

THE SUPPLY AT ST. AGATHA'S.

BY ELIZABETH STEWART PHELPS, IN "THE CENTURY."

The old clergyman sat with his feet upon the base of his little cylinder coal-stove. His thin ankles shrank in the damp stockings which he had not been able to change since he came in out of the storm, because, owing to some personal preference of the laundress, he could not find any dry ones. His worn slippers flapped upon his cold feet when he moved. But he had on his flowered dressing-gown of ancient pattern and rustic cut; his high arm-chair was cushioned in chintz and excoiled behind his aching head; the green paper shade was on his study-lamp; his best-beloved books (for the old saint was a student) lay within reach upon the table; piled upon them were his manuscript sermons; and he sighed with the content of a man who feels himself to be, although unworthy, in the loving arms of luxury. A rap at the door deceived him. His landlady put in her withered face.

"Sir," she said, "the widdler Peek's a-ying. It's just like her to take a night like this—but she's sent for you. I must say I don't call you fit to go."

"A man is always fit to do his duty," said the old clergyman, rising. "I will go at once. Did she send—any—conveyance?"

"Catch her!" retorted the landlady. "Why she hain't had the town water let in yet—and she wuth her fifteen thousand dollars; nor she won't have no hired girl to do for her, not that none of 'em will stay along for her a week, and Dobson's boy's at the door, a drippin' and cussin' to get you, for he's high snowed under. She's a wuthless old heathen miser, the widdler Peek."

"Then there is every reason why I should not neglect her," replied the clergyman in his authoritative, clerical voice. "Pray call the lad in from the weather and tell him I will accompany him at once."

He did look about his study sadly while he was making ready to leave it. The fire in the base-burner was quite warm, now, and his wet much-darned stockings were beginning to dry. The room looked sheltered and pleasant; his books ran to the ceiling, though his floor was covered with straw matting, with old pieces of woollen carpet for rugs; his carpet-covered lounge was wheeled out of the draft; his lamp with the green shade made a little circle of light and coziness; his Bible and prayer-book lay open within it besides the pile of sermons. He had meant to devote the evening to the agreeable duty of selecting his discourse for Saint Agatha's. His mind and his heart were brimming over with the excitement of that first event. He would have liked to concentrate and consecrate his thoughts upon it that evening. As he went, coughing, into the cold entry, it occurred to him that the spot in his lung was more painful than he had supposed; but he pulled his old cap over his ears, and his thin overcoat up to meet it, and tramped out cheerfully into the storm.

"Well, well, my lad!" he said, in his warm-hearted way to Dobson's boy; "I'm sorry for you that you have to be out on a night like this."

The boy spoke of this afterward, and remembered it long—for a boy. But at the time he did but stare. He stopped grumbling, however, and plunged on into the drifts ahead of the old rector, kicking a path for him to right and left in the wet, packed snow; for the widow Peek lived at least a mile away, and the storm was now become a virulent thing.

What passed between the unloved, neglected, dying parishioner and her pastor was not known to any but themselves, nor is there witness now to testify thereof. Neither does it in any way concern the record of this narrative, except as the least may concern the largest circumstance in human story. For, in view of what came to pass, it is impossible not to put the old judicial question: Did it pay? was it worth while when the miser's soul went out at midnight, on the wings and thereof that blind, black storm, did it pass gently a subdued, forgiven spirit, humble to learn how to live again for Christ's sake and his who gave himself—as his Master had before him—to comfort and to save? Did it pay? Do such things pay? God knows. But as long as men do not know, there will always be a few among them who will elect to disregard the doubt, to wear the divinity of uncalculating sacrifice, and to pay its price.

For the soul of the widow Peek the price was large, looked at in curmathematical way; for when the old clergyman, having shrived her soul and closed her eyes, started to come home at one o'clock of the morning the storm had become a malignant force. Already wet through and through his thin coats and worn flannels, weak from the exposure, the watching, and the scene of death, every breath a sword athwart his inflamed lungs, with fire in his brain, and ice at his heart, he staggered against the blizzard.

