

THE LATE MGR. AGOSTI.

Tragic Death of the Venerable Prelate

The Passionist Fathers in the United States, says the Philadelphia *Times*, were the recipients a few weeks ago of the usual mortuary notice sent to the different houses of their order on the death of one of its members. In this instance it was the decease of the Right Rev. Hypolyte Agosti, D.D., that was announced, but it was not until very recently that the dreadful details attending it came to hand. These we now proceed to lay before our readers in the form of a letter addressed from Lumburg to the Cologno *Volkzeitung*, as follows:

"A little while ago the news reached your informant of the death of the resident Bishop of Rustschuk, Bulgaria, Monsignor Hypolyte Agosti, of the Passionist Order. I was well acquainted with the illustrious deceased, often spent some time with him and visited him while he was still a simple missionary priest at Rustschuk. The account of his early demise caused me sincere grief, which, however, was soon to be increased tenfold by the further sad intelligence that his end was a violent one, brought about by members of his own flock. The letter conveying these facts states that while the Bishop was stopping temporarily at Bellina, where he was engaged in the performance of episcopal duty, a number of Catholic peasants forced an entrance into his residence and beat him so horribly that the blood burst from his nose, mouth, eyes and ears, and even from beneath the nails of his hands and feet. In this awful condition did these human fiends leave their august victim, more dead than alive, for three entire days, keeping guard meanwhile over his mangled body and refusing to let any one approach him. Not even was a priest permitted to minister the last sacraments to the dying Bishop.

"When finally the end came his murderers threw his body into a cart, covered it with straw and conveyed it in this disgraceful manner to Rustschuk. Here the sacred remains of the martyred prelate were interred with due solemnity, the Bishop of Sosia performing the funeral obsequies both at this place and at Bucharest. The civil authorities of Rustschuk, where Mgr. Agosti was universally beloved, are now about to institute legal proceedings against those of Bellina on account of this deed of blood. The Bishop had gone to the last named place for the purpose of calming, if possible, the excited spirits of some of his diocesans there, in order that the church of the place, which had been closed for a long time, might be opened to the faithful during the approaching holy days of Christmastide. Before starting on this mission of mercy and peace loving friends warned him of the danger to which he was about to expose himself, but his only reply was the touching words of his Divine Master: 'The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep.' And the prediction was verified in him to the letter.

"In order to have a better understanding of the dreadful events of which we have just heard, I shall add the following. The diocese of Nicopolis, over which the deceased presided, is subject immediately to the Holy See and embraces the so-called 'Danube-Bulgarian tract,' or, in other words, that portion of Bulgaria which lies between the Balkan chain and the Danube. Territorially this is a very great stretch of country, but the Catholic population is exceedingly sparse and the dearth of priests correspondingly great. Aside from Rustschuk, where within recent date a priest has been stationed for the especial needs of immigrants, who are largely of German extraction, Catholic parishes are to be found only in the four villages in the vicinity of

Nicopolis, viz.: Bellina, Orescht, Ladsolin and Transchiwitz, where for centuries back a number of native Bulgarians have remained faithful to the Roman Catholic Church without any one being able to account definitely for this remarkable fact. They belong to the Latin rite and were formerly under the care of the Franciscans, but are now attended by the Passionists. In Nicopolis itself, an ancient city on the Danube, there is no Catholic congregation. The four villages just mentioned constitute the entire diocese, with the episcopal see at Nicopolis. From the time in which the bishops of this title became also administrators of Wallachia, namely, at the commencement of the present century, they were accustomed to reside in the village of Ciopla, adjacent to Bucharest. But when in the beginning of the eighties an archiepiscopal see was erected at Bucharest, with a suffragan see at Jassy, the then titular Bishop of Nicopolis, Mgr. Paoli, C.P., was obliged to resign that diocese, whereupon the subject of this memoir, Mgr. Hypolyte Agosti, a Passionist missionary priest at Rustschuk, was made its bishop.

