

A BEAUTIFUL LEGEND ABOUT GOOD SAINT ANTHONY.

A Franciscan Father of the monastery of St. Lawrence at Naples tells the following story:

In a peaceful little cottage by the seashore there lived a young fisherman and his mother. One stormy night, while they were performing their night prayers, they were startled by a desperate outcry as that of a man in terrible agony. The young man rushed to the door and to his horror found a man who had been waylaid by robbers and was now in a dying condition. The robbers fled; for besides fearing the presence of a witness, they had to escape the hands of the policemen who were on their trail. The fisherman stooped down to assist the dying man, but in a few moments more all was over. The policemen now entering upon the scene, and seeing the young man stooping over the lifeless body, captured him as the murderer, congratulating themselves that they had finally succeeded in tracing one of the band of robbers for whom they had long been searching. All protests on the part of son and mother were in vain, and he was taken to prison.

The circumstantial evidence was too strong against the young fisherman; the trial was soon ended. He was condemned to death. The police had heard the cry, the body was still warm, no one was near but he; the testimony of the mother was of no value in this case, and thus the declarations of the young man's innocence were considered only as those of a stubborn criminal. The poor mother had endeavored to come to the trial, but she was so inexperienced and helpless in such matters that she arrived in court when all was over and the death sentence was passed, the criminal to be executed early the next day. The mother broke out in sobs and tears and asked the judge if there were no way to save her son. The judge, in order to get rid of her, said in an off-hand way—the king could change matters. The mother's mind was quickly settled. She would go to the king at once, fall down at his feet and plead for the life of her son. She did not know of any formalities and was disappointed when told that she had to bring her petition in the prescribed form of writing. The sun was already going down when she left the palace to find a lawyer to write up her petition. When returning with the document it was too late of course, the doors were closed and no petitioner could enter. The poor woman was heart-broken. Not knowing what to do she passed by the church of St. Lawrence. She entered and before the statue of St. Anthony prayed as only a mother's heart under such circumstances could pray. But her time even here was short, for the sacristan soon came and rattling his keys gave her a sign that it was time for him to shut the doors. In her agony the poor mother, who was still holding the document in her hand, threw it over the iron railing calling out aloud and despairingly:

"St. Anthony you must save my child." Singularly consoled and quieted, she left the church and went home.

It was about ten o'clock. The king was all alone in his study, looking through some important documents he had to sign. He had given his servants strict orders to admit no one as he did not wish to be disturbed. Suddenly there was a rap at the door, and a moment after a Franciscan brother entered. His appearance was so majestic yet amiable, that the king was charmed for a moment. The Franciscan approached the king and without any embarrassment modestly spoke: "I beg pardon of your majesty for coming at so late an hour, but my business is very urgent, and will not allow any delay, as a man's life is at stake."

"Speak brother. What can I do for you," said the king encouragingly.

"Your majesty signed a death-warrant to-day for a young fisherman who was found at the corpse of a murdered man. All evidence seemed to tell against him, and yet he is entirely innocent."

"I am sorry," said the king. "I can do nothing in such matters. The courts are there for that and when the court passes a sentence I can not change it, nor can I presume that the sentence is not just." "I will vouch for the innocence of my client," said the monk with a positiveness that impressed the king. "I beg your majesty to write a few words of pardon below this petition."

The king spontaneously reached for the pen, but reflecting again, he stopped and asked the monk: "Where do you come from?"

"From the monastery of St. Lawrence, your majesty," answered the monk.

"But even if I do grant your petition," said the king, "it will be too late, for he will be executed before this can reach him."

"There is no time to be lost if it is true," said the monk, "but I will see that the document is delivered in time, pray just write a few words of pardon here," and the monk pointed with his finger to the blank space where the king was to sign. The king did sign, and with a few words of courtesy and thanks the monk left the room.

The whole affair had made a wonderful impression on the king. He tried to continue his work, but reflecting again, said to himself: How could this man come here at this hour? He asked the chamberlain servants, but no body had seen and all the any one enter or depart. They searched but no traces of the monk could be found. The king resolved to go to the monastery early next morning and find the solution to this mystery. The scaffold on which the young man was to be executed had already been erected and the poor young man in his cell was expecting his executioner to enter when the doors of the prison opened and instead an officer of the king appeared with the "pardon." The young fisherman was at liberty to return home to his mother.

At the dawn of day the State's Attorney was terrified to see a document of pardon signed by the king the day previous lying on his table. He supposed that one of his servants had laid it there and had forgotten or neglected to tell him about it. He was in a terrible predicament. Snatching the document, he rushed to the prison to save the young man's life. We already know that he was not too late.

In the course of the forenoon the king appeared at the monastery of St. Lawrence. He had all the Brothers assembled in the refectory and asked the Rev. Prior who of them had been to see him in the palace the night before. The astonished Prior replied that he knew of no one to leave the house at so late an hour. The king scrutinizing the monks and not seeing his man told the Prior what had happened.

The Prior suggested to call the mother, who might inform them to whom she had given the petition.

Meanwhile the king was shown around the monastery to pass away the time, and was also taken to the church. The king passed from one altar to another until he finally came to the shrine of St. Anthony. Instantly recognizing his man, he pointed to the statue and said: "That is the one who came to see me."

"Pardon, your majesty," said the Prior, "he is not under my jurisdiction."

In consequence of this incident, the city of Naples selected St. Anthony as one of its patron saints.

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