Dobson's boy had long since sought the shelter of his own home, and the old man was quite unattended. True the neighbor who watched with the dead woman suggested that he remain till morning; but the widow Peek's house was cold (she was always especially "near" about fuel), and he thought it more prudent to get back to his own stove and his bed.

Whether he lost his way; whether he crossed and recrossed it, wandering from it in the dark and drift; whether he fell and lay in the snow for a time, and rose again and staggered on, and fell again, and so pushed on again, cannot be known. It is only known that at half-past two on Saturday morning his landlady put her wrinkled face out of the window, for the twentieth time, in search of him (for she had a thought for him in her own hard-featured way), and saw him fallen, and feebly trying to crawl on his hands and knees up the drifted steps.

She got him into his warm study, past the chair where the flowered dressing-gown and old slippers awaited him, and as far as the carpet-covered lounge. Beyond this he could not be taken.

By morning the whole parish rang the door-bell; the hands and hearts and horses, the nurses, the doctors, the watchers, the tears and the prayers of the village, were his—for he was dearly beloved and cherished in that parish. But he lay on his old lounge in his study among his books, and asked of them nothing at all. The kerosene lamp, behind its green shade, went out; and the Bible, with the pile of sermons on the table, looked large in the snowlight of a day when the storm ceases

without sun. He did not talk; but his thoughts were yet alive. He remembered Saint Agatha's, and the sermon which he was to preach to-morrow. He knew that not one of his people (ignorant of such matters) would understand how to get word to the city vestry. He tried to give directions, but his voice refused his bidding. He knew that he would be supposed to have failed to meet his appointment, perhaps to have been thwarted—a rural clergyman, old and timorous, baffled in an important professional engagement—by a little snow. He was to have taken the evening train. He was to be the guest of the vestryman who wrote that pleasant letter. He was to preach in Saint Agatha's to-morrow. He was to—

Nay,—he was not—nay. He was to do none of these things. A sick man, mortally a sick man, past power of speech, he lay upon his carpet lounge, shivering under the pile of thin blankets and cotton comforters that had been wrapped around him, and gently faced his fate. He could not preach at Saint Agatha's. And he could not explain to the vestry. Perhaps his heart-sickness about this matter subsided a little—one likes to think so—as his disease grew upon him; but there are men who will understand me when I say that this was the greatest disappointment of his humble life.

As Saturday night drew on, and the stars came out, he was heard to make such efforts to speak articulately, that one of his weeping people (an affectionate woman of a brighter wit than the rest) made out, as she bent lovingly over him, to understand so much as this.

"Lord," he said, "into thy hands I commit my soul."

"He commits his spirit to the Lord!" sobbed the landlady.

But the listening parishioner raised her fingers to her lips.

"Lord," he said again, and this time the dumbest ear in the parish could have heard the words—"Lord," he prayed, "into thy hands I commit—my supply."

Sunday morning broke upon the city as cold and clear as the sword of a rebuking angel. People on the way to the West End churches exchanged notes on the thermometer, and talked of the destitution of the poor. It was so cold that the ailing and the aged for the most part stayed at home. But the young, the envious, the imitative, and the soul-sick, got themselves into their furs and carriages when the chimes rang, and the audiences were, on the whole, as comfortable and as devout as usual.

The vestryman sat nervously in his pew. He had not fully recovered from the fact that his supply had disappointed him. Having sent his coachman in vain to all the Saturday evening trains to meet his country parson, he had passed but an uneasy night.

"I had supposed the old man had principles about Sunday travel," he said to his wife, "but it seems he is coming in the morning, after all he might at least have sent me word."

"Telegraphing in the country is—difficult, sometimes, I have heard," replied the lady vaguely. She was a handsome, childless woman with the haughty under lip of her class. Her husband spoke cheerily, but he was not at ease, and she did not know how to make him so.

