

THE COMING OF THE SWALLOWS.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE THREE.

tree of the swallows activity. Here they held consultations; here they relayed the history of their wanderings, of their exploits by land and sea.

So at least Owen thought. For each night, after the swallows had retired to rest, he entertained his astonished mother with vivid descriptions of strange lands, and of the people who inhabited them.

One day the parish priest paid a visit to the cottage. After the usual salutations, he asked:

"Where is Owen today, and how is he keeping these times?"

"He is in his usual place on the roof," answered the mother. "He has been growing weaker in health and color, but for the last week or so he seems to be improving. There is a nice, bright color in his cheeks, which I have never seen there before."

The priest glanced sharply at her, but he saw that she had no suspicion of the real state of things. Her great affection was blinding her to the truth.

"He is too," he said, "but he is not deceiving. He knows that these hectic spots were the danger signals of an advanced stage of pulmonary decay."

After saying good-bye to the widow, the priest went to interview her boy.

He found him on the top of the great boulder, listening with absorbed attention to the twittering of the birds.

"Well, my boy," he said, "are you dreaming, as usual?"

"No, Father; I am talking to the swallows."

"And what do the swallows say to you?"

"Oh, they tell me such beautiful stories. Do you see that little bird that skimmed past us just now? She is the cleverest story-teller of the lot. Last year she made her nest in the ivy just over my bedroom window, and she has laid her eggs there again this year. She has another nest in the Southern World thousands and thousands of miles away. What a strange thing to have two homes in places so far apart!"

"And in what country has she the other home?"

"I see it now, when I close my eyes. It is a wild, wild country. There are no trees, no hills, or mountains, or valleys. It is all covered with sand—sand, and everywhere. Here and there are little green spots like islands in the middle of the ocean. On one of these I saw a huge rock, as if it had been struck by lightning. In the crevice there is a nest. It is the home, in the Great Southern World, of this little swallow."

Thus did the boy ramble on, weaving airy webs from his imagination, until the night fell, and the priest departed for home.

"Poor mother! Happy child!" was his only comment as he walked away from the widow's cottage.

Summer had melted into autumn, and as the last days of August were approaching the swallows began to sound the note of preparation for their departure.

As the time drew near, a great change became visible in the child. His health grew still feebler, and his countenance assumed a fixed expression of melancholy. He seldom spoke, and every night, when he kissed his mother, there were great tears in his eyes.

One evening, before going to bed, he said:

"Call me early in the morning, darling mother. The swallows will be leaving to-morrow, and I must be awake to bid them good-bye. But I cannot stay behind them long. I must follow them to the great land where the sun is shining always. They are ever whispering in my ear, 'Come with us. Come with us to the Great Southern World.'"

It was with a sad heart that the poor mother retired to rest that night. In the silence of her little room she asked God to give her resignation, and to take the future of her darling boy into His holy hands.

Scarcely had the first streak of dawn sent its golden rays into the child's room than he rose feebly from his bed, dressed, and went slowly to his accustomed seat under the ash trees.

His appearance was the signal for a loud and prolonged outburst of twittering from his little friends. They wished to show him, in their birdlike fashion, their sympathy with him in his weakness, and their sorrow at parting with the gentle child who had won their affections. Numbers of them left their perches and skimmed past him, touching him lightly with their wings, as if to bid him a long, last farewell.

Then, in the same order in which they had come, they set out for their journey to their home in the Southern World. At first they went in twos and threes, then in larger companies, and finally in multitudes so vast as to darken the atmosphere. The last to leave were the two birds which had made their nests in the ivy over Owen's window. Several times they rose to a great height, then returned, chattering merrily all the time. Then, as if bracing themselves to a great effort, they rushed passed him with the rapidity of lightning, rose higher and higher, uttering plaintive shrieks, until they became mere specks in the blue dome of the heavens, and their cries were lost in the distance.

The boy uttered a feeble moan. His mother heard it, and clasped him in her arms.

"What is it?"

