

Until the Day-Break.

I often wondered, when at night,
The curtaining lips had shut from sight
Those eyes so overbrimmed with light;
How I could sleep the long hours through,
As even the watchful-hearted do—
Nor have their violet once in view.

Sometimes, as love late vigils kept,
Hearing him stir, I've closer stepped,
Half minded, if he lightly slept,
To test him with a whispered wile
(Meant my own reason to beguile,
To see if he would turn and smile.)

Then I would hush my heart and make
Myself ashamed—that I should break
Such sleep—for love's own selfish sake.

"Wait till the morning," I would say;
"Wait till the slumber drifts away;
Then, where are eyes so bright as they?"

I wonder now, as with my head
Bowed on my hands, uncomfited,
My heart keeps watch above my dead.

How can I live and meet the sun
Of years that stretch, a martyrdom
Of yearning, till the dawn shall come!

Yet in this vigil of my woe
Starts forth the thought that shamed me so
Beside his cradle long ago.

"O aching, anguished soul!" I say,
"Until the day-break," watching stay,
Until the shadows flee away.

"And thou shalt find that God has kept
The eyes whose closing thou hast wept,
All heaven the happier that they slept!"

—Presbyterian.

Selected Serial.

ALYPIUS OF TAGASTE.

A Tale of the Early Church.

BY MRS. WEBB,

Author of "Pomponia; or, the Gospel in Caesar's Household," etc.

CHAPTER XV.

Augustine having renounced the profession of rhetoric, and resolved to become a minister of that gospel which he had so long despised, determined to leave Milan, and return to his native land; where he hoped that his ministrations might be blessed to the conversion and the spiritual improvement of his own countrymen.

A short time sufficed for preparation; for Monica was as anxious as her son to leave Milan, and to return to her home and her friends in Africa. She had also a prophetic feeling that her life was drawing to a close; and she greatly desired to be buried in her own land.

The long, and, at that time, toilsome journey, was soon commenced. The travelling party consisted of Augustine, his mother, his son, and his friend, Alypius, who was resolved to follow him whithersoever he might bend his steps. These Christian disciples all hoped to enjoy many years of happy fellowship, and of much usefulness together at Tagaste; but "man proposes, and God disposes;" and their hopes were not to be altogether accomplished.

The travellers arrived at Ostia intending to go from thence to Rome, and to remain there for some time before sailing for Africa. But the fatigue of the journey had already been more than the declining strength of Monica could bear. She was taken ill soon after they reached Ostia; and Augustine would not consent to her proceeding to Rome, but resolved to remain in their present abode until her health was re-established.

This, however, was not the will of God concerning his tried and faithful servant. It seemed as if the purpose of Monica's life was fully accomplished, now that the son of her love and her care was gathered into the fold of Christ. Her soul had long aspired to the joys of heaven; and soon they were to be her portion.

Monica could look calmly forward to the termination of her earthly career; and she cheerfully resigned the long-cherished hope of again beholding her native land, and the friends whom she had known from her youth. She had earnestly desired once more to see Calanthe, to hear from her own lips a confession of her Christian faith, and to strengthen her in the pure and holy doctrines of the gospel. But even this hope she relinquished willingly, knowing that the Lord, who had begun the good work in her friend's soul, would assuredly complete and perfect it, and that he would provide a fitting instrument to carry out his gracious purpose.

It was hard for Augustine to real-

ize the approaching separation from his beloved mother—now dearer to him than ever, since he had learned to share her faith on earth and her hopes for heaven. But he saw that she gradually declined in strength; and he also saw that as "the outward man decayed, the inward man was renewed day by day; and the departing Christian was becoming more and more 'meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.'"

Many were the deeply interesting conversations that were held by this mother and son during the last days of their earthly intercourse; and brightly did Monica's tender affection for her only child burn on to the very last. Her soul was lifted up in fervent prayer for him, and with him; and her greatest delight was in holding spiritual communion with him who had so often caused her the bitterest grief, and who was now the source of her grateful joy.

