

The Old and the New.

BY REV. A. J. RYAN.

How swift they go! Life's many years, With their winds of woe, And their storms of tears, And their darkest nights whose shadowy hopes...

And ah! we pray With a grief so dear, That the years may stay When their graves are near...

For the heart so true To the Old Year cleaves, Tho' the hand of the New Flowers garland its waves...

Yes! men will cling With a love to the last; And wildly sing Their arms round the past!

As the vine that clings to the oak that falls, As the key twines round the rumbled wains...

And why not so? The Old Year's days They knew and they know...

We walked by their side, and we told them each grief, And they kissed our tears while they whispered relief...

Let the New Year sing To the Old Year's grave, Will the New Year bring Flowers garland its wave?

Ab! the Stranger Year trips over the snows, And his brow is encircled with many a roose...

Let the New Year smile When the Old Year dies, In how short a while...

Yes! Stranger Year, thou hast many a charm, And thy face is fair and thy greeting warm...

FABIOLA:

OR THE CHURCH OF THE CATACOMBS

BY HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL WISEMAN.

What is your history? Whence do you come?

"I have no history. My parents were poor, and brought me to Rome when I was four years old...

"Thou trifled with me," exclaimed the judge, thoroughly vexed, "and makest light of my fealty..."

"A thrill of disgust and horror ran through the assembly, which could not help sympathizing with the poor blind creature..."

"And how have you lived since?" "God became my only Father then, and His Catholic Church my mother..."

"How do you know that?" "I have seen you. Do you remember very early one morning in the autumn, leading a poor lame man along the Vicus Patricius?"

"Oh, yes! how could I deny it?" "That that meeting was a Christian meeting?" "Certainly; what else could it be?"

"He wanted no more; his suspicions were verified. Agnes, about whom Torquatus had been able or willing to tell him nothing, was certainly a Christian..."

"After a pause, looking at her steadfastly, he said, 'Do you know whether you are going?'"

"No joyfully, rather," was her brief reply. Having got all that he desired, he consigned his prisoner to Corvinus at the gates of the Æmilian basilica...

"What is a third time in twenty-four hours will then care to cross my path? This time thou shalt not escape..."

"These were Corvinus's words, garnished with a furious imprecation, as he rushed from his father's side round the enclosure before the tribunal..."

"No, no; let me go, Quadratus, let me go." "Where are you running to in such a hurry? I help you!" asked his captor, still holding him fast...

"Who will be gone?" "Pancreas!" answered Corvinus, "who just now insulted my father..."

"No; I am not noble; except because my parents, though poor, died for Christ. As I am blind, those who took care of me called me Orea, (Blind), and then, out of kindness, softened it into Cecilia..."

"But now, give up all this folly of the Christians, who have kept thee only poor and blind. Honour the decrees of the divine emperors, and offer sacrifice to the gods; and good thou shalt have riches, and fine clothes, and good fare, and the best physicians shall try to restore thee thy sight..."

"You must have better motives to propose to me than these; for the very things for which I most thank God and His Divine Son, are those which you would have me put away..."

"I thank God that I am poor and meanly clad, and fare not daintily; because by all these things I am the more like Jesus Christ, my only Spouse..."

"For that, more than all the rest, I thank Him daily and hourly with all my heart..."

"They are not so, most noble sir. For in the midst of what you call darkness, I see a spot of what I must call light, it contrasts so strongly with all around..."

"Oh, no! Christians never hurt one another." The rack was standing, as usual, before him; and he made a sign to Catullus to place her upon it...

"Neither torments nor death," firmly replied the victim tied to the altar, "shall separate me from the love of Christ. I can offer up no sacrifice but to the one living God; and its ready oblation is myself..."

"The prefect made a signal to the executioner, and he gave one rapid whirl to the two wheels of the rack, round the windlasses of which the ropes were wound..."

"Now, sir," said the latter, "what is the wonderful information you have to give?" "That I know who perpetrated the outrage of last night, upon my imperial edict..."

"A youth named Pancreas, whose knife I found under where the edict had not seized him and brought him to justice..."

"Then let him not escape a third time, or you may have to take his place. But how do you know him, or his knife?" "Yes, sir; schoolfellow at the school of Cassians, who turned out to be a Christian..."

"A Christian presume to teach my subjects, to make their enemies of their country, disloyal to their sovereigns, and contemners of the gods! I suppose it was he who taught that young viper Pancreas to pull down our imperial edict..."

"Why, this is worse and worse. Is the ex-prefect then, too, become a Christian?" "Yes, sir; lives with many others of that sect in Campania..."

"What perfidy! what treachery! I shall not know whom to trust next. Prefect, send some one immediately to arrest all these men, and the school-master, and Torquatus..."

