

LEGENDS AND STORIES of the Holy Child Jesus.

France.

MY LITTLE DOLL.

CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK. "Nasty, cross thing, I hate you," retorted Agnes.

"Then she burst out crying, begged nurse's pardon, and finally knelt down by the altar of the Holy Child, and begged Him to make her more gentle and unselfish, and above all to find her little doll.

"If you will, dear Jesus, I will be such a good girl," she sobbed. "I will give all my pocket money to the poor."

Two days passed, and no one had claimed the reward for the little doll. The Countess was in despair, for her little girl had grown so thin, and looked so ill, with a white face, and two bright red spots on her cheeks, and seemed so listless that it was evident she would soon be very ill.

"Oh, Monsieur le Cure, how good you are to us," she said. "Why it is the dear infant Jesus, whom we have asked to bless us, who has sent us all these good things for mother, and such kind friends."

"The little lady was so kind to me," added the child. "She kissed me just as if I had been a lady too, and waited on me and said to-morrow she would look through her toys and give me some for the little ones."

Great was the joy in that poor home when Monsieur le Cure entered with the hamper and the blankets, and told the poor mother of the new friends the good God had sent them.

When Monsieur le Cure and Madeleine were gone, the Countess came up into the nursery to ask Nounou how Agnes had behaved.

"Like a little lady," said Nounou. And then they talked for a long time about the poor child, her sick parents, and her little brother and sister.

Agnes hugged her little doll, and prattled away to it all the time, until her mother called the nursery maid to address her.

The child had been very restless at night of late, since the loss of her little doll, and had got into the habit of waking up very often.

"My servant has told me to what I owe the pleasure of Monsieur le Cure's visit," she said with her gracious smile.

"But before all things, pray remove your coat, for you must be wet through."

"This little friend of mine," said Monsieur le Cure, caressing the little ragged girl, who blushed and looked down on the ground, "found your little girl's doll."

Here Agnes could restrain herself no longer, but rushed from behind her mother's chair, where she had stationed herself, and cried:

"Have you got her? Oh, give her to me quick, my own dear little doll."

"Agnes, you rude child! I am ashamed of you," said her mother very much displeased.

"I quite understand," said Monsieur le Cure, drawing a little packet from his pocket, and giving it to the eager child.

"See, Mademoiselle, your child is not much worse for her stay in the Rue St. Marguerite."

"Have you come all that way?" said Agnes. "I am so sorry. Mamma will send you home in the carriage after dinner, won't you, mamma?"

"Certainly," said her mother, "if Monsieur le Cure will give us the pleasure of his company. And now you must go up to your nursery, and take Monsieur le Cure's little friend with you, and ask Nounou to lend her some dry clothes, and be very polite, and ask her to have tea with you, and be very grateful to her for bringing you back your treasure."

"It is just the same," said Agnes, gleefully. "See, mamma, she isn't hurt in the least."

When the children were gone upstairs to Nounou, Monsieur le Cure told the Countess about his little portage, her sad life and many trials. He told them also what they had never realized before: that there were children—among the number, Madeleine's little brother and sister—who had never known what it was to have a plaything of any kind of their very own before.

"How delighted they must have been to find that little doll," said the kind-hearted lady with tears in her eyes. "I wonder indeed that they gave it back, for most children would have kept it. Did they know of the reward?"

"No, indeed," said Monsieur le Cure. "Just to show you what noble children they are: I went to see them on Monday. They showed me the little plaything with great glee; and I was only too pleased for them; but I said at the time, if I find the little child who owns that doll, will you give it to me? They answered with ready obedience that of course they would do what I told them, though I saw a look of disappointment in their eyes. Then on Wednesday I came to see a friend of mine in the Rue Marbeuf, and happened to see the child who owned the lost doll, which I at once recognized to be none other than the plaything of my little friends. I was delighted, as they are sadly in

need of all sorts of things; in fact, they have been half-starved with cold and hunger this severe winter.

"I think," he added, for the Countess could not speak, the tears were running down her cheeks at the thought of so much misery, "I had better take my little charge home. Perhaps her mother will be anxious."

"Oh, no, no," besought the Countess. "Besides, the little girl must be enjoying herself with Agnes in the nursery, and it will take some little time to find her some warm, dry clothes."

It was not till 8:30 that Monsieur le Cure took leave of his kind hosts. The Count ordered out the carriage and the Countess had a large hamper full of good things for the sick woman put on the box; inside were warm blankets and soft sheets for the bed of the sick woman as well as for the little children. The Countess promised, moreover, to go and visit the poor woman, and to see what she could do for her and the little children.

"It is like the fairy-tales," said Madeleine, shyly taking the hand of Monsieur le Cure, and kissing it. "Oh, Monsieur le Cure, how good you are to us."

