

The Mad Sacristan.

I.



MORE picturesque location for a church I cannot imagine than that of the church of my story. The town, to whose Catholic hearts it affords such ineffable comfort, lies embowered on a Hudson River hill-top in a wealth of foliage which completely hides it from the steamboat traveller. Some dozen fisher-folks' cabins straggle round near the wharf, and a red, winding road-way leads up from their midst to the woodland. But the town itself nestles shyly away amid its perfumed trees and flowers, seeking no other attractions than its great cascade in the glen to the north, its famous pineries on the east, and its own unfailing solitude, romance and sweetness.

The church stands about in the heart of this town. It is small, scarcely able to seat two hundred worshippers, but quite a gem. It was built by a widow that the soul of her husband might rest in peace, and was built with that exquisite taste which the devout sex always bring to bear upon anything linked with the service of God.

The architecture is Gothic, the material red sandstone. The single aisle is laid in marble mosaics. The altar and the sanctuary-railing are of hard pine, heavily carved, while the sanctuary-lamp is of solid silver polished like a mirror. The widow wished that, when possible, a hundred candles should flame upon the altar at Benediction, so that the whole interior should be flooded with their light and no lamp or gas jet be needed. Outside, the church was covered with clambering ivy and shrouded by seven tall elm trees, and beyond the trees God's Acre lay enfolding its sleepers.

II.

To this church there came the Mad Sacristan. Mad indeed the old man was, but his madness was almost heavenly. It had no repulsive features. It attracted the