

dragged us so far on the main road, and joined the double living stream that was pouring down toward the sanctuary.

The convent looks more like a fortress than the dwelling of peaceful monks. It stands on an isolated plateau, surrounded on all sides by a moat, formed by the bed of a mountain torrent—dry, or nearly so, in summer, but a rushing river in winter. Across this is thrown a short massive stone bridge, the only access to the convent. Temporary wooden huts and gaily decorated booths, for the accommodation of visitors, filled every inch of ground on this side of the moat, and swarmed with hundreds of motley people.

Had it not been for the peaceful nature of the occupations of the crowd—so loud was the din, so martial the look of the men with red caps and red belts—it might have been taken for a beleaguering—a which had pitched its tents, and was watching an opportunity to assault the fort above. Venders of wines and eatables, sellers of holy images, reliques, and rosaries, tellers of religious legends, mountebanks, and empirics, were all shouting at the top of their voices, playing on the credulity, exciting the passions, or satisfying the substantial wants of a host of screaming customers.

I sat down in one of the booths, and after partaking of some refreshment, which I really needed, I turned from the bustle around me to gaze on the glories of the departing sun: each fold of the mountain on mountain closing in the prospect to the north was glowing red, while the valleys at the foot were lost already in a soft blue mist. The calm and solemn grandeur of the landscape at that hour, which always brings with it a mingled feeling of regret and hope, made the flurry and excitement going on at my elbow seem still more puerile and aimless. While watching the twinkling into view of one star after another, I heard a bell toll, and saw, to my great surprise, every one, pilgrims and purveyors, all rise with one accord, as if they had received an electric shock—cards, relics, eatables, and wine-bottles, thrown on one side, and a general rush made for the stone bridge. "What's the matter?" asked I of a neighbour.

"The presentation of the sick—the Madonna fa lo grazie," was the quick answer, as he ran off also. "This was the particular hour, it seems, selected by the Madonna for performing her miracles.

To see a miracle was worth a little squeezing; I therefore, resolved on improving the occasion and joined in the race. I crossed the bridge, ran through a little square, up some steps, and so into a spacious cloister which goes round the church. Here, innumerable silver *ex votos* glittered on the walls, amid rude representations of miracles. Some of these last would have been worth copying—naïveté and want of perspective making them *chefs d'œuvre* in their way. The throng here formed in procession, four or five abreast, the sick, with their small or large group of kindred and friends, in the front rows. Moving slowly round, they all wended their way to the church-door, through the open portals of which the miraculous statue was seen. The blaze of jewels on all parts of the image, together with the quantities of lighted wax-torches surrounding her, produced a certain effect even on me. I was positively dazzled. An explosion of admiring ejaculations, of broken appeals, of sighs and sobs, mostly from the female part of the congregation, broke forth at the gorgeous sight—a concert shrill enough to pierce even the stone ears of Nostra Signora del Laghetto, but, nevertheless, overpowered by the rich bass of two sceptical blind men, begging for alms on either side of the door. Their faith must have been languid indeed, since they preferred carrying on their supplications outside, at the risk of being flattered against the wall, to trying their chances with the Madonna inside. The cortege took to the right of the chapel, and advanced till its front row stood opposite the main altar; then it came to a full stop, and the presentation of the sick began. An old man, with snow-white hair and a face like parchment, was hoisted up towards the image; but for the shivering of his palsied limbs, the poor creature might have been taken for a corpse, so unconscious did he look. "O, Madonna, fategli la grazia!" (Grant him the blessing!) screamed several voices—"Fategli la grazia!" responded the whole church in chorus.

"It's the Madonna going to cure you—raise yourself: have faith; lift up your arms to her," cried an old shrivelled peasant woman to the wretched cripple.

He did so, and managed to raise his arms a little, but only to let them drop again, while his head sunk on his shoulders with a groan. O, Madonna, it is too cruel!" sobbed the old woman in a state of distraction, "after I have said so many prayers to you, and given

so many alms on your account. You know you can do it, you like. O me! O me! you know you can."