"Why it is the dear infant Jesus, whom we have asked to bless us, who has sent us all these good things for mother, and such kind friends."

"The little lady was so kind to me," added the child. "She kissed me just as if I had been a lady too, and waited on me and said to-morrow she would look through her toys and give me some for the little ones."

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could be trusted alone for a little while, so she stepped down to have a chat with the housekeeper, and Louise was busy helping the housemaids, for a great many visitors were expected for Christmas and the New Year.

No sooner was Agnes alone than she popped the toys taken from her cupboard into a basket, climbed on a chair and reached down her hat and jacket, and opening the nursery door very gently, and looking over the banisters, she crept down the wide staircase leading to a door opening on the street. Agnes opened the door very softly, and without stopping to close it behind her set off running down to the corner of the street, where there was a cab stand.

She beckoned to the first cabman, as she had seen other people do in the streets, and gave him the address of Madeleine Leclerc. The man looked rather surprised, but she pulled out her little purse and showed it to him.

"I will give you five francs," she said, "to drive me there and back as fast as you can."

A French cabman will do anything for money, and he started without further delay. She felt a little shy when she reached the dirty street in which Madeleine lived, and when she found herself going up a rickety flight of stairs, in many places broken away. She knocked gently at the door which the concierge had indicated to her, and in a minute it was opened by Madeleine herself.

"Is your mother better?" asked Agnes. "My mother is coming to see her, but I couldn't wait, and I've brought you some toys. And I mustn't stay, for—"

Here she grew very red, for she caught sight of Monsieur le Cure, who was sitting on the one chair in the room.

He came forward with his gracious smile, and said:

"My dear child, taking the big basket out of her hand, "what are these? Does Madame la Countesse know you came out all alone this wet day?"

"Oh, no, indeed," she answered. "She would not have let me come if she had known. Please give the toys to the dear little boy and girl."

She took them out of the basket and handed them to Louis and Jeanneton, who were standing by her looking open-mouthed at the wonderful toys, such as they had only seen through the plate glass of shop windows.

"My dear," added Monsieur le Cure, "if your mamma does not know that you are here, you must go home at once. Moreover, the toys are not yours to give away. I must insist on your taking them back."

"Oh, no," returned Agnes quickly. "Mamma is always saying how selfish I am, and wanting me to give my best toys to the poor children at the hospital of the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul. Please leave them, Monsieur le Cure, at any rate till she comes, and she will tell you so too."

"Very well, my child. But you must come down at once. I shall take you home, for you are wet, and see, my child, how naughty to come out in such thin shoes, and on the sly."

Agnes blushed, hastily kissed Madeleine and the little ones, and followed Monsieur le Cure down to her cab. He would not hear of her going home alone, in spite of her earnest pleadings.

Something in his kind face and gentle voice made her open her heart to him, and before they reached the Avenue des Champs-Elysees Agnes had told him about the little doll praying before the altar of the Infant Jesus the night before.

"And I wanted to begin at once," she added. "I couldn't wait any longer. I must give up my very pet toys at once before I have time to change my mind."

Monsieur le Cure told her that if the good God loves to see little children unselfish, He loves also to see them very obedient, and that it was very naughty to slip out, unknown to any one, into the streets.

As the cab drew up to the front door, Agnes began to shiver violently, and yet she was very hot. She had caught cold. Every one in the house was distraught; all was in confusion. Nurse had discovered her absence, and the footmen had been sent out in all directions. In the joy of finding her again so soon the Countess forgot to scold her, but nurse made up for the deficiency as she undressed Agnes and put her to bed.

The next day she was very ill indeed; the doctor said that all the fretting and unhappiness had made her very delicate, and having caught cold she would have a much more serious illness. The days passed on, she grew worse and worse, she became quite unconscious, and the doctor was obliged to say there was very little hope of her recovery. Monsieur le Cure took his three ragged friends to pray at the shrine of Notre Dame des Victoires, and little Jeanneton said she was sure the dear infant Jesus would spare the little lady who had been so kind to them. One day she lay with her eyes fast closed for hours, quite unconscious, and the doctor with the tears running down his cheeks said:

"God help us now, for she will wake to smile upon us again or she will pass away without another look on this world."

The Count and Countess knelt in breathless agony by the bedside, praying Almighty God if it were His holy will to spare her darling.

And even as they prayed on Christmas eve just near midnight, the clouds rolled away, and as the moonbeams shone into the darkened room and played on the child's pale face, the little child opened her eyes and smiled faintly.

"Mother, darling, the angels are kissing me—but why do you cry?" for the father and mother sobbed aloud.

"You have been asleep so long, darling," answered her father. "We were tired of waiting for you to wake up."

"And my little doll?" asked Agnes, "and Monsieur le Cure and Madeleine? But oh, I am so tired."