The Sunday morning train came in from the country station thirty miles back, but the old clergyman was not among its passengers. Now thoroughly alarmed, the vestryman had started for his hat and coat, when his parlor-maid brought him a message. It had been left at the door, she said, by a messenger who brooked neither delay nor question, but ordered her to tell the master of the house that the supply for Saint Agatha's was in the city, and would meet the engagement at the proper time and place. The old clergyman, the messenger, added, had been suddenly stricken with a dangerous illness, and could not be expected; but his substitute would fill the pulpit for the day. The vestryman was requested to feel no concern in the matter. The preacher preferred retirement until the hour of the service, and would fulfil his duties at the church at the appointed hour.

But when the vestryman, feeling flurried despite himself, tapped at the door of the luxurious vestry room, gracefully refurbished that winter for the rector with the sore throat who was in the south of France, he found it locked; and to his unobtrusive knock no answer came. At this uncomfortable moment the sexton tiptoed up to say that the supply had requested not to be disturbed until the service should begin. The sexton supposed that the clergyman needed extra preparation; thought that perhaps the gentleman was from the country and, ah—unnused to the audience.

"What is his name? What does he look like?" asked the chairman with knotted brows.

"I have not seen him, sir," replied the sexton, with a puzzled expression.

"How did you receive the message?"

"By a messenger who would not be delayed or questioned."

Struck by the repetition of this phrase, the chairman asked again:

"But what did the messenger look like?"

"I cannot tell you, sir. He was a mere messenger. I paid no attention to him."

"Very well," said the church officer, turning away discontentedly. "It must be all right. I have implicit confidence in the man whose chosen substitute this is."

With this he ceased to try to intrude himself upon the stranger, but went down to his pew, and sat beside his wife in uneasy silence.

The chimes sang and sank, and sang again:

Holy, holy, holy—

The air was so clear that the sound rang twice the usual distance through the snowlit, sunlit air; and the sick and the old at home listened to the bells with a sudden stirring at their feeble hearts, and wished again that they could have gone to church. One bed-ridden woman, whose telephone connected her with Saint Agatha's, held the receiver to her sensitive ear, and smiled with the quick gratitude for trifling pleasures of the long-sick, as she recognized the notes of the chime. With a leap and a thrill as if they cast their metal souls out in the air, the voices of the bells rose and swelled, and ceased and slept, and where they paused the anthem took the words up:

Holy, holy—
and carried it softly, just above the breath, with the tone which is neither a sigh, nor a cry, nor a whisper, but that harmony of all which makes of music prayer.

He must have entered on the wave of this strain; opinions differed afterwards as to this; some said one thing, some another; but it was found that most of the audience had not observed the entrance of the preacher at all. The choir ceased, and he was; and no more could be said. The church was well-filled, though not overcrowded, and the decorous rustle of a fashionable audience in the interval preceding worship stirred through the house.

In the natural inattention of the moment, it was not remarkable that most of the people failed to notice the strange preacher till he was among them.

But to the church officer whose mind was preoccupied with the supply, there was something almost startling in the manner of his approach.

The vestryman's uneasy eyes were not conscious of having slipped their guard upon the chance for a moment; he had turned his head politely, though a bit impatiently, to reply to some trivial remark of his wife's when, behold, the preacher stood before him.

Afterwards it was rumored that two or three persons in the audience had not been taken by surprise in this way, but had fully observed the manner of the stranger's entrance; yet these persons, when they were sought, were difficult to find. There was one shabby woman who sat in the gallery among the "poor" seats; she was clad in rusty mourning, and had a pale and patient face, quite familiar to the audience, for she was a faithful church-goer, and had attended Saint Agatha's for many years. It came to be said through the sexton's gossip or otherwise, that this poor woman had seen the preacher's approach quite clearly, and had been much moved thereat; but when some effort was made to find her, and to question her on this point, unexpected obstacles arose,—she was an obscure person, serving in some menial capacity for floating employers; she was accustomed to slip in and out of church hurriedly, both late and early,—and nothing of importance was added from this quarter to the general interest which attended the eccentricities of the supply.

The stranger was a man a trifle above the ordinary height, of majestic mien and carriage, and with the lofty head which indicates both fearlessness and purity of nature. As he glided to his place behind the lectern, a hush struck the frivolous audience, as if it had been smitten by an angel's wing; such power is there in noble novelty, and in the authority of a high heart.

