

AFTER WEARY YEARS.

By Most Rev. CORNELIUS O'BRIEN, D.D.,
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CHAPTER V.—Continued.

The sun was nearing its shimmering bed, and shot bright gleams around the towering crosses in the visionary forest. As Morgan gazed intently towards them they seemed to end in a glittering cross. The sun was directly in front of the advancing train and rendered it difficult to distinguish objects.

Gradually it sank; darkness fell upon the lower part of the prospect; a golden beam still tipped each lofty height. One by one these sparks of light went out, until only one glowing shaft was left. So high up rose this sunlit trunk that Morgan wondered how one tree could be so very much taller than the rest.

At this moment a traveller looking out exclaimed: "Roma! Roma! ecco San Pietro."

With a strange, wild thrill the words fell on Morgan's ear. He was gazing on the majestic dome of St. Peter's, still brightly glittering long after everything around had been sunk in darkness.

Thus, thought he, will the Church of Christ shine in the sunset of the world's allotted span, when the institutions of men and the vain efforts of the impious shall have been long buried in the murky past.

Thus, O Rome, City of the Soul, will the failing sun form an aureole of glory around thy brow, making thy old age as beautiful as thy youth.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FEAST OF ST. AGNES.

The pleasure-seeking tourist who, on a bright winter's morning, cantering gaily along the Nomentana Way, to enjoy the pure mountain air which comes cool but soft from the snow-clad Sabine hills, and to feast his eyes on the rich and varied scenery of undulating plains, gently sloping hills, and stern mountain peaks, coldly frowning like grim sentinels posted there by nature—or the dreaming poet who escapes from the confined air of the Eternal City, and seeks inspiration for his epic poem by contemplating the classic scenes of ancient Rome, might pass unheeding by the spot to which we will soon introduce our readers. Still, what a subject for sober reflection, what a noble argument for the Christian mission would not this place supply! The duties which as rational beings we owe to our Creator, the ennobling use of time and talents, the most heroic examples of praiseworthy devotion, love, and sublime fortitude—these are the lessons which might be learned from the story of the broken and weed-covered walls of the ancient Roman villa to which our story leads us. Fain would we linger over the details of its history; fain would we desire to give some adequate account of the short life and glorious death of the last mistress of that villa. It is equally beyond our present scope and the power of our pen to do this; still a few words are necessary.

Every one who has read the acts of the martyrs must experience a thrill of deep emotion whenever he hears the name of St. Agnes. So young, so beautiful, so filled with generous love for God, she seems more like unto a happy spirit that had been sent on a heavenly mission to this world, than a being of mortal mould. The daughter of wealthy and Christian parents, she disengaged her young heart from earthly things, and gave to her Saviour all her love. Flattered by men, she despised the soft pargon, and only thought how she could best please in every action, the Almighty. Surrounded by an atmosphere of pagan corruption, she remained spotless—her soul, like a sweet lily growing in a marshy soil, hemmed itself round with the fragrance of its own purity. Thus she showed how virtue can be practised, no matter what unsought temptations may assail us.

Asked in marriage by a powerful personage, she refused, for already she had given herself as the spouse of Christ. She did not consider, of course, that marriage was wrong; she knew it was the state of life intended for most persons; she knew that Christ had raised it in his Church to the dignity of a sacrament; but she likewise knew from the example of the Blessed Virgin, and from the teachings of St. Paul, that celibacy was a much more perfect state. She felt that to her it had been given to lead in the flesh the life of an angel; and she thanked God that he had chosen her to be one of that white-robed choir who will follow, for all eternity, the "Lamb withersome He goeth." Hence she looked upon her suitor as the "feed of corruption," and told him that she was betrothed to "Him whom the angels serve; whose beauty the sun and moon admire; loving Him I am chaste; embracing Him I am pure; espousing Him I am a virgin." This sublime language will fall strangely on the ears of very many; by some it will be turned into ridicule, by others it will be called contrary to the order of nature (as if celibacy were not highly enjoined in the Holy Scriptures, and recommended to those who had the grace of continence). Modern young ladies whose sense of womanly delicacy is not startled by being frequently, and for long hours, alone with that most useless and uninteresting of the human species, a moon-struck lover, young ladies who have had day dreams of matrimony while yet in short school, and carried, perhaps, their school-books in a coquettish manner, will be unable to realize the ennobling feelings of St. Agnes. Let the reader bear well in mind that the Saints were of the same frail mould as ourselves; they were not, as a general rule, exempt from fierce temptation; their human passions were not extinct, but smothered hotly, and were only kept from bursting forth into flame by unceasing prayer, mortification and watchfulness. God requires rude tests of our love, just as he gave rude tests of His love for us. If we wish to reign triumphant with Him in His glory, we must first partake of the ignominy and suffering of the Cross.

