



JOHN & ELLEN KELLEY

BERKELEY
LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA

THE LIFE OF THE

Blessed Virgin Mary



Painted by

P. S. Duvai & Son. Philad.

THE HOLY FAMILY.

D & J. SADLIER & CO.

NEW YORK.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

<http://www.archive.org/details/lifeofblessedvir00orsirich>

L I F E
OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY,
Mother of God;

WITH THE
HISTORY OF THE DEVOTION TO HER.

COMPLETED BY THE
TRADITIONS OF THE EAST,
THE
Writings of the Fathers, and the Private History of the Jews.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF THE ABBÉ ORSINI,
BY
MRS. J. SADLIER.

*PUBLISHED WITH THE APPROBATION OF THE LATE MOST REV. JOHN HUGHES, D. D.,
AND THE MOST REV. J. McCLOSKEY, D. D., ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK.*

A NEW, ENLARGED AND REVISED EDITION.

New York:
PUBLISHED BY D. & J. SADLIER & CO., 31 BARCLAY STREET.
MONTREAL:—CORNER OF NOTRE DAME AND ST. FRANCIS XAVIER STS.
1872.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1853,

By D. & J. SADLER & CO.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of New York.

LOAN STACK

Stereotyped by VINCENT DILL, 25 & 27 New Chambers St., N. Y.

Printed by EDWARD O. JENKINS, 16 North William St., N. Y.

BT625
6714
1872
MAN



HIS translation, made many years ago at the suggestion of an illustrious prelate, since dead, has been so well received by American Catholics, that it has passed through many editions. The magnificent work of the Abbé Orsini, is confessedly the fullest and most complete life of the Blessed Virgin Mary that has yet been given to the Catholic world. It does not end, as others do, at the close of her mortal life, but follows the course of the universal devotion wherewith the Church has honored, and does still, and shall ever honor, the Virgin of the Prophecies, the glorious Mother of God. It shows how literal has been the fulfillment of her own inspired prediction that all generations should call her Blessed. It shows how devotion to her has grown and prospered with the growth of Catholicity, and records the shrines and churches erected in every land under her invocation and to her honor and glory. Those of America I have myself added to the work, as there was little or nothing in the edition which I translated relating to the devotion in America. The work also embodies the Eastern traditions concerning her, with the conclusive testimony of the Fathers; the little which is related of her in Scripture being but a very faint sketch of her life.

It is truly a labor of love for a Catholic to celebrate the praises and record the glories of Our Most Dear Mother, and it was with the filial devotion of a child of Mary that I translated this great work some fifteen years ago. In common with all who are truly devout to Mary, I have much, very much to thank her for—many a priceless favor, many a sweet consolation, many a ray of light when all was dark around, and when earthly hopes had failed. In thanksgiving, then, and with all reverence and affection, I have now, probably for the last time, revised this noble work, hoping that it may ever tend to make others love and honor Our Lady the Help of Christians as I love and honor her.

M. A. S.

NEW YORK, MAY 2, 1870.





HIS book, which the public has vouchsafed to receive favorably, is not an ambitious attempt to obtain celebrity; it is a work of patience and of faith, a flower laid on the altar of Mary, with the simple sincerity of a pilgrim of the good old times. The Blessed Virgin was, doubtless, deserving of a better historian, but she could find none more desirous of glorifying her name and propagating the devotion which is her due.

The life of the Queen of Angels, of the Mystical Rose of the new law, is, of itself, a theme so poetical that it naturally called forth all graceful and touching ideas, as well as the noblest expressions of our language. It is an Eastern Tale, reflecting the customs, the pageants, and the scenery of Asia; is it, therefore, surprising that the style should be tinted with an Oriental coloring?

We have studied the Fathers enough to know that they did not disdain the graces of diction, and that, in this respect, they fought paganism with equal arms. This is what the great St. Jerome called, in his figurative language, *cutting off the head of Goliath with his own sword*. What can be more elevated, more poetical, than certain descriptions of St. John Chrysostom? That sacred orator often chimes in with the Oriental poets, and it is in one of his homilies that we find the similitude of *the earth embalmed with the perfume of roses*, which has since been reproduced by Saadi in his Gulistan.

The letters and the homilies of St. Basil the Great, replete with agreeable pictures, imitated but not surpassed by Fenelon, have all a poetical cast very fit to frighten those timorous minds who, now-a-days, take poetry for a spectre, and would fain exclude it from all manner of works. It is the same with St. Gregory of Nazianzen, that sublime Christian dreamer, who questioned himself on the nature

of his soul, *under the shade of thick foliage, whilst the zephyrs, mingled with the songs of the birds, shed from the topmost branches of the tree a sweet and dreamy tranquility; whilst the grasshoppers, hidden beneath the herbage, made all the woods resound, and a limpid stream flowed past his feet, winding on in its refreshing course through the wood.* If that be not poetry, I know not what it is.

In order to convert the nations it is necessary, first of all, to obtain a hearing; to confirm in the Roman faith masses long agitated by the successive shocks of revolutions, beaten by the wind of systems, indifferent from weariness, and open to the attacks of an audacious sect which raises its head higher than ever, for

Déjà de sa faveur on adore le bruit ;

the first thing to be done is to induce them to read our works. The preacher who would divest the sacred Word of all the ornaments of elocution would soon have our churches deserted, and might say, like the Greek musician left alone in a public place, "Ye temples, hear me!" The religious writer who would affect a dull and arid style, in the midst of a nation which prides itself on its taste and literary skill, would assuredly fare no better; he would fall, with all his weight, into that oblivion where nothing floats, and his book, had it the intrinsic value of gold and pearls, would be, nevertheless, the most useless thing in the world, for none would touch it. St. Basil was so persuaded of this truth that he strenuously urged the young orators of his time to a profound study of human letters, so as to transfer their beauties to Catholic works. "Human letters," says that great doctor, "are like leaves which serve to cover and to ornament the words of truth and wisdom. If Moses and Daniel were the two most brilliant lights of the Synagogue, it was because they had acquired all the arts of the Egyptians." St. Jerome subjected to the anti-literary attacks of the priest Rufinus, who accused him of *mingling the filth of paganism with the word of the Lord*, coolly sent him word that *being himself blind as a mole he ought not to mock those who had the eyes of a goat.* And, in fact, when the sumptuous decoration of altars and of tabernacles was regarded, even in the most austere ages of the Church, as a good and commendable practice, proper to heighten the majesty of Christian worship, wherefore should we make of religious literature a barren and dreary waste, whereon none would wish to enter for fear of sinking on the way under a load of weariness? Is it thus, then, that the Holy Scriptures, which St. John Chrysostom declared full of *pearls and diamonds*, were conceived? Are not all kinds of composition found in the Bible, from the eclogue to the epic. The saints of those remote times, which we, in our courtesy, are wont

to call *barbarous*, were far from wishing to deprive religious works of all literary merit. "What!" says an illustrious writer of the ninth century, "we enshrine the ashes of the saints in gold and precious stones, yet their actions are clothed but in rude and homely language! We adorn our love-stories with all the graces of fiction, and we describe in the driest, the dullest, and the most uninteresting manner, the immortal deeds of the heroes of Christianity! Is it, therefore, that elegance of style is only to be used for glossing over the turpitude of iniquity?"

"Would," says a pious and learned author who, in 1722, dedicated the life of a holy personage to the Bishop of Blois; "would that Catholics would give to the admirable achievements of the saints those ornaments wherewith sinners embellish their guilty passions, and thereby show that they know better how to adorn virtue than those worldlings to adorn vice."

If it be ever permitted to throw poetical flowers on a religious theme, it is, assuredly, when treating of the Mystical Rose of the new law. This is so true, that the gravest doctors of other ages became poets without their knowing or wishing it, when they spoke of that glorious creature. St. Gregory of Neocesarea, that cold, austere thaumaturgus, finds the most charming appellations for the Mother of God, whom he styles *source of light and immaculate flower of life*. St. Ephraim, that melancholy and enthusiastic solitary, compares the Blessed Virgin to *the golden censer exhaling the sweetest perfumes*. St. Epiphanius calls the Virgin *a spiritual ocean containing the celestial pearl*. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *the inextinguishable lamp which has brought forth the Sun of Justice*. "With what marvelous flowers of eloquence shall we weave thee a crown, O Mary!" says St. Basil of Selemia; "*from thee has budded the flower of Jesse, which embellishes us with glory and honor*." St. Gregory the Great compares Mary, that virgin *fair and adorned with the glory of her fruitfulness*, to a very high mountain, *towering above the angelic choirs, and reaching even to the throne of the Divinity*. Alcuin, that light of the court of Charlemagne, accustomed as he was to dry and arid labors, became a poet for Mary: "*Thou art my beloved*," said he, "*thou art my joy and glory, O Virgin! thou art the life of heaven, the flower of the fields, the lily of the world*." Pope Innocent III. compares Mary to *the dawn*. St. Thomas of Aquinas to *the star of the ocean which guides and directs those who navigate the waters*. "Hail! noble daughter of Kings," cries the learned and mystical Erasmus, "*thou art more brilliant than the dawn, milder than the silvery moon, purer than the fresh-blown lily, whiter than the mountain snow, more graceful than the rose, more precious than the ruby, more chaste than the angels. . . .*"

Impressed with these counsels, encouraged by these examples, we have lightly touched with the honey of Engaddi the edge of the cup which we present to the people of the world—those spoiled children who reject with scorn every beverage which has not, like the sherbets of the East, the perfume of the violet and the rose. Some have made this a crime, and bitterly reproached us with having sacrificed to false gods; but when they set about giving quotations, the result was rather unfortunate for them, for they have, without knowing it, found fault with Scriptural idioms and phraseology; that is to say, even the Word of God itself. “I do not always quote my authority,” says Montaigne, “because nothing is more amusing than to see a thrust made through me at Virgil, Tacitus, Horace—in a word, at the greatest writers of antiquity—by some who are scarcely able to read them.” Precisely the same thing has happened to us, although we did not intend to lay such a snare for the simplicity of certain censors, who are, alas! in the highest degree, ignorant of their own ignorance, which is the worst ignorance of all, if the Orientals are to be believed. We have heard the Prophets gravely descanted on by small critics, who are reputed to know the whole Bible by heart. What could we do in such a case as that?

All evil passions are up in arms against this book, and men who ought to have sustained it, were it only for the sacred cause which it espouses, have stealthily pursued it with a malignity truly Pharisaical. May God, who lifts the seven-fold veil of malice from false hearts to penetrate to the actuating motives of their works—may He forgive them, even as we do! We have had such fair and honorable suffrages to console us, that we may well afford to overlook these puny attempts.

The foreign press, namely, the Italian, the German, and the Spanish, have taken much notice of this *Life of the Blessed Virgin*. Being unable to quote all, we shall confine ourselves to this extract from a learned article in *La Cruz* (*The Cross*), a Spanish journal, religious, political, and literary, which is honored with the patronage of the eminently Catholic clergy of Spain:—

“The Abbé Orsini, in tracing the annals of the worship of the Blessed Virgin, which commenced with Christianity, and in raking up authorities, which, but for him, might perchance have remained in oblivion, presents to the reader the titles whereon hyperdulia and the worship of the Virgin are founded—a worship which certainly occupies a golden page in the calendar of the world, and is connected with the most glorious associations. Nor is this all that the Abbé Orsini has done. His book comprises the biography of Jesus, and, in some measure, the history of the terrestrial globe, which dates from the fall of man and the promise of a Redeemer. In this work we find profound theology, vast erudition, good literary taste, and enchanting touches of poetry.....

"The translator, Dr. F. Y. P., has added another jewel, in the name of the Spaniards, to the crown wherewith the *literati* of Europe have adorned the brow of the author of *The Complete Life of the Mother of God*. This book is one of the great works of the nineteenth century, and merits a place in the first rank."

We refer not to these eulogiums (which are certainly somewhat exaggerated) through a ridiculous vanity or self-laudation, but to demonstrate that the *Life of the Mother of God* has been well received by Catholics abroad, whose sympathy is exceedingly precious to us. It is no less consoling to see that it is also becoming popular in Germany, in England, in Russia, and in America, where it has probably assisted in dispelling some unjust prejudices amongst dissenting Christians.

As for the French press, it has treated this book just as it pleased, for we have never attempted to influence it either by intrigue or solicitation of any sort; notwithstanding which it has, in general, expressed itself in such a way that we have only to return our best thanks. By a providential chance it has happened, that most of those literary men who have taken cognizance of our work are men of feeling, knowledge, and intellect, and have acted generously by us. But great minds are usually indulgent and lenient towards others; lions, conscious of their own strength, often magnanimously spare the weaker prey; it is not so with the vipers who hiss and bite in the mire of their native marsh, by way of satisfying their conscience.

Happy the author who falls into the hands of men able to appreciate a book, to examine it without prejudice, and with the probity which becomes the magistracy of thought. Criticism is a trade in which many meddle, but which very few understand; to do it as it should be done, there is need of learning, taste, and conscience; things which every one has not.

A learned prelate, whose name was still unknown to us when we wrote the preface to our first edition, the late Bishop Cotteret of Beauvais, a profound theologian and a very distinguished writer, after having justified our use of Oriental traditions—"Traditions," says the learned Bishop, "*which the author has not given as articles of faith*"—goes on to say: "The Abbé Orsini is one of the writers of our time who has the most perfectly mastered the language; he speaks like a true disciple of Chateaubriand." This was conferring a high honor upon us, although it was far from being deserved; we have never had the presumption to follow, even afar off, in the gigantic steps of that great master; and if our style have any, even a slight resemblance to his, we can only say, as did an humble poet of Kurdis-

tan, on a similar occasion, "I have come forth, like Antar, that famous poet, from the garden of Nischabur; but Antar was the rose of the garden, and I am only a brier."

An observation has been made to us, to which we are now about to reply; it relates to the use which we have made of the Hebrew customs in completing our *Life of the Blessed Virgin*. Any traveller who has visited the East, or any scholar who is at all acquainted with the history and condition of Asia, will perceive that our work is based on long and laborious researches, and *not by any means on imagination*; we had not even presumed to invent the common forms of *farewell*, or of wishing *a good journey*; all has been derived from respectable sources, which we have scrupulously acknowledged whenever the thing was worth the trouble. Our work has been read, moreover, by learned Orientalists, who have found it correct, and Israelites of the highest rank have praised the exact fidelity wherewith we have restored the faded splendor of Sion and the ancient customs of their fathers. The historian, like the painter, now requires a profound study of the local coloring. If an artist should attempt to introduce our Western customs and our Northern landscapes in a painting, of which the subject was taken from ancient Asia, he would by no means escape the just censure of the *connoisseurs*. A literary work is likewise a painting, which should reproduce the hues of the sky, the aspect of the country, the historical costumes, the habits and the customs of the groups represented in its pages. In writing the life of the descendant of the kings of Juda, we have studied the requirements of our theme; we remembered that it would not do to engraft the manners of the Israelites on our own, or to wrap them up, as Strauss says, in a Western disguise, but to paint them such as they were when Mary lived: that was the only way to adhere to probability, when tracing a history of what occurred in Jewish society in the days of Herod. We meet, in every page of the Gospel, the manners and customs of the Jews, to which Jesus Christ himself vouchsafed to conform; it can scarcely be doubted but that the Virgin had anticipated the example of her divine Son. The Hebrew customs were based upon Scripture and tradition, which made them sacred things in the eyes of the whole nation; to deviate from received usages would have been regarded as a grave misdemeanor. Even the nuptial garments of the bride were directed by the reminiscences of the Bible and the antediluvian traditions of the temple.

We have received, from quarters not connected with the press, testimonies of

sympathy and good-will, which have descended upon us from on high, like the gifts of Providence. The Prince Orsini, who has deigned to accept the dedication of our book, like a true Roman prince, and a friend of letters, has done us the honor to write to us:—

“A work so remarkable and so holy as yours certainly deserved a more distinguished patron than I am; I am penetrated with the liveliest gratitude, and no words of mine could convey to you my sense of the obligation you have conferred upon me. Rome applauds your work; and the glory which you have given to the Mother of God already reflects on yourself.”

If we quote these flattering words, so characteristic of the graceful urbanity of the higher Italian nobility, it is not that we deem ourselves worthy of them; we receive them as a generous encouragement to do better at another time, and we lay them respectfully at the feet of the Blessed Virgin, well knowing that such kind and honorable suffrage from a prince as eminent for his piety as for his intelligence, proceed from her and to her belongs.

Another compliment, very precious to our heart, is from the Commander Moutinho-Lima, Minister-Plenipotentiary from the Emperor of Brazil, who, with diplomatic talents of the highest order, has a refined and enlightened taste for letters, which he has himself cultivated with much success.

“Your new edition of the Life of the Blessed Virgin, only a few months after its first appearance,” writes his Excellency, “is sufficiently indicative of the favor wherewith the book has been received by the public. Permit me, on the occasion of this second edition, to add my humble testimony to those which you may have already received.

“Your work has contributed, and doubtless will yet contribute more and more, to promote in France the touching devotion to the Virgin, where of old it was so fervently propagated by St. Bernard. I am persuaded that wherever the children of the Church are found, the Life of the Mother of God will produce the same effect; be my name the pledge.”