"All, what do I care?" replied the emperor peevishly; "arrest as many as you can, and spare no one, and make them smart well; do you understand me? Now begone, all; it is time for my supper..."

"Corvinus went home; and, in spite of medicinal applications, was feverish, sore, and spiteful all night; and next morning begged his father to let him go on the expedition into Campania, that so he might retrieve his honour, gratify his revenge, and keep the disgrace and sarcasm that was sure to be heaped on him by Roman society..."

"When Fulvius had deposited his prisoner at the tribunal, he hastened home to recount his adventures, as usual, to Euraetas. The old man listened with imperturbable sternness to the barren recital, and at last said, coldly..."

"No immediate profit, indeed; but a good prospect is view, at least." "How so?" "The lady Agnes is in my power. I have made sure, at last, that she is a Christian. I can now necessarily either win her, or destroy her..."

"Take the second alternative," said the old man, "it is the shorter and less troublesome way." "But my honour is engaged; I cannot allow myself to be spurned in the manner I told you..."

"You have no time to lose, remember, in foolery. Your funds are nearly exhausted, and nothing is coming in. You must strike a blow..."

"Get it, get it any way, provided it be the surest and the speediest. You know our compact. Either the family is restored to wealth and splendour, or it ends in and with you. It shall never linger on in disgrace, that is, in poverty..."

"I know, I know, without your every day reminding me of the latter condition," said Fulvius, wringing his hands, and writhing in all his body...

"I give you time, till all is hopeless. Things do not look bright at present. But, Fulvius, it is time that I tell you who I am..."

"I was your father's elder brother, Fulvius, and am the head of the family. I have had but one thought, but one aim in life, the restoring of our house to that greatness and splendour, from which my father's negligence and profligacy had brought it down..."

"Fulvius, who had been riveted with amazement and deep attention to the speaker, shrank into himself with shame, at this hearing of both their hearts. The dark old man fixed his eyes more intently than ever, and went on..."

"You remember the dark and complicated crime by which we concentrated in your hands the divided remnant of family wealth..."

"Fulvius covered his face with his hands and shuddered, then said entreatingly, 'Oh, spare me that, Euraetas; for heaven's sake spare me!'"

"Well, then," resumed the other, unmoved as ever, "I will be brief. Remember, nephew, that he who does not recoil from a brilliant future, to be the past. Let our compact, therefore, be straight-forward and honest; for there is an honesty even in sin..."

"Fulvius, in his heart, cursed the day that he came to Rome; or bound himself to his stern master, whose mysterious fate was so much stronger than he had known before. But he felt himself spell-bound to him, and powerless as the kid in the lion's paws..."

"Of fright, I fancy," he replied. "Of Christian modesty," interposed a strange who passed them."

CHAPTER XVII. RETRIBUTION.

The prefect of the city went to give his report on the untoward events of the day dyed, and do what was possible, to screen his worthless son. He found the emperor in the worst of moods. He found Corvinus come in his way early in the day, and now the result of the inroad into the cemetery had revived his anger, when Tertullus entered into the audience-chamber...

"Where is your body of a son?" was the first salutation which the prefect received. "Humbly waiting your divinity's pleasure outside, and anxious to propitiate your godlike anger, by the tricks which fortune has played upon his zeal..."

"Fortune!" exclaimed the tyrant; "fortune indeed! His own stupidity and cowardice; a pretty beginning, forsooth; but he shall smart for it. Bring him in..."

"Come, sirrah! stand up," he said, "and let me hear an account of yourself. How did the edict disappear?"

"Corvinus told a rambling tale, which occasionally amused the emperor; for he was rather taken with the trick. This was a good symptom."

"Well," he said at last, "I will be merciful to you. Lectors, bind your faces. They drew their axes forth, and felt their edges. Corvinus again thrust himself down, and exclaimed..."

"Spare my life; I have important information to furnish, if I live." "Who wants your worthless life?" responded the gentle Maximian. "Lectors! put aside your axes; the rods are good enough for him..."

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Our readers will perhaps be curious to know what has become of the third member of our worthy trio, the apostate Torquatus. When, confused and bewildered, he ran to look for the tomb which was to guide him, it so happened, that, just within the gallery which he entered, was a neglected staircase, cut in the sandstone, down to a lower story of the cemetery. The steps had been worn round and smooth, and the descent was precipitous. Torquatus, carrying his light before him, and running heedless, fell headlong down the opening, and remained stunned and insensible at the bottom, till long after his companions had retired. He then revived; and for some time was so confused that he knew not where he was. He arose and groped about, till consciousness completely returning, he remembered that he was in a catacomb, but could not make out how he was alone, and in the dark...