When St. Agnes spurned the love of a worldly suitor he became enraged, and, being a pagan, accused her to the judges of being a Christian. A good deal of

meanness and pride was mixed up with the professed love of this suitor; perhaps he has his counterpart often in our days. Ye who may be disposed to make light of the words of St. Agnes to her would-be lover, and ye also who can suffer nothing for the religion of Christ, attend to the closing scenes of the life of this lovely girl. Calmly she stood before the judges, and firmly, though mildly, she professed her faith. Promises and threats were alike unable to shake her constancy. Borne by force to the altars of the false gods, she refused to do them homage; but even there, standing by the flames that consumed the sacrifices, surrounded by angry crowds that thirsted for her blood, the noble girl stretched forth her arms in the form of a cross, and spoke aloud her faith in God. The malice of Satan suggested to the judge the most fearful threat that could be made to such a one as St. Agnes; he threatened to send her to a house of infamy. Great God! the blood curdles at the thought of the impious threat, and in the first moment of indignation we are tempted to cry out: "Why not, O God, strike dead the inhuman monster, and free thy handmaid?" But the Almighty intended to be still further glorified in his beloved Agnes. At the sound of this threat a flush, like the reflection of a rosebud cast on a lily, overspread her face, but the next moment she quietly said: "I have with me an Angel of the Lord who guards my body." Carried to the den of iniquity, her pure presence changed it into a place of prayer; even as burning grain of frankincense dissipates the noxious vapors of a sick-room, so did the heavenly odor of her purity cleanse the public brothel. Hearts long dead to every sense of shame were melted, lips that never uttered aught save curses sought to form a prayer. In that very spot there has long centuries stood a beautiful church, a monumental proof of this glorious triumph.

Back to the judge was, at length, brought the innocent girl. No need for hanging her head, for to blush. To use her own beautiful words, by God's grace she had escaped the threats of the sacrilegious tyrant, and with an unpolluted heart had trampled on the filth of the flesh. She was condemned to be beheaded, and was manacled preparatory to being led forth. But the slight, girlish hands were too small for the cruel bracelets, and she playfully shook them off. More joyfully did she proceed to the place of torture than did ever a victorious general tread the Triumphal Way. It was the road to heaven. It was but a few steps, and then she would see face to face her eternal Spouse. The cruel spectators were softened at the sight of her, in the first flush and glow of life so ready to lay it down. They wept; she alone rejoiced. The headman, whose eyes had long been as arid as the sign of human suffering as a dried and broken fountain, shed tears of compassion, and vainly endeavored to induce her to do the bidding of the judge—viz: to sacrifice to the idols. Her outer garments were removed, and then her long golden hair streamed down round her body, enveloping her as with a glistening cloud. One moment she stood in silent prayer, while an aggressive stiffness reigned among the crowd, then saying, "Perish the body that can be loved by eyes that I wish not," she bent her slender neck to receive the death-stroke. The headman trembled; many a cheek grew pale that blushed not in battle, and a suppressed murmur of agony ran through the multitude. The golden hair parted slightly, and fell on each side of her neck, which, white gleamed like a moonbeam, through the rift of a yellow cloud. As she knelt thus the executioner raised his axe, it glittered for an instant in the air, and ere it had reached the earth the soul of Agnes was with her God. In a beautiful church in her own suburban villa her saintly bones are resting, awaiting the angel's trumpet, her shrine claims the respect and devotion of every generous soul, and her example will shine to the end of all centuries.

It is to this pleasing relic of early Christian Rome that we will take our readers. It is the 21st January, 1897; this is the day on which the Church celebrates the Feast of St. Agnes. It is a ways, at least so far as observation during many years can prove, a clear, cheerful day. Although about the middle of the short Roman winter, it is mild and genial. A slight hoar-frost has made the ground crisp and the air bracing. The sun has risen in unclouded splendor, and a bright tranquility reigns around, as if the gentle spirit of Agnes were hovering in the air and filling it with a balm from heaven. Passing out of the "Porta Pia," we tread the well-paved Nomentana Way; her by lawns and grassy mounds are checked in the sunlight. Shepherd boys, picturesquely clad in sheepskin jackets, red flannel vests, dark trousers and strong leggings, lead their bleating flocks, much after the same fashion as did their far-off ancestor Romulus. Light-hearted peasants in parti-colored dresses are upturning the mellow soil of the vineyards, or killing the *cavoli* and *broccoli* which are now flourishing. The famous Tiber, just increased by the waters of the Anio, flows swiftly through the outstretched plain, bearing from its mountain sources old-fashioned barges laden with elm wood; from this is made the charcoal so much used in Rome.

