Monday.—Of the Feria.
 „ 4, Tuesday.—St. Casimir, Confessor.
 „ 5, Wednesday.—Ash Wednesday.
 „ 6, Thursday.—S.S. Perpetua and Felicitas, Martyrs.
 „ 7, Friday.—St. Thomas Aquinas, Confessor and Doctor.
 „ 8, Saturday.—St. John of God, Confessor.

Ash Wednesday.

Ash Wednesday, the Wednesday after Quinquagesima Sunday, is the first day of the Lenten fast. The name *dies cinerum* (day of ashes) which it bears in the Roman Missal, is found in the earliest existing copies of the Gregorian Sacramentary, and probably dates from at least the eighth century. On this day all the faithful according to ancient custom are exhorted to approach the altar before the beginning of Mass, and there the priest, dipping his thumb into ashes previously blessed, marks upon the forehead of each the Sign of the Cross, saying the words: "Remember, man, that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return." The ashes used in this ceremony are made by burning the remains of the palms blessed on Palm Sunday of the previous year. In the blessing of the ashes four prayers are used, all of them ancient, and the ashes are sprinkled with holy water and fumigated with incense. The celebrant himself, be he bishop or cardinal, receives either standing or seated, the ashes from some other priest, usually the highest in dignity of those present. In earlier ages a penitential procession often followed the rite of the distribution of the ashes, but this is not now prescribed.

GRAINS OF GOLD.

LENT.

Now are the days of humblest prayer,
 When conscience to God lies bare
 And mercy most delights to spare,
 O hearken when we cry,
 Chastise us with Thy fear;
 Yet, Father! in the multitude
 Of Thy compassions, hear!

Now is the season, wisely long,
 Of sadder thought and graver song,
 When ailing souls grow well and strong.

The feast of penance; Oh, so bright
 With true conversion's heavenly light,
 Like sunrise after stormy flight!

O happy time of blessed tears,
 Of surer hopes, of chastening fears,
 Undoing all our evil years!

We, who have loved the world, must learn
 Upon that world our backs to turn
 And with the love of God to burn.

Full long in sin's dark way we went,
 Yet now our steps are heavenward bent,
 And grace is plentiful in Lent.

All glory to redeeming grace,
 Disdaining not our evil case,
 But showing us our Saviour's face!
 Oh, hearken when we cry,
 Chastise us with Thy fear;
 Yet, Father! in the multitude
 Of Thy compassions, hear!

—Father Faber.

The Storyteller

THE WILD BIRDS OF KILLEEVY

ROSA MULHOLLAND.

(By arrangement with Messrs. Burns and Oates, London.)

CHAPTER XI.—ON THE TRACK.

On a chill January evening, about nightfall, a weary figure approached the gate of a trim farmhouse in the South of England, and after hesitating for an instant, hand on latch, entered and walked up to the lighted dwelling. Through the window he could see a picture of tranquil comfort in contrast with the region of bare, lonely, wind-swept woodland through which his way had led him for hours; and, with a sudden thrill and contraction, the heart within him appreciated the full force of the contrast.

The gleam of golden asters and the pale, drenched bloom of pink climbing roses against the gable gave even to the outer walls of the house an air of fostering protectiveness; and the figure visible within between half-drawn curtains, of a fair, placid woman musing by an old-fashioned fireside, hands folded, and face and figure crossed by loving lights and shadows, seemed to promise an ample fulfilment of the suggestions made by the exterior of her habitation. The impression conveyed in a moment by the woman and her walls decided Kevin, who proceeded to the back entrance to make his business known.

Rachel Webb looked up as one of her hand-maidens opened the door of her sitting-room.

"Please, ma'am, there is a young man outside looking for work, who says he has walked all the way from Ireland."

"Nay, Dorothy," said the mistress, mildly, "thou must make a mistake. He will have crossed the sea if he comes from that island."

"Really, ma'am?" said Dorothy, who had not the least idea of where Ireland lay on the map.

"He must be of an industrious turn if he has come so far for work," continued the mistress. "Invite him to have some supper and I will see him afterwards."

Accordingly a little later Rachel Webb stepped into her spotless kitchen, and was at once struck by the pale, thoughtful face of the young man who rose from his seat by the fire. Mild and staid as were all her looks and movements, she was a keen judge of character, and rapidly noted something unusual in the appearance of this applicant for labor to do. And Kevin felt on the instant an emphatic increase of the feeling of trust which her very shadow had inspired him with.

"Thou art seeking work?" said Rachel; "and I hear thou hast come far to look for it."

"Yes," said Kevin, "I am looking for work; but, madam, I will tell you the entire truth."

"Do so," said Rachel, approvingly.

"I have not left my home merely to obtain work, for I had plenty at home. My father will miss me; but I have another purpose."

"Proceed," said Mrs. Webb, kindly.

"I am in search of one I love dearly," continued Kevin, flushing with painful earnestness, "who has been stolen away from home; who may possibly be in England—"

"A young woman?" asked Rachel, while the maids at a table near pricked up their ears and listened with rounded eyes for the young man's story.

"No, madam, only a child; a child who will one day be a woman."

"Is she thy sister?"

"No; but her mother when dying left her to my care."

"And thou hast quitted thy home and thy country to seek for her?"