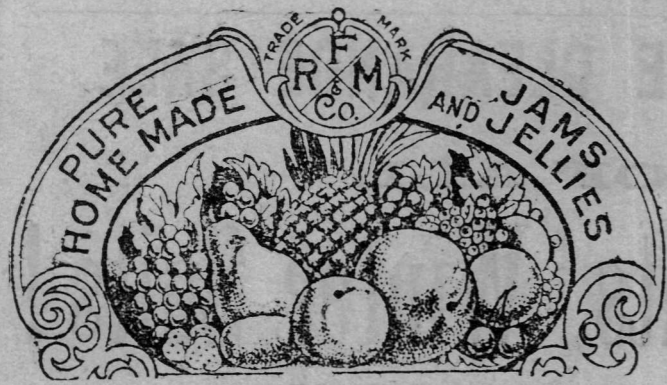


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Vol. XLII, No. 7



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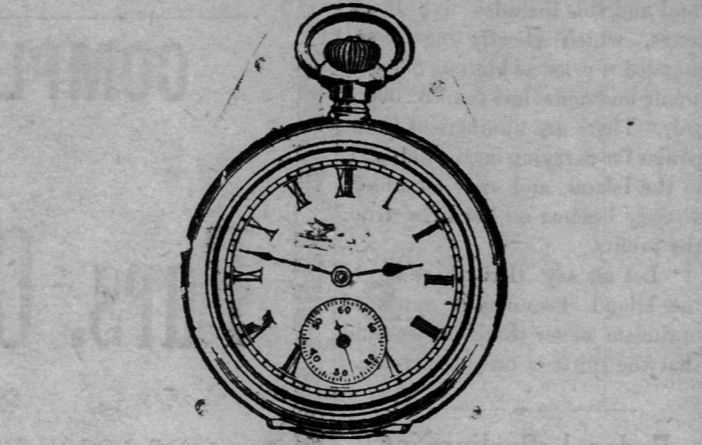
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Aug. 15 1906—3m

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Charlotteville, P. E. I.
Nov. 30 1910.

Amalfi's Great Day.

(From Our Correspondent.)

Amalfi, Dec. 30.—Having come down from Naples to Amalfi for the feast of St. Andrew, and arriving a few days in advance, I have realized a new and fuller meaning in the old proverb, "Be there an hour too early has a minute too late." The time of waiting can be well spent here, and after the feast we are still inclined to linger. We have visited the old break ruins of Paestum, driven along the Riviera to Salerno and returning always to Amalfi, as the loveliest spot in this lovely coast line, have found that increasing interest in the remaining vestiges of her ancient splendor.

But I did not come to Amalfi on an archaeological expedition. I did not come to investigate the ruins of the past. I came especially to witness the feast of a great saint as the people of Amalfi have celebrated it for centuries and to kneel in prayer at his shrine.

The Cathedral of Amalfi enjoys a privilege, shared only by a very few churches in Christendom, that of containing enshrined within its walls the body of an apostle, and that no other than the brother of the great St. Peter whom Christ constituted head of the Church and His first vicar on earth. The body is preserved in an ancient crypt within the Cathedral, encased with a covering of precious marbles. It was brought hither by Cardinal Capua after the sack of Constantinople in the early days of the thirteenth century.

The head of the apostle is preserved in Rome where it is enshrined in one of the four great relics of the Vatican basilica. He is, of course, the patron saint of the town, as well as vicar of the Cathedral, and his feast is celebrated with undiminished pomp and fervor by the people on the night of November. To witness the celebration will amply repay the short trip from Naples.

It was, indeed, a Catholic day in Italy, and the whole combination of beauty, climate, devotion and popular happiness could not, it is safe to say, be duplicated in any other part of the world. With the first flush of early dawn, discharges of misters from the beach and the neighboring hills began to arouse the echoes and to remind the still slumbering population that once more the great anniversary had arrived. The world was quickly astir, and from a very early hour an innumerable stream of peasants and villagers, young and old, male and female, began to enter the town from all quarters, and to congregate in the piazza where stands the large fountain crowned by the saint's effigy.

Here with exemplary patience the throng waited until the hour of the ceremony in the Cathedral drew nigh. For all this throng of persons had assembled that day with one definite purpose to see, as it were, their universal friend and patron, their saint and their guardian of their beloved Amalfi.

The most interesting and suggestive feature of the whole day's ceremonies was the procession, as it was also the most beautiful and picturesque. It was not merely a religious procession of the twelfth century in southern Italy. It was a historical pageant setting forth the life and the glory of the Amalfi that was and is no more. It would be impossible to describe the picture, for one would need to see it in its glorious framework. You must know that Amalfi or all that is left of it lies at the foot of the mountain, which almost arches over it in a cliff and then recedes gradually back into myriad peaks that lift their brown pinnacles into the blue sky. Her feet, to use Longfellow's simile, are washed by the useless sea which extends into space dancing and shimmering in the sun. The whole coast is a panorama of scenic glory which has ever captivated the long line of poets, artists and writers who have visited it in days gone by. And over this whole panorama of beauty, awaiting, as it were, to become the framework of the procession, spreads the canopy of the azure blue heavens without cloud to be seen.

Within the church had been profusely decorated and with our ideas, perhaps, excessively. The blank space of wall, where no monument or paintings were found, had been covered with draperies of rich crimson and every pillar had been sheathed from base to capital in the gorgeous material. Innumerable cut-glass chandeliers had been slung from the ceiling and the arches of the nave. Dark red curtains of damask were drawn over the windows to keep out the sun's bright beams, and thus a sombre appearance was given to the whole. From the high

altar down to the nave and into the piazza and along the route of the procession were strewn bay and myrtle leaves, emitting a pleasant, wholesome odor when crushed beneath the feet of the picturesque crowd.