But it is not only amongst the great ones of the earth that our Life of the Blessed Virgin has found favor; many learned doctors, both Italian and Spanish, have also honored it with their approbation. His Lordship the Bishop of Salamanca, a learned prelate, well worthy of presiding over that famous university which has, for many ages, shed a brilliant light on Europe, has deigned to protect it in Spain. His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Malines, whose fame has spread far beyond the boundaries of his own country, has given his formal approbation to the Belgian editions. Finally, our own bishop has, from the first, taken it under his protection, as became a man who has no need of the opinion of others to form his own, and who waits not to see how the current of public opinion will go.

We shall here insert a portion of the letter of Monsgr. Castanelli d'Istria, to the

end that if this book should have any protracted existence, it will prove, in days to come, that at a time when religious literature had no sort of encouragement in France, it was protected and fostered by Roman princes, ambassadors from remote regions, and by saintly and learned prelates.

"It is somewhat late to thank you for the present of your valuable work, and for the pleasure it gave me to read a life doubly interesting, from the nature of the subject and the charming style wherewith you have embellished it. I prize this gift the more highly as coming from the author, and because that author is a countryman and one of my own priests. Nor am I alone in my appreciation of the merits of your book. The opinion of all those readers to whom I have lent it is quite in accordance with that of the journals of Paris.

"I am gratified to see that the first fruits of your literary labors are dedicated to the Queen of Angels. From such a commencement there is reason to hope for a career the most distinguished."

Since these encouraging letters were addressed to us, the life of the Mother of God has had (we may venture to say it, because the proof is apparent) the most unbounded success, not only in France, but throughout Europe, and even beyond its bounds. Three translations of it have been made in Italy; it has been translated in Spain by two Spanish doctors; in Germany by an able ecclesiastic, and there has been published at Leipsic a second translation, magnificently illustrated; several editions have been published in Belgium; it has even penetrated the depth of Russia, and has crossed the ocean to Mexico; finally, it has been favorably received at Rome, where it is propagated by permission of the Sacred College. Thanks to the powerful protection of Mary, the little grain of mustard-seed has become a great tree, whose branches overspread the earth; trifling as this book may be, She has blessed it, because She knows it was written with no other intention than that of promoting her glory.

Deeply grateful to that European public which has received our work so favorably, we have done our best to merit that sympathy which we prize so highly. This new edition, printed with the permission of his Grace the Archbishop of Paris, has been carefully revised and considerably enlarged; as it is for the last time, we have endeavored to do our duty conscientiously. The second part, which comprises the History of the Devotion to Mary, has been entirely remodeled, and enriched with important facts taken from the rarest and most authentic sources. Notwithstanding all our efforts, we cannot but be aware that our work is still very imperfect. But such is the ordinary lot of human undertakings. Perfection is the mountain of the talisman, whose summit no mortal has ever reached, and the present writer least of all.

GREGORIUS PP. XVI.

Dilecte Fili, Salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem Jampridem Nobis dono miseras opus gallica lingua a Te elucubratum, atque inscriptum—
LA VIERGE, HISTOIRE DE LA MÈRE DE DIEU ET DE SON CULTE. *Nunc vero cum tuis obsequentissimis Litteris alterum ejusdem operis exemplar libenter accepimus, quod a Te auctum pulcherrimisque imaginibus ornatum ac splendidissimis Parisiensibus typis editum superiori anno rursus evulgandum, curasti.*

Tuum consilium ecclesiastico viro plane dignum vehementer commendamus, quod eo potissimum spectat, ut pietas erga Sanctissimam Dei Genetricem Mariam in fidelium animis magis magisque augeatur, atque excitatur.

Agimus aulem pro dono gratias, ac paternæ nostræ in te caritatis testem, et cælestium omnium munerum auspicem Apostolicam Benedictionem Tibi ipsi, Dilecti Fili, intimo cordis affectu impertimur.

Datum Romæ apud S. Mariam Majorem die 23 Augusti, Anno 1843, Pontificatus nostri anno decimo quinto.

GREGORIUS PP. XVI.

DILECTO FILIO,

PRESBYTERO ORSINI, LUTETIÆ PARISIORUM

1974-1975 MEMBERSHIP

The following persons have been elected to the membership of the Society for the year 1974-1975. The names are listed in alphabetical order of the surnames. The names of those who have been elected to the membership of the Society for the year 1974-1975 are listed in alphabetical order of the surnames. The names of those who have been elected to the membership of the Society for the year 1974-1975 are listed in alphabetical order of the surnames.

The following persons have been elected to the membership of the Society for the year 1974-1975. The names are listed in alphabetical order of the surnames. The names of those who have been elected to the membership of the Society for the year 1974-1975 are listed in alphabetical order of the surnames.

The following persons have been elected to the membership of the Society for the year 1974-1975. The names are listed in alphabetical order of the surnames. The names of those who have been elected to the membership of the Society for the year 1974-1975 are listed in alphabetical order of the surnames.

The following persons have been elected to the membership of the Society for the year 1974-1975. The names are listed in alphabetical order of the surnames. The names of those who have been elected to the membership of the Society for the year 1974-1975 are listed in alphabetical order of the surnames.



Letters Apostolic
OF
OUR MOST HOLY LORD PIUS IX.,

BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE POPE,
CONCERNING THE DOGMATIC DEFINITION OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
OF THE VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD.

[TRANSLATION.]

Pius, Bishop, Servant of the Servants of God: for the perpetual remembrance of the thing.



HE Ineffable God, whose ways are mercy and truth, whose will is omnipotence, and whose wisdom reaches powerfully from end to end, and disposes all things sweetly, when he foresaw from all eternity the most sorrowful ruin of the entire human race to follow from the transgression of Adam, and in a mystery hidden from ages determined to complete, through the incarnation of the Word, in a more hidden sacrament, the first work of His goodness, so that man, led into sin by the craft of diabolical iniquity, should not perish contrary to his merciful design, and that what was about to befall in the first Adam, should be restored more happily in the second; from the beginning and before ages, chose and ordained a mother for His only-begotten Son, of whom, made flesh, He should be born in the blessed plenitude of time, and followed her with so great love before all creatures that in her alone He pleased Him-

self with a most benign complacency. Wherefore, far before all the angelic spirits, and all the Saints, He so wonderfully endowed her with the abundance of all heavenly gifts, drawn from the treasure of divinity, that she might be ever free from every stain of sin, and, all fair and perfect, would bear before her that plenitude of innocence and holiness than which, under God, none greater is understood, and which, except God, no one can reach, even in thought. And, indeed, it was most becoming that she should shine, always adorned with the splendor of the most perfect holiness, and, free even from the stain of original sin, she should have the most complete triumph over the ancient serpent—that Mother so venerable, to whom God the Father willed to give His only Son, begotten of His heart, equal to Himself, and whom He loves as Himself; and to give Him in such a manner that He is by nature, one and the same common Son of God the Father and of the Virgin, and whom the Son chose substantially to be His Mother, and of whom the Holy Ghost willed that, by His operation, He, from whom He Himself proceeds, should be conceived and born.

Which original innocence of the august Virgin agreeing completely with her admirable holiness, and with the most excellent dignity of the Mother of God, the Catholic Church, which, ever taught by the Holy Spirit, is the pillar and ground of truth, as possessing a doctrine divinely received, and comprehended in the deposit of heavenly revelation, has never ceased to lay down, to cherish, and to illustrate continually by numerous proofs, and daily more and more by conspicuous facts. For this doctrine, flourishing from the most ancient times, and implanted in the minds of the faithful, and by the care and zeal of the Holy Pontiffs wonderfully propagated, the Church herself has most clearly pointed out when she did not hesitate to propose the conception of the same Virgin for the public devotion and veneration of the faithful. By which illustrious act she pointed out the conception of the Virgin as singular, wonderful, and very different from the origin of the rest of mankind, and to be venerated as entirely holy, since the Church celebrates by festivals only that which is holy. And, therefore, the very words in which the Sacred Scriptures speak of the uncreated Wisdom and represent His eternal origin, she has been accustomed to use not only in the offices of the Church, but also in the holy liturgy, and to transfer to the origin of

that Virgin, which was pre-ordained by one and the same decree with the incarnation of Divine Wisdom.

But though all those things everywhere justly received amongst the faithful, show with what zeal the Roman Church, the mother and mistress of all churches, has supported the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, yet the illustrious acts of this Church are evidently worthy that they should be reviewed in detail; since so great is the dignity and authority of the same Church, so much is due to her who is the centre of Catholic truth and unity, in whom alone religion has been inviolably guarded, and from whom it is right that all the Churches should receive the tradition of faith.

Thus the same Roman Church had nothing more at heart than to assert, to protect, to promote, and to vindicate in the most eloquent manner the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, its devotion and doctrine, which fact is attested and proclaimed by so many illustrious acts of the Roman Pontiffs, Our predecessors, to whom, in the person of the Prince of the Apostles, was divinely committed by Christ Our Lord the supreme care and power of feeding lambs and sheep, of confirming the brethren, and of ruling and governing the Universal Church.

Indeed, Our predecessors have ever gloried in instituting in the Roman Church by their own Apostolic authority the Feast of the Conception, and to augment, ennoble, and promote with all their power the devotion thus instituted, by a proper Office and a proper Mass; by which the prerogative of immunity from hereditary stain was most manifestly asserted; to increase it either by indulgences granted, or by leave given to states, provinces, and kingdoms, that they might choose as their patron the Mother of God, under the title of the Immaculate Conception; or by approved sodalities, congregations, and religious families instituted to the honor of the Immaculate Conception; or by praises given to the piety of those who have erected monasteries, hospitals, or churches, under the title of the Immaculate Conception, or who have bound themselves by a religious vow to defend strenuously the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God. Above all, they were happy to ordain that the Feast of the Conception should be celebrated through the whole Church as that of the Nativity; and, in fine, that it should be celebrated with an Octave in the Universal Church as it was placed in the rank of the festivals

which are commanded to be kept holy; also, that a Pontifical service in our Patriarchal Liberian Basilica should be performed yearly on the day sacred to the Conception of the Virgin; and desiring to cherish daily more and more in the minds of the Faithful this doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God, and to excite their piety in worshipping and venerating the Virgin conceived without original sin, they have rejoiced most freely to give leave that in the Litany of Loretto, and in the Preface of the Mass itself, the Immaculate Conception of the same Virgin should be proclaimed, and that thus the law of faith should be established by the very law of supplication. We ourselves, treading in the footsteps of so many predecessors, have not only received and approved what had been most wisely and piously established and appointed by them, but also mindful of the institution of Sixtus IV., We have appointed by Our authority a proper Office for the Immaculate Conception, and with a most joyful mind have granted the use of it to the Universal Church.

But since those things which pertain to worship are evidently bound by an intimate chord to its object, and cannot remain fixed and determined, if it be doubtful, and placed in uncertainty, therefore our predecessors, the Roman Pontiffs, increasing with all their care the devotion of the Conception, studied most especially to declare and inculcate its object and doctrine; for they taught clearly and openly that the festival was celebrated for the Conception of the Virgin, and they proscribed as false and most foreign to the intention of the Church the opinion of those who considered and affirmed that it was not the Conception itself, but the sanctification, to which devotion was paid by the Church. Nor did they think of treating more indulgently those who, in order to weaken the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, drawing a distinction between the first and second instant and moment of the Conception, asserted that the Conception was indeed celebrated, but not for the first instant and moment; for Our predecessors themselves thought it their duty to protect and defend with all zeal both the feast of the Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin, and the Conception from the first instant, as the true object of devotion. Hence the words, evidently decretive, in which Alexander VII. declared the true intention of the Church, saying: "Certainly, it is the ancient piety of the faithful of Christ towards His

Most Blessed Mother the Virgin Mary, believing that her soul, in the first instant of creation, and of infusion into the body, was by a special grace and privilege of God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ her Son the Redeemer of mankind, preserved free from the stain of original sin, and in this sense they keep and celebrate with solemn rites the Festival of her Conception."

And to the same, Our predecessors, this also was most especially a duty to preserve from contention the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God, guarded and protected with all care and zeal. For not only have they never suffered that this doctrine should ever be censured or traduced in any way, or by any one, but they have gone much farther, and in clear declarations on repeated occasions they have proclaimed that the doctrine in which we confess the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin is, and by its own merit, held evidently consistent with Ecclesiastical worship, that it is ancient and nearly universal, and of the same sort as that which the Roman Church has undertaken to cherish and protect, and, above all, worthy to be placed in its sacred liturgy and its solemn prayers. Nor content with this, in order that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin should remain inviolate, they have most severely prohibited the opinion adverse to this doctrine to be defended either in public or in private, and they have wished to crush it, as it were, by repeated blows. To which reiterated and most clear declarations, lest they might appear empty, they added a sanction; all which things Our illustrious predecessor, Alexander VII., embraced in these words:—

"Considering that the Holy Roman Church solemnly celebrates the festival of the Conception of the Immaculate and Ever-Blessed Virgin, and has appointed for this a special and proper office according to the pious, devout, and laudable institution which emanated from Our predecessor, Sixtus IV., and wishing, after the example of the Roman Pontiffs, Our predecessors, to favor this laudable piety, devotion, and festival, and the reverence shown towards it, never changed in the Roman Church since the institution of the worship itself; also in order to protect the piety and devotion of venerating and celebrating the Most Blessed Virgin, preserved from original sin by the preventing grace of the Holy Ghost, and desiring to preserve in the flock of Christ unity of spirit in

the bond of peace, removing offences, and brawls, and scandals; at the instance and prayers of the said Bishops, with the Chapters of their churches, and of King Philip and his kingdoms—we renew the constitutions and decrees issued by the Roman Pontiffs, Our predecessors, and especially by Sixtus IV., Paul V., and Gregory XV., in favor of asserting the opinion that the soul of the Blessed Virgin, in its creation and infusion into the body, was endowed with the grace of the Holy Ghost, and preserved from original sin; likewise, also, in favor of the festival of the same Virgin Mother of God, celebrated according to that pious belief which is recited above, and We command that it shall be observed under the censures and punishments contained in the same constitutions.

“And against all and each of those who try to interpret the aforesaid constitutions or decrees so that they may frustrate the favor shown through these to the said belief and to the festival or worship celebrated according to it, or who try to recall into dispute the same belief, festival, or worship, or against these in any manner, either directly or indirectly, and on any pretext, even that of examining the grounds of defining it, or of explaining or interpreting the Sacred Scriptures or the Holy Fathers or Doctors; in fine, who should dare under any pretext or on any occasion whatsoever, to say either in writing or in speech, to preach, to treat, to dispute, by determining or asserting anything against these, or by bringing arguments against them and leaving these arguments unanswered, or by expressing dissent in any other possible manner; besides the punishments and censures contained in the constitutions of Sixtus IV., to which we desire to add, and by these presents do add, those: We will that they should be deprived *ipso facto*, and without other declaration, of the faculty of preaching, of reading in public, or of teaching and interpreting, and also of their voice, whether active or passive, in elections; from which censures they cannot be absolved, nor obtain dispensation, unless from Us, or Our successors, the Roman Pontiffs; likewise We wish to subject, and We hereby do subject, the same persons to other penalties to be inflicted at Our will, and at that of the same Roman Pontiffs, Our successors, renewing the constitutions or decrees of Paul IV., and Gregory XV., above referred to.

“And We prohibit, under the penalties and censures contained in the Index of Prohibited Books, and We will and declare that they should be esteemed prohibited *ipso facto*, and without other declaration, books in which the aforesaid belief and the festival or devotion celebrated according to it is recalled into dispute, or in which anything whatever is written or read against these, or lectures, sermons, treatises, and disputations against the same, published after the decree of Paul V. above mentioned, or to be published at any future time.”

All are aware with how much zeal this doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God has been handed down, asserted and propagated by the most distinguished religious Orders, the most celebrated theological academies, and the most eminent doctors of the science of Divinity. All know likewise how anxious have been the Bishops openly and publicly to profess, even in the Ecclesiastical assemblies themselves, that the Most Holy Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, by virtue of the merits of Christ Our Lord, the Saviour of mankind, never lay under original sin, but was preserved free from the original stain, and thus was redeemed in a more sublime manner. To which, lastly, is added this fact, most grave, and, in an especial manner, most important of all, that the Council of Trent itself, when it promulgated the dogmatic decree concerning original sin, in which, according to the testimonies of the Sacred Scriptures, of the Holy Fathers, and of the most approved councils, it determined and defined that all mankind are born under original sin; solemnly declared, however, that it was not its intention to include in the decree itself, and in the amplitude of its definition, the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Indeed, by this declaration, the Tridentine Fathers have asserted, according to the times and the circumstances of affairs, that the Blessed Virgin Mary was free from the original stain, and thus clearly signified that nothing could be justly adduced from the sacred writings, nor from the authority of the Fathers, which would in any way gainsay so great a prerogative of the Virgin.

And, in real truth, illustrious monuments of a venerated antiquity of the Eastern and of the Western Church most powerfully testify that this doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin, every day more and more so splendidly explained and confirmed by the high-

est authority, teaching, zeal, science, and wisdom of the Church, and so wonderfully propagated amongst all the nations and peoples of the Catholic world, always existed in the Church as received by Our ancestors, and stamped with the character of a divine revelation. For the Church of Christ, careful guardian and defender of the dogmas deposited with her, changes nothing in them, diminishes nothing, adds nothing, but, with all industry, by faithfully and wisely treating ancient things, if they are handed down from antiquity, so studies to eliminate, to clear them up, that these ancient dogmas of heavenly faith may receive evidence, light, distinction, but still may retain their fullness, integrity, propriety, and may increase only in their own kind—that is, in the same dogma, the same sense, and the same belief.