From that time she improved every day. It was a long time before she could go out walking, but Monsieur le Cure came to see her very often and Madeleine and Louis and Jeanneton, all in beautiful warm clothes given them by the Countess. And Agnes was so gentle and affectionate and so afraid of giving trouble even to nurse and Louise that it really seemed, said the Countess, as if the angels had kissed her and whispered words of love and devotion in her ear.

And now she is quite a big girl, tall and very pretty, and as good as she is beautiful. And when she made her First Communion she wanted to give away everything of which she was most fond, and Monsieur l'Abbe Warambon, who still teaches her her catechism, declares to her father and mother that every day leaves fresh prints on that beautiful soul of humility, obedience, and generous, devoted love of Jesus and the least of His brethren.

TO BE CONTINUED.

WAS SHAKESPEARE A CATHOLIC?

At the commencement of the third public lecture on "The Supernatural in Hamlet," Prof. Egan impressed his audience at the Catholic University with the fact that Shakespeare was not the child of the Reformation, but essentially Catholic in his code of ethics.

As to his personal religious service, in the lack of historical proof, no assertion was made, but for a correct appreciation of his great dramas and especially the psychological master-piece and puzzle of Hamlet, a knowledge of Catholic theology was declared requisite. About the supernatural of the play, and his intention was to prove that the appearance of "Denmark's murdered King in ghostly form" was not forced upon Shakespeare by the customs of the Elizabethan drama; that the spectre was not merely a subjective hallucination with no objective existence, and that it did not inculcate mere personal vengeance. The four opening lines, indicating that the rumors of the dead king's appearance were noised about in all Denmark, and credited even by the sturdy soldiers, dispate all doubt of the objectivity of the ghost, and its implied introduction this early in the play, showing that upon it the whole narrative was to hinge, preclude its being a forced concession to the spirit of the times. The dead Hamlet coming from purgatory—and any interpretation that goes beyond the text which clearly asserts that he was "condemned to fast in fire till foul crimes done in days of nature be burned and purged away," is false, —was not actuated by motives of personal revenge. His mission was a patriotic one. To save his loved son and Denmark from the threatened invasion of Fortinbras, to quiet the fears of the people who supposed that the too hasty marriage of Claudius and Gertrude without obtaining dispensation from the double impediment of crime and adultery, forbore nothing but evil, and to rekindle the courage of the doubting soldiers, certainly justified his appearance.

In the rude North myth of Saxo Grammaticus, the skeleton into which Shakespeare breathed the life and coloring of Hamlet, the University of Wittenberg did not exist, but the poet with no care for chronological details gave it life in his masterpiece because it was the first school of Protestant free thought. Sent thither, Hamlet had learned to doubt and he returned to attend to his father's funeral, "sicklied o'er with a pale cast of thought," doubting everything: the virtue of his mother; the purity of Ophelia, in fact the purity and truth of all his womanly ideals. The lecturer concluded that Shakespeare was the heritage of Catholics, and he ended his series with an earnest appeal to Catholics to defend by serious study of his masterpieces, the divine poet who had bequeathed them the grandest literary treasures of the world.

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When we say dear brethren name may be in heaven. worthy of our thought that been devoted to this reverence. His service is a vessels used in are holy things none but the touch them with contact with certain particip. At one time it the hem of His woman of a living other it was His ing to the deaf, things, so it is indeed, much in For His Name of all that He significant of the office as the Rede to Him by the ministry of an that He should He shall save sins." "For th under heaven g Peter in to-day's must be saved," as His sacred h above all creat name above all the name of Jes bow." "From t says the Psalmi down of the sa Lord is worthy o Lord is worthy o Worthy of pra yet what is our e In all ranks of the shop, in the of Christ's littl women sweat, a they can use, t learn to lip cur Parents, who are and who should Christ and revea stand of having a quiring some lit temper when an give loose rein t insult our Bless ed use of that s symbol of His lo many there are v reverence to th house of God, and or their occupat add sin to their neighbors. His that Holy Nam the mire and filth often obscure lang What a detest How worthy of th lion to God's exp shall not take the God in vain, for t him guiltless who vain." Let this se serve as an occasi our love and reve of Jesus. Let us special acts of re the insults He rec tion of that Holy fortunate enough t dreadful habit, w example or carele cious promise of o the Father anyth amen, I say, He w be an incentive to pray for the gra that slavery. Ha God's grace is stro of help never vo Name of Jesus!

Pray for the Helpless in the Hel

The piety of the Mary as the Queen as her agent, when words of the offer the dead, he "in the holy light prom and his seed."

Our Lady, theret this pious sentim manner concerned parted, and inter intervention for them wholesome thought dead; but it is do pray for them thro Mother.

With confidenc pray to her, particu month of Novemb consecrated by Catho Church Suffering, t forth her messenge solution to her suffer whatever faults the mitted in life, expi ship of her Divine S