Augustine watched his mother with the fondest care and gentleness; and, in his "Confessions," he has left us a touching record of the latest scenes of her life. One of these descriptions has been made the subject of a very lovely picture, which must be admired and appreciated by every one who has either a feeling heart or an artist's eye.

Augustine stood by his mother's side at a window of their lodging while she reclined in a chair; and they looked down together on the ever-flowing waters of the Tiber, and listened to its soothing but monotonous sound. The day had been sultry, and Monica's weakness had visibly increased, warning her son that he could not hope long to retain her on earth. The evening breeze had, however, revived her; and she could once more enjoy sacred communion with him whom she loved so well.

They talked of death—of death, whose sting has been destroyed, and which is to the Christian only the gate of heaven. And they talked of what should be after death, when they should attain to the land of everlasting rest and joy.

"Yea," he says in his own expressive language, "we were soaring yet higher by inward musing and discourse, and by admiring of Thy works, that we might arrive at that region of never-failing plenty, where thou feedest Israel for ever with the food of truth."

Then they paused awhile, and kept silence; and again no sound broke the stillness but the rippling of the ever-rolling river.

The mother and son were communing in spirit all the while; and ere long they spoke again. He gave, as their uttered thoughts in some such words as these:—

"We were saying, then, that if, even now, in this our bodily states the tumult of the flesh were entirely hushed—hushed the images of earth, and water, and air; yea, the very soul hushed to herself—hushed all dreams and imaginary revelations—hushed every tongue and every sign; and he alone should speak, not through any tongue of flesh, or angel's voice, or sound of thunder, but so that we might hear his very self in the depth of our soul—could this be continued, and all other visions be withdrawn, and this one absorb and ravish the spirit, even with these inward joys, so that life might be filled with that heavenly communion which now we sighed after,—would not this be to realize the blessed sentence, Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?"

Such were the heavenly aspirations of the enthusiastic and highly imaginative Augustine; and Monica shared his spiritual exaltation.

"Oh, my son!" she replied, as she raised her eyes, now beaming with holy joy and hope, towards the heaven where her heart had long been fixed, "oh, my son, when shall that be? For mine own part, I have no further delight in anything in this life. What I do here any longer, or to what end I am here, I know not—now that all my hopes in this world are accomplished. One thing there was, for which I desired to linger for a while on the earth—that I might see thee, my beloved Augustine, a true Christian before I died. My gracious God hath now done this for me more abundantly than I could

have hoped; for I see thee dispising earthly happiness and earthly advancement, and become his devoted servant. What do I here any longer?"

"Mother," replied Augustine, with much emotion, as he seated himself at her feet, and took her hand in his, and looked up with her into the deep blue sky, "Mother, it will be lonely for me on earth when you are gone. Yet how can I wish to retain you here when your spirit is so ready for heaven? What is my love for you, or even yours for me, compared to that love of God which passeth all understanding—that love wherewith he has loved us, and which in some measure he has also implanted in my erring and wandering heart—how much more in yours? He will recompense you for all your love to me; and he will abundantly satisfy all the desires of your soul towards himself."

"Yes, my son: the Lord will give much more than we either desire or deserve. I know that henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory—and not for me only, but for all them also that love his appearing. I know that I love him; and I glory in this, not because it gives me any claim upon his mercy, but because I know that my love to him is a proof that he first loved me. And I know, also, that all whom he loves are safe, and that no man, no devil, shall ever pluck them out of his hand. But, Augustine, I likewise know that I have not either loved or served him as I ought; and for this I now feel shame and sorrow, because herein I have failed to testify my gratitude for his full, and free, and unmerited salvation."