The Fathers and writers of the Church, taught by the heavenly writings, had nothing more at heart, in the books written to explain the Scriptures, to vindicate the dogmas, and to instruct the faithful, than emulously to declare and exhibit in many and wonderful ways the Virgin's most high sanctity, dignity, and freedom from all stain of original sin, and her renowned victory over the most foul enemy of the human race. Wherefore, repeating the words in which, at the beginning of the world, the Almighty, announcing the remedies of his mercy, prepared for regenerating mankind, crushed the audacity of the lying Serpent, and wonderfully raised up the hope of our race, saying, "I will place enmity between thee and the woman, thy seed and hers," they taught that in this divine oracle was clearly and openly pointed out the merciful Redeemer of the human race—the only-begotten Son of God, Christ Jesus, and that his Most Blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary, was designated, and at the same time that the enmity of both against the Serpent was signally expressed. Wherefore, as Christ, the mediator of God and men, having assumed human nature, blotting out the handwriting of the decree which stood against us, fastened it triumphantly to the Cross, so the Most Holy Virgin, bound by a most close and indissoluble chain with Him, exercising with Him and through Him eternal enmity against the malignant Serpent, and triumphing most amply over the same, has crushed his head with her Immaculate foot.

This illustrious and singular triumph of the Virgin, and her most exalted innocence, purity, and holiness, her freedom from all stain of sin,

and ineffable abundance and greatness of all heavenly graces, virtues, and privileges, the same Fathers beheld in that ark of Noah, which, divinely appointed, escaped safe and sound from the common shipwreck of the whole world; also in that ladder which Jacob beheld reaching from earth to heaven, by whose steps the Angels of God ascended and descended, on whose top leaned God himself; also in that bush which, in the holy place, Moses beheld blaze on every side, and amidst the crackling flames neither to be consumed nor to suffer the least injury, but to grow green and to blossom fairly; also in that impregnable tower in front of the enemy, on which are hung a thousand bucklers and all the armor of the brave; also in that garden fenced round about, which cannot be violated nor corrupted by any schemes of fraud; also in that brilliant city of God, whose foundations are in the holy mounts; also in that most august temple of God, which, shining with divine splendor, is filled with the glory of God; likewise in many other things of this kind which the Fathers have handed down, that the exalted dignity of the Mother of God, and her spotless innocence, and her holiness, obnoxious to no blemish, have been signally pre-announced.

To describe the same totality, as it were, of divine gifts, and the original integrity of the Virgin of whom Jesus was born, the same Fathers, using the eloquence of the Prophets, celebrate the august Virgin as the spotless dove, the holy Jerusalem, the exalted throne of God, the ark and house of sanctification, which Eternal Wisdom built for itself; and as that Queen who, abounding in delights and leaning on her beloved, came forth entirely perfect from the mouth of the Most High, fair and most dear to God, and never stained with the least spot. But when the same Fathers and the writers of the Church revolved in their hearts and minds that the Most Blessed Virgin, in the name and by the order of God himself, was proclaimed full of grace by the Angel Gabriel, when announcing her most sublime dignity of the Mother of God, they taught that, by this singular and solemn salutation, never heard on any other occasion, is shown that the Mother of God is the seat of all divine graces, and adorned with all the gifts of the Holy Ghost—yea, the infinite storehouse and inexhaustible abyss of the same gifts; so that, never subjected to malediction, and alone

with her Son partaker of perpetual benediction, she deserved to hear from Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Ghost: "Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."

Hence it is the clear and unanimous opinion of the same that the Most Glorious Virgin, for whom He who is powerful has done great things, has shone with such a brilliancy of all heavenly gifts, such fullness of grace, and such innocence, that she has been an ineffable miracle of the Almighty, yea, the crown of all miracles, and worthy Mother of God; that she approaches as nearly to God as created nature can do, and is far above the praise of men or angels.

And, therefore, to vindicate the original innocence and justice of the Mother of God, they not only compared her to Eve, as yet virgin, as yet innocent, as yet incorrupted, and not yet deceived by the most deadly snares of the most treacherous serpent, but they have preferred her with a wonderful variety of thought and expression. For Eve, miserably obeying the serpent, fell from original innocence, and became his slave, but the Most Blessed Virgin, ever increasing her original gift, not only never leant an ear to the serpent, but by a virtue divinely received utterly broke his power.

Wherefore they have never ceased to call the Mother of God the lily amongst the thorns, earth entirely untouched, virgin, undefiled, immaculate, ever blessed, and free from all contagion of sin, from which was formed the new Adam; a reproachless, most sweet paradise of innocence, immortality, and delights, planted by God himself, and fenced from all snares of the malignant serpent; incorruptible branch that the worm of sin has never injured; fountain ever clear, and marked by the virtue of the Holy Ghost; a most divine temple, or treasure of immortality, or the sole and only daughter not of death but of life, the seed not of enmity but of grace, which by the singular providence of God has always flourished, springing from a corrupt and imperfect root, contrary to the settled and common laws. But if these encomiums, though most splendid, were not sufficient, they proclaimed in proper and defined opinions that when sin was to be treated of, no question should be entertained concerning the Holy Virgin Mary, to whom an abundance of grace was given to conquer sin completely. They also declared that the Most Glorious Virgin was the reparatrix of her parents, the vivifier of posterity, chosen from

the ages, prepared for Himself by the Most High, predicted by God when he said to the serpent, "I will place enmity between thee and the woman," who undoubtedly has crushed the poisonous head of the same serpent; and therefore they affirm that the same Blessed Virgin was through grace perfectly free from every stain of sin, and from all contagion of body and soul and mind, and always conversant with God, and united with him in an eternal covenant, never was in darkness, but always in light, and therefore was plainly a fit habitation for Christ, not on account of her bodily state, but on account of her original grace.

To these things are added the noble words in which, speaking of the Conception of the Virgin, they have testified that nature yielded to grace and stood trembling, not being able to proceed further; for it was to be that the Virgin Mother of God should not be conceived by Anna before grace should bear fruit. For she ought thus to be conceived as the first born, from whom should be conceived the first born of every creature. They have testified that the flesh of the Virgin, taken from Adam, did not admit the stains of Adam, and on this account that the Most Blessed Virgin was the tabernacle created by God himself, formed by the Holy Spirit, truly enriched with purple which that new Beseleel made, adorned and woven with gold; and that this same Virgin is, and deservedly is, celebrated as she who was the first and the peculiar work of God, escaped from the fiery weapons of evil; and fair by nature, and entirely free from all stain, came into the world all shining like the morn in her Immaculate Conception; nor, truly, was it right that this vessel of election should be assailed by common injuries, since, differing very much from others, she had community with them only in their nature, not in their fault.

Moreover, it was right that, as the Only Begotten had a Father in heaven whom the seraphim proclaim thrice holy, so He should have a Mother on the earth, who should never want the splendor of holiness. And this doctrine, indeed, so filled the minds and souls of our forefathers, that a marvelous and singular form of speech prevailed with them, in which they very frequently called the Mother of God immaculate and entirely immaculate, innocent and most innocent, spotless, holy, and most distant from every stain of sin, all pure, all perfect, the type and model of purity and innocence, more beautiful than beauty, more gracious than

grace, more holy than holiness, and alone holy, and most pure in soul and body, who has surpassed all perfectitude and all virginity, and has become the dwelling-place of all the graces of the Most Holy Spirit, and who, God alone excepted, is superior to all, and by nature fairer, more beautiful, and more holy than the cherubim and seraphim; she whom all the tongues of heaven and earth do not suffice to extol. No one is ignorant that these forms of speech have passed, as it were spontaneously, into the monuments of the most holy Liturgy, and the Offices of the Church, and that they occur often in them and abound amply; and that the Mother of God is invoked and named in them as a spotless dove of beauty, as a rose ever blooming and perfectly pure, and ever spotless and ever blessed, and is celebrated as innocence which was never wounded, and a second Eve who brought forth Emmanuel.

It is no wonder, then, if the Pastors of the Church and the faithful people have daily more and more gloried to profess with so much piety and fervor this doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mother of God, pointed out in the Sacred Scriptures, according to the judgment of the Fathers, handed down in so many mighty testimonies of the same, expressed and celebrated in so many illustrious monuments of a revered antiquity, and proposed, and with great piety confirmed, by the greatest and highest judgment of the Church; so that nothing would be more dear, more pleasing to the same, than everywhere to worship, venerate, invoke, and proclaim the Virgin Mother of God conceived without original stain. Wherefore, from the ancient times, the Princes of the Church, Ecclesiastics, and even emperors and kings themselves, have earnestly entreated of this Apostolic See that the Immaculate Conception of the Most Holy Mother of God should be defined as a dogma of Catholic faith. Which entreaties were renewed also in these Our times, and especially were addressed to Gregory XVI., Our predecessor of happy memory, and to Ourselves, not only by Bishops, but by the secular clergy, religious Orders, by the greatest princes, and by the faithful people.

Therefore, with singular joy of mind, well knowing all these things, and seriously considering them, scarcely had We, though unworthy, been raised by a mysterious dispensation of Divine Providence to the exalted Chair of Peter, and undertaken the government of the whole Church, than, following the veneration, the piety, and love We had entertained for the

Blessed Virgin from Our tender years, We had nothing at heart more than to accomplish all these things which as yet were amongst the ardent wishes of the Church, that the honor of the Most Blessed Virgin should be increased, and her prerogatives should shine with a fuller light. But wishing to bring to this full maturity We appointed a special congregation of Our Venerable Brothers, the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, illustrious by their piety, their wisdom, and their knowledge of the sacred sciences, and We also selected Ecclesiastics, both secular and regular, well trained in theological discipline, that they should most carefully weigh all those things which relate to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, and report to Us their opinion. And, although from the entreaties lately received by Us for at length defining the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, the opinions of most of the Bishops of the Church were understood; however, We sent Encyclic letters, dated at Gaeta, the 2d day of February, in the year 1849, to all Our Venerable Brethren, the Bishops of all the Catholic world, in order that having offered prayers to God they might signify to Us, in writing, what was the piety and devotion of their flocks towards the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God, and especially what the Bishops themselves thought about promulgating the definition, or what they desired in order that We might pronounce Our supreme judgment as solemnly as possible.

Certainly we were filled with no slight consolation when the replies of Our Venerable Brethren came to Us. For, with an incredible joyfulness, gladness, and zeal, they not only confirmed their own singular piety, and that of their clergy and faithful people, towards the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin, but they even entreated of Us with a common voice that the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin should be defined by Our supreme judgment and authority. Nor, indeed, were We filled with less joy when Our Venerable Brothers, the Cardinals of the Special Congregation aforesaid, and the consulting theologians chosen by Us, after a diligent examination demanded from Us with equal alacrity and zeal this definition of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God.

Afterwards walking in the illustrious footsteps of Our predecessors, and desiring to proceed duly and properly, We proclaimed and held a Consistory, in which We addressed Our Brethren, the Cardinals of the

Holy Roman Church, and with the greatest consolation of mind We heard them entreat of Us that We should promulgate the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mother of God.

Therefore having full trust in the Lord that the opportune time had come for defining the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary Mother of God, which the Divine word, venerable tradition, the perpetual opinion of the Church, the singular agreement of Catholic Prelates and Faithful, and the signal acts and constitutions of Our predecessors wonderfully illustrate and proclaim; having most diligently weighed all things, and poured forth to God assiduous and fervent prayers, We resolved that We would no longer delay to sanction and define, by Our supreme authority, the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, and thus to satisfy the most pious desires of the Catholic world and Our own piety towards the Most Holy Virgin, and, at the same time, to honor more and more the only-begotten Son Jesus Christ Our Lord, since whatever honor and praise is given to the Mother redounds to the Son.

Wherefore, after We had unceasingly, in humility and fasting, offered Our own prayers and the public prayers of the Church to God the Father, through his Son, that He would deign to direct and confirm Our mind by the power of the Holy Ghost, and implored the aid of the entire heavenly host, and invoked the Paraclete with sighs, and He thus inspiring, to the honor of the Holy and undivided Trinity, to the glory and ornament of the Virgin Mother of God, to the exaltation of the Catholic faith and the increase of the Catholic religion, by the authority of Jesus Christ Our Lord, of the Blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul, We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the first instant of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace of the Omnipotent God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind, was preserved immaculate from all stain of original sin, has been revealed by God, and therefore should firmly and constantly be believed by all the faithful. Wherefore, if any shall dare—which God forbid—to think otherwise than as it has been defined by Us, they should know and understand that they are condemned by their own judgment, that they have suffered shipwreck of the faith, and have revolted from the unity of the Church; and besides, by their own act they subject themselves to the penalties justly established, if what they think

they should dare to signify by word, writing, or any other outward means.

Our mouth is filled with joy, and Our tongue with exultation, and We return, and shall ever return, the most humble and the greatest thanks to Jesus Christ Our Lord, because through his singular beneficence He has granted to Us, though unworthy, to offer and decree this honor, glory, and praise, to His Most Holy Mother; but We rest in the most certain hope and confidence that this Most Blessed Virgin, who, all fair and immaculate, has bruised the poisonous head of the most malignant Serpent, and brought salvation to the world, who is the praise of the Prophets and the Apostles, the honor of the Martyrs, and the crown and joy of all the Saints—who is the safest refuge and most faithful helper of all who are in danger, and the most powerful mediatrix and conciliatrix with the only-begotten Son for the whole world, and the most illustrious glory and ornament, and most firm guardian of the Holy Church, who has destroyed all heresies, and snatched from the greatest calamities of all kinds the faithful peoples and nations, and delivered Us from so many threatening dangers, will effect by her most powerful patronage that, all difficulties being removed, and all errors dissipated, Our Holy Mother the Catholic Church may flourish daily more and more throughout all nations and countries, and may reign from sea to sea to the ends of the earth, and may enjoy all peace, tranquillity, and liberty; that the sinner may obtain pardon, the sick healing, the weak strength of heart, the afflicted consolation, and that all who are in error, their spiritual blindness being dissipated, may return to the path of truth and justice, and may become one flock and one shepherd.

Let all the children of the Catholic Church, most dear to Us, hear these Our words, and, with a more ardent zeal of piety, religion, and love, proceed to worship, invoke, and pray to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, conceived without original sin, and let them fly with entire confidence to this most sweet Mother of Mercy and Grace in all dangers, difficulties, doubts, and fears. For nothing is to be feared, and nothing is to be despaired of under her guidance, under her auspices, under her favor, under her protection, who, bearing towards us a maternal affection, and taking up the business of our salvation, is solicitous for the whole human race, and, appointed by God the Queen of Heaven and

Earth, and exalted above all the choirs of Angels, and orders of Saints, standing at the right hand of the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord, intercedes most powerfully, and obtains what she asks, and cannot be frustrated.

Finally, in order that this Our definition of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary may be brought to the knowledge of the Universal Church, We will these Letters Apostolic to stand for a perpetual remembrance of the thing, commanding that to transcripts or printed copies, subscribed by the hand of some notary public, and authenticated by the seal of a person of Ecclesiastical rank, appointed for the purpose, the same faith shall be paid which would be paid to these presents if they were exhibited or shown.

Let no man interfere with this Our declaration, pronouncement, and definition, or oppose and contradict it with presumptuous rashness. If any should presume to assail it, let him know that he will incur the indignation of the Omnipotent God and of His Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, in the year of the Incarnation of Our Lord 1854, the sixth of the Ides of December, in the ninth year of Our Pontificate.

PIUS IX., POPE.



L I F E

OF THE

BLESSED VIRGIN MARY,

Mother of God.

CHAPTER I.

UNIVERSAL EXPECTATION OF THE VIRGIN AND OF THE MESSIAH.



IN those remote * times when the world was still in its infancy, when our first parents, trembling and amazed, heard, under the majestic shades of Eden,* the awful voice of Jehovah condemning them to exile, to labor, and to death, in punishment of their mad disobedience, a mysterious prediction, wherein the pitying kindness of the Creator was manifested through the

wrath of the offended Deity, came to raise the drooping spirits of those two frail creatures who had, like Lucifer, sinned through pride. A daughter of Eve, a woman of *masculine* courage, was to crush the head of the serpent beneath her feet, and to regenerate for ever a guilty race; that woman was Mary.

Thenceforward, it was a tradition amongst the antediluvian tribes that a woman should come to repair the evil which another had done; this consoling tradition, which kept up

* The word *Eden*, among the Arabs as among the Hebrews, is the name of the terrestrial paradise, and also of the paradise of the elect. *

In Hebrew, it signifies a place of delight; in Arabic, a place proper for the grazing of flocks.

the hopes of a fallen race, had not yet been effaced from the minds of men, at the time of their grand dispersion on the plains of Sennaar; they carried with them, over seas and mountains, that sweet, though distant hope, together with the religion of Noah, and the wreck of art and science saved from the waters of the Deluge.* In after times, when the primitive religion faded away, and the ancient traditions were shrouded in obscurity, that of the Virgin and the Messiah resisted, almost alone, the action of time, and reared itself up on the ruin of ancient creeds, swallowed up in the fables of polytheism, like the evergreen which grows amid the

* ruins of what once was Babylon the great.†.

