

The Huntingdon Journal.

"LIBERTY AND UNION, NOW AND FOREVER, ONE AND INSEPARABLE."

WM. BREWSTER, EDITOR & PROPRIETOR.

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TERMS

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Historical Sketch.

THE CATACOMBS OF ROME.

(Continued.)

When the Goths descended upon Italy, ravaging the country as they passed over it, and sat down before Rome, not content with stripping the land they forced their way into the catacombs, searching for treasure, and searching also, it seems most likely, for the bodies of the martyrs, whom their imperfect creed did not prevent them from honoring. After they retired, in the short breathing-space that was given to the unhappy city, various popes undertook to do something to restore the catacombs,—and one of them, John III. [A. D. 560-574] ordered that service should be performed at certain underground shrines, and that candles and all else needful for this purpose should be furnished from the Basilica of St. John Lateran. Just at the close of the sixth century, George the Great [590-604] again appointed stations in the catacombs at which service should be held on special days in the course of the year, and a curious illustration of the veneration in which the relics of the saints were then held is afforded by a gift which he sent to Theodelinda, queen of the Lombards. At this time the Lombards were laying all Italy waste. Their Arian zeal ranged them in religious hate against the Yoman Church,—but Theodelinda was an orthodox believer, and through her Gregory hoped to secure the conversion of her husband and his subjects. It was to her that he addressed his famous Dialogues filled with the most marvellous stories of holy men and the strangest notions of religion. Wishing to satisfy her pious desires, and to make her a very precious gift, he sent her many phials of oil taken from the lamps that were kept burning of the shrines of the martyrs in the catacombs. It was the custom of those who visited these shrines to dip handkerchiefs, or other bits of cloth, in the reservoirs of oil, to which a sacred virtue was supposed to be imparted by the neighborhood of the saints; and even now may often be seen the places where the lamps were kept lighted.

But although the memory of those who had been buried within them was thus preserved, the catacombs themselves and the churches at their entrances were falling more and more into decay. Shortly after Gregory's death, Pope Boniface IV. illustrated his otherwise obscure pontificate by seeking from the mean and dissolute Emperor Phocas for the purpose of consecrating it for a Christian church. The glorious temple of all the gods was now

dedicated [A. D. 608, Sept 15] to those who had displaced them, the Virgin and all the Martyrs. It now name was S. Marta ad Martyres—and in order to sanctify its precincts, the Pope brought into the city and placed under the altars of his new church twenty-eight wagon loads of bones, collected from the different catacombs, and to be those of martyrs. This is the first notice that has been preserved of the practice that became very general in later times of transferring bodies and bones from their graves in the rock to new ones under the city churches.

Little more is known of the history of the catacombs during the next two centuries, but that for them it was a period of desolation and desertion. The Lombard hordes often ravaged and devastated the Campagna up to the very gates of the city, and descended into the underground passages of the cemeteries in search of treasure, of relics, and of shelter. Paul III, about the middle of the eighth century took many bones and much ashes from graves yet unrisen, and distributed them to the church. He has left a record of the motives that led him to disturb dust that had rested so long in quiet. "In the lapse of centuries," he says, "many cemeteries of the holy martyrs and confessors of Christ have been neglected and fallen to decay. The impious Lombards utterly ruined them,—and now among the faithful themselves the old piety has been replaced by negligence, which has gone so far that even animals have been allowed to enter them, and cattle have been stalled within them." Still, although thus desecrated, the graves of the martyrs continued to be an object of interest to the pilgrims, who, even in these dangerous times from year to year came to visit the holy places of Rome; and itineraries, describing the localities of the catacombs and of the noted tombs within them, prepared for the guidance of such pilgrims, not later than the beginning of the ninth century, have been preserved to us, and have afforded essential and most important assistance in the recent investigations.

