

THE GOOD PRIEST OF AOSTA.

In 960 A. D. a young man about 30 years of age, was pacing up and down the stately rooms of a castle. Often he lifted his eyes to heaven as if to pray for guidance, then, stopping suddenly, he seemed to have taken some resolution, only to resume again his restless walk and his deep meditation. He was the son of the Sire of Montone, owner of this grand castle, which was situated not far from Annecy in Savoy. He had a fine mind and a wonderfully mild and religious heart. Having been in Paris, where religion and theology were flourishing just then, he returned to the home of his ancestors with the intent to give his life up to works of piety and to become a priest.

But his father had other views, and wanted him to live in splendour in his own castle. Accordingly, in conformity with the customs of those times, he decided that his son should wed the rich Margherita of Miolana. At this decision the young man became very sad, and without opening his heart completely he showed a profound distaste for the marriage. But in vain. His father insisted that the whole hope of his happiness rested on him and on this marriage, and even sent away from the castle the son's old tutor, whom he suspected of influencing the young nobleman. After vain threats from the father the mother added her entreaties, and these seemed to have conquered the son's mind. Meanwhile a sumptuous wedding feast was ordered in the castle of Miolana. The Sire of Montone and his wife and son repaired early thither. Already the great day had dawned; already the bride in full bridal array was prepared to step to the altar; already the two fathers had united their hands in satisfaction over the union so much desired by them; but the young man who throughout a feverish restless night had paced his apartment, upon hearing the noise of the approaching guests lifts his eyes in despair to heaven, and with a sudden resolution returns to his room, locks the door, and writes on a sheet of paper which he leaves on the table. He then opens the window and measures the height; going to a closet, takes a rope, which he fastens to the sill, and, after having once more read the letter, kisses it, bends his knees in a mute prayer for a few seconds; then, rising, scales the window and flees.

Since the groom does not appear, after a little while his parents hurry to his chamber, but they knock and call in vain; the stillness is terrible, and soon the door is broken open and they discover the letter.

"I beg my good father and merciful mother to permit me to follow the vocation of my heart. I leave you only to meet me again in heaven."

That is what the trembling father reads. A cry of desolation issues from his lips and is echoed by the entire company. A search throughout the whole place and through the neighboring castles and woods proves useless. No one has seen the fugitive.

After fifteen years of faithful service in the city of Aosta the Archdeacon had died, and to his place came a priest who had been raised to the position on account of his wisdom and goodness. Even the Bishop consulted him and soon he had opened schools throughout the whole valley. He went also to Novara, Genova and Milan, preaching and making known the gospel by his pious example. The population full of wonder at his eloquence and piety, came from far and near to hear him.

He had uprooted idolatry everywhere near his home, but there still remained a statue of an idol on a mountain, which bore the name of Jupiter. Thieves and murderers had made it their home, and attacked the travellers who had to pass it on their way from Italy to France, taking everything from them and often killing them. The good priest of Aosta decided to re-

deem the mountaineers from idolatry, and at the same time make the roads safe. At once he climbs the mountain, preaches a God of love and charity destroys the idol, and raises an altar to the living God. Then he founds a hospice at the highest spot associating some good Brothers with him in the work to frighten the wicked and to tame the ferocity of the inhabitants of these wild regions. He and the good Brothers offer hospitality to the pilgrims, dividing with them their bread, and they assist people who would otherwise be frozen by the terrible snow storm. In a word they become the guardian angels of that frightful solitude.

The fame of these good deeds was soon borne throughout France and Italy. One name became known, one name which everybody blessed with a grateful heart. It was the name of Bernardo, the hermit of Mount Jupiter. To him applied the sick, the afflicted, the disconsolate, and he helped everyone with ineffable kindness.

Among those who were drawn to the mountain by his fame were two aged people. Bent by years and fatigued by the long journey, they asked to see the hermit. He came at once, and they bowed, full of respect while the man said in a feeble, subdued voice: "Father, heaven gave us riches and a high position in Savoy. A son was our joy, our love, our heir and our hope for our old age. Nothing had been neglected to make him religious and virtuous. We chose for him a wife, good, beautiful and young, belonging to as noble castle as himself. Everything was ready, the bride was draped in her marriage veil—but our son had gone, leaving us only this letter."

Big tears were falling from the eyes of the aged couple. The hermit sighed and lifted his gaze toward heaven. The old man went on: "From that day our happiness was gone; we have sought him but in vain. Oh, if he were living yet, for we are near the grave. We may never see him again."

