

FRIENDS AT COURT

GLEANINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR.

- Dec. 20, Sun.—Fourth Sunday of Advent.
 „ 21, Mon.—St. Thomas, Apostle.
 „ 22, Tues.—Of the Feria.
 „ 23, Wed.—Of the Feria.
 „ 24, Thurs.—Vigil of the Nativity.
 „ 25, Frid.—Feast of the Nativity. Holy day of Obligation.
 „ 26, Sat.—St. Stephen, Proto-Martyr.

Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord.

To-day the Church rejoices over the birthday of her Divine Founder—the Redeemer of mankind. The time appointed for the entrance of the Son of God into the world having arrived, Mary and Joseph were led by Divine Providence into Bethlehem. Failing to obtain admittance into the inns, they were compelled to take refuge in a grotto which served as a shelter for cattle. There Our Blessed Saviour was born to a life of poverty, humiliation, and suffering. He came to redeem the world, and to draw to Himself the affections of men, and, therefore, He presented Himself in the most amiable form that can be imagined—that of an innocent, helpless babe.

St. Stephen, First Martyr.

St. Stephen was one of the seven who were chosen to assist the Apostles in the daily distribution of alms, and who, by the imposition of the Apostles' hands, were raised to the Order of Deacons, and qualified to discharge some of the inferior duties of the sacerdotal office. By his zealous efforts for the propagation of the Gospel he stirred up the hatred of some of the Jews, who stoned him to death. He thus had the honor of being the first among Christ's disciples to seal his faith with his blood.

GRAINS OF GOLD

O MOTHER BLEST.

What heart hath loved thy Son, O Mother blest,

And hath not felt a tender love for thee,
 Who brought the Saviour to humanity,
 Who held our God a babe upon thy breast
 In love the strongest, purest, tenderest?

What pow'r can hush the waves' wild harmony,

Restrain the sunset splendor from the sea,
 Keep back the stars from heaven's azure crest.

And who shall part the Mother and her Son
 In that blest union, mightiest of all?

What sweet uplifting for the souls that fall,

This mother-love and Christ-love blent in one!
 Oh, love of Bethlehem and Calvary,
 The joy and promise of eternity!

Man never rose to greater power and honor, never "lifted his daring to the stars" in such a sublime hope as when through Christ he turned the defeat of suffering into victory and dared to creep up to the knees of God and call Him Father. To our Brother Christ be the honor and praise!

The Storyteller

For the Old Land

A TALE OF FIFTY YEARS AGO.

(By CHARLES J. KICKHAM.)

CHAPTER VI—(Continued.)

The cooper's workshop, you must know, was the favorite resort of the wise and the witty of Shannaclough, who might be seen wending their way thither of an evening to smoke their pipes and discuss political and other topics—generally in an amicable spirit; except when Tom McMahon ventured to assert certain claims of direct descent from the victor of Clontarf, which was sure to raise the anger of Stephen O'Brien to such a pitch that Davy Lacy, whose disposition was pacific, was often seen to turn from his contemplation of the poplar tree in Mr. Armstrong's garden, and quietly put the adze and all other dangerous weapons out of the reach of the disputants; and "Dicky Sheil" would sidle close to the wires of his cage, and look down in perplexity and fear. To be sure, religious discussions were not unknown at one time in Roddy Flynn's workshop. But happily that time was past and gone. Poor old Hammy Cosgrove, the sexton, stoutly carried on the war, though his supporters had dropped off one by one, till he was left to fight the battle of the Church, as by law established, alone amid a host of foes—not shrinking to meet even the formidable Paddy Shannahan, who had *Ward's Cantos* and *Cobbet's History of the Reformation* at the tips of his fingers. But one day the old sexton, taking the "authorised version" from the tail pocket of his rusty black coat, was nervously opening it with a view to utterly demolishing his opponents with a text, when Paddy Shannahan, laying his finger upon the page, said in a severe tone—"Read that."

"St. Paul to the Romans." Hammy Cosgrove read, turning his eyes from the book, and fixing them in surprise upon Paddy Shannahan's face, in every lineament of which "victory" complete and decisive was as clearly legible as were the words to which his index finger continued to point.

"St. Paul to the Romans," Hammy Cosgrove repeated in a more subdued tone, still wondering what Paddy Shannahan could make of the words, but with a vague presentiment of disaster.

"St. Paul to the Romans," rejoined Paddy Shannahan, slowly and impressively. "And will you show me St. Paul to the Protestants?" And Paddy Shannahan, drawing himself up to his full height, and folding his arms across his chest, paused for a reply.

There was no reply. Hammy Cosgrove closed his Bible with trembling hands, and retreated backwards into the street. He took to his bed for a month, and was "never the same after," his wife used to say. After this, arguing religion" was a thing of the past in Shannaclough; and Paddy Shannahan, who at one time was perhaps the most important person in the parish, would have fallen into comparative obscurity, had he not become the possessor of a certain book which treated of the identity of Antichrist, the

knowledge derived from which made him, if not a more popular, certainly a more feared and revered character even than he was when the sight of his red-brown wig made scripture readers hide their diminished heads.

Yet the attendance in Roddy Flynn's workshop was sure to be unusually numerous whenever Mr. Sweeny, the schoolmaster, was observed to walk straight over the bridge, without taking note of the crowd of unruly urchins in the waste space known as "Bully's Acre" (with a view to "hoistings" on the morrow), and forgetting to enquire how old Mrs. Ryan's "pains were that evening." When this happened, and Mr. Sweeny hurried on, looking straight before him, with his hands under his coat tails, which jerked up and down curiously as he descended the incline of the bridge, forgetting in his eagerness that he was going down a hill; then it was known that there was "something in the paper"—which paper the bobbing up and down of the coat tails revealed to all beholders, and forthwith there was a general movement towards Roddy Flynn's. Roddy's pretty daughter, Julia, hurried out from the kitchen on these occasions with a chair for the schoolmaster—a compliment paid to no other visitor except to Mr. Ambrose Armstrong—and Mr. Sweeny, in order to give the audience time to assemble, would repress his eagerness, even to the extent of taking a few whiffs from Roddy Flynn's pipe, specially lit for him, before putting on his brass-rimmed spectacles and unfolding the newspaper.

Leading articles, and didactic utterances in general, were very trying to Roddy Flynn, who after conscientiously listening to them from beginning to end, and allowing reasonable time for comment or criticism, would tell the reader to "come to the news of the week." And Roddy's round face was not the only face that brightened with awakened interest and relaxation, from strained mental effort, when Mr. Sweeny did come to the "news of the week," in which there was always sure to be an item that reminded Roddy Flynn of something he had seen "in the Queen's County." Indeed the experience in the Queen's County was looked upon quite as much as a matter of course after the "news of the week," as was Mr. Sweeny's taking off his brass-rimmed spectacles, and wiping his eyes with his blue pocket-handkerchief. But we have not yet told the story about Councillor Doheny's speech. It was when the Old and Young Ireland controversy was at its highest and angriest. Mr. Sweeny had just commenced the reading of a speech, when Davy Lacy was interrupted in his contemplation of the top of the poplar tree—only about the size of his hand of which had at that time appeared above the tiles, and that "lad of his" still got over the threshold on all-fours—by the half-door being rudely

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