About the same time, Pope Paschal I. [A. D. 817-824] greatly interested himself in searching in the catacombs for such bodies of the saints as might yet remain in them, and in transferring these relics to churches and monasteries within the city. A contemporary inscription, still preserved in the crypt of the ancient church of St Prassade, (a church which all lovers of Roman art and legend take delight in,) tells of the two thousand three hundred martyrs whose remains Paschal had placed beneath its altars. Nor was this the only church so richly endowed. One day, in the year 821, Paschal was praying in the church that stood on the site of the house in which St. Cecilia had suffered martyrdom, and which was dedicated to her honor. It was now one of the oldest churches in Rome. Two centuries before, Gregory the Great, St. Gregory, had restored it,—for it even then stood in need of repairs, and now it was in greater need than ever. Paschal determined, that he would rebuild it from its foundations; but with this determination came the desire to find the body of the Saint, that her new church might not want its most precious possession. It was reported that the Lombards had sought for it and carried it away, and the knowledge of the exact place of the grave, even was lost. But Paschal entered vigorously on the search. He knew that she had been buried in the cemetery of St. Callixtus, and tradition declared that her sepulchre had been made near the Chamber of the Popes. There he sought, but his seeking was vain.

On a certain day, however,—and here he begins his own story,—in the Church of St. Peter, as he sat listening to the harmony of the morning service, drowsiness overcame him, and he fell asleep. As he was sleeping, a very beautiful maiden of virginal aspect, and in a rich dress, stood before him, and looking at him, said,— "We return thee many thanks; but why without cause, trusting to false reports, hast thou given up the search for me?—Thou hast been so near me that we might have spoken together."

The Pope, as if hurt by her retuke, and doubtful of his vision, then asked the name of her who thus addressed him. "If thou seekst my name," she said, "I am called Cecilia, the handmaiden of Christ."

"How can I believe this," replied the sleeping Pope, "since it was long ago reported that the body of this most holy martyr was carried away by the Lombards."

The Saint then told him that till this time her body had remained concealed; but that now he must continue his search, for it pleased God to reveal it to him; and that her body he would also find other bodies of saints to be placed with hers in her new-built church. And saying this, she departed.

Hereupon a new search was begun, and shortly after, "by the favor of God, we found her in golden garments, and the cloths with which her sacred blood had been wiped from her wounds we found rolled up and full of blood at the feet of the blessed virgin."

At the same time, the bodies of Valerian, Tiourius, and Maximus were found in a neighboring cemetery, and, together with the relics of Pope Urban,—as well as the body of St. Cecilia,—were placed under the high altar of her church. The cypress coffin in which she had been reverently laid at the time of her death was preserved and set within a marble sarcophagus. No expense was spared by the devout Paschal to adorn the church that had been so signally favored. All the Art of the time (and at that time the arts flourished only in the service of the Church,) was called upon to assist in making the new basilica magnificent. The mosaics which were set up to adorn the apse and the arch of triumph were among the best works of the century, and, with colors still brilliant and design still unimpaired, they hold their place at the present day, and carry back the thought and imagination of the beholder a thousand years into the very heart of this old story. Under the great mosaic of the apse one may still read the inscription, in the rude Latin of the century, which tells of Paschal's zeal and Rome's joy, closing with the line, "Roma resulat ovans semper ornata per avum."

(To be continued.)

It is of no use to mention details in this connubial case. We know that there are kisses and fond words, and that our rays is of course regarded with unmixed enthusiasm.

The nurse comes up too soon and too suddenly, but don't see anything of the young couple's fondness—she's particularly anxious about setting a straight toilet cover a little straighter, and newly arranging the very orderly looking articles on the farther bureau. She is an exemplary and faithful nurse!

Night comes. The exemplary nurse has steeped herself in sleep to such a degree that the voice of mother and restlessness of baby cannot move her to more than a pat on nothing at all, instead of the precious bundle, and whispered 'hush! hush!' like the maudlin whisper of a man in his cups.

The mother soothes, and does the genuine patting, pitying the elderly female, who is perhaps so tired, from running up and down.

