

## THE SONG OF THE SILENT VALLEY.

(Continued from last week.)

Once more we were left to ourselves, to gloat over the delightful novelty of the situation, and the yet more delightful prospect of what would follow. On going to the doorstep, attracted by a clatter of dishes and the monotonous tones of a reader's voice, I had the unexpected privilege of a peep at the Trappists taking their six o'clock meal. Through a window nearby I could just see a double row of shaven heads, hands busy with cup or knife, and, every now and then, a lay-brother passing up or down to attend to the wants of the monks. The lector was reading what seemed to be a sermon on monastic duties.

When the guest-master returned, he opened the second door, and, bowing graciously, stood aside to let us pass. We now found ourselves in a little room, smaller than the small parlor. The walls were tinted pale green; in the corner was a square cupboard, at the end nearest to us, a window through which only waving branches could be seen. In the centre was a table laid for five guests. No snowy damask here, only the yellowish oil-cloth tacked down on the plain wood, white crockery dishes, on straw mats, common metal knives and forks with black wooden handles—such was the simple array prepared for us in the Trappist hostelry.

We said grace, seated ourselves, and were rather confused at seeing the guest-master uncover the steaming dishes and wait upon us with far more attention, if less skill, than a trained butler! The frugal but perfectly-cooked meal consisted of fried fish and "omelette aux fines herbes," followed by cheese, bread, butter, honey, milk or tea, and finally big, rosy cheeked apples—all the proceeds of Trappist industry.

While offering each viands, changing plates, filling cups, etc., the monk answered our questions. "No," he told us, "we Trappists never eat meat, save the invalids, and even they can eat only the flesh of quadrupeds." "What do you eat then?" "Why, all kinds of vegetables, boiled, never fried or otherwise prepared; also honey, fruit, cheese and butter on alternate days." "And what do you take in the way of liquids?" "Cider, wine, milk at supper, and since the wine has been destroyed, we drink tea instead." Then he told us about the fire, how mysteriously it had arisen, how the sacred vessels had been saved, how 5,000 books and manuscripts had been destroyed by the flames, how, after the wine-cellar had been burnt and the bottles uncorked or broken, all the ditches had been full of wine which the cows came to drink next day!

After the simple meal, we passed out into the sweet summer air. Leaving with us some photographs of the burned monastery, our host went in quest of the Prior. With him and the Superior (for the Abbot being away in Montreal, the Prior was first in command), came the porter—these three, Prior, guest-master and porter, being the only Trappists who may speak to visitors.

The Prior was shorter and thinner than our first acquaintance, less striking in appearance, though he had the same expression of quiet content and the same kindly manner. He began by apologizing for the very dusky color of the robes, telling us that all their extra clothing had been burnt. Then he spoke of various matters, and found several subjects in common, the Prior having studied in Montreal. We touched upon the probable advent of the Trappistines or Trappist Nuns, whose rule and costume are identical with those of the monks. He told how the Mother Abbess, just out from France, had come to visit I.a Trappe a few weeks before. She had chosen a most auspicious time, just after the fire and before the cloister was solemnly re-established, and she had therefore enjoyed the unique privilege of going through the whole monastery. She is probably the only woman who can boast of having entered a Trappist cloister!

Meanwhile, the tall, slim Father-Potter, with stooping shoulders and long thin hands folded in his

wide sleeves, listened to the conversation, silently but with unconcealed interest. His large, deep blue eyes and sensitive mouth were sufficient to arrest a passing glance, but the expression of his face was wonderful. "Father Angelo" or "Father Felix" would have been the proper name for him, so winning was the childlike simplicity, so touching the celestial happiness, that shone in his eyes and lighted up his smile.

A bell rang with brief, rapid strokes. The evening office was beginning, so the Prior took his leave.

For half an hour or more, the two remaining monks walked with us in the garden, with its straight rows of vegetables, then into a large field with elms and oaks standing out in shadowy groves against the fading light and quivering aspens that reared their slender trunks and tremulous foliage beside a narrow strip of marshy land. They allowed us a wonderful glimpse into the real peace and blessedness of lives seemingly so austere and forbidding.

Gloom was stealing over the dim landscape, a pale half-moon came out in the dark sky and her beams silvered trees and grass and cast a shimmering radiance on the distant lake. From the monastery came the ringing of the bell, its sound so quick, so imperative, so unlike any other. "If you wish to hear the 'Salve,' said the guest-master, we had better walk under the chapel windows."

So we paced up and down in the moonlight, just beneath the temporary chapel. While the chant of Vespers was rising up within the house, we learned that the music of the famous "Salve Regina" dated from the seventeenth century, that the present organist of the monastery had once been a German musician of no ordinary gifts before becoming a nameless Trappist; and, moreover, that the "Salve" is the only part of the daily office sung to a musical accompaniment.

Then the bell rang again. We paused under the windows, the evening gloom now relieved only by the soft moon beams, and a deeper hush seemed to fall over the lovely, quiet scene.