The old man's tears burst out afresh, while the priest seemed to be making a strenuous effort to check some strong emotion.

"Oh, Father! you alone can advise us. Some pilgrims to whom we gave hospitality in Montone told us marvelous tales of you, and hope has given us the strength to reach you. Have pity on us! pray to God! He may at least manifest to us whether we may hope to see our beloved son again."

They wanted to kneel at his feet, but he prevented them and said, gently consoling them:

"Only heaven can have inspired your son with such extraordinary decision. Console yourselves and hope, for he may return to you when you least expect him."

At that moment the aged lady, who had until then wept bitterly, cried out: "Oh, how wretched are the poor mothers who have importuned God for a son who is to be the cause of such cruel sufferings!"

The pious Bernardo said gently: "God tried Abraham's heart, and his faith saved him. If He tried you do not murmur. The Christian must bear his cross."

The hermit was fighting a battle with his own heart. He feared that the strength of these aged ones would not support a longer talk. Begging them to wait, he hurried to the church and knelt at the altar with a fervent prayer. Meanwhile the aged couple sat waiting, fearing, hoping, uncertain, yet with a vague presentiment.

"Vain hopes!" exclaimed the father.

"But let it be of good omen," said the mother. "Let him at least tell me that I may see my adored son before I die."

Thus they sat watching the door by which the hermit had left and trembling at every noise. At last no came, his face full of overpowering joy:

"Be consoled, your son lives. He left you only to follow the voice of his conscience."

So saying his eyes filled with tears, and, no longer able to check the emotion which holds his heart, he extends his arms, looks lovingly upon them and says: "I am your son Bernardo!"

The mother gives a cry of joy; the father springs up, and soon the tears of sorrow have changed into tears of happiness, and Bernardo is held in the loving arms of his father and mother.

After having given many days to the pleasure of relating to each other the story of the cares and sorrows of the past and enjoying the reunion, the old couple returned to their home, and Bernardo to his high charge his beneficent work.

Meanwhile the hospice was flourishing and to make it a perpetual institution he went to Rome in 1008 to beg the Pope's protection. He started joyfully from the Eternal City with the desired mandate, but it was not given to him to see his beloved Alps again. A sudden illness seized him at Novara, and he surrendered his beautiful soul to God with that supreme serenity which comes from a duty done. He had ceased to be, but his work was accomplished, and it continues to this day, while in his honour Mount Jupiter has been named Mount San Bernardo.

This mountain lies between the valleys of Entremona and Aosta. The famous Hospice is situated upon one of the most practicable passes, and gives hospitality to all travellers from the proud prince to the poorest tramp. The pious monks of the hospice and their strong, faithful dogs go in search of the tired and freezing pilgrims, and usually succeed in saving them. These touching scenes are renewed every year in the cold season, but the most marvellous sight ever witnessed up there was on May 16, 1800, when Father Luigi Luder was superior of the hospice. On that day it gave hospitality to 80,000 men, with thirty eight cannon and other baggage. It was the French army, which was descending into Italy, a few days previous to the battle of Marengo.—*Irish Catholic.*

A Statue of the Chevalier Bayard.

A statue has been erected at Mezieres to the Chevalier Bayard. It is another added to the many already existing in France in honor of the hero *sans peur et sans reproche*. The unveiling of it was an event of sufficient importance to take the minister of war to Mezieres. While the occasion served for one of those military and national demonstrations in which the French delight, it also brought to light a trait which, for anti-religious littleness, perhaps could only have been conceived in France. Some memorable words of Bayard are engraven on the pedestal of the statue. It is his reply to the envoys of Charles V., requiring him to surrender Mezieres. "Tell them," says the Chevalier, alluding to the envoys, "that the king, my master, had better persons in the kingdom than myself to guard this frontier town, but that since he has conferred the honor on me, I hope, with the aid of God, to remain faithful to my charge." Such are the words of the original document. In the reproduction on the pedestal the words "with the aid of God" have been carefully left out. The omission comes from headquarters. It is not the sculptor, M. Croisy, who is answerable for it. His statue of Bayard is a fine work of art.

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A nun in the Loretto Convent, at Dublin, Sister Gertrude, has written a drama entitled "Nemesius." It is dedicated to the martyrs of the catacombs, and has been performed in Loretto Abbey.

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