"He established his residence in the same village, so lately the scene of his humble labors for the good of souls. The above named villages have from time immemorial been the theatre of religious insubordination and rebellion against ecclesiastical authority, whether vested in priests or bishops, a thing which cannot be understood when viewed side by side with the otherwise firm faith, stubborn adherence to the Church and devoted attachment to traditional religious observances for which their Catholic inhabitants are noted, unless one is well acquainted with their peculiar character, habits of life and their way of looking at religious matters. In this connection, too, the panslavistic agitation carried on by Russia must not be lost sight of. Innumerable times have deeds of violence occurred, even if not so deplorable in their nature as that which we have just chronicled.

"Not long ago, for instance, I met two Passionist Fathers who (one of them dragged from a sick bed on the occasion) were unceremoniously hustled into a wagon by some of the placid lambs of the gentle (I) flock and driven to the banks of the Danube, with the parting injunction to take shipping and return no more. Oftentimes, even while under Turkish domination, was it found necessary to call in the aid of the secular power to suppress uprisings of disaffected members of the several congregations referred to and to bring the frenzied masses to their senses. On this one point alone volumes could be written. In great part these outbreaks are due to a species of matrimonial alliances that are peculiar to those localities. It is a custom namely for fathers to dispose of their daughters in marriage after the fashion of the Turks, viz.: without consulting their wishes in the least. This irregular mode of proceeding, so utterly at variance with the faith they profess, is strenuously resisted by the clergy, who are often compelled to invoke the intervention of the civil authority to prevent it and to insure entire freedom of choice on the part of the young women in so weighty and sacred a matter—of vast importance to the weal of society no less than to that of religion.

"As an example I may mention that in the year 1855, at the instance of the Governor, Omer Pasha, fourteen fathers of families were incarcerated at Sistowa, while fourteen marriages which they had severally unreasonably opposed were duly celebrated and blessed. Whether such a course of action, with the attending circumstances as just described, is prudent may be doubted. At least it is an open question whether the interests of

souls would not be better subserved by a relaxation of rigorous religious observances that have been introduced into these parishes, which are maintained with unrelenting precision and far exceed the requirements of Holy Church, or whether the same interests would not be more effectually promoted by turning these wasted energies to the proper education of the rising generation in religious forms that ingrained use and custom have rendered unacceptable to their elders.

"After the sad event which I have just communicated to you it seems that fresh outbreaks like those related above have occurred in Bellina in consequence of which the church has been placed under an interdiction. In his apostolic zeal to bring the erring back to a sense of duty this good shepherd, Mgr. Agosti, laid down his life for his sheep, and what is saddest of all is that his own sheep took it from him. May the tragic death which he met with in the very prime of life be the forerunner of a new and better era; his blood the seed of a more fruitful harvest. May it serve as a proof of the sickly condition of Europe-Oriental missions and of the crying need there is of a thoroughgoing reform in their government and administration." * * *

The Adopted Kitten.

One evening, toward the close of the war, while Union soldiers lay in camp on a hillside near the Staunton River, the cry of "Halt! who goes there?" from a sentry started every lounge to his feet, and several of the mere curious ran to the guard-line to find out what the trouble was. A minute later, all knew that the night visitor who had been challenged was no enemy. A little girl, about ten years of age, holding a little white kitten, came forward into the light of the fires, conducted by two soldiers who looked as proud as if they were escorting a queen.

The whole regiment gathered, including the colonel himself, to look at the child and hear her tell her story. A very short story it was—scarcely a paragraph; but there was matter enough in it for a full chapter. She lived near by with her father, who was sick and poor; and they were Northerners, she said, and "Union folks." Her mother was dead, and her brother had been killed while fighting in the Federal army. She "wanted to give something," and when Union soldiers came she thought she would bring her pet kitten and present it to the colonel.

The colonel took the little girl in his arms and kissed her, and her kitten too, and he was not a bit ashamed of his weakness. He accepted the kitten with thanks; and its innocent donor was gallantly waited on to her humble home, loaded with generous contributions.

The white kitten was adopted by the regiment, but was considered the property and special pet of the colonel; and when the war was over he took it home with him. Like the white lamb that stayed and fed with the victors after the battle of Antietam, the little creature was a daily inspiration to better feelings and thoughts in the presence of all that is worst—a living flag of truce gleaming among the thunder-clouds of human passion and strife.—*Harper's Young People*.