Let us survey the various regions of the globe; let us search, from north to south, from east to west, the religious chronicles of the nations, we shall find the Virgin promised, and her divine maternity at the basis of almost all theogonies.

In Thibet, in Japan, and in a portion of the eastern peninsula of India, it is the god Fo, who, to save mankind, became incarnate in the womb of the young betrothed of a king, the nymph Lhamoghiuprul, the fairest and holiest of women. In China, they reckon amongst the number of the *sons of Heaven* the Emperor Hoang-Ti, whose mother

* It is certain that the race of primitive men, which was wild, but not savage, early attained a knowledge of the arts analogous to their wants and pleasures. Scarcely do the children of Adam form into little communities of men, when we see them establish a public worship, fabricate tents, build towns, forge iron, cast bronze, invent instruments of music, and follow the course of the stars. The history of Astronomy must be traced, according to Bailly, to an antediluvian people, of whom the memory is lost, but of whose astronomical knowledge some fragments escaped the general revolution. Lalande, fearing that this assertion might prove too much in favor of the Sacred Books, refers to the Egyptians the origin of this science; but the Hebrews, who, as neighbors, contempo-

aries, and ancient dwellers amongst the Egyptians, have a right to settle this difference, decide for Bailly, against his adversary, by informing us that the Egyptians derived their first astronomical knowledge from the traditions saved from the Deluge. (*See Joseph. Ant. Jud.*)

† There is but one single tree found amid the ruins of Babylon; the Persians give it the name of *Athele*; according to them, that tree existed in the ancient city, and was miraculously preserved, to the end that their prophet Ali, the son-in-law of Mahomet, might fasten his horse to it after the battle of Hilla. It is an evergreen shrub, and so rare in those regions that there is only one other of the same kind, found at Bassora. (*Rich's Memoir.*)

conceived by a flash of lightning ; * another emperor, Yao, who lived at the time of the Deluge, had for his mother a virgin who conceived from the beam of a star ; Yu, the head of the first Chinese dynasty, owed his life to a pearl (the emblem of light throughout all the East),* which fell from heaven into the chaste bosom of a young maiden. Heou-Tsi, chief of the dynasty of Tcheou, changed not, by his birth, the virginity of his mother, who conceived him by divine operation, one day as she was in prayer, and brought him forth without effort and without pain in a deserted grotto, where lambs and oxen warmed him with their breath.† The most popular goddess of the Celestial Empire, Sching-Mou, conceived at the simple touch of a

water-flower ; her son, brought up under the roof of a poor fisherman, became a great man, and wrought miracles.

The lamas say that Buddha is born of the virgin Maha-Mahai. Sommonokhodom, the prince, the legislator, and the god of Siam, likewise owes his life to a virgin made fruitful by the rays of the sun. Lao-Tseu took flesh in the womb of a black virgin, *wonderful and fair as the jasper*. The zodiacal Isis of the Egyptians is a virgin mother. The Isis of the Druids was to bring forth the future Saviour.‡ The Brahmins teach that, when a god assumes human flesh, he is conceived in the womb of a virgin, by divine operation : so also Jagrenat,§ the mutilated re-

* "The pearl," says Chardin, "has everywhere distinctive names : in the East, the Turks and Tartars call it *mardjaun*, globe of light ; the Persians, *marvid*, production of light."

† We find in the *Chi-king* two fine odes on this marvellous birth of Heou-Tsi ; and the comments and paraphrases of the learned on these verses agree in explaining them in a way which renders the resemblance to the divine maternity of Mary still more striking. "Every child who is born," says Ho-sou, "rends the womb of his mother, and costs her the most cruel anguish. Kiang-Yuen brought forth hers without rupture, hurt, or pain. It is that *Tien* (Heaven) ✱

would thus display its power, and show how the Holy One differs from men. Having been conceived by the operation of *Tien*," says another commentator, Tsou-Tsong-Ho, "who gave him life by a miracle, he must needs be born without wounding the virginity of his mother."

‡ Hinc Druidæ statuam in intimis penetralibus erexerunt, Isidi seu virgini hanc dedicantes, ex qua filius ille proditurus erat (nempe generis humani Redemptor). (Elias Schedius, *de Düs Germanis*, cap. 13.)

§ Jagrenat, the seventh incarnation of Brahma, is represented in the form of a pyramid, without hands and without feet. "He lost

deemer of the world; Chrichna, born in a grotto, where angels and shepherds come to adore him in his cradle,—each of these has a virgin for his mother.

The Babylonian Dogdo sees in a dream a brilliant messenger from Oromazes, who deposits at her feet the most magnificent garments; a celestial light falls upon the face of the sleeper, who becomes fair as *the*

them," say the Brahmins, "trying to carry the world, in order to save it." (See Kircher.)

* Zer-Ateucht signifies *washed with silver*; this surname was given to Zoroaster, because that, as the Ghebers say, he proved his mission, to a Sabeian prince who persecuted him, by plunging into a bath of molten silver. (See Tavernier; vol. ii., p. 92.)

† This Nemroud, whom Tavernier names Neubront, is, according to some, Nimrod, the famous hunter; according to others, the tyrant Zhohac, of the Persians, a king of the first dynasty of princes, who reigned immediately after the Deluge. According to the author of the *Mefatih Aloloum*, Nemroud would be identical with Caicaous, second king of the second dynasty of Persia, named the Caianides. The Persian historians give him a reign of nearly two centuries, which must needs be rather long. By some he is represented as an impious man, who conceived the strange fancy of ascending to heaven in a chest, drawn by four of those monstrous birds called *herkes*, mentioned by old Eastern writers in their romances. After having wandered some time through the air, he fell so heavily on a mountain, say the ancient legends of Persia, that it was shaken to its very base. According to the Persians, this Nimrod caused

day-star; Zerdhucht, Zoroaster, or rather Ebrahim-Zer-Ateucht,* the famous prophet of the Magi, is the fruit of this nocturnal vision. The tyrant Nimrod,† informed by his astrologers that a child, still unborn, menaces his gods and his throne, causes all pregnant women to be put to death; Zerdhucht, however, is saved through the prudence and dexterity of his mother.‡ The Ma-

Zerdhucht, whom they confound with Abraham, to be cast into a fiery furnace; according to others, Nemroud was a Sabeian in religion, and it was he who first established the worship of fire. (D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, t. iii., p. 32.) The Jews claim for Abraham, the father and the founder of their people, this persecution, of which the honor is given by the Persians to Zerdhucht, their legislator. St. Jerome relates an ancient tradition of the Jews, to the effect that Abraham had been cast into the fire by order of the Chaldeans, because he would not adore him. (Hieron., *Quæst. in Genes.*) This tradition is confirmed by Jewish writers much more modern; R. Chain, ben' Adda mentions that Abraham, meeting a young girl carrying an idol, broke the latter in pieces; a complaint was immediately laid before Nemroud, who would have him, therefore, adore the fire. The patriarch gravely answered, that it would be much more natural to worship water, which extinguishes fire, the clouds whence the water proceeds, the wind which gathers the clouds, and man who is a being much more perfect than the wind. Nemroud, irritated by this cutting rebuke, cast Abraham into the fire, which, however, did not harm him.

‡ See Tavernier, at the place quoted.

ceniques, who inhabit the shores of Lake Zarayas, in Paraguay, relate that at a very remote period a woman of rare beauty became a mother, yet remained a virgin; her son, after having wrought many extraordinary miracles, ascended one day into the open air, in presence of his disciples, and transformed himself into a sun.

Let all these scattered fragments of corrupted seed be brought together, and they will make up, in nearly all its details, the history of the Virgin and her divine Son. The Virgin, notwithstanding the royal blood which flows through her veins, is of obscure condition, like the mother of Zoroaster; like her, too, she receives the visit of an angel bearing a message from Heaven. The tyrant Nemroud, who was the progenitor of a line of very wicked princes, may pass for the type of Herod, and is as anxious to compass the death of the young fire-worshipper as the sanguinary spouse of Mariamne to accomplish that of the infant Jesus; both miss their prey. Born of a virgin who conceives him during fervent prayer, and brings him forth without pain or effort in a

* poor stable, like the first-born of the noble and pious Kiang-Yuen, our divine Saviour dwelt amongst the lower classes, like the son of the Chinese goddess; angels and shepherds come to render Him homage, as to Chrichna, on the very night of his birth; then, after having stilled the tempest, walked on the water, expelled demons, raised the dead to life, he ascends triumphantly into heaven in the presence of five hundred disciples, whose dazzled eyes lose sight of him in the clouds, precisely as is related by the savage tribes of Paraguay.

It is assuredly very strange that these marvellous legends, which have not been copied from the evangelical facts, since they are incontestably more ancient, yet form, when taken together, the real life of the Son of God. Can truth, then, spring from error? What are we to think of these fantastic associations? Shall we say, with the scoffing philosophers of the Voltairian school, and some German visionaries of a somewhat more recent date, that the Apostles borrowed these fables from the various creeds of Asia? But without speaking of the jealous care

with which they hid the books reputed divine in the impenetrable darkness of the sanctuary—not to mention the profound horror where-with the Jews regarded idolatrous legends, and their supreme contempt for foreign learning—how could poor, illiterate men, the extent of whose knowledge was to steer a bark over the waters of Genesareth, and whose nets were still dripping with its living waters, when they were promoted to the Apostleship—how could laborious artizans, forced to toil for their daily bread during the intervals of their preaching—how could such as they have ransacked the sacred books of the Indias, of the Chinese, the Bactrians, the Phenicians, and the Persians? What appearance is there that Simon Peter, the sons of Zebedee, or the austere disciple of Gamaliel, who boldly said to Corinth, that rich and learned Grecian city, *For myself, I know but one thing, Jesus, and Him crucified*, that these should have snatched from idolatry, which their mission was to destroy, some of its old tatters to patch upon the life of Jesus Christ—a life so simple and so grand! Still, if the question had

* only been of loans made from the fabulous legends of nations bordering on Palestine, such as the Egyptians and Phenicians, however unjust might have been the accusation, it would have had, at least, a show of probability; but no! these brilliant points, which detach themselves from the dark shades of idolatry to form, like so many little stars, the aureola of the Virgin's Son, come from places the most distant and the least known. Not to speak of that Gaul, whose impenetrable forests hid, at the extremity of Western Europe, its mysterious creed under the shadow of giant oaks; of the great Indies, so imperfectly known in the time of Tiberias; of that Serica of the porcelain towers, whose distant provinces did not tempt even the covetous Romans;* how could the Apostles have contrived to communicate with far America, separated from the old continent by her green belt of waves, and lost like the pearl amid the waters.

* It was under the reign of Augustus that the Roman people received the first ambassador from the Seres, whom we now call Chinese. The ambassadors pretended that it had taken them three years to make the journey.

But, granting that the Apostles * had known, no matter how, these ancient myths, disseminated over all the globe—nay, I will go farther still, and, setting aside native simplicity, the sealed testimony of blood, the high sanctity of these divine men, carried away, as Rousseau says, with zeal for their Master's glory, I will suppose that the idea had occurred to them to embroider some fabulous circumstances on the evangelical tissue—why, the thing would have passed their *power*. With what face, for instance, could they have attributed to that Herod, whom all Jerusalem had known, whose reign, so glorious and yet so tragical, each one knew by heart, an atrocious and improbable fact, renewed from I know not what king of Persia, who, perhaps, never existed save in the dreams of the Magi? If the massacre of the Innocents had been a story fabricated or copied by the Apostles, is it to be believed that the Bethlehemites,

so likely to know what was passing in the Holy City, whose lofty towers darkened their horizon, would not have openly protested against that audacious falsehood; or that those cunning Pharisees, who would fain have confounded Jesus himself, would have let such a story become current without attempting to refute it; or that the Herodians would have tamely suffered a stain so foul to be falsely imprinted on the fame of a prince whom they regarded almost as a god,* and who had loaded them with wealth and honors? If all were silent, it is because the fact was too well accredited, too public, too recent, to leave any plausible pretence for denial; it is because that, within two hours' walk of Jerusalem, were the mothers of the martyrs who had purchased with their young lives the honor of being born with Christ; it is because that whole towns had seen the glitter of the murderous steel, and heard the wail of death; it is because that, at the

* The flatterers of Herod the First, dazzled with the greatness and magnificence of that prince, maintained that he was the *Messiah*. Hence arose the sect of the Herodians, so often mentioned in the Gospel, and even known to

the Pagans, since Persus and his scholiast inform us that, from the days of Nero, the birth of King Herod was celebrated by his sectaries with the same solemnity as the Sabbath.

first denial given to the Christians, a whole nation would have risen and shouted, *But we were there !**

So it is with the divine child-bearing of Mary—the visit of the shepherds sent by the angels—the glorious resurrection—and, in short, with all the prodigies which marked the coming of Christ. The Apostles wrote during the lifetime of those who had figured in the scenes they related; and, even before they consigned these prodigies to writing, they had openly preached them in the very temple of Jehovah, before that immense assemblage of Hebrews from all the provinces, who repaired thither either to offer sacrifice or to bring first-fruits; the most dangerous auditory in the world, if they had promulgated falsehood.

Far from fearing contradictions,

* “Neither Josephus nor the Rabbins speak of the massacre of the Innocents,” says Strauss; “Macrobus, who lived in the fourth century, is the only writer who says a word of the massacre decreed by Herod.” Strauss is in error; the Toldos, from whom Celsus has taken some of the facts prejudicial to Christianity, which he has interspersed through his writings, do speak positively on the subject, and the fact is in the Talmud. This is the way in which Bossuet answers those who deny the evangelical fact, and never was answer more definitive. “Where

which in case of imposture must needs have followed, St. Peter speaks to that vast multitude as one sure of the general assent; he boldly appeals to the yet recent remembrance of those who hear him; he asserts the miracles which stamped as divine the mission of the Son of Mary, and that even before the great council of the nation, which had exerted all its power to have Jesus crucified. And the senators of Israel, frightened and furious, cause St. Peter and St. John to be beaten with rods, in order to make them keep silence; but yet they deny not, as the Talmud shows, those prodigies which they stupidly attribute to magic. Thus it is that they say not to the Apostles brought before them by the guards of the Temple, “Ye are liars or visionaries!” they only tell

are those,” says he, “who, in order to confirm their faith, would wish that the profane historians of that age had mentioned this cruelty of Herod, as well as all the others? Just as though our faith ought to depend on what the negligence or affected policy of worldly historians has made them record or omit in their histories! Far from us be such weak imaginings; even in a human point of view, the Evangelist would have been very careful not to compromise the character of his narrative by recording a fact which was not well authenticated.”

them, with an agitation which plainly indicates their secret fears, "Be silent! will ye that we be stoned by the people?" Whereupon those two men; simple in heart, but great in soul, made answer: "We cannot be silent! God commands us to speak, and Him must we obey rather than men." Imposture is not so bold or confident.

After having examined the acts, the character, and the position of the Apostles, every impartial mind will be forced to admit that they were neither deceiving nor deceived, and that they have nothing to do with the analogies remarked between the evangelical facts and the traditions, more or less fabulous, of the ancient nations.

But, then, how to explain these analogies? Is it a mere game of chance, a lucky coincidence?

No, it is not by chance that the mystery of the incarnation of a God in the womb of a virgin is one of the fundamental doctrines of Asia. It is not by chance that the privileged women who bear in their womb that emanation of the Divinity are always chaste, beautiful, and holy; that they have glorious and

* mysterious names, which signify, in all these ancient tongues, *expected beauty, immaculate virgin, faithful virgin, delight of mankind, polar star*; and that they are all so much alike that one would say they were moulded on a far-off type hidden from us by the darkness of time. Finally, it is not by chance that a luminous ray unites the divine and human nature.

These traditions, wherein the stamp of a primitive time is so plainly visible, evidently ascend to the birth of the world. The antediluvian patriarchs, that chain of old men who lived the age of cedars, wishing to form for themselves an idea of the woman blessed amongst all others, whose miraculous maternity was to save mankind, represented her to themselves under the likeness of Eve before her fall; they gave her a majestic and saintly beauty, which could awake in the minds of men no other feeling save that of religious veneration; they made her a mild and veiled star, whose dawn was to precede that of the Sun of Justice.

The means whereby God gave fecundity to that virginal womb are

strikingly alike, amongst the different nations of the world. Cast a glance over all the old religions, and you will there find a sacred fire. But the fire was, for the Persians, the terrestrial emblem of the sun, and the sun himself was but the dwelling of the Most High, the glorious tent of the *God of Heaven*.*

The Hebrews, who shared in this belief, recognized the divine presence, or the *shekina*, in the radiant cloud which overhung the cherubim of the mercy-seat. They believed that God clothed himself with light as with a garment, when manifesting himself to men, on solemn occasions. It was the opinion of the Synagogue, supported by the tradition of the Temple, that in the midst of the wild rose-bush, which burned without being consumed, when Moses, that great shepherd of men, was tending, on Mount Horeb, the flocks of his Arab father-in-law, there was seen a very lovely face, resembling nothing that is seen here below; and that this celestial im-

age, clearer than the flame and more brilliant than the lightning, was, without doubt, the image of the Eternal God.† With this premise, it is not difficult to understand the drift of the opinion, so generally diffused, that a luminous ray was to impart fecundity to the womb of the favored virgin who was the expectation of all nations.