Such was the framework when the rich bronze doors were flung open to the sweet air and sunshine, and the procession began to move from the high altar.

It was a wonderful and deeply interesting experience to watch the glittering train slowly emerge from the darkness of the church into the glare of day and then descend that stately flight of marble stairs to the ground of the piazza, and to the accompaniment of soft strains of strowak First came the leading members of the various confraternities of the little city, all bearing taper whose tongues of flame shone feebly in the brilliant sunlight, and all wearing snow white smocks and colored scarfs. Red, green, blue, white, purple, yellow gleamed the huge banners of these different societies, each borne by a tall standard bearer, assisted by quaint, solemn little figures who acted as pages. These were dressed picturesquely and some even fantastically with angel wings, or white and gold elements. In their innocent features and dark, sparkling eyes one could not see where Raphael and many another great painter found the models for their angels and cupids, for Italian children are nearly always beautiful, though age and sunburn and care can make them very much otherwise.

Next I followed the body of the clergy in copes of white and gold and then the canons of the Cathedral in the fine old vestments designed and reserved for such occasions and with mitres on their heads. The stranger might think that these were the visiting bishops, but, as I have already hinted, this is an historic special privilege conceded to the Chapter of Amalfi in the days when she was metropolis of southern Europe, when Florence and Venice were still little more than villages, and when the Doge of Amalfi held and exercised the title of "Defender of the Faith," half a thousand years before Henry VIII was born to receive and then to disgrace it.

List of all walked the archbishop in a cope of cloth of gold and mitre whose jewels glittered brilliantly in the sun. This, I thought, is the successor of that bishop appointed to his see by Pope St. Gregory the Great nearly fifteen hundred years ago, and there is no Anglican difficulty here as to the unbroken continuity of the line. He was attended by two Clerical clad in black livery edged with ermine and looking as venerable as their aged superior.

Immediately behind the archbishop beneath a gorgeous canopy of state upheld by six white robed assistants was borne the great silver bust of St. Andrew, upon which the sunbeams were now playing in a dazzling constellation as the bearers with slow and cautious steps descended the marble steps from the great door of the Cathedral into the piazza. This bust contains the relics of the saint and, with the exception of this day, is preserved in the crypt to which I have referred.

As they reached the level of the piazza with their precious burden the people fell to their knees and a deep murmur of satisfaction passed through the crowd which recalled to me the like expression of deep suppressed feeling that sweeps over a devout congregation in country districts in Ireland when the Mass bell has just ceased to tinkle after the most solemn parts of the holy sacrifice.

Thus the procession wended its way through the square and down to the road that leads along the sea with banners waving, choir chanting and clouds of incense rising into the sun-kissed air. It was truly a beautiful sight, this pageant that linked the present with the past, this festival of the Church amid a people so devout and surroundings so appropriate. On its return to the Church the band took up its position in the piazza, the organ within now joining in its joyous strains, as the procession ascended the marble steps and passed up the aisle. Of course, the climax could not be reached in any Italian procession without the explosion of firecrackers, and the booming of mortars.

The afternoon was spent in feasting and innocent amusement, the band always relieving the monotony by its lively Italian airs, the national melodies of a joyous people; and when at last darkness descended upon the happy town rockets and Roman candles were seen to spring into the night air from many points and thus a sombre appearance was given to the whole. From the high

dying trails of colored light. When I finally turned from my window, having closed only the venetian blinds, although it was the last day in November, my first thoughts were this was a thoroughly Catholic day and yet a typically Italian feast. Patriotism could never have lived in this climate or among a people. The evidences of God's love and Fatherhood are here too manifest and tangible. Surely we should take into account the national characteristics, the inherited traditions and instincts of these people who are now coming to our shores annually in thousands. It is said they are not generous and will do nothing to support the Church; but, surely, they were Italians who built the churches and lavished upon them the best treasures of their wealth and genius. Can it be that the same spirit is wholly dead, or cannot be revived in their descendants? Let us hope not. They are a religious people. These fossils are a proof of that, for they are the outgrowth of their religious instinct. But in this age they will not alone suffice. Instruction, clear knowledge of the fundamentals that underlie all the externals is necessary. If so important as this our omitters—to do one, but not neglect the other. There are religious but they are different. Let us judge mercifully, but, above all, patiently, this people; for while we are one in faith they are not wholly like us, whose inherent instincts were developed among the logs and rain, and frosts and snow of Iceland, Germany and Poland. For woe or we they are now mongers and have come to stay and they will be a determining element in the amalgam that is now in the boiling pot, make the future Catholic Church and nation of America.—O. B. M. in N. Y. Freeman's Journal.

Pictures In The Home.

That "anything is good enough to cover the bare space on the wall" seems to be the principle on which many Catholics set nowadays in selecting pictures for the adornment of the home. Correct taste in art is a rare thing in this country, and of judgment in literature. For those who exercise some care in their selection of books will buy without hesitation worthless or dangerous pictures and engravings. Yet the character of the pictures in a house is a matter of more importance than the nature of the library's contents or the books are harmless till they are read, but a morbid picture may be always hanging on the wall for all to see.

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No one can expect to be free from some form or other of skin trouble unless the blood is kept in good shape. The blood can easily be purified and the skin disease cured by the use of Burdock Blood Bitters, that old and widely known blood medicine. It has been on the market for over 35 years and its reputation is unrivaled. Mrs. Lillie Mitchell, Guelph, Ont., writes:—"I was troubled with eczema. My body was covered with awful itching skin eruptions. Although I tried many different remedies I could not get any relief. Finally I got a bottle of Burdock Blood Bitters, which completely cured me."

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All men are dust, quoted Good-nan.

O, no, they ain't, said Runder. Dat sometimes settles.

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