It was pleasant, when the baby went to sleep, to lay there and think of all her happiness. She thought of what her baby would be—very lovely; for the families on both sides said it was already remarkably so, and she was sure it would grow up beautiful. Already there was astonishing fullness of brow. Everybody was speaking of that—that is, both the families were speaking of that, and this was mind-perhaps genius. It hadn't cried above its breath since the first hour of its birth; and what could better betoken an amiable and gentle character?

'What,' thought the happy mother, 'should I ask, if a fairy should stand suddenly upon the bedpost, with one foot in the air, as they are always represented, with airy garments and a waving wand, and should say to me in a low, sweet tone 'What gift shall the powers of fairy land bestow upon the child of your love?'

She was sure she couldn't tell! The very bright. There was every reason to believe that her disposition was very sweet. A wonderful purse that filled up itself as fast as it was emptied, might be very useful if the times continue hard; this was the only thing she could think of.

But money seemed such a low subject for the thoughts, when she took a careful peep at the pretty creature, which she was so glad she did!—for there lay the baby with one ear, sweet hand quite over its head; such an alarming position, the nurse had said, for its intellect.

With a little trembling at her darling's narrow escape, the mother brought the little hand carefully down, and put a fold of blanket round it to keep it from endangering it again.

Then she laughed to herself at the idea of fancying what she should say to a fairy on her bed-post when fairies had gone from the earth so very long ago. And with a smile she fell asleep, although she still felt wide awake.

Somebody spoke to her! Not a fairy but something belonging to 1800 which said:— 'What good do you ask for your child? There was nothing to be seen, but the voice was strong, yet gentle, that repeated:— 'What good do you ask for your child? The mother, calmed to thoughtfulness after the playfulness of her last thoughts seemed to answer:— 'My darling has sweetness, loveliness, a promise of intelligence; what can you give her to crown these? 'I will help her to speak the holy and pure truth, while surrounded by the fashionable deceit and falsehood. On every small or great occasion of her life—her lips will only open to speak the pure unshackled truth. Shall the gift be hers? 'My child's sweet mouth never to open to speak an untrue word? Oh! blessed and power and blessed giver, accept my gratitude! 'The baby moved: the mother suddenly awoke, for a moment listened for the voice of her dream. But although she listened in vain, there was in a heart a voice as clear and real as the baby's cry now in her ear. 'Always truthful! Heaven itself was gained for her child, with the immortal gift!

Oh! bonny youth—with eyes like summer stars, with heaven's morning smile—when storms are in the secret places, known only to bitter hearts or disappointed age—when the great, wild ocean is a smiling-lake and deep, broad lakes are mirrors only of the trees and birds on wing of the moonlight and the stars—Dora was an embodiment of all thy graces and all thy hopes—of all thy sweetness and all thy joy!

Dora, the tiny creature of the quiet birth-room—she with the small, round head and bunched limbs—had grown thro' all the actual deprivations of doting parents and admiring friends, to a beautiful child of ten years old. The small, round head had kept its prettiness, only to be improved upon by time; and the small white hands were still so small and white only more plump and full of work, from an active little spirit.

It she did a naughty thing, from baby impulse, or childish thoughtfulness, and was asked about it, the child's blue eyes looked straight into the eyes which questioned of the truth, and the child's lips willingly answered to the command— 'You have been naughty, Dora; tell me about it.'

Friends, relations, acquaintances, tho't it beautiful—spoke in raptures of the trait which promised such a noble womanhood. How much they all loved truthfulness!—How much they all enjoyed those pure blue eyes, down in whose depths lived Truth in its fabled well—naked and pure, with no mortal garments of flattering flattery or false goss! 'What a sweet treasure you possess!' says Mrs. Brown to Mrs. Beals.