With this graceful tradition of a pure virgin admitted to a divine union, surrounded by impenetrable mystery, was connected that of a Saviour God, born of her womb, who was to suffer and die for the salvation of the world.‡ This tradition was not perpetuated, like the other, by means of brilliant and poetical images, but by terror, which makes an impression far more indelible than poetry. The bloody sacrifice, which we find established, from the earliest times, amongst nearly all nations, was solely intended to preserve amongst men the remembrance of the promised immolation of Calvary. This is easily proved.

* "The Persians suppose that the throne of God is in the sun," says Hanway, "and hence their veneration for that star."

† Philon, *Vie de Moïse* (*Life of Moses*).

‡ This tradition is found in the sacred books of China. (See Father Premare's work, entitled, *Selecta quædam vestigia præcipuorum Christianæ religionis dogmatum ex antiquis libris eruta*.)

Worship, that demonstration of love, that homage of gratitude which Adam and Eve were to render to God immediately after their creation, was, in Eden, doubtless composed of only innocent prayers and oblations of fruits and flowers.* But when they—ungrateful that they were—had infringed upon the precept, so easy in observance, which the Lord had imposed, like a sweet yoke, upon them, merely to make them feel that they had a master;

when they had lost, with the immortalizing fruits of the tree of life,† their talisman against death,‡ and descended from the charming hills of Eden to a land bristling with briars and thorns, to a land whose virgin bosom they must open to nourish themselves; they added to the fruits and wild flowers produced by the land of exile, the first fruits of their flocks. This merits attention. Adam, who joined to the perfection of the human form an intel-

* Porphy. *de Abst.*, lib. ii.

† God might annex to the plants certain natural virtues for the sake of our bodies, and it is easy to believe that the fruit of the tree of life had the virtue of restoring the body, by an aliment so proportionate and so efficacious that none could ever die while using it. (Bossuet, *Élev. sur les Myst.*, t. i. p. 231.)

‡ Man was never immortal, in this world, as the pure spirits are, for a body formed of dust must needs return to dust; he was so only by a favor, without precedent, and conditionally granted, whereby he was elevated to, and maintained in, a position far above his proper sphere. Immortality here below never yet belonged to man as a birthright. Every earthly body is to perish through the dissolution of its parts, unless prevented by a special decree of the Creator; this Divine will was manifested in favor of our first parents. God planted, in the delicious garden where he had placed mortal man, the tree of life, a plant of celestial origin, which had the property of repelling death, as the laurel, according to the ancients, *

keeps off the thunder. To that mysterious tree was attached the immortality of the human species; away from that protecting tree, death again seized his prey, and man was hurled from the height of heaven into his miserable tenement of clay. (Aug., *Quæst. Vet. et Nov. Test.*, q. 19, p. 430.) No one will question, I fancy, that God had an undoubted right to expel Adam from the garden after his disobedience; but the expulsion involved the sentence of death for man and his posterity; without the tree of life, he was nothing more than a frail and perishable creature, subject to the laws which govern created bodies: when the antidote is wanting, it is very evident that the poison kills. Having again become mortal, Adam begot sons mortal like himself. The condition into which the father had fallen must needs be that of the children. In that, God did no wrong to the human race; we are, by nature, mortal; He has left us as we were. To withdraw a gratuitous favor, when the object of that favor tears with his own hands the deed of gift, is assuredly not severity, but only justice.

ligent and elevated mind, wherein the Lord had planted the germ of all virtue and of all knowledge, could not be void of humanity. His fatal complaisance to Eve shows him loving even to weakness, and therefore susceptible, in the highest degree, of all kindly feelings and affections. How could it, then, occur to him that the Creator would take pleasure in the violent death of His creature, or that an act of destruction was an act of piety?

The immolation of animals, which has not the slightest connection with the vows and prayers of man, and which the purely vegetable food of the first patriarchs left without other object than that of murder, must needs have excited a

* thousand feelings of disgust and repugnance in the mind of our common father. Long had those poor, dumb creatures, devoid of reason, but very capable of attachment, composed, in Eden, the court of that solitary king. He then seated himself at the same table, slept on the same mossy hillock, quenched his thirst at the same spring, and his prayer ascended to heaven, at early dawn and evening's close, with the warbling of the birds, who seemed to sing, in their turn, the morning or evening hymn. Those companions of his happier days, involved in his misfortune, now shared his exile:* some, giving way to the ferocious instinct which in Paradise had remained undeveloped, fled to

* The time that Adam and Eve remained in the terrestrial paradise is not exactly known; it must, nevertheless, have been of some duration, and so it was understood by Milton, whom we do not here quote as a poet, but as a profound Oriental scholar. Moreover, if we remember that it was in Eden that Adam learned to distinguish and to call by name all the birds of the air, the beasts of the earth, and the fishes of the water; that he there learned the virtues of plants, and what God chose to teach him regarding the course of the stars; we must then conclude that all this was not the work of a day. The Persians and the Chinese have it that the first man was in Paradise for many

ages. The Arabs and the Rabbins say that he was there only half a day; but, according to them, that half day in Paradise was equivalent to five hundred years; for a day there was equal to a thousand years. According to our views, that period of time is much too long. It is commonly believed that Cain, whose birth, in Genesis, follows closely upon the expulsion of his parents, was born in the year of the world 13, which would leave the stay in Paradise in or about twelve years. That term, although somewhat short, would have, nevertheless, enabled the first man to establish his supremacy over the animals subject to him, and to attach him to his humble dependants by the ties of habit.

the depth of the wilderness or the secret caverns of the mountains, whence they soon waged deadly warfare against their former master. Others, mild and inoffensive by nature, established themselves around the grotto of their lord, to whom they offered, to satisfy his wants and soothe his cares, their milk, their labor, their fleece, and their melodious concerts. Well, it was from the ranks—thin they were, too—of these humble friends, faithful in misfortune, that Adam selected, counted, and marked his victims; it was into the throat of the heifer who had given him milk, of the dove who had flown to his bosom for shelter when the vulture hovered in the air, of the lamb that quitted its flowery pasture to lick his hand, that he had the heart to plunge his knife. Ah! when man, yet unpractised in killing, struck down at his feet a poor, timid creature, and saw it bleeding and struggling in the agony of death, he must have stood

pale and horror-stricken, like the assassin who has just committed his first murder! That thought never occurred to him; it was not an act of choice, but of painful obedience. Who imposed it upon him? He to whom alone it belongs to dispose of life and death—God!

Adam committed a sin so enormous by its aggravating circumstances and its disastrous consequences, that, in order to express its full extent, the Hebrew tradition relates that the sun hid his face in horror.* Satan attacked him in his strength, at a time when, as yet, he knew nought but good, in the fairest of earth's scenes, under the recent impression of the immense benefit of creation, free, happy, tranquil, immortal, and capable of resisting, if he had chosen to do so. It was from this height that he fell into the fearful abyss of disobedience and ingratitude. The justice of God demanded a punishment proportionate to the offence; man

* It is in remembrance of the sin of Eve, at sight of which, according to the Jews, the sun hid his light, that the Jewish women are specially charged to light the lamps which burn in every house during the Sabbath night. "It is

just," say the Hebrew doctors, "that women should rekindle the flame which they have extinguished, and that they be charged with that trouble, in expiation of their sin." (Basn., lib. vii. ch. 13.)

was condemned to die a double death, and it was all over with the human species, had not a Divine Being, predestined before the birth of time to the work of our redemption, taken it upon himself to make satisfaction for us all. Thenceforward he was called the Messiah, and revealed as a Saviour, at the very moment when the voice of God—that voice which rends the cedars—pronounced the sentence of the three criminals. “Because thou hast done this thing,” said God to the serpent, who showed himself proud of our ruin, “the seed of the woman”—that is to say, her offspring—“shall crush thy head.”

And the Hebrew tradition adds that God, touched by the repentance of our first parents, revealed to them by an angel, that from their race should arise a just man who would annihilate the pernicious effects of the tree of knowledge,* by means of a voluntary oblation, and

would be the salvation of those who put their trust in Him.† On the other side, we learn from the Arab traditions that God, who is merciful and indulgent, would vouchsafe to point out to man the way to implore his forgiveness. That worship, revealed by God, was undoubtedly sacrifice, a ceremony at once commemorative, expiatory, and symbolical, whereby man acknowledged that he had deserved death, and, substituting for himself innocent victims, kept perpetually before his mind the great victim of Calvary.

Thus, then, the institution of the bloody sacrifice, which was not of human invention, rested, at bottom, on a conception of Divine mercy, since it perpetuated, amongst all nations, that tradition of the Messiah, without which the work of the Redemption would have been a favor thrown away.

God ripens his councils by ages,

* It is generally considered, amongst Christians, that the tree of knowledge was an apple-tree; the Persians maintain, on the contrary, that this fatal tree was a fig-tree. In our days, the German Eichhorn makes it out to have been a species of manchineel. “A deduction

made from the wonders attending on the fall of man,” says that Rationalist writer, “the fact is evident that the constitution of the human body has been, from the beginning, vitiated by the use of a poisonous fruit.” (Eichhorn’s *Argeschichte*.)

† Basnage, lib. vi. ch. 25, p. 417.

for a thousand years are to Him but as one day; but man is eager to obtain, for man lasts but a short time. It appears that Eve had concluded, from the words of the angel, that she was to be the mother of the promised Redeemer, and that this was the reason why she testified such transports of joy on the birth of Cain,* whom she took for her Saviour. Undeceived by the development of his perverse inclinations, she transferred her hopes to Abel, that son so fondly loved, whose name recalls the mourning and tears

of his mother;† then to Seth;‡ but all in vain, for the gates of Paradise never opened again for her. The just of the race of Seth, those pure, solitary, and contemplative men called in Scripture the children of God, and in the Assyrian legends genii, long flattered themselves with a similar hope; and the Jewish tradition represents them as wandering on the heights around the garden of Eden,§ whose gigantic cedars they wistfully admired,|| and flattered themselves the while that from amongst themselves should arise a

* Cain is called *Cabel* by all the Arab writers; that name, which means the *first*, is perhaps his proper name. The surname of Cain, which signifies *traitor*, must have been subsequently given him. (Savary, *note to Chapter V. of the Koran.*)

† Abel, by the Arabs written *Habel*, is, according to them, only the surname of that young shepherd who was the first type of Jesus Christ. In fact, it recalls the sad event which threw the family of Adam into mourning, "and properly signifies," says Savary (place quoted), *His death left a mother in tears*. Josephus, too, says that the name of Abel signifies mourning. (*Antiq. Jud.*, p. 4.)

‡ See Basnage, lib. vi. ch. 25.

§ The Arabian traditions place the terrestrial paradise in that fair valley of Damascus which the Eastern poets designate as the emerald of the desert. This idea is justified by its admirable situation, its beauty, and its fertility; and a learned commentator on Genesis has not hesi-

tated to set down this fair site as that of the garden of Eden, although the names of the Euphrates and the Tigris indicate a position somewhat different. In support of this Arab tradition there is shown, about half a day's journey from Damascus, a lofty mountain of white marble, shaded with beautiful trees, and therein is a cavern, pointed out as the abode of Adam, of Abel, and of Cain; there is also seen the sepulchre of Abel, which is much respected by the Turks. The spot whereon the fratricide was committed is marked by four pillars. (D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, p. 772 and 780.—Père Pacifique, in his *Commentaries on the Bible.*)

|| The lofty cedars of Eden have remained traditionally in the memory of the Hebrews, who have made the terrestrial paradise their heaven. In most of their epitaphs we read these words: "He is gone down to the garden of Eden to those who are amongst the cedars." (Basnage, t. v. lib. vii.)

just man who would obtain admission for them. But it was not the name of a virgin of the primitive times that was written in the immutable decrees of the Eternal; and the earth, still quivering under the Divine malediction, had need of being washed as by the ablution of a baptism, before the foot of Him who was to bring the glad tidings should leave its sacred impress on the mountains.

When the earth had absorbed the waters of the Deluge, and the winds had dried it up, the new human family, springing into life under favorable auspices, hastened to re-establish the worship of Enos. Noah joined thereto the seven precepts which bear his name, not forgetting the historical and religious traditions which his long existence prior to the

* Deluge had enabled him to gather. He told how man was formed of clay, his rebellion, his fall, and his future reparation, which the world was to owe to the miraculous maternity of a new Eve. At sight of the bloody sacrifice offered for the unexpiated crime of their first parents, he taught his descendants to raise their eyes to a more august victim, seated at the right hand of Jehovah, in the starry depths of heaven—a victim whereof the oblation of lambs and heifers was but the figure.*

These primitive notions were at first faithfully retained by the nations, and are found at the base of all creeds.† Altars were erected at the confluence of rivers, in the shade of forests, on the summits of mountains, by the green sea-wave, and on the sandy moor where the worm-

* All the ancient law bears an aspect of blood and death in figure of the new law established and confirmed by the blood of Jesus Christ. (Bossuet, *Elév. sur les Myst.*, t. i. p. 428.

† The Indians, the Chinese, the Peruvians, and even the Hurons, acknowledge that the first man was formed of clay. The Brahmins, who make delightful representations of their *chorcam* (paradise), place therein a tree whose fruit would confer immortality if it could be eaten. The Persians relate that the genius of evil, Ahriman, seduced our first parents under the

form of a snake. The story of the woman seduced at the foot of a tree, the anger of God, and the first fratricide, was traditionally told amongst the Iroquois. The Tartars attribute our fall to a plant sweet as honey and of wondrous beauty; the Thibetans, to the crime of having tasted of the dangerous plant *schimæ*, mild and sweet as sugar; the knowledge of the state of nakedness was revealed by this fruit. The tradition of the woman and the serpent was likewise known in Mexico, &c. (See *le Christ devant le Siecle*, by M. Roselly de Lorgues, ch. 9.)

wood-tree spreads its leaves to the desert-wind. The soft moonlight illumined, from the first, those rural temples which had no other bounds than the horizon, no other roof than the firmament with all its stars. At that remote period, God was worshipped in a manner worthy of Him, and with ideas so clear, so sublime, so uniform, and so simple, that they had evidently emanated from Himself.

Nevertheless, there glided, like a destroying principle, into the post-diluvian worship, an element of superstitious terror founded on the fresh and drear remembrance of the submersion of the globe—a remembrance of which traces are found in most of the religious festivals of antiquity.* Congregated together on the lofty table-lands of Caucasus, and the mountains of Armenia, the descendants of Noah had long refused, even at the command of the patriarch himself, to go down again into the plains, so great was their fear of a second deluge! In vain did the rainbow span the clouds—as it were to encourage the

* children of men—with its soft, mellow hues, where the green of the emerald united with the blue of the sapphire. That auspicious omen, that radiant sign of an appeased God, lessened, but could not dispel, a rooted terror. The Tower of Babel is proof of this. That gigantic monument of human pride concealed, beneath its insolent boast, an overwhelming fear. It was as a fortress of refuge against the contingency of a new deluge which that race of men, already corrupt, could not but feel that they deserved. And when the confusion of tongues, that terrible stroke of Divine wrath, forced the builders to disperse—when they saw their precaution, injurious as it was to the sworn clemency of the Lord, result in their disgrace—they were the more disposed to give way to new fears.

It must, however, be admitted, in extenuation of their fault, that the spectacle then presented by the earth was far from cheering. The whole economy of the creation was upset. The rivers, diverted from their natural channels,† formed im-

* See Boulanger, *Antiq. Devoilée*.

† History has preserved us proofs of this dis-

mense ponds and putrid marshes in those vast plains, adorned, before the Deluge, with the graceful tents of the shepherds. The cedars lay prostrate on the sea-shore, whilst the spoils of the ocean were found amongst the eternal snows of the loftiest mountains. On every side were seen towers levelled to the ground,* and cities silent and in ruins. The ploughshare everywhere notched on bones and rubbish. The avenging hand of an angry God had fallen so crushingly, that man, whose heart still trembled with fear, remembering the risk he had run, was more disposed to fear his Sovereign Master with a mighty fear than to love him with confiding

love; he had learned to fear God! He doubted His promises and His goodness. Like the drowning mariner, he eagerly sought, around him, some helping object, which might interpose between them, and ward off, at need, that just but terrible wrath. Noah had spoken to them of an influential and Divine Being whose tenderness for men was infinite, and who was to plead their cause before the Eternal, and take upon himself their crimes; but who was that privileged mediator, that powerful advocate? They knew not. The descendants of Shem believed that they had found him in the stars which cheered their solitary watch,† and which they sup-

placing of rivers after the Deluge. We read in Strabo, book ii., that the Araxes, which waters Armenia, was still without a vent, and inundated the country, when Jason, chief of the Aeronauts, opened a subterraneous channel, whereby the Araxes flowed into the Caspian Sea. In the famous *Chou-King* of Confucius, the Emperor Yao says that the waters, which had once risen to heaven, still bathed the feet of the highest mountains, and rendered the plains impassable.—(Freret, *Chron. des Chinois*, 1st part.)