Away in the Northeastern horizon lies in rugged grandeur, the chain of Sabine hills from whose recesses, as legends have it, Romulus and his daring companions bore off their shrieking brides. Perhaps by this very road they re-entered the newly founded city; perhaps at this point they paused to defend themselves against their pursuers. Be this as it may, the traveler now needs have no apprehension of meeting with such a band of embarned warriors. He will pass a few Capuchin monks, whose coarse garb, shorn heads, and sandalled feet bespeak a total indifference to aught save holy contemplation and the obligations of charity; silently telling their well-thumbed beads they look as happy as innocents of life and duties fulfilled can make one in this world. He will see a number of students of every nation, and will hear every language from English to Chinese. He may reflect that the forefathers of these youths were perhaps brought captive to ancient Rome to grace a conqueror's chariot; and that these their descendants, captivated by the intellectual power of Christian Rome, followed, but under

happier auspices, the footsteps of their sires. Verily Rome will ever draw to her classic bosom enchained yet free and joyous bands. He may see the rich carriages of the wealthy and creaking cars of rude design, drawn by oxen whose branching horns are often brought in threatening proximity to his person. Ever and anon a gilded coach of some prince of the Church will flash past, and add a new feature to the varied scene.

About a mile and a half from "Porta Pia" stands the Church St. Agnes: it is to this spot that all are tending. The floor of this sacred edifice, like that of many ancient ones in Rome, is several feet below the level of the ground. By a door near the southern corner you enter, and descend a long and gently sloping flight of marble steps. They land on the floor of the church. You now find yourself in a beautiful little basilica, decorated with that good taste which subdues and renders delightful profuse ornamentation. One false shade of coloring, one inartistic carving, one badly matched panelling would mar the whole. In our experience Italian churches are the only ones in which profuse decoration is a success. The high altar stands in the centre of the transept, and beneath it rest the relics of the gentle Agnes. A beautiful gilt figure of her stands on the altar, numerous lights in rose-tinted glasses burn constantly near, giving a chastened ray like the glow of her virtues. Cut in a marble slab less than a century after her death, are the following verses by Pope Damasus:

*Yama refert sanctos dudum retulisse parentis
Agnes, cum lugubres cantus tuba conceperat.
Necris gramini subito liquisse puellam,
Sponte traxit calcasse minas rubicundum tyranni.
Ure cum flammis voluisset nobile corpus,
Viribus immensum parvis superasse timorem;
Nudaque profusum eripuit per membra dedisse
Se domini templum facies peritura videtur.
O Virginitas mihi, sanctum decus, alma puella
Ut Damasus precibus faveas, precor, inclyta martyri.*

For the benefit of those who are not Latin scholars, the following translation is offered: "It is said that once on a time, when the pious parents of Agnes were bringing her home, and whilst the trumpets were giving forth mournful strains, the young girl quickly left her nurse's arms, and of her own accord braved the threats and the rage of the cruel tyrant. When he wished to burn her noble person, she overcame by her childish courage the immense fear of this threat; and that her flowing hair fell profusely around her form, so that mortal eyes might not gaze upon the temple of the Lord. O holy beauty! O soul of purity so venerated by me! I pray thee O glorious martyr, that thou mayest be favorable to the prayers of Damasus."

We can learn from this inscription how the glory of the lovely Agnes shone in the early Church, and also how the first Christians invoked the prayers of the saints. If we judge the power of a cause by the effects it produces, we must, when contemplating this beautiful soul, form an exalted idea of the living power of grace and faith which vivifies the Holy Roman Church. Christian maidens! keep the image of St. Agnes ever before you; she is a noble type of womanhood, the noblest after the Blessed Virgin. She is not the ideal creation of some novelist's clever brain; she is the real work of Divine faith and grace. The faith still glows as brightly as ever in Holy Church, and that grace still flows as strongly as ever through its divinely constituted channels, the Sacraments. What is to prevent you from trampling "with unpolluted feet the filth of the flesh?"