When had the similar of this preacher led the service in that venerable and fashionable house of worship? In what past years had his counterpart served them?

Whom did he resemble of the long line of eminent clerical teachers with whose qualities this elect people was familiar? What had been his history, his ecclesiastical position, his social connections? It was characteristic of the audience that this last question was first in the minds of a large proportion of the worshippers. What was his professional reputation—his theology? What were his views on choir-boys, confessionals, and candles—on mission chapels, and the pauperizing of the poor?

These inquiries swept through the inner consciousness of the audience in the first moment of his appearance. But in the second, neither these nor any other paltry queries fretted the smallest soul before him.

The stranger must have had an impressive countenance; yet afterward it was found that no two descriptions of it agreed. Some said this thing, some said that. To this person he appeared a gentle, kindly man with a persuasive manner; to that, he looked majestic and commanding. There were some who spoke of an authoritative severity in the eye which he turned upon them; but these were not many. There were those who murmured that they had melted beneath the tenderness of his glance, as snow before the sun; and such were more. As to the features of his face, men differed, as spectators are apt to do about the lineaments of extraordinary countenances. What was the color of his eyes, the contour of his lips, the shape of his brow? Who could say? Conflicting testimony arrived at no verdict. In two respects alone opinions agreed about the face of this man; it commanded, and it shone; it had authority and light. The shrewdest heresy-hunter in the congregation would not have dared question this clergyman's theology, or the tendencies of his ritualistic views. The veriest Pharisee in the audience quailed before the blinding brilliance of the preacher's face. It was a moral fire. It ate into the heart. Sin and shame shriveled before it.

One might say that all this was apparent in the preacher before he had spoken a word. When he had opened his lips these impressions were intensified. He began in the usual way to read the usual prayers, and to conduct the service as was expected of him. Nothing eccentric was observable in his treatment of the preliminaries of the occasion. The fashionable choir, accustomed to dictate the direction of the music, met with no interference from the clergyman. He announced the hymns and anthems that had been selected quite in the ordinary manner, and the notes of the great dailies took the usual notes of the musical programme. In fact, up to the time of the sermon nothing out of the common course occurred.

But, having said this, one must qualify. Was it nothing out of the common course that the congregation in Saint Agatha's should sit as the people sat that day, bond-slaves before the enunciation of the familiar phrases in the morning's confession.

"What a voice!" whispered the wife of the vestryman. But her husband answered her not a word. Pale, agitated, with strained eyes uplifted, and nervous hands knotted together, he leaned toward the stranger. At the first articulate sentence from the pulpit, he knew that the success of his supply was secured.

What a voice indeed! It melted through the great house like burning gold. The heart ran after it as fire runs through metal. Once or twice in a generation one may hear the liturgy read like that—perhaps. In a lifetime no longer to be counted short, the vestryman had heard nothing which resembled it.

"Thank God!" he murmured. He put his hat before his face. He had not realized before what strain he had endured. Cold drops stood upon his brow. He shook with

relief. From that moment he felt no more concern about the service than if he had engaged one of the sons of God to "supply."

"Are you faint?" asked his wife in a tone of annoyance. She offered him her smelling-salts.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

FACTS ABOUT RUBIES.

Gems of Great Value and Beauty—The Collection of Burmah's King.

The story of the theft and possible recovery of King Theebaw's crown jewels, which has been so thoroughly discussed of late, is likely to bring rubies into more common appreciation, suggests an English paper. The real value of the lost rubies is not known, because Orientals prize their jewels for their weight rather than great perfection, and another consideration is the fact that red spinels often pass in the East for the genuine ruby, with which they have nothing in common except the color, although they are found in the same bed with rubies and sapphires. The famous Black Prince's ruby in the royal crown of England is only a spinel. Rubies and sapphires are identical in their component parts. The form of crystallization is the same. Their hardness and specific gravity are equal, and they are found in the same bed of clay so closely together that one side of a stone will be bright blue and the other as red as blood. In both aluminum is the principal ingredient, but the mystery of their real difference has never been solved by science.

