

THE SUPPLY AT SAINT AGATHA'S

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649198733

The supply at Saint Agatha's by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS

**THE SUPPLY AT
SAINT AGATHA'S**



*"The kneeling people lifted their wet faces . . . But the
chancel was empty"*

THE
SUPPLY AT SAINT AGATHA'S

126343

BY

ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS Ward

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BY

E. BOYD SMITH AND MARCIA OAKES WOODBURY



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1896

© 28 Sep 13 T.S.

1470665.

THE SUPPLY AT SAINT AGATHA'S.

At the crossing of the old avenue with the stream of present traffic, in a city which, for obvious reasons, will not be identified by the writer of these pages, there stood — and still stands — the Church of Saint Agatha's.

The church is not without a history, chiefly such as fashion and sect combine to record. It is an eminent church, with a stately date upon its foundation stone, and a pew-list unsurpassed for certain qualities among the worshipers of the Eastern States. Saint Agatha's has long been distinguished for three things, its money, its music, and its soundness.

When the tax-list of the town is printed in the daily papers once a year, the wardens and the leading parishioners of Saint Agatha's stand far upwards in the score, and their names are traced by slow, grimy fingers of mechanics and strikers and socialists laboriously reading on Saturday nights.

The choir of Saint Agatha's, as all the world

knows, is superior. Her soprano alone (a famous prima donna) would fill the house. Women throng the aisles to hear the tenor, and musical critics, hat in hand, and pad on hat, drop in to report the anthem and the offertory for the Monday morning press.

In ecclesiastical position, it is needless to add, Saint Agatha's has always been above reproach. When did Saint Agatha's question a canon? When did she contend with a custom? When did she criticise a creed? Why should she contest a tradition? She accepts, she conforms, she prospers.

In one particular Saint Agatha's has been thrust into an attitude of originality foreign to her taste. Her leading men feel called upon occasionally to explain how the eternal feminine came—a little contrary to the fashion of our land—to be recognized in the name of the church. Saint Agatha's first pastor, one should know, was a very young man of enthusiastic and unconventional temperament. He did not live long enough to outgrow this—for a clergyman—unfortunate trend of nature, having died, full of dreams and visions, in the teeth of a lowering conflict with his wardens; but he lived long enough to carry the day and the

name for a portion of his people who desired to call their church in honor of a sweet, though rich, old lady who had put her private fortune into their beautiful house of worship, and her warm heart into their future success. It had befallen this dear old lady to bear the name of Agatha, which, for her sake, — and, of course, in due ecclesiastical remembrance of the strictly canonical saint of similar cognomen, — was accordingly bestowed upon the church.

In the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and another numeral, which I am requested not to indicate, but I may not deny that it is a recent one, the popular rector of Saint Agatha's took a winter vacation. He was an imposing and imperious man, full of years and honors, in the full sway of his professional fame, when he fell a victim, like any common person, to the grippe.

In the attempt to recover from this vulgar malady, he was forced to observe that his select physician had drugged him, *via* an exclusive bronchitis, into a minister's sore throat, such as any ordinary country parson might develop for lack of an overcoat, or a fire in his bedroom. Without undue delay or

reluctance, the rector of Saint Agatha's took ship for the south of France; and in the comfortable way in which such things are done in such quarters, the church was set trundling upon the wheels of a two-months' "supply." This was managed so gracefully by the experienced vestry of Saint Agatha's that hardly a visible jar occurred in the parish machinery. Many of the people did not know that their rector had gone until a canon from London sonorously filled the pulpit one Sunday morning. A distinguished Middle State clergyman followed the next week; the West sent her brightest and best the succeeding Sunday; and so it went.

Eminent variety easily occupied that sacred desk. The wardens of St. Agatha's have but to say, Come, and he cometh who weigheth the honor of ministering in this aristocratic pulpit. In brief, the most distinguished men in the denomination cordially supplied. On the whole, perhaps the parish enjoyed their rector's vacation as much as he did.

Now, upon the vestry there chanced at that time to be one man who was "different." One does find such people even among the officers of fashionable churches. This man (he was, by the way, a grand-nephew of the old lady who built the church when

Saint Agatha's was an unendowed experiment) had occasional views not wholly in harmony with the policy of his brother officers; and, being himself a heavy rate-payer, was allowed, sometimes, by the courtesy of the majority,—when his notion was not really in bad form, you know,—to have his way. He did not get it so often but that he was glad to make the most of it when he did; and when his turn came to control the supply for that Sunday with which this narrative has to do, he asked the privilege of being intrusted with the details of the business. This request, as from a useful man of certain eccentricities, was indulgently granted; and thus there occurred the events which I am privileged to relate.

It was just before Lent, and the winter had been a cold one. One Friday evening in early March there came up, or came down, a drifting snow-storm. It was bad enough in town, but in the suburbs it was worse, and in the country it was little less than dangerous to passengers through the wide, wind-swept streets, the choking lanes, and bitter moors.

An old clergyman, the pastor of a scattered parish, sat in his study on that Friday night, and