The Church of St. Agnes was soon crowded with persons of all ranks and stations; there is no aristocracy of faith. The feast of a saint is a family one common to all the faithful, for are we not to the "fellow-citizens of the saints, and the domestics of God." The tiler of the soil, the shepherd, the merchant, the mechanic, the prince too, are kneeling in the same line, and addressing their prayers to the same God. Clad in gorgeous vestments a cardinal is celebrating mass at the shrine of Agnes. The altar and sanctuary glow with innumerable lights from silver lamps and glittering chandeliers. Choice flowers in rare old European vases scent the atmosphere with a delicious balm. Subdued strains of solemn music come floating gently down, like the whisperings of angels, from the distant choir. "Jesus, Crown of Virgins," is the burden of the song. Rays of sunlight steal softly in through stained-glass windows; they sparkle brightly on gilded crosses, silver reliquaries and crystal sconces; they play with dancing motion around the graceful pillars of the nave, and laughingly hide in the recesses of the fretted vaults. As the solemn moment of consecration approaches every sound is hushed, one can scarcely realize how so many thousands of persons can be so still. The one absorbing thought that Jesus is about to descend on the altar—that the sacrifice of Calvary is about to be repeated in an unbloody manner, holds all her hearts entranced. There is a vivid reality of devotion pictured on every downward face; many, perhaps, of them may be careless or sinful sinners; still the teachings of faith speak to their hearts now, and set up within them many a good resolution. How often may the blessing of a holy death be traced to the sweet influence of grace falling on the heart at such a moment as this. Now it can be felt that religion is not a mere sentiment of mandarin affection; but that is a supernatural element engrafted on the soul. The cold forms of worship of those outside the Church can never bring about such a picture of real adoration. Love is the electric current which circulates through every fibre of the prostrate multitude as the Sacred Host is elevated, love, which is kindled into a blaze by the Real Presence of its heavenly source. Such an air of heaven hangs over the adoring congregation that one forgets for the time all manner thoughts; the cares and trials of life vanish before the gentle influence of the place, like the shadow of night chased by a sunbeam. Happy those souls who carry out with them to their every-day duties some few drops of the heavenly dew which falls at such times so abundantly on their hearts.

(To be continued.)

[This story can be had in book form from J. Murphy & Co., Baltimore, or Knowle's book store, Halifax, N.S.]

FARMERS' COLUMN.

Canadian Horses.

One of the oldest horse-buyers in Ontario is George C. Tamm, who was buyer for the firm of Hendrie & Co. for 25 years. He came to Canada in '06 but the sobriquet of "Yankee George" has still clung to him, although there is little indication of his nationality. Mr. Tamm's experience has been chiefly with the heavy breeds, the draught and several purpose animals, those that are most seen on Canadian farms. He said to THE FARMER some time ago: "There was a big lot of horses shipped from Canada to England last winter, and full. Shipments are still being made even in these winter months, for example 25 head of Canadian draught horses left New York last Wednesday, or the old country, and a consignment of eleven lighter horses will leave Boston this week. The McKinley tariff affected the trade in the general purpose animals very slightly. The depression in the trade with the States of late years and the effects had to be felt sooner or later. That the McKinley tariff is not greatly to blame is shown by the fact that draught horses are being sold in Buffalo and Chicago to-day at cheaper prices than on our side of the direct result of the McKinley tariff as regards the heavier class of horses has been to commence a Canadian trade with England, which is sure to grow to very large proportions. The English like our heavy horses better than the American animal. I have been all over the world and know the horses of almost every country on the globe, and I say that there is no country in the world which can raise such horses as Canada. The climate is the reason. It is a hardening and healthy climate. I remember last fall in New York seeing two lots of horses which were being shipped to England together. One batch was from the Western States, the other from Canada. The horses from the Western States looked better than those from home, but they were not the same enduring animal. Out in the West the horses are not, in fact, cannot be worked until they are 4 or 5 years old. In Canada they are worked when 2 or 3 years old, so while those Canadian horses did not look as well as the American ones, they would last longer and be more serviceable. The English are pleased with our heavy draught horses. Those which I have bought for shipment have been sent to transportation and carriage companies in the larger cities in England. Messrs. Hendrie & Co. have received numerous letters from the managers of these companies saying the Canadian horses are doing great work, and that they are more than satisfied with them. The Canadian horse has only to be known in England to be bought. Already a Glasgow buyer at home, who has sent them shipments once and sometimes twice a month. There is a good profit in the trade, and I have every reason to believe that it will grow enormously next year. It's going to develop into a big thing."