* The Tower of Babel, so immediately after the great Deluge, may furnish an idea of the antediluvian architecture. Brick and pitch were the materials used. If this immense

tower, as there is every reason to believe, resembled the ancient and famous Tower of Bel in Babylon, it was surrounded by an exterior staircase, on a gentle slope, which wound up to the flat roof, and gave the building the appearance of seven successive towers.

† It is a very ancient notion in the East that the stars are animated; the Jewish doctors had fallen into this error, although it dated much earlier than their people. Philo said that the stars were intelligent creatures, who had never done, and were incapable of doing, harm. According to the Maimonides, the stars know God, their Maker, and also themselves, and their actions are always good and holy. (Philo, *de Mundi opificio*, *de Gigant.*, *de Somniis*.—

posed inhabited by celestial spirits; they engaged those spirits to protect them, and kindled fires in their honor on the mountain-tops.*

This was the origin of Sabeism, which degenerated into idolatry when the accursed race of Cham, attaching themselves to the material object, adored the fire, the water, the earth, the rustling breeze; and in scornful mockery of the primitive worship, which knew not the use of images, they consecrated to the moon statues of silver, and to the sun statues of gold.†

In the lapse of time the shades thickened, religions became burdened with rites, the worship of the

* true God was gradually intermixed with that of the stars and the elements; the invention of hieroglyphics completed the confusion, and the few truths which escaped the overthrow of creeds were mysteriously buried in the depth of the idolatrous fanes, like those sepulchral lamps which burn but for the dead. They were carefully concealed from the multitude,‡ which lavished its senseless adoration on stones, trees, rivers, mountains, and on animals—a worship more degrading still—and which ended at last by deifying the very vices and passions. It was then that impostors, speculating on human credulity, either entangled

Maimonides, *More nevochim*, Part II., ch. 4, p. 194, et *de Fundam. legis*, ch. 3, § 11.) The modern Persians still sacrifice to the Angel of the Moon.

* According to R. Bechai, the Sabæans did not adore the sun; they merely kindled fires on the earth to thank God for the luminary which he lit for them in the heavens; and, looking at the stars, they begged of the angels, whom God had placed therein to keep them in motion, that they might be favorable to them. (R. Bechai, *Comm. in Genes.*, ch. 1.) The fires which are lit in almost every country of Europe, commonly called St. John's fires, or Midsummer fires, are a relic of Sabeism.

† The ancient Arabs, descendants of Cham, regarded Noah with contempt, because he did not make use of images; they consecrated to

the moon statues of silver, and others of gold to the sun; they divided metals and climates amongst the stars; and believed that they have great influence on the things consigned to them, and on the images consecrated to them. (Maimonides, *More nevochim*, Part III., ch. 2, p. 423.)

‡ Plato, speaking of the God who formed the universe, says that it is forbidden to make him known to the people. The books of Numa, written on birch-bark, and found in his tomb many ages after his death, were secretly burned as dangerous to Polytheism. The Brahmins, who, if some travellers are to be credited, have a sublime idea of the Divinity, do, nevertheless, make the Hindoos adore the most hideous idols. It is only the true religion that treats men as rational and immortal beings.

or deliberately broke the slight * thread of the patriarchal traditions, and, audaciously substituting memory for hope, grouped around the cradles of their fabulous kings, their false prophets, or their powerless divinities, the wonders of the Incarnation of the Word, and the primitive revelations of his high and tragical destiny.

This, we think, is the explanation of those analogies which are, at first sight, incomprehensible.

Nevertheless, all the heathen nations did not take the mystery of the Messiah as a fact accomplished. The Druids, just before the Christian era, were still raising altars, in the gloomy forests of Gaul, to the Virgin *who is to bring forth*. The Chinese—instructed by Confucius, who had himself found that oracle in old traditions—expected the

HOLY ONE, *born of a Virgin, and Son of God, who was to die for the salvation of the world,** in the western regions of Asia, and sent to seek him, by solemn embassy, less than half a century after the death of the Man-God. The Magi, on the faith of Zerdhucht, studied the constellations in quest of the star of Jacob, which was to guide them to the cradle of Christ.† The Brahmins sighed for the glorious *avatar*‡ of Him who was to purge the world of sin, and begged it of Wichnou, laying on his jewelled altar odorous stuffs of sweet basil, a plant beloved by the Indian god. The haughty children of Romulus, those idolaters by excellence, who had created whole legions of gods, read in the books so jealously and so wisely kept by the sibyl of Cumes, a contemporary of Achilles and Hector,

* "According to the ancient sages of China," says the learned Schmitt, "the Holy One, the *miraculous man*, will renew the universe, change its morals, expiate the sins of the world, die overwhelmed with sorrow and opprobrium, and open the gates of heaven." (See *Redemption of Mankind*, by that author.)

† Abulfarages (*Historia Dynastarum*) says that Zerdhucht prophesied to the Magi the birth of the Messiah, sprung from a virgin. He added that at the time of his birth there should

arise an unknown star to guide them to his cradle, and he commanded them to bring presents with them when they went. Sharistani, a Mussulman author, also relates a prediction of Zerdhucht respecting a great prophet who was to reform the world as well in religion as in justice, and to whom kings and princes were to be submissive.

‡ *Avatar*, the fabulous incarnation of a Hindoo deity.

the virgin, the divine infant, the adoration of the shepherds, the serpent crushed, and the golden age restored to the earth. Finally, about the time of the Messiah, all the nations of the East were in expectation of a future SAVIOUR; and Boulanger (who was better inspired on his death-bed), after having shown how generally that hope was diffused, illogically calls it a universal chimera.*

But what were those glimmering rays, powerless to dispel the darkness of idolatry, when compared with the blaze of light which illumined the chosen people? We are struck with amazement at sight of that prophetic chain of which the first link was fixed to the cradle of the world, and the last settles down at the sepulchre of Christ.† The threat of Jehovah to the serpent contains, as we have already said, the first prediction of the Messiah. We have further said, and the Jewish traditions confirm it, that this prediction was more fully explained, in after

* times, to the exiles of Eden, when they had conciliated Heaven by penance.‡ Noah, who was adopted by God as inheritor of the faith,§ transmitted to Shem His revelations, and Shem, whose life was nearly as long as that of his ancestors, might repeat them to the father of the faithful. Then it was that a mysterious benediction, wherein the promise of the Messiah was contained, made it manifest that the blessed seed promised to Eve should be also the seed and the offspring of Abraham. The primitive traditions were very soon succeeded by the great prediction of Jacob. The expiring patriarch, who has seen in spirit the state of the twelve tribes, when in Palestine, announces to his sons, assembled round his death-bed, that Juda has been chosen, from amongst his brethren, to be the root of the kings of Israel, and the father of that *Schilo* so long promised, who was to be the King of kings and the Lord of lords. The coming of

* "A unanimous testimony is of the greatest weight," says Bernardine de St. Pierre, "for all the earth cannot be in one universal error." (*Etudes de la Nature*, étude 8, p. 398.)

† It is a tradition taught in the Synagogue, and recognized by the Church, that all the

prophets, without any exception, prophesied only for the time of the Messiah." (St. Cypr., *de Vanit. Idol.*)

‡ Basnage, t. iv. lib. vii.

§ *Epist. S. P. ad Hebr.*, 2.

Christ is pointed out in a precise manner: he shall arise from amid the ruins of his country, when the *schebet* (the sceptre, the legislative power) shall rest in the hand of strangers.*

The prophet saved from the waters, who was divinely called to gather and consign to writing the history of the first ages and the ancient traditions of mankind—traditions whose remembrance was still vivid amongst the nations—fails not to lend the weight of his imposing testimony to the prophecy of Jacob. "A prophet," says he, speaking to

* the people of God, "shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me: him you shall hear according to all things, whatsoever he shall speak to you. And it shall be, that even some which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."†

Then it is of the Messiah that the Synagogue has always understood this text so clear; St. Philip, without any hesitation, applied it to our Redeemer, when he said to Nathaniel, "We have found Him who was foretold by the prophets, and of

* Christians apply this revelation of Jacob to the Messiah, and thereby prove to the Jews that he must have come long ago, seeing that for upwards of eighteen hundred years their tribes have been mixed up together, their sacrifice abolished, their government extinct; that they have no longer either territory or princes, and that, wherever they are found, they have to submit to the laws of foreign nations. To evade the force of this argument, the Jews now pretend that the word *schebet*, which we translate by *sceptre*, also signifies the rod which chastises the slave; and they take occasion from that to maintain that, even if this oracle did regard the Messiah, all that they could infer from it is, that their chastisement was to last till his coming, which was to be the signal of their delivery. Finally, they deny that the word *Schilo* can be translated by Messiah. But their old books give them the lie; this prophecy is under-

stood of the Messiah in the Talmud; and here is how the Paraphrase of Onkelos expounds this passage: "Judas shall not be without a supreme ruler, nor without scribes of the sons of her children, till the Messiah come." Jonathan, to whom the Jews assign the first place amongst the disciples of Hillel, and whom they venerate almost as they do Moses, also translates *schebet* by principality, and *Schilo* by Messiah. The Paraphrase of Jerusalem is likewise on that side. Thus the most ancient Commentaries, the most authentic, and the most respected amongst the Jews, furnish weapons for their own defeat.

† Hence comes that hope of a new law which the Jews expect with the Messiah, a law which they place far above that of Moses. *The law which man studies in this world is but vanity, say their doctors, in comparison to that of the Messiah.* (Medrash-Rabba, in Eccl., xi. 8.)

whole Moses spoke in the law—
Jesus of Nazareth.”

Towards the end of the mission of Moses, and while Israel was still encamped in the desert, Balaam, who had been bribed by a Moabitish prince to curse them in the Valley of Willows,* came to strengthen, in his turn, the expectation of the Messiah, and to point out, in a clear and precise manner, the period of his coming. Standing on the precipitous height of Phogor, surrounded by victims slain for an oblation of hate, in view of the accursed lake and the barren mountains of Arabia, the conjurer from the shores of the Euphrates, actuated by the spirit of God, perceives, as with a dreaming eye,† an admirable vision; his phrases, interrupted by solemn pauses, are flung, without order or art, to the mountain-wind, like fragments of a mysterious dialogue kept up in a whisper with invisible

* powers. *I shall see him...but not now. I shall contemplate him...but not near. A star shall come forth from Jacob...a shoot shall arise from Israel; he shall rule over many nations.* To these incoherent words succeeds a magnificent, but gloomy picture of the conquests of the great King. It is not without a purpose that the prophetic vision shows Rome at the height of her colossal power; it is then that Christ is to visit the earth, and immolate himself for us on the infamous tree. The prophet gives a bold sketch of that bloody period; one would say that cities and empires yet to be, arise before his view on the *mirage* of the desert. He sees the fleet of the Cæsars leave the ports of Italy and direct their conquering prows towards the level coasts of the Syrians; he beholds the ruin of that Judea which was not yet in existence, and where the people of God

* The plain of Babylon, intersected by rivers and canals, and consequently very marshy, abounded in willows. Hence it is that it is called in Scripture *the Valley of Willows*.

† Even if the prophecy of Balaam were not known to be ancient, yet the manner of its delivery would be sufficient to prove its antiquity. Balaam, the Chaldean astrologer, prophesies not

like the seers of Juda; for him is required a vast horizon, whence he discovers at once earth, sea, and sky: he speaks as a man who details to himself things which he sees at the moment, and which impress themselves deeply on his mind. This species of prophecy is somewhat like that which the Scotch Highlanders call *second sight*.

then possessed only a few graves; finally, his eye marks the fall of the Roman eagle, seven hundred years before the birth of the sons of Ilia, and whilst the wild goats of Latium were still browsing in peace on the woody slopes of the seven hills.

Ages and ages then roll away without any further promise from JEHOVAH; but the prophecies are either confided to tradition, which faithfully preserves them, or else consigned to the sacred books. Israel maintains an obscure, but ceaseless and infuriate struggle against the idolatrous nations which surround and press in upon its tribes; at times it gives way to the strange infatuation which attracts it to idolatry, and then the fatal sword of the Amorrhean and the Moabite is unwittingly drawn on behalf of the Lord, and avenges, though undesignedly, the insult offered to the God of Jacob. But through all these vicissitudes, the people forget not the coming of Christ; they live in the faith of the Messiah; in default of new revelations, their very

life becomes prophetic. Political and religious institutions, local customs and private habits, all tend to the same end, all flow from the same source; all are linked to the generation of the Saviour born of a virgin of Juda. It was the coming of the Messiah that was asked by the prophet Samuel, kneeling in the Holy of Holies, before the *Schekina*, its luminous and divine emblem, and by all the high priests who succeeded him in the temple of Solomon. It was to the expectation of the Messiah that the law of Deuteronomy referred, which decreed that the brother should raise up an heir to his brother who died childless, to the end that his name might be perpetuated in Israel. It was the blighting of the hope of belonging one day, sooner or later, to the celestial ambassador, that drew tears from the eyes of that fair young virgin of Galaad, who sank but with that one sorrow into the bloody tomb which was to close on the last of her father's race.* It is to this belief, so general amongst the He-

* Some Rabbins pretend that the daughter of Jephtha was not sacrificed, but only condemned to perpetual celibacy. That assertion is nulli-

fied by the text of Scripture which says: *Let the daughters of Israel assemble once in the year to mourn four days for the daughter of Jephtha of*

brews, that the woman of Thecua has reference, when, denouncing to King David the secret intrigues which were warping the mind of the only son who remained to her, she signalizes her fears as a mother and a Jewish matron by the poetical complaint, "My lord, they would extinguish my last spark!"

There is nothing but the present incredulity of the Jews to equal in depth the faith of their fathers. The grand business with the men of those days was the coming of the Messiah; they who died at a period remote from that which was to see the fulfillment of the Divine promises, departed in the firm persuasion that they should one day be fulfilled; standing on the threshold of eternity, they hailed from afar that consoling hope, even as the great prophet, Moses, saluted, with a sigh, that *land of milk and honey* which the Lord did not permit him to enter.

From the time of David, and under the kings of his race, the thread of prophecy is renewed, and the mystery of the Virgin and the Mes-

siah is made more manifest than ever by magnificent predictions clearer than the sun.

The holy king whom the God of Israel had preferred before the house of Saul, saw the virginity of Mary and the extraordinary birth of the Son of God. "Thy birth," said he, "unsullied by sin, shall be pure as the morning dew." Then, raising his eyes higher, he beholds Him whom God has given him for a son, according to the flesh, seated at the right hand of JEHOVAH, on a throne more lasting than sky or stars.

In the earlier prophecies, the blessed Virgin, though always pointed out, was yet left somewhat in the shade, and, so to speak, on the verge of the picture; but, from the time of David, the radiant figure of Mary is no longer undefined, and she who was to transfuse into the veins of the Man-God the blood of Abraham, of Jacob, and of Jesse the Just, begins to be clearly defined. David had spoken of her virginal maternity; Solomon took delight in tracing her image in col-

Galaad! (*Judic.*, ch. xi. ver. 40.) People do not mourn for one who is living—Flavius Jose-

phus also refers to the immolation of the daughter of Jephtha. (*Ant. Jud.*, t. ii. lib. v. ch. 9.)

ors so enchanting as to far outstrip the graceful descriptions of the Eastern Peris, those smiling and ethereal divinities which visit the dreams of Arabian shepherds. He sees her rise amid the daughters of Juda *like a lily among thorns*; her eyes are soft and mild *as those of the dove*; from her lips, *red as a fillet of scarlet*, comes a voice clear and melodious as the sound of the harp which inspires Israel in the battle; her step is ethereal *as the breath of perfumes*; and her beauty is radiant as that of *the rising morn*. Her tastes are simple and poetical; she loves to wander in the fresh valleys *when the vines are in blossom* and the figs hang like clusters of emeralds from the leafless branches; *her looks seek out the red roses of the pomegranate*, the tree of paradise,* and she hears with delight the plaintive song of the turtle. Silent and collected, she shrinks from every eye, and conceals her-

self within her dwelling like the dove which makes her nest *in the clefts of the rock*. She is chosen for a mystical marriage, preferably to all the virgins and queens of the nations; a crown is promised her by Him *whom her soul loveth*; and the blissful tie whereby she is united to her royal spouse *is stronger than death*.†

Elias, praying on Mount Carmel for the cessation of that long drought which, for three years, parched the earth and dried up every spring, discovers the promised virgin under the form of a transparent cloud arising from the bosom of the waters to announce the return of rain. The acclamations of the people salute this propitious omen,‡ and the prophet, who penetrates divine things, builds a chapel to the future Queen of Heaven.§ Isaiah declares to the house of David, whose chief, Achab, trembles beneath the threats of the

* In the East the pomegranate is called the fruit of paradise.

† It is agreed by all the holy Fathers that the *Canticle of Canticles* is but one continued allegory of the Mother of God.

‡ When rain falls in Palestine, there is a general rejoicing amongst the people; they as-

semble in the streets, sing, caper, and cry aloud, "O God!" "O Blessed!" (Volney, *Voyage en Syrie*.)