"Make another effort," cries a young man to the old one. "Only say a *Salve Regina*, an *Ave*—anything you can remember." Alas! it was past the power of the sufferer, already covered with cold sweats, to do anything but tremble and shake; and he and his disconsolate friends must make room for another party.

My jolly friend, the father of the deaf and dumb child, with some of his relations whom he had met, came forward. Poor Marina was duly lifted up, and held towards the Virgin, with the customary invocations. It was a sad and touching sight, indeed, to behold the intelligent little creature join her hands and evidently pray—O, so earnestly!—her eyes distended with eagerness, and, in answer to her father's expressive pantomime, try to speak. Nothing came of it, of course but some uncouth, inarticulate sounds, which apparently deceived a portion of the more distant spectators, for they began shouting: "She speaks! she speaks! a miracle—she speaks!"

I shall never forget the half-angry, half-dejected glance of the father, as he shook his head towards the spot whence the shouts proceeded.—He then looked up at the Madonna, made an attempt to address her; but his emotion was too great for utterance (lucky it was so), and retired in silence, his child clasped to his bosom.

The third sick, presented was a spectral young man on crutches, obviously in the last stage of consumption. The persons round him—mountaineers from their dress—looked particularly fierce and excited. They raised him up, uttering savage cries "that they must have him cured." After a moment's pause, they lowered him again, and bade him stand and walk without crutches. I saw the poor fellow stagger like a drunken man. I heard frantic exclamations of disappointment mixed with muttered imprecations. I saw fists raised in defiance. . . . I could stand no more—I was sick at heart, less with the shocking exhibition itself, than with the spirit in which it was conducted. I literally fled from the church, and turned my back on the shrine, *ad vialto*.

The moon shone bright on hill and vale, and the starry sky recounted the glories of the Lord. The soothing and elevating influences of the divine harmonies of creation stood over me as I walked, and tuned my soul to forbearance. Did the poor people I had just seen at the shrine know what they were about? Was it their fault if they were taught no better? And I put my trust for them in the Great Mercy—reaching Nice at midnight, in a more Christian frame of mind than I could have anticipated a few hours before.—*Chambers' Journal*.

#### THE VATICAN.

THIS word is often used, but there are many who do not understand its import. The term refers to a collection of buildings on one of the seven hills of Rome, which covers a space of 1200 feet in length and 1000 feet in breadth. It is built on the spot once occupied by the garden of cruel Nero. It owes its origin to the Bishop of Rome, who in the earlier part of the sixth century erected a humble residence on its site. About the year 1160, Pope Eugenius rebuilt it on a magnificent scale. Innocent II., a few years afterwards, gave it up as a lodging to Peter II, King of Arragon. In 1605 Clement V. at the instigation of the King of France, removed the Papal see from Rome to Avignon, when the Vatican remained in a condition of obscurity and neglect for more than seventy years.

But soon after the return of the pontifical court to Rome, an event which had been so universally prayed for by poor Petrarch, and which finally took place in 1375, the Vatican was put in a state of repair, again enlarged, and it was thenceforward considered as the regular palace and residence of the Popes, who, one after the other, added fresh buildings to it, and gradually encircled it with antiquities, statues, pictures and books, until it became the richest depository in the world.

The library of the Vatican was commenced fourteen hundred years ago. It contains 40,000 manuscripts, among which are some of Pliny, St. Thomas, St. Charles Borromeo, and many Hebrew, Syrian, Arabian and Armenian Bibles.

The whole of the immense buildings composing the Vatican are filled with statues from beneath the ruins of ancient Rome, with paintings by the masters, and with curious medals and antiquities of almost every description.

When it is known that there have been exhumed more than seventy thousand statues from the ruined temples and palaces of Rome, the reader can form

some idea of the richness of the Vatican. It will ever be held in veneration by the student, the artist, and the scholar. Raphael and Michael Angelo are enthroned there, and their thrones will be enduring as the love of beauty and genius in the hearts of their worshippers.