It then struck him, that he had a couple of tapers about him, and means of lighting them. He employed them, and was cheered by finding himself again in light. But he had wandered from the staircase, of which, indeed, he recollected nothing, and went on, and on, entangled himself more inextricably in the subterranean labyrinth.

He felt sure that, before he had exhausted his strength by his tapers, he should come to some outlet. But by degrees he began to feel serious alarm. One by one his lights were burnt out, and his vigour began to fail, for he had been fasting from early morning; and he found himself coming back to the same spot, after he had wandered about apparently for hours. At first he had looked negligently around him, and had carelessly read the inscriptions on the tombs. But as he grew fainter, and his hope of relief weaker, those solemn monuments of death began to speak to his soul, in a language that it could not refuse to hear, nor pretend to misunderstand. "Deposited in peace," was the inmate of one; "resting in Christ" was another; and even the thousand nameless ones around them reposed in silent calm, each with the seal of the Church's motherly care stamped upon his place of rest. And within, the embalmed remains awaited the sound of angelic trumpets, to awaken them to their death. And he, in a few more hours, would be dead like them; he was lighting his taper, and had sunk down upon a heap of mould; but would he be laid in peace, by pious hands, as they? On the cold ground, alone, he should die, unremembered, unknown. There he should rot, and drop to pieces; and if, in after years, his bones, cast out from Christ's sepulchre, should be found, and might be taken for a piece of wood, and extinguished it. So covetous did he feel of those three minutes more of light, so jealous was he of that little taper-end, as his last link with earth's joys, so anxious was he to have one more look at things without, lest he should be forced to look at those within, that he drew forth his dirt and steel, and labored for a quarter of an hour to get a light from tinder, damped by the cold perspiration of his body. And when he had lighted his remnant of candle, instead of profiting by its flame to look around him, he fixed his eyes upon it with an idiotic stare, watching it burn down, as though it were the charm which bound his life, and this must expire with it. And soon the last spark gleamed smouldering like a comet's tail on the red earth, and died. He found himself alone in the dark. Why not? Darkness, complete and perpetual, had come upon him. He was out for ever from comfort with the living, his mouth would no more taste food, his ears never again hear a sound, his eyes behold no light, or thing, again. He was associated with the dead, only his grave was much larger than theirs; but, for all that, it was dark and lonely, and closed far ever. What else is death?

No, it could not be death as yet. Death had to be followed by something else. But even this was coming. The worm was beginning to gnaw his conscience, and it grew apace to a viper's length, and twisted itself round his heart. He tried to think of pleasant things, and they came before him; the quiet hours in the villa, with Chromatius and Polydorus; the kind words, and last embrace. But from the beautiful vision darted a withering flash; he had betrayed them; he had told of them; to whom? To Fulvius and Corvinus. The fatal chord was touched, like the tingling nerve of a tooth, that darts its agony straight to the centre of the brain. The drunken debauch, the dishonest play, the base hypocrisy, the vile treachery, the insipid apostasy, the remorseful sacrileges of the last days, and the murderous attempt of that morning, now came dancing, like demons hand in hand, in the dark before him, shouting, laughing, jibing, and sparring, moaning, gnashing their teeth; and sparks of fire flying before his eyes, from his enfeebled brain, seemed to dart from glaring torches in their hands. He sunk down and covered his eyes.

"I may be dead, after all," he said to himself; "for the infernal pit can have nothing worse than this."

His heart was too weak for rage; it sunk within him in the impotence of despair. His strength was ebbing fast, when he fancied he heard a distant sound. He put away the thought; but the wave of a remote harmony beat again upon his ear. He raised himself up; it was becoming distinct. So sweet it sounded, so like a chorus of angelic voices, but in another sphere, that he said to himself, "Who would have thought that Heaven was so near to hell! Or are they accompanying the fearful Judge to try me?"

And now a faint glimmer of light appeared at the same distance as the sounds; and the words of the strain were clearly heard. "In pace, in idipsum, dormiam et requiescam." "In pace, in the selfsame, I will sleep and I will rest." Ps. iv. 9.

"Those words are not for me. They might do at a martyr's entombment; they cannot at a reprobate's burial."

The light increased; it was like a dawn glowing into day; it entered the gallery and passed across it, bearing in it, as in a mirror, a vision too distinct to be unreal. First, there came virgins robed and holding lamps; then four who carried between them a form wrapped up in a white linen cloth, with a crown of thorns upon the head; after them the

youngful acolyte Tarcisus bearing a censer steaming with perfumed smoke; and, after others of the clergy, the venerable Pontiff himself, attended by Repartus, and another deacon. Diogenes and his sons, with sorrowful countenances, and many others, treated of death. At length it was placed in the tomb prepared for it, under an arch. While this was being done, Torquatus drew nigh to one of the spectators and whispered to him the question, "Whose funeral is this?"