Keeping Potatoes.

It is important to keep potatoes intended for early planting, in as nearly a dormant condition through winter as practicable. On the approach of the warm weather of spring, they are more or less started into vigor; and the early ones, which are intended for the earliest crop, will often send out sprouts one or two inches long before the late ones show any disposition for growing. The growth of these early sprouts, and the drawing out of the tubers, and when planted they make a more feeble growth at the outset, and instead of coming forward as early as possible, when they are planted, they are retarded, and they are put back and delayed for use. So great is this difference between early and late crops, that it is often found that the late crop is actually found to be later than the early crop, and this is due to the fact that the late crop is retarded by the growth of the early crop.

Some difference of opinion exists among cultivators as to the best method of keeping potatoes. Potatoes are remarkable for their sensitiveness to cold. They will freeze at but little below the freezing point of water, and are injured by enduring several degrees of frost. It is safe, therefore, not to approach too near the danger line, and to keep them in a cellar, with the aid of guidance of a thermometer, and to keep them at a temperature of 45° to 50° F. at which point they will remain strictly dormant. A uniform temperature is more important than a high one, and it is better to have a lower temperature even if it is lower than the ideal one. As the weather in winter always varies more or less—sometimes up to 60° and in a day or two down to 20° or 30°—some care is often necessary in regulating the heat of the apartment by opening up or closing the windows, using the thermometers for guidance. With a thermometer that can be reasonably used, the air in the cellar may be so warm that the sprouts will be found pushing their way out, and in this case the next best thing is to rub the tubers with a dry cloth, to which a wet or stormy day may be chosen for the purpose, and it would not be advisable to wait for such an opportunity. The sooner they are planted on this account the better, in well prepared ground. When early varieties have sent out sprouts in spring, two or three inches long, they would give an earlier crop if they could be planted without injury to these sprouts. These, however, are extremely delicate at the point, and it is nearly impossible for a cultivator to plant the tubers without bruising and destroying their vitality. While it is important to preserve seed potatoes from frost, sprouting and rotting, and to keep them at a temperature of 45° to 50° F., a marked difference will exist for the tubers between the tubers that are kept fresh and sound, and those which are sprouted and rotted. It is worth the experiment to try for the tubers which have been treated both ways, the one fresh and plump, and the other wasted and shrivelled by two or three months' sprout.

There is no doubt that many of the fields as well as the garden crops of the country are large have been reduced in productivity by using seed tubers which have been exhausted by copious sprouting. More attention should be given to keeping the seed tubers dormant, and during that portion of the spring which precedes planting. A good way to keep them, is the shallow boxes which we have figured and described on former occasions for keeping apples. These boxes are nearly of about two feet square and three or four inches deep. They have slatted bottoms to admit the needed supply of air, and when filled with tubers are placed one on another, the bottom of the upper one serving as a cover for the one next below. A greater quantity of seed may be kept in this way than in any other way. By lifting and conveying these boxes one at a time and making vertical piles of them, they may be quickly and thoroughly examined, and in this way a convenient or a change of temperature may require.

Measuring Fields in Winter.

Every successful farmer should know the size of his fields, as well as the distance which he has to travel in his daily work. And one of the cheapest improvements which the owner of a farm can make is to learn the area of every field, and the distance of every field from his farm buildings. Unless he knows the number of acres in a field, he cannot apply the acreage of the seed he sows in it, the manure he applies to it, the labor required to cultivate it, and the amount of crop which should be expected from it, or the value of the amount of crop and what it has cost him. Owners often make considerable mistakes in estimating the area of their fields. They should measure them in winter, when there happens to be a light snow on the ground. The ground is then frozen hard and is easy to go over, and the task is then not impeded by weeds and brush. Set out measuring sticks, with a red woolen yarn or cord attached to the upper end, are quickly seen by the measurement of the same length. A tape line will answer a good purpose. An old cord, twisted and mended, and regular distances with red yarn, will be useful on many occasions. A light rod or pole, 10 feet long, will often be found convenient for smaller fields, as a pointer to the corner of a corn field, or a kitchen garden. Three lengths of the pole will make exactly two rods. A little practice will enable the farmer to measure his fields and measure certain plowed portions in a day, or certain distances on the farm. His first trial will be in measuring a blundering, but let him find some measured distances and repeat the work the next year, and with some practice he will soon be able to measure distances in this easy and rapid way with surprising accuracy.

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