

Prayer on a Violin

A chaplain to one of the divisions of the French Army, tells the following pretty story:—

On the eve of Whitsuntide, I went to the little church where I was to officiate the next day. It was after the dinner hour and I came with the intention of placing myself at the disposal of whomsoever might require my ministrations. As I was nearing the door, I heard the sound of a violin and I thought at once there was some rehearsal such as take place on the eve of a feast. I entered the church, cast a look around me and saw no one. The violinist was there alone. I let him finish his piece, to which I listened with a delight you will understand when I tell you that our "poilu" was first violin solo at the famous C-concerts in Paris. Then I advanced toward him and complimented him upon his execution: "It is a beautiful piece of music you have just been playing, what is it?" My question seemed to perplex our modest artist, who answered with some hesitation: "Oh, it is not much, just a little extempore voluntary." "An extempore production!" I exclaimed with astonishment, "If such be the case, it seems to me you have put all your heart and soul into it. One would have thought it was a prayer, the sweet prayer of a little child." "Your surmise is right, Monsieur l'aumonier," replied the violinist. "It certainly was a child's prayer I was playing — my own prayer. It happens to me now and then. When I am free, I come here alleging a rehearsal, and I never go away *without having played a piece to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin*. It seems to me that when I hold a bow in my hand is the time when I pray best. I think of all those I love and in the church, in front of Our Lady's image, all my past years as an altar boy, the day of my first Communion come back to my memory. Then, feeling the want of saying a fine prayer (which does not come to my lips) I begin to play and I feel I am more capable of praying with my violin than with words. Unfortunately, I have only a wretched instrument of the value of 30 francs; ah, if I had my own!...." As the chaplain excellently remarks, the soul of "Our Lady's Juggler" lives in the French people.