"It is the deposition," he answered, "of the blessed Cecilia, a blind virgin, who this morning fell into the hands of the soldiers. In this cemetery, and whose soul God took to himself..."

"Then I am her murderer," he exclaimed, with a hollow wail; and staggering forward to the holy bishop's feet, fell prostrate before him. It was some time before his feelings could find vent in words; when these came, they were the ones he had resolved to utter: "Father, I have sinned before heaven, and against Thee, and I am not worthy to be called Thy child..."

The Pontiff raised him up kindly, and pressed him to his bosom, saying, "Welcome back, my son, whoever thou art, to thy Father's house. But thou art weak and faint, and needst rest..."

Some refreshment was immediately procured. But Torquatus would not rest till he had publicly avowed the whole of his guilt, including the day's crimes: for it was still the evening of the same day. All rejoiced at the prodigal's return, at his recovery. Agnes looked up to heaven from her last affectionate glance on the blind virgin's shroud, and thought that she could almost see her seated at the feet of her Spouse, smiling, with her eyes wide open, as she cast down a handful of flowers on the head of the penitent, the first-fruits of her intercession in Heaven.

Diogenes add his sons took charge of him. A humble lodging was procured for him, in a Christian cottage near that of his mother; but he was not of the class of penitents; where years of expiation, shortened by the intercession of confessors—that is, future martyrs—would prepare him for full re-admission to the privileges he had forfeited. (The penitentiary system of the early Church will be better described in any volume that embodies the antiquity of the second period of ecclesiastical history, that of The Church of the Basilicas. It is well known, especially from the writings of St. Cyprian, and those who proved weak in persecution, and were subjected to public penance, obtained a shortening of its term,—that is, an indulgence,—through the intercession of confessors, or of persons imprisoned for the faith.)

CHAPTER XIX. TWOFOLD REVENGE.

Sebastian's visit to the cemetery had been not merely to take thither for sepulture the relics of the first martyr, but to consult also with Marcellinus about his safety. His life was too valuable to the Church to be sacrificed so early; and Sebastian knew how eagerly it was sought. Torquatus now confirmed this, by communicating Fulvius's designs, and the motive of his attendance at the December ordination. The usual papal residence was no longer safe; and a bold idea had been adopted by the courageous soldier,—the "Protector of the Christians," as his acts till he had been authoritatively called. It was to lodge the Pontiff, whose name no one could suspect him to be, and where no search would be dreamt of in the very palace of the Cæsars. (This is related in the Acts just referred to.) Efficiently disguised, the holy Bishop left the cemetery, and escorted by Sebastian and Quadratus, was safely housed in the apartments of Irene, a Christian lady of rank, who had a remote part of the Palatine, in which her husband held a household office.

Early next morning Sebastian was with Pancreas: "My dear boy," he said, "you must leave Rome instantly, and go into Campania. I have horses ready for you and Quadratus; and there is no time to be lost..."

"And why, Sebastian?" replied the youth, with sorrowful face and tearful eye. "Have I done something wrong, or are you doubtful of my fortune?"

"Neither, I assure you. But you have promised to be guided by me in all things; and I never considered your obedience more necessary than now..."

"Tell me why, good Sebastian, I pray..." "It must be a secret as yet..."

"What, another secret?" "Call it the same, to be revealed at the same time. But I can tell you what I want you to do, and that I think will satisfy you. Corvinus has got orders to seize on Chromatius and all his community, yet young in the faith, and the wretched example of Torquatus has shown us; and, what is worse, to put your old master Cassianus as Fandi to a cruel death. I want you to hasten before his messenger (perhaps he may go himself), and put them on their guard..."

"Pancreas looked up brightly again; he saw that Sebastian trusted him. "Your wish is enough reason for me," said he, smiling; "but I would go to the world's end, to save my good Cassianus, or any other fellow-Christian..."

He was soon ready, took an affectionate leave of his mother, and before Rome had fully shaken off sleep, he and Quadratus, each with well-furnished saddle bags on their powerful steeds, were trotting across the campagna of Rome, to reach the less-frequented, and safer, track of the Latin way.

Corvinus having resolved to keep the hostile expedition in his own hands, as honourable, lucrative, and pleasant, it was delayed a day, both that he might feel more comfortable about his shoulders, and that he might make proper preparations. He had a chariot hired, and engaged a body of Numidian runners, who could keep up with a carriage at full speed. Though he was thus a day behind two Christians, though he, of course, travelled by the shorter and more beaten Appian road.

(To be Continued.)

The Congressional report on libraries pronounced that of Georgetown College the oldest and most interesting on the continent.