Among the finest of historical rubies were three of the French crown jewels, and one of these formed part of the dowry of Catherine de Medicis on her marriage to Henry II., and it weighed 241 carats. The other two were reset for Marie Stuart when she reigned as Queen of France. It is said that the Kings of Burmah possessed at one time the finest collection of rubies in the world, and they took great precautions to prevent strangers from reaching their mines. Before the annexation of the country by England all rubies valued at 1,000 rupees were claimed by the King, and the finder received no reward except the King's favor. Ordinary travel was forbidden, and merchants had great difficulty in dealing with the chiefs of the mining districts. In order to purchase jewels a man had to first obtain a license, then report himself at Ruby Hall in Mandalay, stating the exact amount of money and merchandise he wished to take with him. This information was sent to the officials at the mines, and at every stopping place on the way, both going and coming, the merchant and his baggage were carefully examined. If he returned with rubies beyond the value he declared in starting he was dealt with as being a smuggler.

Added to the value and beauty of the ruby were its magical properties, which the ancients considered powerful enough to guard them from "poison, plague, sadness, evil thoughts, and wicked spirits," and to keep them in health and cheered in mind.

Although superstition is not such a powerful influence in these modern days, the cheering qualities of the ruby are fully appreciated by the women who are fortunate enough to possess a gem.

A FIEND IN HUMAN FORM.

A Man Throws Vitriol on a Woman in Montreal.

Judge Desnoyers had a vitriol-throwing case brought before his attention the other morning. The case is a serious one. Mrs. Mary Newman is the victim of the outrage. When she appeared before the Judge her face was hidden with bandages which covered the injuries that the acid had made. Her black cloth dress had turned a brilliant yellow, in places where the vitriol had fallen upon it. Such was the power of the acid that it had eaten through the sleeve of her dress and burned into her flesh. Her wounds were dressed at the General Hospital. The name of the man who is charged with this crime is Charles Maxwell. He calls himself a merchant, living on Sherbrooke street, but the directory apparently is ignorant of his existence.

Mrs. Newman told Judge Desnoyers that while she was out she was informed that Maxwell had been seen trying to enter her house. In order to protect herself against him she went to No. 5 police station and notified the police of Maxwell's behavior. As she was going home she met Maxwell on the corner of Anderson and Dorchester streets. With an oath he uncorked a large bottle containing vitriol and tried to throw it into her eyes. Some of it went in her face and a little on her left eyelid. She screened her eyes with her arm. The vitriol splashed all over her dress. Constable Hawthorne took her to the hospital.

A little boy saw the prisoner throw the empty bottle away. He picked it up and took it to No. 5 station.

The prisoner took the matter coolly enough in court. He pleaded not guilty. The desperate fellow also savagely bit and beat a prisoner named J. Gallagher, who happened to be in the cell with him one night. A charge of assault was laid against him by Gallagher, to which he also pleaded not guilty.

They Fall Up and Get Hurt.

The fish that live at enormous depths are, in consequence of the enormous pressure, liable to a curious form of accident. If, in chasing their prey or for any other reason, they rise to a considerable distance above the floor of the ocean, the gases of their swimming bladder become considerably expanded and their specific gravity greatly reduced; up to a certain limit the muscles of their bodies can counteract the tendency to float upward and enable the fish to regain its proper sphere of life at the bottom, but beyond that limit the muscles are not strong enough to drive the body downward, and the fish becoming more and more distended as it goes, is gradually killed on its long and involuntary journey to the surface of the sea.

The deep sea fish, then, are exposed to a danger that no other animals in the world are subject to—namely, that of tumbling upward. That such accidents do occasionally occur is evidenced by the fact that some fish, which are known to be true deep sea forms, were discovered dead and floating on the surface of the ocean long before our modern investigations were commenced.

ROUND THE WHOLE WORLD

WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE GLOBE.

Old and New World Events of Interest Chronicled Briefly—Interesting Map; penings of Recent Date.

The States telephone exchanges represent \$100,000,000.

A single bakery in New York makes 20,000 pies a day.

A stone saw in use in Rutland, Vt., does the work of 100 men.

12,000 bushels of oysters are eaten every day in New York city.

An Englishman has invented a detachable heel for boots and shoes.