"Good-bye, darling mother. Don't be lonely after me. I am going with the swallows. I hear them calling, calling: 'Come with us, to the land where the sun is shining always.'"

The gentle boy closed his eyes, gave one last sigh, and his soul was carried on the wings of angels to the land of eternal summer.

That night the voice of weeping was heard from the widow's cottage. When the neighbors came, they found her, a picture of woe, seated beside her dead child, and as she wept she crooned:

"The swallows have come and gone. They will return again, next year and the year after, but my angel boy will never come back to me."—William Ganly, in the Austral Light, Melbourne, Australia.

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.
FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

To-day, my brethren, is Our Lady's birthday. She who is the type of all unfading beauty was this day born into our ugly world nearly two thousand years ago. May God be praised for ever! and may every soul feel some deeper stirrings of heavenly joy this day which made glad the bright company of the angels and told of the approach of man's salvation! Her birth meant the birth of Him Who is the first-born of all the race, and in Whom all the elect are born again unto newness of life. Our Lady herself being the noble queen of men that she is by reason of her Son's foreseen merits.

It seems to me that we should say a prayer for the Jewish people on this day: "Let thy dwelling be in Jacob and thy inheritance in Israel; and take root in my elect" are words applied to Our Lady by the Church in her offices.

More worldly honor, my brethren, whether of wealth or family, is by spiritual writers classed among the vanities of this life. But the children of Israel were a chosen people and the house of David a royal family, and both in a sense far above what man can give. If I am the son of a rich man I may still die a pauper, and if the son of a great man I may still be a mean, unloving, and unworthy creature.

But to be of the blood kindred of Jesus Christ is a very different sort of aristocracy, and is the true honor of the Jewish people—an honor not quite forfeited, let us hope, even by their apostasy and their many additional crimes. Our Lady was, and is, a Jewess: "I took root in an honorable people—I was established in Zion." It seems to me that our very first thought on a day of hers like this, should be a prayer that she may hasten the time when her kindred according to the flesh may rend the veil which covers their faces and their hearts, and come to her Son and to her, and to the true religion, the holy Catholic Church.

"The loss of them," says St. Paul, "is the reconciliation of the world; what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" Surely for no cause would Mary of Nazareth plead with her Son more gladly than for that great, strange and everlasting race to which she belongs herself.

Another peculiarly fitting prayer is that day and during its octave is for the female sex. The Mother of Jesus is the glory of the entire race, but she is the woman of history and of revelation. From her and on account of her comes all the dignity of her sex. "I am the Mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope," are the words of the Church spoken for her in her office, using those words of the Wise Man. And indeed love and fear and knowledge and hope, together with all the other beneficent forces of nature and grace, are in the custody of woman. Who taught you about Christ and paradise? Your mother. The mother of the family is the original and direct source in every relation of life, virgin, wife and mother. She consecrates their joy, hallows their grief, dignifies their modest retirement, asserts and secures their rights in the home and in the state. Now let us pray her most fervently that she may stand by the sex these days more than ever before. For it is just now that many women are tools of Satan to corrupt the minds of the young with foul legends, to lure them to hell by obscene plays, to make them flippant and frivolous by pagan amusements and by vanities in dress, to drive families to ruin by waste and extravagance, and to scatter and disgrace them by divorce and worse.

Let us appeal to the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, on this day especially, to obtain purity and chastity and good sense, and, above all, deep religious character for all her sex.

THE REAL KINGS OF FRANCE.

AN INCIDENT WHICH PROVES THE CLOSE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT AND FREEMASONRY.

By the Comtesse de Courson in the Ave Marie.

We have sometimes noticed the sceptical smile with which English and American Catholics are inclined to receive our assertion that at the present moment the real kings of France are the Freemasons. It is they who hold in their hands the reins of government, who control the elections, and who dispose of every chance of preferment or advancement to which their fellow-citizens may aspire. Examples are daily brought forward that illustrate this fact.

A fresh instance of this tyranny has lately been brought before the public. The incident we are about to relate has been told in certain French papers—to those especially whose object is to unmask the Freemasons; it was our good fortune to gather it from the lips of the hero of the tale.

