

ON MARRIAGE.

CATHOLIC ANECDOTES

CHAPTER XIII.

MATRIMONY.

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631. *The Most Ancient of Mausoleums.* -

It would be difficult, I think, even impossible, my friends, to find in all ancient history a firmer instance of conjugal affection than that which I am going to relate. Mausoleus, King of Caria, in Asia Minor, dying after a reign of twenty-four years, left the throne to Queen Artemisa, his wife. That princess employed all her power and riches only in signaling the affection she had had for her husband. Wishing to immortalize her grief, she raised, in honour of her dear Mausoleus, a monument so magnificent, so splendid, so richly decorated, that it passed for one of the seven wonders of the world; hence it was that the name of *mausoleums* was subsequently given to all remarkable monuments erected to the memory of the dead. That nothing might be wanting to the glory of her husband, that princess, the true model of wives and widows, founded a prize in favour of the orator who should best succeed in pronouncing the eulogy of the deceased monarch. It was Theopompo, of the Island of Chio, in Greece, who first obtained it. If Aulu-Gella and several other writers of antiquity are to be believed, Artemisa did not even content herself with these public proofs of her conjugal affection. She went so far as to gather carefully the ashes of Mausoleus

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and have his bones pulverized, and, every day, she put a little of that powder into her drink desirous of making her own body, so to say, the living tomb of her husband. She survived him but two years, and her love ended only with her life. She died in 351 before Christ.

- FILASSIER, *Dict. Hist d'Educ.*, I., 233.

632. *Story of Eponina and Sabinus.* -

It is not only amongst the Greeks and Romans that we shall find beautiful instances of conjugal love and fidelity. Here is one which has been justly celebrated by the poets and artists of all ages; it took place amongst the ancient Gauls. Sabinus, chief of the Lingons, - that is to say, the people of whom Langres, in Upper or Haute Marne, was the capital, - Sabinus, I say, having attempted to shake off the yoke of the Romans, was defeated by the troops of the Emperor Vespasian, and obliged to seek an asylum from the wrath of the victorious prince. He could easily fly into Germany, but his affection for his virtuous spouse, named Eponina, hindered him from taking that step. He had a vast and deep cavern, only known to himself, which served him to secrete his grain and his treasures. Resolved to conceal himself there, he dismissed all his people, as though purposing to take his own life. He kept but two freedmen, of tried fidelity, and, with their aid, he set fire to his country house, to make believe that his body was consumed by the flames and retired into one of his caverns. He then dispatched Martial, one of his two domestics, to his wife, to

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announce to her that he was no more. He knew well what a blow it would be for that tender spouse; but his purpose was precisely to persuade the public of the truth of the report of his death by the sincerity of Eponina's grief. It was just what happened. Eponina, in despair, threw herself on the ground, gave herself up to cries, and tears, and groans, and in that state passed three days and three nights without eating and without

receiving any consolation. Sabinus, apprised of her situation, feared the consequences. He had her secretly apprised that he was not dead, that he was concealed in a safe place, but requested her to continue her demonstrations of grief to keep up an error that was so salutary to him. Eponina played her part to perfection. She visited her husband by night ; then reappeared in the world without giving the least suspicion of so strange a mystery. By degrees she grew bolder; her absence became longer; at last she buried herself alive in the cavern with Sabinus. She had two children during the time these relations lasted, so agreeable for two spouses who loved each other so faithfully. She nursed them herself, and brought them up carefully in her obscure retreat, always by means of the two faithful servants whom Sabinus had kept. After remaining nine years in this gloomy dwelling, Sabinus was unhappily discovered. He was taken with his wife and children, and brought to Rome loaded with chains. When they were presented to the Emperor Vespasian, Eponina spoke to him courageously; and, showing her

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children: "Caesar," said she, "I have brought into the world these sad fruits of our disgrace, and I suckled them in the horror of darkness that we might be able to raise to you a greater number of suppliant hands." Horrible to relate, Vespasian is said to have shed tears of pity, and yet yielded to the desire of a base revenge: he condemned Sabinus to death. Seeing this, Eponina resumed her wonted dignity of mien, and demanded to be executed with her husband. The Emperor gave her that barbarous satisfaction.
- FILASSIER *Dict. Hist. d'Educ.*, I., 127.

633. *The Holy Industry of a Christian Woman.* -

St. Monica, mother of the great St. Augustine, may serve as a model for persons whom God calls to manage a household. Patricius, her husband, was a pagan, and gave himself up to all the impetuosity of his passions. Monica's great care was to gain him for God. For that she laboured by her submission, her mildness, her patience. She was most careful never to make him any hasty or unseasonable reproaches. She never complained of him; on the contrary, she hid his faults from all her acquaintances. By this truly Christian conduct she succeeded in gaining her husband's heart; he esteemed, he admired, and respected her. She often addressed fervent prayers to the Lord for his conversion; they were at length heard. Patricius allowed himself to be instructed in the Christian religion and was converted. He received baptism, and thenceforward became chaste, modest, meek, worthy, in short, of