A crusade against chattel mortgages has begun in Milwaukee.

The Fibre Works, Fort Huron, turns out four carloads of stuff daily.

The metropolitan police commissioner of London employs 15,083 men.

The United States pension appropriation for the year is \$151,000,000.

Minnesota gets \$1,500,000 from gross earnings of railroads in the State.

All the telephones now operated in Japan are owned by the government.

The highest mountain in Japan is Fujiama, which is 13,000 feet high.

John T. Hiller was arrested in Chicago on the charge of having seven wives.

An apple tree recently blew down in Connecticut which was known to be a century and a half old.

Three of the largest Japanese maples in the country are now standing in Prospect park, Brooklyn.

A design for a font of phonetic printing type of 42 characters has been patented by Robert S. Avery.

Dr. Herz has threatened to publish all the documents in his possession relating to the Panama scandal.

Under the 300 Protestant foreign missionary societies there are 4,717 men and 3,755 women missionaries.

In Prussia 13 and 14 are legal ages a which men and women may contract a matrimonial alliance.

The Atlanta, Ga., federation of trades has adopted resolutions declaring the A. P. A. as inimical to unionism.

A number of interpreters, intended for war service, are to be appointed to serve in the German army. They are especially required to be proficient in Russian and French.

Professor George Wellner asserts that he has solved the problem of aerial navigation. His machine is being tested secretly by the Austrian Government.

The King of Italy, it is said, display great indifference on the subject of Anarchists. When the recent bomb explosion occurred, and the announcement was made to him, he merely shrugged his shoulders.

Sir Frederick Burton brought a fast cyclist, who was careering through Piccadilly Circus, London, to reason by the application of an umbrella to his back with such force that the police had to be called to quell the row.

A Russian cavalry colonel has been executed at Odessa for betraying military secrets to a general on the staff of a foreign power. He had received an annual payment of 24,000 francs for two years as an informer.

Nobody would have prophesied fifteen years ago that in the year 1893 France would consume as much beer as Bavaria. Yet, there are the figures under the eye of the statistician. In every restaurant and cafe in Paris, where Burgundy and the nectar of the Bordeaux were once the only beverage, beer is now supreme.

A new sect in Russia is known as the Underground People, lately organized in Saratoff. When a person falls ill, the elders come in and baptize him anew. Then they carry him down into an underground labyrinth where he is left to wrestle with death alone. After a week the elders come to inspect the sick man, and, if dead, he is duly buried.

A curious box was recently found amid the ruins of Pompeii. It was made of marble, or alabaster, two inches square, and closely sealed. When opened it was found to be full of a pomatum of grease, hard, but very fragrant. The smell resembled that of the sweetest rose. It is singular that we, in the nineteenth century, should be able to regale our noses with perfumes prepared in the first.

In the English navy a drink record is kept against every officer not in command, on the same principle as the "consumption book" of the sergeants' mess in the army. The book of naval officers' wine bills is inspected every week by the captain, and produced at the admiral's inspections. If the latter officer considers the amount in any particular case excessive he records his opinion to that effect, and the culprit is warned.

There is one industry in which there seems to be no serious depression, the business of the "Monte Carlo Gambling Company," for such is the frank title of the great gambling institution of Monte Carlo. At its annual meeting recently it was announced that the receipts for the year were \$4,400,000. This is a decrease of \$400,000 compared with the former year's receipts, but it represents an enormous profit and a colossal dividend.

The Queen's Name.

It is probable that most of her Majesty's loyal subjects know the Queen only by her royal style, Victoria, and that such of the remainder of them as are aware that she bears another name, and that that is Alexandra, believe that the latter is the second, and, therefore, in some sense the inferior name. The well-informed, however, know that the Queen's names are Alexandra Victoria, and a sentence or two in a letter of her father, the Duke of Kent, written within a couple of months of her christening, and sold a few days since in Paris, may account for the choice of the second as the principal name. "Her first name," the Duke wrote, "is Alexandra; Victoria, by which name she is always called at home, is her last, being that of her dear mother. The first she bears after her godfather, the Emperor of Russia."