"The path of the righteous is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Thus was it with Monica—and thus did her light shine before men—and thus did she, and those who marked her faith and her holiness, glorify her Father which is in heaven. It has been well said by a modern writer, "The Christian shines like the sun—not because he purposes to shine, but because he is full of light." And such is the light that guides other souls into the strait and narrow way, and lures them to enter the path that leads to heaven.

"The shock of ripe corn" was soon to be gathered into the garner of the Lord. Only five days after this conversation between Augustine and his mother—and while the party still tarried at Ostia, with little hope that Monica would ever leave the place—she was seized with a fever, which soon reduced her very low. She felt indeed her last sickness, and that her days—and even her hours—were numbered.

Her exhaustion was so great that she fell into a swoon, or fainting fit, in which she lay utterly insensible for a considerable time. Her son and his companions were greatly alarmed, and thought for a while that her spirit had fled. But while they stood around her couch, she revived, and turning towards Augustine, she said, softly—

"My son, here shall you bury your mother. I shall never see Tagaste again."

"Say not so," replied Alypius, who had seen less of her increasing weakness than Augustine, and was more sanguine as to her recovery; "say not so, dear Monica. I still hope that my mother will welcome you to Tagaste once more, and that we shall all meet, as a Christian party, in her house. It would be sad to leave your loved form here, so far from your country and your home, and the friends to whom you are so dear."

"My children," said the dying saint, as she fixed her now languid eyes in turn on each sad countenance, "my beloved children, ever remember that nothing is far to God. I do not fear that he should not know where to find me at the resurrection."

All were struck by her words, and all were deeply impressed by the solemn manner in which she uttered them. They saw that she was indeed rapidly drawing nigh to the brink of eternity, and that soon the eye which had seen her should see her no more. They stood silently watching her, while tears were in every eye, and sorrow in every heart, except her own.

"Let me bless thee, my son, before I die," she said, faintly.

Augustine knelt before his mother, and she laid her trembling hands upon his head, as he bowed it down on her pillow.

"O Lord, bless my son," she murmured. "Make him to be a light on the earth—give him grace to serve Thee faithfully. Take him for thine own, O God, now in this world, and then may he be mine forever in heaven."

"Bless my boy also, O mother dearest!" exclaimed Augustine, in a broken voice, as he drew his son to his side.

The youth knelt down, and tears flowed over his blooming cheeks, and dimmed the brightness of his clear blue eyes.

Monica lifted one hand from Augustine's head, and placed it on that of her grandson.

"Adeodatus* is thy name, my son; and truly, though thou wast born in sin, thou hast been a good gift from God, both to thy father and to me. Here, on my death-bed, I give thee back to him. My he keep thee for ever as his own!"

Her voice faltered and ceased; but her eyes still sought those she loved, and a sweet smile dwelt on her pale features. Soon it died away, as the light of evening fades from the eastern hills when the sun sinks behind the western horizon—and the spirit of Monica had returned to God who gave it.

"I closed her eyes," says Augustine, "and there flowed a mighty sorrow into my heart."

The young Adeodatus fondly loved his grandmother; and when he saw that she was dead he no longer restrained his grief, but broke out into sobs and lamentations. But Alypius checked this violent expression of his sorrow, by reminding him what a blessed change death must be to Monica, who had so long been preparing to meet her God. Then Adeodatus ceased to weep audibly, and all stood around the bed of death in solemn silence.

Truly the loss of such a mother, and so soon after he had become of one heart and of one mind with her, must have been "a mighty sorrow" to Augustine. He tells us, however, in his own account of this interesting period of his life, that he had many sources of comfort in the remembrance of her watchful care and unflinching love for him, and of the holy and affectionate intercourse which they were permitted to enjoy during her last illness. He also dwells fondly and gratefully on her having called him "dutiful" at last—he who had for so many years been most undutiful; and on her having observed, "with great affection of love," that she had never even in his wildest days, heard any unkind or disrespectful words addressed to herself.