Benziger's Catholic Home Annual, 1894.

We have just received a supply of this very popular annual. It contains the usual good things in the shape of stories, poems, historical and biographical sketches, and plenty of pretty, interesting pictures. Price by mail 25c., in stamps or scrip. Address, CATHOLIC REGISTER PUBLISHING CO., LTD., Toronto, Ont.

Died, on Feb. 6, after a brief illness, Mrs. O'Dowd, aged 71 years, the beloved wife of Mr. Thos. O'Dowd, merchant, Kilrushelghor, Templeboy. Deceased is deeply and deservedly regretted by a large circle of sorrowing friends.

The Life of a Siberian Priest.

A most interesting and truly touching account of the hardships and dangers encountered by the Catholics who are doing the work of the Apostles in Siberia is given in the *Month* for December, 1893. The materials for this story of courage, zeal and self-sacrifice are taken chiefly from letters written to his mother by Father Valerian Giromadaki, one of the most zealous of the toilers in this desolate portion of God's vineyard.

Though much has been written of late years about that vast portion of the Russian Empire, yet very few people realized its enormous size. Its provinces are each larger than the largest kingdom in Europe, yet there are only eleven priests to minister to the spiritual needs of the thirty or forty thousand Catholics, nearly all Poles, scattered throughout these huge provinces, and their ecclesiastical superior, the metropolitan bishop of Mohylewaki, resides at St. Petersburg, which is between thirteen and fourteen hundred miles off. The parishes are enormous in extent; that of Tomsk, for example, covers an area of 38,186 square miles, another takes in a territory of 46,708 square miles, and so of the rest. These figures may help one to form some idea of the difficulties of parish priests in Siberia. Moreover, the expenses incurred for the long journeys involved in pastoral visits must be borne by the priests themselves in most cases, as the Russian Government allows nothing for such expenses unless Government troops are quartered in the mission, and the people who send for the priests are seldom able to furnish means themselves.

Then these Apostolic workmen have to contend not only with daily risk of life from cold, hunger, floods and wild beasts, but the greatest danger is met in the hospitals and prisons, where typhus fever is always raging and which have been described, even by the Government officials, as "places not fit for dogs." Again on account of the great distance of the priests from their Bishop, it is impossible to obtain dispensations when they are required, and there is no one to administer Confirmation, so that many Catholics live and die without the sacraments. The poor priests carry all the burden of responsibility without any advice help or support from their chief pastor. No one can read the letters in the *Month*, without realizing that the words of the Apostle are verified in the case of those devoted priests: "In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils in the wilderness . . . in labor and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, besides these things which are without, the care of all the churches." (II. Cor., ix, 26, 28.) The whole article is a strong appeal to the hearts of all Catholics for help in urgent need.

DYSPEPSIA AND INDIGESTION.—C. W. Snow & Co., Syracuse, N. Y., writes: "Please send us ten gross of Pills. We are selling more of Parmelee's Pills than any other Pill we keep. They have a great reputation for the cure of Dyspepsia and Liver Complaint." Mr. Chas. A. Smith, Lindsay, writes: "Parmelee's Pills are an excellent medicine. My sister has been troubled with severe headache, but these pills have cured her."

A Simple way to help Poor Catholic Missions. Save all cancelled postage stamps of every kind and country and send them to Rev. P. M. Barral, Hammonon, New Jersey. Give at once your address, and you will receive with the necessary explanation a nice Souvenir of Hammonon Missions.

With sincere regret we have to announce the death on February 15th, of Mr. James Hughes, Mayor's Walk, Waterford, at a ripe old age. Mr. Hughes was one of God's noblest works—an honest man. Since boyhood he had been identified with every National movement for the advancement of his countrymen. He was an O'Connellite in '43; a follower of T. F. Meagher in '48, and gave a worthy son to the Fenian movement in '67. He joined the Home Rule under Isaac Butt, and died a firm believer in the National cause.