

FRIENDS AT COURT

GLEANINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR.

March 22, Sun.—Fourth Sunday of Lent.
 „ 23, Mon.—Of the Feria.
 „ 24, Tues.—St. Gabriel, Archangel.
 „ Wed.—Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
 „ 26, Thur.—Of the Feria.
 „ 27, Fri.—St. John Damascene, Confessor and Doctor.
 „ 28, Sat.—St. John Capistran, Confessor.

St. John Damascene, Confessor and Doctor.

St. John was born at Damascus, in Syria, which was then under the dominion of the Mahometans. So great was his reputation for integrity and prudence that, on the death of his father, he was appointed, notwithstanding his religion, to the important post of Prime Minister of the Caliph. After some years he resigned this dignity, and placed himself under the direction of some holy monks near Damascus. He died about 780. St. John rendered great service to the Church by his writings against the Iconoclast heretics, whose doctrines he triumphantly refuted.

GRAINS OF GOLD

"HAIL, FULL OF GRACE."

(Feast of the Annunciation, March 25.)
 When the Angel winged swiftly his flight
 from the skies
 And announced to thee, Mother, thy worth in
 God's eyes,
 Did he know that his greeting, his "Hail,
 full of grace!"
 Would re-echo forever through time and
 through space?

Was he conscious that, ages thereafter, his
 word
 Would be treasured as gladdest this earth
 ever heard,
 That the sheen of its glory for aye would
 increase,
 And its music grow sweeter with mercy and
 peace?

Did his vision angelic foreshow him a world
 Bearing proudly a banner to Mary unfurled,
 While the millions who march 'neath it never
 give o'er,
 Just repeating their watchword, his "Ave"
 of yore?

Did he see, dearest Mother, our hearts filled
 with love
 For thy Son and thyself in his fair home
 above?
 Did he see us, life spent, at thy feet, find
 a place
 To repeat with him, "Ave! O hail, full of
 grace!"?

THE STORYTELLER

NORA

Translated from the German by PRINCESS LIECHTENSTEIN
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 CHAPTER XIX—(Continued.)

With a thorough knowledge of the human heart, the chaplain did not discuss the details of this passionate speech; he only selected one part of it in order not to frighten away the wounded and suffering soul.

"Man's love is at best but a poor anchor," he said. "But how do you know that he despises you?"

At this question the blush became deeper on Nora's cheeks, and, unable to answer him at once, she arose, and, going to the window, laid her burning forehead against the fresh pane of glass.

"Have you heard from him?" asked the chaplain.

"I came a few weeks ago in the express train from Paris. A gentleman sat in the carriage with me . . . a gentleman who no longer knew me," she added hoarsely.

The chaplain started. "You travelled with him?"

Nora nodded silently, and her whole body was convulsed with a nervous trembling at the very remembrance.

The chaplain now understood what had caused Curt's relapse, but was it prudent to tell her what an impression the meeting had made upon him? Was it wise to revive the spark of hope now extinguished in her heart? But, after all, kindness and truth go before wisdom, and the priest, simple and straightforward as he was, felt that he could not withhold a balsam from one so deeply injured, or conceal a fact which might do her good.

"Count Degenthal fell seriously ill after that journey," he said. "I am on my way to see him at Göhlitz, which place he has not yet been able to leave."

Nora suddenly raised her head. "Seriously ill?" she asked breathlessly.

"It is a relapse of his former illness. The doctor attributes it to a complete shattering of the nervous system, the cause of which no one can explain."

"Relapse!" repeated Nora. "What do you mean? What illness are you talking about?"

"Did you know nothing about it?"

Nora shook her head.

"I knew nothing but that he was abroad at the Embassy," she said in a stifled voice.

"Then listen, and see whether he loved you faintly. Three years ago, that news reaching him unprepared, felled him to the ground, and kept him during long months on a sick bed." And then the chaplain, in his clear and quiet way, recounted all he knew about Curt.

Deadly pale and awfully still, Nora listened. "O my God!" she said slowly; "ill and suffering all these years!"

Ill and suffering for her sake. In her immense sorrow she had only thought of herself, and had never represented to herself

what he might have suffered. And now she saw that his delicate nature had not even supported the blow as well as she had done, and this was the man whom she had almost hated in her heart on account of his cold indifference! She felt herself a culprit standing there in all the strength of her youth and health.

"O my God!" she began once more. "This is dreadful; I never supposed it for a moment!"

"We are generally so much taken up by our own sorrows that we cannot easily represent to ourselves the sufferings of others, especially, as in this case, when we feel aggrieved."

"Oh, sir, hear me! Indeed it was not my fault," she cried; "you don't know what brought it about. . . I can hardly speak about it. I wrote it all to Curt, explained the whole to him, and he condemned me without hearing me; he returned the letter without even having read it, or without sending me a word of comfort."

"In that case he did not read the letter, and he probably heard through some indirect way of your appearance in public, and felt deeply hurt, as he had placed all his confidence in you. His long illness followed immediately upon this news. And now will you tell me, Nora, how all this took place?" asked the priest earnestly.

"Yes, I will tell it you; but under the seal of confession, for others are implicated in it." She fell on her knees, as if she were really going to confess a fault, and then she poured out the complete recital of those dreadful days during which her father's life—nay, more than that, his very soul—had been at stake. She described the fearful terror which had forced the vow from her.

The chaplain listened in silence. Even in thought he had never accused her of lightness or of caprice, but he had been unable to explain to himself the course she had taken. The greatness of her struggle and the magnitude of her sacrifice surpassed all his expectations. He was filled with a deep compassion for the poor girl who had acted so heroically, and had gained nothing but contempt in return.

"Was I wrong? Oh, do not condemn me!" she said in conclusion. "I have suffered so much. . . I destroyed my happiness with my own hands."

"God forbid that I should condemn you!" said the chaplain deeply moved. "I don't know myself what I might have advised at that moment! Your decision was made out of pure filial love and devotion. God will bless you for it! Yes, your life has been even a more difficult and hard one than your poor mother ever supposed—you've had to give up everything in order to save your father."