Captain S. served with much distinction in the French colonies; he took a prominent part in different encounters, was publicly praised and congratulated by his chiefs, received the Cross of the Legion of Honor; in fact, rendered such signal service to his country that he found himself entitled to claim an important civil post on his retirement from the army.

A well-known French general, one of the most prominent military leaders of the day, was keenly interested in Captain S. He brought forward his pro-

tege's claims when, a few months ago, the latter decided to retire from active service. No objection was raised to the officer's demands; on the contrary, the justice of his claims and the value of his past services were fully recognized by the Government, and in due course of time he was promised the important post of curator of the Chateau of Compiègne—a post that brings with it a comfortable salary. His appointment was duly made known to him. It seemed absolutely certain; for he was informed that he might count upon the appointment being officially announced to the public on the following Tuesday.

A few days before this date, Captain S. received a letter from an unknown hand. It was written from 14 Rue Cadet, Paris; and under the illegible signature were the words, "Secrétaire aux Affaires Gouvernementales." It merely requested the Captain to call at the foregoing address on a certain day. Captain S. had spent the best years of his life in distant lands. The words "14 Rue Cadet" conveyed no special meaning to his mind; and the lines accompanying the signature made him think that he was summoned to one of the government offices on the subject of his future post.

On the appointed day, therefore, he rang at the house, which, as the Grand Orient, is the well-known central lodge of the French Freemasons—a fact of which Captain S. was totally ignorant. He owned to him that the aspect of the house struck him as somewhat strange; "but," he added, "I have lived so much in foreign parts that these things do not impress me as they would a Parisian."

Yes, he continued, "I have lived so much in foreign parts that these things do not impress me as they would a Parisian."

He was warmly congratulated upon the distinguished services he had rendered to his country—services which the government was about to reward as he deserved. This flow of compliments from a stranger somewhat astonished the gallant soldier, and, as he listened, he wondered vaguely to what his host was leading.

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"I understand perfectly," he said; "and again I distinctly refuse to become a Freemason."

"We will no take you at your word," they replied. "Think the matter over, and on Monday you will, we feel sure, give us another answer. We shall expect to see you here that day, and we are certain that by that time you will see things in another light."

"You need not expect me to return. My answer on Monday would be the same as it is today."

"Captain," they persisted, "remember your children."

"My children," was the firm reply, "would blush for me if I were to yield to your proposal."

And, with these words, Captain S. walked out of the Grand Orient. The soldier, who had seen much hard service, probably never fought a fiercer battle than the one from which he issued, with his conscience at rest but his earthly hopes ruined and broken.

Needless to add that the promised appointment was given to another, and that Captain S. was left to face poverty. Some anxious months followed, during which the gallant soldier sought high and low, far and wide, for a situation that would enable him to provide for his family. He has found one at last. A society has lately been organized in Paris with a view to helping the officers and the civil officials whose religious principals have led them to be deprived of their employments. Among them are many military men who last year declined to break down the doors of the churches during the agitation caused by the inventaires.

This society—"Honneur, Conscience"—undertakes to find situations for the victims of government oppression; and, although it has not been in existence for many months, it has already achieved much good and useful work. One of the first to benefit by its organization was, naturally enough, Captain S., whose generous allegiance to his principles was thus rewarded by Him who has promised to crown, even on earth, those who seek above all things, "the Kingdom of God and His justice."

This true story emphasizes the fact that the Freemasons no longer take the trouble to conceal their close connection with the French government. The letter that Captain S. received was written by a Mason who openly signed himself the "Secretary of Government Affairs," thus proclaiming that the Grand Orient is now a government office.

What to Forget.

Forget evil imagination. Forget the slander you have heard. Forget the meanness of small souls. Forget the faults of your friends. Forget the misunderstanding of yesterday. Forget all malice, all fault-finding, all injuries, all hardness, all unlovely and distressful things. Start out every day with a clean sheet. So be lovely, by loving. See how much sunshine you can produce.

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