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having St. Monica for a wife. The latter was truly an angel of peace. When women complained before her of the bad conduct and ill-treatment of their husbands, she smiling said to them: "Take care of your tongue, does it become servants to rebel against their masters?" As tender a mother as she was, a meek and gentle wife, what care did she not take to bring up her children Christianly! Notwithstanding her wise counsels, Augustine, her son, had the misfortune to go astray for a time; but Monica gave herself neither rest nor peace till she had brought him back to the right way. It was the tears she shed, and the prayers she offered up for him, that at length obtained his conversion. And that conversion was so perfect that he became a very great Saint. Monica herself had the art of sanctifying herself amid the cares and troubles of the household, and the Church decreed to her the honours of canonization.
- GODESCARD, *Vies des Saints. (Lives of the Saints.)*

634. *A Woman Carrying Her Husband on Her Back.* -

When you read the history of the Middle Ages, my friends, you will there find the beautiful portrait of conjugal love which happened in the little town of Weinsberg, in Germany. The Duke of Wurtemberg had strongly opposed the election of Conrad III., who was proclaimed Emperor in 1138. That did not prevent the election from being confirmed. When the new monarch had assumed the diadem, the Duke of Wurtemberg refused to recognize him, and shut himself up in the fortress of

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Weinsberg, the strongest in his whole duchy of Wurtemberg. He was besieged there by the imperial army, but withstood for twelve days the attack of his sovereign with a bravery truly heroic. At length he was

obliged to yield to superior strength. The Emperor, much exasperated, would have destroyed all before him; he even intended to slaughter every living being. Nevertheless, on the remonstrance's of his council, he pardoned the women, and permitted them to carry off what they most valued, but insisted on their leaving the town immediately. The Duchess availed herself of this permission to save her husband's life. She took him on her back, and so quitted the town. All the other women did as much, and Conrad saw them go forth loaded with this precious burden, the Duchess at their head. He could not withstand a sight so touching; yielding to the admiration it caused him, he forgave the husbands for the sake of their wives; the whole town was saved. - FILASSIER, *Dict. Hist. d'Educ.*, I., 229.

635. *A Female Soldier.* -

It has sometimes happened, my friends, and you may, perhaps, have read examples of it, that women have succeeded in enrolling themselves as soldiers, although such fraud is against the law of every country of which I know. I have read in the *Historical Dictionary of Education*, that Catherine Hermann, the wife of a Dutch sailor, employed that most extraordinary means to save her husband from the galleys for life. The fact occurred as follows. This brave mariner, having been taken by the Spaniards,

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who were besieging Ostend, in the 17th century, was sent to the galleys with several of his countrymen. Catherine, hearing this sad news, forms then the strangest of all projects. Without saying anything to any one, she cuts off her hair, disguises herself as a workingman, repairs to the camp of Ostend, and enlists in the service of the Spaniards the enemies of her country. She soon made herself remarkable as much by her prudent and regular conduct as by her heroic bravery. On one occasion, having fought valiantly under the eyes of the Count de Bucquoi, the latter sent for her and told her without knowing who she was: "Brave soldier, ask whatsoever you will, and I will grant it." -- "General," said Catherine, with an engaging smile, "if I chanced to be a female soldier, would you retract?" -- "No, on the contrary --" Immediately, Catherine throws herself on her knees, makes herself known as the wife of the sailor Hermann, confesses the stratagem she employed, and asks the Count de Bucquoi to set her husband free. The Count, touched with admiration, raises her immediately, restores her husband to her, and sends them both back to their village, praising Catherine for her fine action, and congratulating the sailor on having so virtuous a wife. - FILASSIER, *Dict. Hist., d'Educ.*, I., 181.

636. *The Wife of Marshal de Mouchy.* -

Of all the victims who perished on the revolutionary scaffold in 1793, there are few who do not merit the admiration of all France. You may judge of this from the following

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fact. Marshal de Mouchy was sentenced to die on the scaffold; he mounted it courageously, pronouncing these emphatic words: "At twenty I mounted the breach for my king, at eighty I mount the scaffold for my God." But listen: This venerable old man had been arrested, and conducted, like so many others, to the prison of the Luxembourg, in Paris. He was scarcely there when his wife went to join him. She is told that the accusation makes no mention of her; but she answers in a decided tone. "Since my husband is arrested, so am I." Monsieur de Mouchy is brought before the revolutionary tribunal; she accompanies him. The public accuser warns her that he did not send for her. "Since my husband was summoned before your tribunal, so am I." At length, the famous Marshal is condemned to death, and the courageous wife ascends the fatal cart with him. "But you are not condemned," says the executioner to her. "Since my husband is condemned, so am I." No other answer could be drawn from this admirable woman, and it was found necessary to employ force to make her descend from the scaffold. Is not this what may be called the literal acceptance of those words of Our Lord: *A woman shall leave her father and her mother, and cleave unto her husband?* Oh! happy are the families which have at their head a man and woman so well adapted to each other! - FILASSIER, *Dict. Hist. d'Educ.*, I., 125.

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