**PROTESTANTISM IN FRANCE.**—The fact that Biquet, the late admiral of the French navy, was a Protestant, and that General Pellissier, the hero of Sebastopol, is also said to be a Protestant, has led Dr. Baird to present a brief view of Protestantism in France. Though in two centuries and a half ending in 1786, oppressions and persecutions caused the death of over two millions and the expulsion from the country of half a million more, yet there are now a million and a half of French Protestants in France, besides half a million in the part which Bonaparte took from Germany. Many of her most distinguished citizens have been and still are Protestants.

In the last years of the reign Louis Philippe, when the Jesuits had gained great power, the *Journal des Debats* announced that if the Protestants did not like the state of things, "they might emigrate as their ancestors did at the revocation of the edict of Nantes," in '85. The next day Gabriel Dellesert came out in the same journal over his own name, and as a deputy of France, and told the editors and all France, that the Protestants of that country were one million and a half in number; that they had done as much and were ever ready to do as much as any other equal portion of the population to uphold the honor and advance the interests of the kingdom; that they knew their rights, and would maintain them. The effect was immense. Not another syllable was published in that journal about the emigration of Protestants.

Astronomers expect the appearance this year of the comet of 1556, called Charles V., and so named from having, according to some historians, caused that monarch to abdicate and retire to the convent of St. Just. It is the wandering star, some say, which appeared in 1264, in 993, and in 683. Its return was fixed for 1848, but it did not answer the call, frightened perhaps, as a monarchical comet, by the eccentricities of that epoch. The new calculations of the *savans*, however, are spoken of with confidence as to the present nearness of its visit.

The Rochester *Advertiser* states that a few days ago a man cut a canoe from Blackbird Island, overhauling Niagara Falls. The feat was performed in this wise: "The ice had made from the shore a considerable distance, until it was almost met by the ice from this island; but still there was a frightful space between, where the water was boiling and surging over the cataract. Nothing daunted at this, he procured an eighteen foot ladder with which he crept along the ice, and managed to throw it over, so that both ends rested on the edge of the ice, across the gulf, and then went across himself on the rounds of the ladder. After cutting a stick of red cedar sufficient to make three or four canes, he fastened it over his shoulder and then made the perilous return over the rounds of the ladder, in the same way he went. The slightest giving way of the ice, his frail bridge and himself would have been hurled into instant destruction; or had he missed his hold in the last, certain and instantaneous death would have been the consequence. The river has never been so filled with ice above the falls as at present, and a century may roll round before this perilous feat could be accomplished again."

**THE BRITISH BARK RESOLUTE.**—It is now stated by good judges, that the *Resolute*, which lies in New London harbor, is not worth \$75,000, as has been stated, and probably the English government will never make any attempt to recover her. The sails, rigging, &c., of the ship are represented to be in a rotten and dilapidated condition. The hull is built of oak wood, which is the only wood fit for Arctic navigation; ships that are built of it being almost indestructible; and the only value now attaching to the ship is this wood and her copper. These are worth perhaps \$20,000.—the men who brought her in have been satisfied, so far as any claim for salvage was concerned, with \$300 each. The ship is still visited almost daily by the curious from all parts of the country, and some of these visitors are "curious" enough, for they steal everything that they can lay hands upon.—*Harvard Times*.

**GRAIN AT THE WEST.**—A writer in the *Orrego Palladium* gives an estimate of the present stores of flour and wheat on Lake Ontario and the Upper Lakes, confirming the common opinion that "a very large proportion of the last year's crop is still in the hands of producers, both in Canada, and the West, owing to the decline in prices and bad roads, and will not be likely to come out very early this spring."—The total quantity in store at a variety of places specified, is, according to his estimate, 340,000 barrels of flour, and 1,264,000 bushels of wheat.