The mother loved the friend of her girlhood more than ever for the words, and this mother was like most others, as we can plainly see. 'What a dear, good, constant friend, is Mrs. Brown!' said Mrs. Beals to Mr. Beals that night at tea. 'Very,' said Mr. B., quietly; and as he sipped his tea, inquired, without a smile that Mrs. B. could see— 'Anything of Dora from Mrs. Brown? 'Oh! yes, my dear, she thinks so much of her. She speaks of her as such a treasure, and quite envies me, I know, the possession of such a darling, although there isn't a bit of world envy in it. My dear Matilda is just such a sympathizing she could be divided over the whole world to make every body as happy as she does me! 'Where would you bestow her little sarcastic nose, my dear?' said the strong-hearted Mr. Beals. 'Don't let her leave it here, I pray.'

'Now, Arthur, I never knew you so unjust!' said the indignant and constant friend, Rebecca Beals, no longer, for the moment, the loving partner of his joys and sorrows. 'Aow njust! Ungenerous! My friend, who has been so constant to me for long, long years (Perhaps there was an emphasis upon the 'long,' to convey a searching idea to her husband's mind!) So indulgent, too, and so very kind! Oh! I could cry.'

'Don't cry, my dear,' says the colly cruel Mr. B. eating his buttered toast, with out a choke of conscience rising in his throat. 'Mrs. Brown isn't so very bad; but she never was and never can be all the angel you have fancied her. And I calmly repeat, without the slightest fear of hurting your feelings, my dear, that she has very decidedly, a small sarcastic nose.—Hasn't she, Dora?'

I can't say it was right for Mr. B. to appeal to the truthful child against her mother's friend; but men and husbands don't, as a general thing, stop to ask themselves delicate questions, when they see they are gaining a point.

'I think she has, papa,' says the sweet clear voice, in a quiet way, as if it were quite proper she should tell the fact.

'Dora says it, my dear; and you know Dora always tells the truth. In fact, you pride yourself upon Dora's truthfulness, my dear, as of course I do.'

And Mr. Beals pushed his chair back from the table as he spoke; actually whistling as he went to the sitting room, to read the evening papers.

Whistled when he had spoken so slightly of her friend's nose, and had called upon Dora (who was growing a little pert) to put her mother's friend to shame.

'Dora,' said the mother, with a little of the acid of the cranberry tart she had been eating, in her voice. 'It seems to me that you needn't join your father in anything that's rude. It doesn't seem quite proper that you should forget you are a little child, and have no right to speak against your mother's dearest friend.'

'But, dear mamma, you know I only told the truth, because papa asked me—so I must! Could I help it, dear mamma?'

'They say Dora, that the truth isn't to be spoken at all times; and certainly it seems to me, to night, as if it were very wise.'

Dora looked wonderingly at her moth-

er, for a moment, and then said slowly, as if she were thinking it over in her little mind:—

'Mamma, must I only speak the truth when it says something pleasant to you? 'The mother put her chair back from the table with some little haste, and, following her husband into the sitting room, said to the child, 'We will talk of this some other time.'

'Shall I only tell the truth when it says something pleasant to you? So sharp a question pierced very deep. And Mrs. B. allowed, that evening to the unmoved reader of the news, that Mrs. Brown was somewhat sarcastic, and perhaps her nose did show it some.

Dora heard it, and knew that the acid of the cranberry tart had passed away.

'My Darling Dora,' said Mrs. Brown, one day, 'your mother is the sweetest woman, and your papa such an agreeable man. Now don't think I am trying to find out your secrets, pet.' And Mrs. B. laughed quite naturally, it was such a pleasant fancy to ascertain it the quiet and intelligent husband of her friend appreciated her.

Dora was willing to avoid an answer, and made an effort very gracefully to do so; but Mrs. Brown knew very well that she should get the truth, if anything, and so she mentally clutched the little truth teller, and would not let her go.

'Come, there's no escape, my Dora,' said Mrs. B., with a very lovely smile, which didn't seem to warm the child, 'what does papa say about Mrs. Brown?—haven't you ever heard?'

'I have heard papa say something about you, Mrs. Brown; but I think I must not say,' says Dora quietly.