§ The chapel built by Elias on Mount Carmel was dedicated by him to the Virgin who was to bring forth, *Virgini parituræ*. This chapel was called *Sennæum*, which means a place conse-

stranger like a forest beaten by the tempest, that God shall give it an encouraging sign with regard to the future of Judea—a future long and glorious still. “A virgin shall conceive;* she shall bring forth a son whose name shall be *Emmanuel*, or God with us.... That child, miraculously given to the earth, shall be a scion from the stock of Jesse, a flower springing from his root.† He shall be called God the mighty, the Father of the world to come, the

* Prince of peace. He shall be raised as a standard before the world; all nations shall pray unto him, and his sepulchre shall be glorious.”

The mystery of the Messiah is clearly foreshown to the prophets. Some see Bethlehem made illustrious by his birth; others predict his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, and indicate the peaceful and unpretending style thereof. They see him enter into his temple, that sacred pontiff according to the order

crated to an *impératrice* (empress), which can only refer to Mary, empress of heaven and earth. (*Histoire du Mont Carmel, succession du Saint Prophète*, ch. 31.)

* This grand prophecy of Isaiah has been the object of a long and sharp controversy between the Jews and the Christians. The Rabbins, who have commented on the text since the time of Christ, wishing to pervert the proofs which condemn them, and to mystify the words of the prophet, have pretended that the word *halma*, which is found in the Hebrew text, signifies a simple young woman, although the Septuagint has rendered it by *virgin*. The Fathers have triumphantly refuted this objection. “The interpreters of the Septuagint,” says St. John Chrysostom, “are the most deserving of credit; they made their version more than a century before Jesus Christ; they were many in number; the time in which they wrote, their number and their union, render them much more worthy of belief than the Jews of our days, who have maliciously corrupted many passages of the Sacred Scriptures.” (S. Joan. Chrys., *Serm.* 4, ch. 1.) St. Jerome, the most profound

Hebrew scholar of all the interpreters and commentators, asserts, without fear, he says, of being contradicted by the Jews, that *halma*, everywhere that the word occurs in the Sacred Scriptures, signifies simply a virgin in all her purity, and never a married woman. (*Comm. S. Hieron. in Is.* lib. iii.) Luther, who made such lamentable use of much real learning, exclaims, with characteristic petulance and impatience, “If there be Jew or Hebrew scholar who can show me the *place* where *halma* means a woman, and not a virgin, he shall be entitled to 100 florins from me—that is, providing that I have them.” (Luther’s works, vol. viii., p. 129.) Mahomet himself has testified to the virginity of the Mother of God. “And Mary, daughter of Imram, who has preserved her virginity; and we have sent into her our spirit and she has believed in the words of the Lord and in his Scriptures.” (Koran, Surate 66.)

† Jesse, called also Isaiè, was son of Obed and father of David. His memory is in high veneration amongst the Hebrews, who regard him as a perfectly just man.

of Melchisedek; they know the number of the pieces of silver which the persecuting rulers of the Synagogue shall drop into the hands of the wretch who is to sell his Master;* they see the ignominious execution, the draught of vinegar and gall offered in insolent mockery during the agony of a God, and the garment, woven by the hands of a mother, disposed of by lot amongst the rude soldiers; they hear the sound of the nails which rend the bleeding hand, and sink with a dry, crackling sound into the accursed wood. And then the scene changes, like those paintings of Raphael, where the subject, begun on earth, extends itself beyond the clouds. The man of sorrows, the humble Messiah, whom even his own kindred despised, whom his people have not known, looks down in triumph from the highest heavens on his prostrate enemies; and the nations of the earth are all at length

* mindful of their God, forgotten for so many ages! The nations rally round the standard of the cross, and the empire of Christ shall have no bounds but those of the universe. Nothing is wanting to complete the prophecies. Jacob pointed out the coming of *Schilo* at the precise moment when the Jews shall cease to be governed by their own laws, which involves, of course, the ruin of a state; Balaam adds that that destruction shall be effected by a people from Italy, and the satrap Daniel counts exactly the weeks which are to elapse before the appointed time.

"Every thing that happens in this world has its preceding sign," said a man of genius, who is now lonely and dreaded under his tent. "When the sun is about to rise, the horizon is colored with a thousand hues, and the East appears all on fire. When the tempest is coming, there is heard on the shore a rumbling noise, and the waves are agitated, as it were, of themselves." The figures of the Old Testament, according to the Fathers of the Church, are the signs which announce the rising of the Sun of

* This passage, wherein God himself declares the number of silver pieces given in that infamous bargain, is impressed with a bitter and a dreadful irony. "And the Lord said to me, Cast it to the statuary, a handsome price, that I was priced at by them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver," &c. (*Zach. xi. 13.*)

Justice and of the Star of the Sea. To Christ, the Son of God, belongs strength and power; to Mary, grace and pitying kindness. She is the tree of life planted in the abodes of men by the hands of God himself, and the pledge of happiness far beyond that which our first parents enjoyed in Eden; the dove from the ark, bearing to earth the olive branch; the sealed fountain whose waters have never been troubled with aught of impurity; the fleece which receives the dew of heaven; finally, the delicate and odoriferous rose-bush through which Moses perceived the Divinity—a bush which, very far from being consumed by the fire, which destroys all things else, was in some sort preserved thereby, and lost, in its contact with the celestial flame, neither a leaf nor a flower.*

Like that enchanting figure which an ancient painter composed by borrowing a thousand detached beauties from the loveliest women of Greece, so the chaste spouse of the Holy Ghost united, in her own person, all that had been most admirable in the celebrated women of the old law. Fair as Rachel and Sarah, she united to the prudence of Abigail the heroic courage of Esther; Susannah, chaste as the flower whose name she bears;† Judith, whose crown of lilies was sprinkled with the blood of Holofernes;‡ Axa, whose hand was the ransom of a conquered city; and that mother, so illustrious in her misfortunes, who beheld all her sons die for the law; these were but faint images of Her who was to unite within herself all the perfections of the woman and the angel.

* Philo, who has made this remark, and who discovers in this burning bush a mysterious allegory, falsely applies it to the Jewish nation by a forced conjunction. Josephus, who also tried to penetrate this mystery, has succeeded no better. Those wild roses, emblematical of modest maidens who shed their sweet perfume in solitude, and who are made resplendent by contact with the Deity, without having their spotless white and delicate blush anywise taint-

ed thereby, these are the most striking image of Mary, that mystical rose of the new law.

† The name Susannah signifies *lily*. (Fabyn. ii. 2.)

‡ The ancients attribute to the lily the power of nullifying enchantments and warding off danger. "Judith encircled her brows," say the Rabbins, "with a garland of lilies, so as to make her way without fear into the tent of Holofernes." (Comm. R. R. in *Judith*.)

After an expectation of four thousand years, the time marked out by so many prophecies at length arrives; the shadows of the ancient law disappear, and Mary arises on the horizon of Judea like the star which heralds the approach of day.

CHAPTER II.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.



A WOMAN destined from all eternity to save the world by deifying our nature, and to bear in her chaste womb Him *whose tent is the sun, and whose footsteps are on the highest heavens*; a woman expected from the beginning of the world, revealed by God even in Paradise, and the acknowledged end of all the holy generations who succeeded

each other from the days of the patriarchs;* she can be no ordinary creature, and must needs have superhuman prerogatives. The pious belief of the immaculate conception of Mary is the result of that sentiment of respect. Heirs of an unfortunate parent, degraded by our rebellious father, blighted by the sentence which condemns him, so far from receiving from him the life of grace, we have received from him the death of sin, and, by a fearful doom, are condemned even before

* According to St. Augustine, the issue to which all the patriarchs aspired was Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ in Mary, through whom alone they could expect him. "And in fact," says he, "if nature, in all her efforts, tends to Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of Ages, it is

not that she flatters herself that she can reach the Son of God by herself; the extent of her power stops at the humble Mary, who was to engender the blessed seed, not by virtue of her ancestors, but by that of the Most High." (St. Augustine, 5, *Contr. Jul.* 9.)

our birth. This misfortune, inherent in the human race, accursed as one man in its very origin, is common to all, and the Scripture makes no exception in favor of any son of Adam. But the piety of the faithful cannot bear the idea that the Mother of God should be submitted to the scathing condemnation whereby we are stamped with the seal of hell even in our mother's womb; they have believed that the Sovereign Judge must have suspended the general effect of his rigorous law in favor of her who was brought into the world only to contribute to the accomplishment of the most secret, the most incomprehensible of the decrees of God—the Incarnation of the Messiah. Notwithstanding the silence of the Gospel, it has, therefore, been generally supposed

* that the Virgin, in anticipation of her divine maternity, was withheld, so to speak, on the verge of the dread abyss hollowed under our feet by the fatal disobedience of our first parents, and that her conception is immaculate as her life.

This belief, which the Greeks borrowed from Palestine, and adopted with enthusiasm,* gave rise to the institution of the feast of the Immaculate Conception, which was celebrated with great pomp in Constantinople, from the sixth century.† In the West, on the contrary, this doctrine met opponents, and powerful opponents; for St. Anselm, St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus, and many other pious and learned doctors, all great theologians,‡ and, moreover, devoted to the service of

* We find in the *Menées* (*Secret Practices*), so ancient in use among the Greeks, these words, which clearly prove their belief in the Immaculate Conception: "By a special dispensation, the Lord decreed that the Blessed Virgin should be as pure, from the first moment of her existence, as was suitable and becoming for her who was to conceive and to bring forth Jesus Christ, the *Word made flesh*."

† St. Andrew, of Crete, makes mention of this feast of the Immaculate Conception, the office of which St. Sabas had composed, and to which

St. Germanus, patriarch of Constantinople, had added an anthem.

‡ The opponents of the Immaculate Conception are wont to boast of having in their ranks St. Anselm, St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas, Albertus Magnus, &c. However great these names may be, yet we must not be dazzled by them; for, confronting these doctors with themselves, we find that they have positively maintained the *yea and nay*, which shows either that their opinions on this subject were not fixed, or that they had singular distractions.

Mary, maintained that she was conceived in sin and subjected to the common law, although she was very soon entirely purified therefrom by a special and excellent grace which commenced her glorious state of Mother of God.

But the belief in the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin prevailed, at length, over the opinion of the great doctors of the Middle Ages; what the eagles of the school had not seen was revealed to the simple. The writings of the doctors and of the Apostles were again searched; a more careful examination was made of what has been handed down to us regarding the greatness and glory of Mary, and that investigation served to throw a more vivid light on this doubtful point in the life of the Mother of Christ.

And in fact, going back even to the Apostles, we already see the title of *Blessed* and *Immaculate* applied to Mary.* The apostle St.

* Andrew, quoted by the Babylonian Abdias, expresses himself in these terms: "Even as the first Adam was made of the earth before it was cursed, so was the second Adam formed of a pure virgin who was never under the ban."

The saints and martyrs who lived in the third century, St. Hippolytus, martyr,† Origen,‡ St. Denis of Alexandria,§ all give to the Blessed Virgin the qualification of *pure* and *immaculate*. St. Cyprian|| is more precise, and says clearly that "there is a great difference between the rest of mortals and the Virgin, and that she has nothing in common with them but nature—not sin."

In the fourth century, St. Ambrose, who compares the Virgin "to a bright and luminous stem, whereon has never been either the knot of original sin or the bark of actual sin;"¶ St. John Chrysostom,** who proclaims her most holy, *immaculate*, blessed above all creatures; St. Jerome,†† who poetically calls her

* St. James the Major, and St. Mark, in their Liturgies.

† S. Hipp. in an oration on the Consummation of the World. ‡ Orig. hom. in S. Matth.

§ S. Den. in an epistle given in the *Biblioth. des PP.* || S. Cypr., de Nat. Virg.

¶ "Virgo in qua nec nodus originalis, nec cortex actualis culpæ fuit." S. Ambr. de Inst. Virg., ch. 5.

** S. Chrysostom, in his Liturgy.

†† St. Jerome's Commentaries on Psalm lxxvii. "Diduxit eos in nube diei: nubes est

the day-cloud which never knew darkness; St. Basil,* whom the defenders of the Immaculate Conception are proud to regard as their leader; these have never varied regarding that stainless purity which so well becomes the Queen of Angels.

In the fifth century, St. Augustine† cannot endure to have the name of Mary mentioned when there is question of sin, and St. Peter Chrysologus‡ affirms that “in the Virgin all were saved.”

St. Fulgentius, who lived in the beginning of the sixth century, says, that “the Blessed Virgin was entirely excluded from the first decree.”§ “It is very wrong,” says St. Ildefonso,|| archbishop of Toledo, who flourished in the same century, “It is very wrong to think of subjecting

* the Mother of God to the laws of nature; it is certain that she was free and exempt from all original sin, and that she has removed the curse of Eve.” St. John Damascene,¶ speaking expressly of her conception, says that she was “pure and *immaculate*.” In the ninth century, Theophanes, Abbot of Grandchamp; in the tenth, St. Fulbert, bishop of Chartres; towards the middle of the eleventh, Yves of Chartres,** one of the most brilliant lights of that period, and a little later, St. Bruno,†† founder of the Carthusians, are evidently in favor of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin.

Islamism itself declares for the Immaculate Conception, and the Arab commentators on the Koran have adopted, in their own way,

beata Virgo, quæ pulchre dicitur nubes diei, quia non fuit in tenebris, sed semper in luce.”

* St. Basil, in his Liturgy.

† It must be observed that St. Augustine was then defending the doctrine of Original Sin against the Pelagians.

‡ S. Peter Chrysol. *de Annonciat.*, Sermon 140.

§ S. Fulg., Sermon on the Glories of Mary.—Sermon on the Two Natures in Jesus Christ.

|| St. Ildefonso, in the book on the Virginity of Mary.

¶ St. John Damascene, *de Nativ. Mar.*, or. 1.

** The two holy bishops of Chartres, Fulbert and Yves, declared for the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Yves maintained it in the pulpit, and Fulbert says in his paraphrase on the angel's salutation to Mary: “Ave, Maria, electa et insignis inter filias, quæ immaculata semper extitisti ab exordis tuæ creationis, quia paritura eras Creatorem totius sanctitatis.”

†† St. Bruno, in his explanation of those words of Psalm ci.: *Dominus de cælo in terram aspexit*, which he applies to the Blessed Virgin.

the opinion of the Catholic theologians who have pronounced in favor of that doctrine. "Every descendant of Adam," says Cottada, "from the moment that he comes into the world, is touched on the side by Satan; Jesus and Mary are alone excepted; for God interposed between them and Satan a veil which preserved them from his fatal touch."

These testimonies in favor of the Immaculate Conception become weaker and less abundant in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; few writers of any note then took this view of the subject, and several men of eminent piety and learning maintained the contrary opinion. On the other hand, the feast of the Conception of the Virgin was established in many kingdoms.

William the Conqueror established this festival in Normandy as early as the year 1074; and, from the reign of his son, Henry the First, King of England and Duke of Normandy, it was celebrated at Rouen with extraordinary solemnity. "It was instituted," say the ancient chroniclers, "because of the holy apparition seen by an eccle-

* siastic worthy of credit, who found himself exposed to the perils of the sea during a storm." An old history of the antiquities of Rouen, adds that "even at the time of the institution of the feast, there was founded an association of the most notable persons of the city, who still annually elect one of their number to be prince of the confraternity, who holding the *puy* (or stage) open to all orators, in every language, gives excellent and valuable prizes to those who shall best and most faithfully celebrate the praises of the Virgin Mary, in her holy conception, by hymns, odes, sonnets, ballads, royal songs, &c."*

Thus the Virgin full of grace presided at the revival of poetry, and her Immaculate Conception furnished pious themes to the land of minstrels.

From Normandy, the feast of the Conception passed over to the English. The first council of Oxford, held by Stephen Langton, archbishop of Canterbury, in the year 1222, placed it in the number of holidays to be observed. In France,

* *Antiquités et Singularités de la Ville de Rouen.*
By N. Taillepié, Doctor of Theology.

in the year 1288, a bishop of Paris, Renoul de Hombière, bequeathed a considerable sum to found the office of that feast of the Blessed Virgin, which was about the same time introduced into the Lyonnais. Finally, a manuscript martyrology of the thirteenth century, found in the library of the Dominicans of Dijon, fixes the festival of the Conception of Our Lady on the 8th of December: "which also shows," say the learned Benedictines who deciphered that ancient manuscript, "that in St. Dominick's time, this feast was already celebrated in nearly all the Church."

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception had been banished from pulpits and from schools for a very long period of time, when some theologians, perceiving that this belief could be traced to the highest and purest sources of Christianity, undertook to revive it. The Francis-

cans, who first began to make a public profession of it, in speaking,* and in writing, supported it by reasons so strong and so convincing, that not only the mass of the faithful, but the most learned body in Europe, clung to it with enthusiasm. The Sorbonne, which was then called "the firmament of science, the prop of truth and piety in the church of God," decreed that all those who should be promoted to the degree of doctor were to engage themselves by oath to maintain this pious belief.† So, in succession, did the universities of Mayence, of Cologne, of Valentia, of Alcala, of Coïmbra, of Salamanca, and of Naples.

Amongst those religious orders in whom France has gloried for so many ages, the Dominicans alone, or nearly alone, showed themselves hostile to the pious doctrine of the spotless Conception; but the learned Benedictines, venerated even by

* Montfaucon, who journeyed through Italy about the year 1698, having visited at Pavia the library of the Signor Beleridus, renowned for his piety, was much surprised to see that his immense collection of books was composed solely of treatises written by the Franciscans in defence of the Immaculate Conception.

