

saalem' (Romans xv., 19-25). St. Peter would thus be regarded as the founder of the Church at Rome, and though he could not continue to reside in their midst—there was so much to do elsewhere—he would exercise over the faithful at Rome the authority of a founder.

Jewish Christians were doubtless the first to practise the Christian religion in Rome; they were followed by Jewish and pagan converts. Both of these would bring many of their friends in Rome to a knowledge of the truth. But the expulsion of the Jews from the city in 49 and 50 cut off the stream of Jewish converts, with the result that the Church at Rome was transformed into a predominantly pagan community. This appears from the opening words of St. Paul's Epistle: 'Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ through Whom we have received grace and apostleship unto obedience of faith among all the nations . . . among whom are ye also called to be Christ's; to all that are in Rome, beloved of God. . . . Oftentimes I proposed to come unto you . . . that I might have some fruit in you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles. I am debtor both to Greeks and Barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you also that are in Rome' (Romans i., 1-15). Still, the Jewish Christians by reason of their moral and religious training must have been the leaders of the young community.

Chapter xvi. of the same Epistle gives us some idea of the status of these Roman Christians: the names mentioned there are largely those of slaves and freed men. But not all belonged to the poorer class. The better sort of Greek and some Oriental slaves would often be more highly educated and more refined in manners than their masters. We know, too, that owing to St. Paul's presence and preaching Christianity had penetrated into the retinue of the Emperor. The Apostle 'abode two years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him, preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God with all boldness, none forbidding him' (Acts xxviii., 30-31. 'I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me (in Rome) have fallen out rather for the progress of the Gospel; so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole Praetorium, and to all the rest' (Philippians xii., 14). 'All the saints salute you, especially those of Caesar's household' (Philippians iv., 22).

BY THE QUEEN'S MERCY

The rays of the western sun were struggling through the dense pine woods of the Black Hills one sultry afternoon in the late summer. The tops of the tall pines that crowned the summits of the hills seemed etherealised with the glorious effulgence; not the ghost of a breeze stirred their sleeping branches. The lengthening shadows already lay heavy in the valleys, while in the distance the eastern ascent of Harvey Peak towered aloft in gloomy indistinctness.

The dreary silence of the scene was unbroken save for the tramping of a solitary horse that moved at a brisk canter along the backbone of one of the lesser hills. His rider, a man still young in years, was dressed in the blue full-dress of one of Uncle Sam's troopers. He was a man to hold the eye of even a casual observer—tall, lithe, and well proportioned, with the free and easy grace of perfect self-possession. His face, though still handsome, had fallen into hard lines, while his sunken cheeks, and the dark hollow beneath his eyes showed but too plainly that he was 'going the pace that kills.' The bridle hung loosely on his horse's neck; the road across the hills was no new one to man or beast, and in the little hamlet that nestled down there in the valley beyond, the name of Will Staunton was one of unhallowed notoriety. Times without number he had ridden over from the fort, and bartered his manhood for a night's carouse.

And it was a sad sight, too, this ruthless blighting of such fair promises, this wearing away of the vital

forces in such a magnificent physique, this slow and relentless strangling of a spirit that still dared to dream of higher things. And was it to be no more than a dream? Would all this unspeakable shame and loathing of its degradation never fan to a flame the last faint spark of nobility in the fettered soul? For there were still some shreds of nobility in Will Staunton, a nobility born not only of nature, but of a deep, unshaken faith in a just and eternal God.

It was in such a mood of half-hopeful remorse that he pulled his horse into a walk, and with his head sunk forward upon his breast, became wrapt in reverie. His thoughts went back through the years and rested on a scene of his boyhood.

* * * * *

It was the Feast of Corpus Christi. The sun peered over the eastern hills with a sleepy, sodden look in his bloated red face, as though he had been drinking hard the night before, and was not well pleased to be up at this early hour. But when he had gained a height from which he could look down on the scene before him, he brightened up considerably. His jolly old face returned to its habitual size and color, and after a few hard winks to clear his eyes, he broke into a broad, good-natured smile that seemed to diffuse itself over everything. The myriad dew-drops that clung to the fresh green grass blinked and sparkled in a most witching way; the violets and morning-glories opened their sleeping eyes, and tossed their little heads in a decidedly disdainful manner at the softly murmured protestation of the lovelorn breeze, for didn't he tell the same to all the flowers—the fickle minion! The thrushes whistled gaily in the hedges by the roadside, while from copse and thicket came the clear, strong note of the robin calling to his mate. Even the solemn old ocean seemed to enter into the fun as he heaved and shook with suppressed merriment, and then chafing at restraint cast himself with uproarious laughter upon the beach. The sweet-voiced bell from the little chapel overlooking the sea called out in its blithest, cheeriest tones; and over all bent the smiling clear blue of the Irish skies.

'Hurry, mother,' said little Will Staunton, 'or we shall be late.'

The mother looked down proudly at the flushed and eager little face. It was her boy's First Communion day, and who will say what that means for a good Catholic mother!

'Very well; now I am ready. Don't forget your prayer-book, Will.'

'No, mother, I have it here in my pocket.'

'Oh, mother,' said the boy, as the two hurried on to church. 'I am so happy! I don't think I shall ever be so happy again in my life.'

'Yes, dear,' said Mrs. Staunton very tenderly, 'and you must pray very hard when our dear Lord comes to you this morning, that He may keep you ever good and dear to Him.'

'I will, I will, mother, and I'm going to pray for you and papa, too.'

'And your promise? You haven't forgotten your promise, have you, Will?'

'No, indeed, mother. I am to promise the Blessed Mother to say the 'Angelus' and three 'Hail Marys' in her honor every day.'

And now it was the Communion of the Mass. A solemn hush went through the little chapel. The children knelt with bowed heads, as the good old pastor turned towards them, and lifting one tiny Host in his fingers, said in a voice tremulous with emotion:

'Ecce Agnus Dei,' Behold the Lamb of God! 'Domine non sum dignus—Oh, Lord, I am not worthy.' And then with love and awe Will Staunton received his God.

A great sob broke from the young rouse, and a tear stole unheeded down his sunken cheek. It was a pure vision from life's morning, calling the prodigal home.

'A sorrow's crown of sorrows
Is remembering happier things.'

And ah! the sadness in the thought of what might have been! And how the sorrowful yet loving face of the

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