"And yet, O my God!" he continues, in a passion of grief, and self-reproach, "what comparison is there between that honour which I paid to her and her slavery for me? Being then forsaken of so great comfort in her, my soul was wounded, and that life rent asunder as it were, which of hers and mine together had made but one."

The silence which prevailed among the friends who stood around the death-bed of Monica was broken by Alypius, who opened a psalter, and began to sing the 101st psalm; "I will sing of mercy and judgment; unto thee, O Lord, will I sing."

Many members of the family and household had assembled in the room, and all were deeply impressed by what they had seen and heard in the chamber of the dying Christian. They now united in the song of prayer and praise, and chanted the responses in the manner which had so lately been introduced into the services of the church.

We cannot refrain from another extract from Augustine's account of this time of deep sorrow:—

"Behold," he says, "the corpse was carried to the burial. We went and returned without tears. . . . And then, by little and little, I recovered my former thoughts of thine handmaid, her holy conversation towards thee, her holy tenderness and obser-

*Adeodatus means Given by God.

vance towards us, whereof I was suddenly deprived."

Towards his son the heart of Augustine now turned with increased affection, and Adeodatus well repaid his love and care. But the comfort which he must have derived from this promising youth was not long continued to him. We knew no more of Adeodatus than that he died young; and his father thus speaks of his early removal in a later part of his "Confessions":—

"His talents struck awe into me. But soon didst thou take his life from this earth; and I remember him with out anxieties, fearing nothing for his childhood, his youth, or his whole life."

After the death of Monica, Augustine left Ostia with his son and Alypius, and pursued his way to Rome. After some stay there he returned to Tagaste, always accompanied by the faithful Alypius and some other Christian friends. He took up his abode on his own small estate near the town; and there he resided in great retirement, and devoted himself to prayer and the study of the Scriptures; and thus this chosen vessel of the Lord was prepared for that great sphere of usefulness which he was afterwards called to occupy.

There we must now leave him—and return again to Alexandria, and to the family of Sophis the Egyptian.

To be Continued.

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FACETIE.

The teacher of a Sabbath-school in Cincinnati asked his class: "Who constituted the mob which stoned the house of Jason?" A boy promptly answered, "The politicians." "What makes you think that," said the teacher. The boy replied, "Because it says they were 'Lewd fellows of the baser sort.'"

One Sunday, as a certain Scottish minister was returning homewards, he was accosted by an old woman, who said: "Oh, sir, well do I like the day when you preach." The minister was aware that he was not very popular, and he answered: "My good woman, I am glad to hear it. There are too few like you. And why do you like when I preach?" "Oh, sir," she replied, "when you preach I always get a good seat."

How an English preacher narrowly escaped the charge of plagiarism is thus related by one of our English exchanges: "Rev. Charles Bradley's sermons were published when he was comparatively a young man, and as he (on retiring from active life many years before his death) naturally attended churches where other people preached, he often heard his own sermons. On one occasion the preacher, on catching his eye as he was closing one of Mr. Bradley's discourses, had the presence of mind to say, 'I have the more pleasure in having read you this excellent sermon of Mr. Bradley, as I see him an attentive listener.'"

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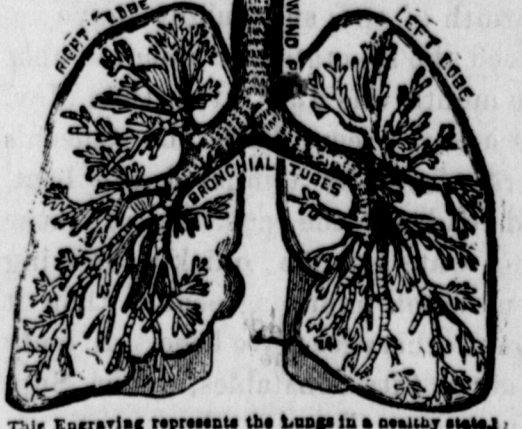
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