

SERMON ON ST. AGNES

PREACHED IN ST. AGNES'S CHURCH

JANUARY 26TH, 1890

But by the grace of God I am
what I am ; and His grace in
me hath not been void.

I COR. xv, 10.

IT is now almost sixteen hundred years since the little girl whom we honor and invoke to-day was beheaded. It was the dreadful year of our Lord three hundred and three, in the darkest hour of the tenth persecution in the reign of the despot Diocletian. Christian churches were closed, Christian property confiscated ; priest, bishop, and pontiff pined in dungeons or lay hid in caves, and the faithful were hunted like wild beasts. The tigers in the amphitheatre grew fat on the bodies of martyrs. In every town and city of the Roman empire, from Gaul to Asia Minor, the smoke and flame of the funeral pyre obscured the skies, and the sound of the executioner's axe rang out on the frightened air. Seventeen thousand of the followers of Christ were put to death in one month. The desolation des-