Of course Mrs. Brown was quite as anxious after this as before to have Dora 'say,' and so she intimated, with a peculiar expression of the little sarcastic nose. 'There was no escape. And it may be that the child, not quite angelic, felt some indignation at the process she was subject to. 'Papa says he thinks you are a little sarcastic,' and Dora's eyes were on the expressive feature.

'And what does mamma say to that? 'says Mrs. Brown, with a growling eloquence in the unfortunate nose.

And so Dora loved everything in Nature more and more, and fostered in her own heart the beautiful spirit which was so much in sympathy with every work of God.

'Twenty years! since there nestled in the blankets the little creature of the wee round head. More beautiful in the soul than at sweet sixteen, and lovely in body as lover could wish—and Dora had a lover.

Yes, 'dear Dora' was the sweetest aliteration of the evening worship, and the morning dream. 'Dear Dora was the burden of the trees and all Nature's voices.

Happy Dora! Beautiful Dora! Truthful Dora! Will the dear worshipping of thy beauty and mental charms ever grow cold and turn away from thee for the very clearness of thy brow and the very purity of thy lips?

Alas! he will. No, not alas! A man of intellect, a man of fashion, a man of wealth was Robert Percival; but not a man to understand the true nobility of woman.

A charming woman, gentle and yielding; a feminine mind, keeping its subordinate position; a warm heart, with its affections under his control—was the being Robert would call a treasure of a wife.

Dora would be quite willing to make one with him; but she would not be willing to be lost in him—with no individuality, with no will, with no judgment of her own.

They talked one evening upon the home they should some day share together. The lover's views were softened by expedient gentleness and selfish caution; but the truthful Dora, in the strong spirit of her mind and heart, spoke earnestly of the great wrong that was done to woman in not trusting in, and advising with, as well as loving her.

'You would then be a delegate to the feminine convention, Dora darling,' said Robert, half sarcastically.

'Never!' said Dora fervently. 'But in the dear domestic circle, I would be the confidante, and true partner of my husband, or I would set up a standard of revolt! I would rather perish in the battle, than be my husband's bondswoman!'

It was the truth, and Robert felt that he had his warning. She was to be no slave, in mind or heart; but a true, faithful helper in the work of life.

Some would have known that such a woman would make a noble wife—a noble

Dora husbanded her zeal, so that at the end of the year it was still healthy and strong; While Clara's had a chill after the fever turn, and was dying out.

But in a 'revival,' excited state of mind, she wrote to Dora, begging, for their friendship's sake, that she would tell her all her faults, and help her to a truer state of heart and mind.

Dora, with her high, noble views of character, and the use that we should all be to our friends, was delighted by the call to help her darling friend in this best state of her life.

And truthfully she gave out her knowledge of her friend's peculiarities; mingling with words of truth and counsel, expressions of tenderness and fond encouragement.

Alas! poor, loving, believing Dora. She asked you for some truth, and you gave it to her. She asked you to speak plainly, and you did.

But Clara's heart had been directed from revival to a lover; and, in the flush of gratified affection and devoted homage the truthfulness of Dora's chart of character, so earnestly besought, came as chillingly as it had been unmasked.

Clara felt herself misunderstood—thought little of Dora's judgment—gave the letter to her lover—received with triumph his glowing verdict of her perfections, against the clear-sighted judgment of her truthful friend—and sent a wedding card to 'Miss Dora Beals' some six months after, with the same ceremony as for her hundred other friends.

Poor Dora! No, not poor Dora; but poor Clara, the friend.

Was there not one other heart in the wide world that could bear the unveiled presence of Truth?

Sweet Dora asked this mournfully of the trees and stars that always answered her so gently with the waving of their boughs, and with their twinkling eyes. Nature always spoke to her of truth; and when this last disappointment came upon to glow with zeal to tell her earnestly that truth was lovely and divine, and she must not sorrow over anything that would seem to prove it an enemy to happiness, and 'good will upon earth.'

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