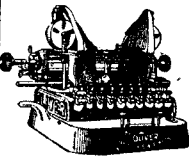
There was a shuffling of feet, a noise of moving benches, and we held our breath, fearing to lose a single note. A practiced hand touched the organ keys, and sweet, solemn melancholy, the grand music that had in its strains all the beauty of this glorious night with all the pleading pathos of a human prayer, rose and swelled, and sank again in mournful cadences. Then all the monks took up the strain with deep, expressive voices that sang as angels sing before the Throne, yet prayed and pleaded as only human hearts that have suffered and striven can learn to pray and plead. Surely the bright spirits singing their Queen's praises in Heaven must have paused to listen as Mary's sons breathed forth that most beautiful of the Church's prayers!

"Salve Regina"—how grand and sweet the salutation! "Mater misericordiae, ad te clamamus—" Oh, the pleading notes of the voices, how they stirred our hearts to the depths, yet not so deeply as the "Suspiramus," the soft Italian pronunciation making it "Soospira-moos," truly a long-drawn sigh that floated in the air, then throbbed gradually into silence. Rising once more, how fondly they dwelt upon St. Bernard's cry of love, lingering on each syllable: "O clemens, O pia, o dulcis Virgo Maria!" Even to the thrice-repeated "Amen" that hymn was too full of meanings that can be felt but not expressed, it was too rich in unearthly beauty to be fitly described in cold, soundless, written words.

When the monks resumed their seats, each one of us drew a long, long breath, and for a moment there was unbroken silence. "How heavenly!" some one said at last, very softly. Then, feeling as though we, too, had been listening to the wonderful bird whose "celestial and immortal song" had held Longfellow's monk Felix in silent rapture until

"A hundred years had passed and had not seemed so long As a single hour,"—

We returned to the carriage that was waiting before the door.



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The two monks parted from us as kindly as they had received us, courteously brushing aside our thanks as though we had done them a favor by coming to be entertained and thus obliging them to miss the long evening office which would have to be recited before they slept that night. We marvelled all the more since "Father Felix," with his charming ingenuousness, had told us how, one day, some Americans, visiting the monastery, plied him with questions as to how he lived and ate and slept, how long he prayed, etc., until, being a little tired that day," he grew rather weary of this cross-examination. At last, a young lady queried sympathetically: "And what do you find most dreadfully disagreeable in your rule?" "The answer," he told us, "escaped my lips before I had time to think. Her question was scarcely uttered before I replied: 'Being obliged to talk!'"

We had supped at I.a Trappe, we had heard the "Salve Regina," and now, with full hearts, we went away to crown the day's enjoyment with a beautiful moonlight drive. The change—the moon's magic transformation of the fair scene viewed by sunlight a few hours earlier, was a revelation to us, especially the strangely golden light cast upon the lake, set off by the last orange glow of sunset behind the dark woods opposite.

When we parted from our friends at their gate, the last word was: "We shall never forget this!" I am very sure that for one of us, at least, the "Salve Regina" will always evoke the picture of a balmy moonlit evening and a shadowy monastery, and will bring faintly back, from a perhaps far distant past, the strains of a music almost too beautiful for "this vale of tears." —R.A.

## A NEW ZEALAND WEDDING.

The following from the Dunedin, New Zealand Tablet, refers to the marriage of a brother of Mr. M. A. McCormack, of Kelly Bros. & Co., this city.

A ceremony which attracted a large amount of attention took place at the Church of the Sacred Heart, Oxford, on Wednesday, Feb. 4, when Mr. James McCormack, secretary and treasurer to the Waimakariri-Ashley Water Supply Board, Oxford, third son of the late Mr. John McCormack, collector H.M.S. customs at Dundalk, Newry, Waterford, Grimsby and Sutherland, and of Leinster road, Rathmines, Dublin, was united in the bonds of matrimony to Elizabeth Sabina (Binie), eldest daughter of Mr. K. Jennings, Oxford. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. Father Hyland, who also celebrated the nuptial mass. The church was crowded with a congregation embracing members of all the religious denominations of the district, thus testifying to the regard in which the happy couple are held. The bride, attended by her little sister, dressed in white, trimmed with green, and carrying a basket of handsome flowers, was arrayed in a travelling costume of brown cloth with hat to match, and looked exceedingly charming. Mr. John O'Halloran, jr., of Glentui, acted as best man. As the bridal party left the church, Mendelssohn's wedding march was played by Miss A. Parish. After the ceremonies the wedding party adjourned to the home of the bride's mother, where about 50 guests sat down to the wedding breakfast. The health of the bride and bridegroom was proposed by the Rev. Father Hyland, and other toasts followed, which were duly honored, the speakers

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paying warm tributes to the popularity of the happy couple. The wedding presents, which were numerous and much admired by the guests, comprised both useful and ornamental articles. The newly wedded couple left by the afternoon train for Christchurch, amidst a great demonstration of good wishes for their future happiness. In the evening the event was celebrated by a very pleasant social entertainment and dance in the West Oxford town hall.

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