† This is the decree of the Sorbonne: "We

resolve and declare that no one shall be admitted for the future into our Faculty, until he swears to maintain all his life this doctrine of the Immaculate Conception." "Statuentes ut nemo deinceps huic nostro collegio adscribatur, nisi se hujus doctrinæ assertorum semper pro viribus futurum, simili juramento, profiteatur."

Protestants for their immense scientific labors, the Carthusians, the Carmelites, the order of St. Augustine, in Cluny, in Cîteaux, in Prémontré, and a host of others whom it would be superfluous to enumerate here, all adhered with an enlightened piety, an ardent zeal, and a profound conviction, to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

Councils, too, have been favorable to this belief. That of Bâle, in its

session of 27th September, 1429, declares that the doctrine which teaches that the glorious Virgin Mary was conceived without sin is a pious doctrine, conformable to ecclesiastical worship, to Catholic faith, to right reason, and to Holy Writ.* The Council of Avignon confirmed, in 1457, the decree of the Council of Bâle, and in their session of 1564,† the Fathers of the Council of Trent declared that, in their de-

* "There has arisen in this Council (that of Bâle) a difficult question on the Conception of the glorious Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and on the beginning of her sanctification; some saying that her soul was, for some time, or at least for some moments, subjected to original sin; others maintaining, on the contrary, that the love of God for her extended even to the first instant of her creation; that the Most High, who created her, and the Son who formed her to be his mother on earth, endowed her with singular and extraordinary graces; that Jesus Christ redeemed her in a superior and particular manner, preserving her from the original stain, and sanctifying her in the very first moment of her conception.

"Having, therefore, carefully examined the reasons and the authorities which, for several years, have been brought forward, on both sides, in the public acts of this holy Council; having, moreover, given our attention to many other things on the same subject; all weighed and maturely considered, we decide and declare that the doctrine which teaches that the glorious Virgin Mary, Mother of God, by a special favor, and by a preventing and operating grace, has

never been actually subjected to original sin, but that she has ever been holy, immaculate and exempt from all sin, original and actual; we declare that the doctrine which teaches all that, is a pious doctrine, conformable to ecclesiastical worship, to Catholic faith, to right reason, and to Holy Writ, and that, as such, it is to be approved, held, and followed by all Catholics, so that no one shall be hereafter permitted to preach or teach the contrary. Renewing, besides the institution of the feast of the holy Conception, which, by an ancient and praiseworthy custom, is solemnized on the 8th day of December, at Rome, as in all the other churches, we will and ordain that this festival be celebrated on the day before mentioned, under the name of the Conception of the Virgin, in all the churches, monasteries, and communities of the Catholic religion, and that it be observed with all manner of praise and gladness, and canticles of joy." The Council even attaches indulgences to this solemnity.

† "Declerat hæc sancta synodus non esse intentionis suæ comprehendere in hoc decreto, ubi de peccato originali agitur, beatam et IMMACULATAM Dei Genitricem." (Conc. Trid. sess. 1564.)

cree of 1546, on original sin, they did not pretend to include the Blessed and *Immaculate* Mother of God.

Notwithstanding the prudent reserve maintained by the Holy See in an affair wherein figured, for and against, famous doctors and illustrious theologians, it yet could not help showing, at times, which party had its sympathy. In the year 1483, Pope Sixtus IV. had expressly forbidden that the subject of the Conception of Our Lady* should be discussed in pulpits or in schools. This might be taken for a mere act of neutrality, had not this pontiff approved of the Office of the Conception composed by a monk of Verona, and granted a hundred days' indulgence to those who should assist thereat.† The successors of that great pope walked uniformly in the way which he had marked out and followed. In 1506, Cardinal Ximenes established in Spain, with the consent of Pope Julius II., a confraternity of

the Conception. The same pope confirmed, by a brief, dated the 17th of September, 1511, an order of nuns founded under the same title by Innocent VIII.‡ In the hymns which Zachary, bishop of Gordia, composed by order of Leo X. and Clement VII., it is said that Our Lady was created in the state of grace. In 1569, Pope Pius V. gave the Franciscans permission to celebrate the office of the Immaculate Conception, attaching thereto the same indulgences as to the feast of the Holy Sacrament. Paul V., by a bull of the year 1616, forbade any one to maintain, in public instructions, the opinion contrary to the Immaculate Conception; and Gregory XV., in 1622, extended that prohibition even to discourses and private conversations. It only remained for the popes to celebrate this festival in Rome itself, and this was done by Alexander VII. in 1661. It is evident, from this uniform conduct of the Holy See, that

* See the constitution of Sixtus IV., which commences with *Grave nimis*.

† See the constitution of Sixtus IV., which begins, *Cum præ excelsa* . . . Extravag. Commun.

‡ In this order of the Immaculate Conception,

each Sister consecrated herself expressly to this mystery by these unequivocal words, "I, Sister N . . . , for the love and service of Jesus Christ our Lord, and the Immaculate Conception of his Blessed Mother, do promise," &c.

all its sympathies were with the doctrine of the spotless conception. Nevertheless, it never chose to censure the contrary opinion, doubtless through respect for high and holy names.

A voice whose weight is immense, the great voice of Bossuet, made itself heard in this cause; the *shield of religion* nobly took his stand before the Blessed Virgin. "The opinion of the immaculate conception," says he, "has, I know not what, force which persuades pious souls. After the articles of faith, I see but few things better assured. Hence I am not surprised that the Paris school of theology obliges all its members to defend this doctrine. For my own part, I am delighted now to follow its intentions. After having been nursed on its milk, I willingly submit to its ordinance, the more so as this seems to me to be also the will of the Church; she has a very great veneration for the conception of Mary; she does not, it is true, oblige us to believe it *immaculate*; but she makes us understand that that belief is very pleasing

to her. There are things which she commands, and by them we manifest our obedience; there are others which she insinuates, and by them we may testify our affection. It is for our piety, if we are true children of the Church, not only to obey the commandments, but to bow to the slightest indications of the will of a mother so good and so holy."*

It is certain that the devotion to the Blessed Virgin has been common in Western Europe from the mediæval times; and, since then, it has made immense progress; but, without meaning to disparage France and Italy, those two nations so eminently devoted to the Virgin, it must be acknowledged that it is Spain which has labored the most zealously and ardently for the propagation of that doctrine.

The Spanish Church, protesting against the pretensions of the Church of Normandy, which attributes to itself the institution of the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady in the West, will have it that it has been observed in Spain ever since the seventh century.† It

* Bossuet, *Sermon on the Conception*.

† "La Iglesia española fué la primera que cel-

is certain that, in 1394, Don Juan I. of Arragon, who instituted it, in the name of the king, in the several provinces of Spain which had shaken off the yoke of Islamism, affirms that a great number of his predecessors had celebrated this festival before

embró la Immaculada Concepcion de Santissima Virgen ; euya fiesta tuvo lugar eu ella desde el siglo séptims." (El maestro Villados, en el cap. de los Festiv. Ecles. t. i., part ii.

* This is the decree of Don Juan I. of Arragon : " We, Don Juan, by the grace of God, King of Arragon and Valencia, &c. Why is it that some persons are amazed to hear that the Ever-blessed Mary, Mother of God, was conceived without original sin, whilst they doubt not that St. John the Baptist was sanctified in his mother's womb by the same God, who, coming down from the highest heavens and from the throne of the Most Holy Trinity, was made flesh in the blessed womb of a virgin ? What graces do we think could the Lord withhold from the woman who brought him forth by the splendid miracle of her fruitful virginity ? Loving his mother as he loves her, he must have invested with the most glorious privileges her conception, her nativity, and the other phases of her holy life.

" Why raise up a doubt as to the glorious conception of a Virgin so privileged, and of whom we are obliged, by Catholic faith, to believe wonders and greatness beyond the reach of our imagination ? Is it not, for all Christians, a much greater subject of admiration to see that a creature has begotten her Creator, and become a mother without ceasing to be a virgin ? How, then, can the human mind give adequate praise to that glorious Virgin, destined by the Almighty to possess, without the slightest corruption, the advantages of divine maternity,

him.* We shall not decide between the two churches ; but if Spain have but a doubtful claim to the institution of that festival of Mary, which is called in France and in England *the feast of the Normans*, she cannot be deprived of the honor of having

conjointly with the glory of the purest virginity, and to be placed over all the prophets, over all the saints, and over all the choirs of angels, as their queen ? Could the stain of original sin have been imputed to her even for an instant, there would then have been some deficiency of grace and of purity in that excellent Virgin, to whom the angel of the Lord, the ambassador of heaven, addressed these words : *Hail, Mary, full of grace ; the Lord is with thee ; blessed art thou amongst women !* Let those persons who speak so unreasonably be now silent ; let those who have only vain and frivolous arguments to propose against the Immaculate Conception, so privileged and so pure, of the Blessed Virgin, be ashamed to publish them, because it was expedient that she should be endowed with so great purity, that after that of God there could be none such imagined. It is likewise most fitting that she who became the Mother of the Creator and Father of all things should have been ever and always purest, fairest, and most perfect, having been chosen from the beginning and before all ages, by an eternal decree of God, to bear in her womb Him whom the whole world and all the immensity of the heavens cannot contain.

" But we who, of all Catholic kings, have received, from this Mother of mercy, so many graces and benefits undeserved by us, we firmly believe that the conception of this Blessed Virgin, in whose womb the Son of God vouchsafed to become man, was indeed holy and immaculate.

" Hence, we honor with a pure heart the

been the first to erect churches and altars under the title of the Mystery of the Immaculate Conception. In the year 1525, the Spaniards of Mexico placed the splendid cathedral of *Puebla de los Angeles* under the invocation of the immaculate Virgin, whose sacred image stood

mystery of that Immaculate and Blessed Conception of the most Blessed Virgin, Mother of God ; and we, with all the royal house, do annually solemnize the feast thereof, even as our most illustrious predecessors, of glorious memory, did celebrate the same, having established a perpetual confraternity thereof. Wherefore, we do hereby ordain that this festival of the Immaculate Conception be celebrated every year in perpetuity, with great solemnity and respect, throughout all the kingdoms subject unto us, by all faithful Catholics, whether religious or secular priests and laity, of whatsoever state or condition they may be ; and that, henceforward, it is not permitted, but expressly forbidden, to all preachers, and to all those who publicly expound the Gospel, to say, to advance, or to publish anything that might, in any way whatsoever, be prejudicial or hurtful to the purity and holiness of that Blessed Conception ; but, on the contrary, we ordain that preachers, and other persons who have had opposite sentiments, shall keep silent, since the Catholic faith does not in any way oblige us to maintain and profess the contrary opinion ; and that others, who cherish in their hearts our own holy and salutary opinion, may publish it in their discourses, and hasten to manifest their devotion by celebrating, through the praises of the Most High, the glory and honor of his holy mother, who is the Queen of Heaven, the gate of paradise, the protectress of our souls, the sure port of salva-

* sparkling with jewels over an altar of massive silver, surrounded by a multitude of elegant pillars, with plinths and capitals of burnished gold. The faithful of Mexico raised in her honor, in their metropolitan church, an altar and a statue of massive silver, adorned with a mag-

tion, and the anchor of hope for sinners who have confidence in her. We now hereby expressly establish, in perpetuity, that if it happen that any preacher, or any other of our subjects, of any state or condition, fail to observe this ordinance, unless exempt by reason of some of our other edicts, that they be expelled from their convents and houses, and, whilst they retain that contrary opinion, they shall be driven, as our enemies, from all parts of our dominions. Commanding likewise, and decreeing, in our knowledge and mature deliberation, that all and each of our officers, whether at home or abroad, present or future, shall observe, and cause to be observed, with great diligence and respect, our present edict, as soon as they are made cognizant thereof ; and that each, in his district, shall have it published exactly, solemnly, and by sound of trumpet in all the accustomed places, to the end that no one may plead ignorance, and that the devotion of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, so long preserved in the hearts of Christians, may increase more and more, and that no one may ever again be heard to express a contrary opinion. In faith whereof we command that these present acts be dispatched everywhere, duly authorized by our sign and seal, hereto attached.—Given at Valencia, on the 2d of February, being the Feast of the Purification of that Ever-blessed Virgin, the year of our Lord 1384, and the eighth of our reign."

nificence truly Peruvian. A little later, the Mexican cathedrals of Merida, Maracaibo, and Nabana were founded under the invocation of the immaculate Virgin; nor did Peru remain behind. This splendid accession to the doctrine of the conception without sin, did not suffice for the zeal of the nations subject to the Spanish domination. In 1618, the vice-king of Naples, his court and his army, made a vow, in the Church of Our Lady the Great, to believe and to defend the immaculate conception of the Virgin. A commemorative pillar, surrounded by a magnificent statue of Our Lady, with the symbolical emblems of her victory over original sin, was raised in testimony of that public engagement so chivalrously contracted.

The Spanish people, who have at all times specially signalized themselves in this devotion, have adopted

it so far that not a single preacher ascends a pulpit without prefacing his sermon by a profession of faith in the spotless conception,* and it has even been introduced into the familiar phrases used in greeting.†

Finally, in 1771, whilst the destroying wind of philosophy was violently shaking religious belief in France and several other countries of Europe, the King of Spain, Charles III., instituted an order in honor of the Virgin conceived without sin, and solemnly declared her, with the assembled Cortes and a brief of the Holy See, *Universal patrona de Espana è Indias*.‡

In France, notwithstanding the license and the unbelief which the flood of revolution left behind it, this doctrine is gaining ground, and penetrating even to the most distant hamlets. The Diocese of Paris is particularly distinguished

* Alabado sea el santísimo Sacramento del altar, y la Immaculada Concepcion de la Virgen Maria, concebida sin pecado original en el primer instante de su ser natural.

† On entering a Spanish house, the first words spoken by the visitor, even before wishing good day, are these: "Ave, Maria purisima;" the people of the house immediately answer: "Sin

pecado concebida, santísima," (holiest, conceived without sin.)

‡ "Por la devocion que desde nuestra infancia hemos tenido á Maria santísima en su misterio de la Immaculada Concepcion, deseamos poner bajo los divinos auspicios de esta celestial protectora la... Nueva Orden, y mandamos que sea reconocida en ella por

for its zeal in propagating this pious belief, which flourishes there under the protecting shadow of its archbishops,* confirmed by the supernatural things related of the miraculous medal struck in honor of the mystery of the spotless Conception.

If the tradition of the Apostles, the inclination of the Church, the authority of Councils, the adhesion of universities and religious orders, the assent of kings and nations, the dedication of temples and altars, the

patrona....." (*Leg. 12, t. ii., l. vi. Noviss. Rec.*)

* "It is a fact we would wish to establish, and to make known in even the most remote parts of the Catholic world: in our Diocese, this devotion has been rooted deeper and deeper with passing time, and misfortunes have come in plenty to confirm, increase, and extend it with marvellous rapidity." (*See the mandamus of*

† foundation of offices, the institution of confraternities and royal orders have any weight in a controversy which has astonished the Pagans themselves,† then the cause of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, so long pending before the tribunal of Catholic opinion, appears to us gained; and we do not think it rash to suppose that God, preserving his divine Mother from the original stain, said to her, as Assuerus did to Esther, "This law is not made for thee, but for all others."

His Grace the Archbishop of Paris on the occasion of the consecration of the Church of Our Lady of Loretto.)

† "How!" exclaimed Julian the Apostate, addressing a bishop who maintained the universality of original sin; "How! dost thou, then, subject the birth of Mary to the empire of the Devil!" (*St. Augustine, l. iv., Op. imperf.*)



CHAPTER III.

THE BIRTH OF MARY.



ABOUT the time when the religion and the prosperity of the Hebrews were on the decline at the period pointed out by the prophets, and when the royal sceptre was in stranger hands, according to the great prediction of Jacob, there was in Nazareth, a city of Lower Galilee, not far from Mount Carmel, a just man named Joachim,* of the

tribe of Juda and the race of David† by Nathan; his wife, who, according to the opinion of St. Augustine, was of the sacerdotal tribe,‡ was called Anne, a name which, in Hebrew, signifies *graceful*.§

They were both just before Jehovah, and walked in the way of His commandments with a perfect heart;|| but the Lord seemed to have turned away his face from them, for a great blessing was wanting unto them; they were childless, and therefore sorrowful,

* A biographer of Mary, Christopher de Castro, discovered, according to the Rabbins, St. Hilary and other Fathers of the Church, that the father of Mary had two names, Heli and Joachim. The Arabs and the Mussulmans know him under that of Amram, son of Matheus, and distinguish him from another Amram, father of Mary, the sister of Moses. (D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, t. ii.)

† According to the proto-Gospel of St. James and the Gospel of the nativity of Mary, Joachim was of the race of David. Justin, who flourished only fifty years after the death of St. John the Apostle, who was born in Palestine, and was in a position to collect traditions still quite recent, likewise says that Mary was descended in a direct line from David.

‡ St. August., *De consens. Evangel.*

§ The Mahometans, inheritors of the Arabian

traditions, know the blessed mother of the Virgin under her own name, which is Hannah; she was, according to them, the daughter of Makhor, and wife of Amram. (D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, t. ii.)

|| St. Anne and St. Joachim were publicly honored in the Church in the first ages. St. John Damascene highly extols their virtue. The Emperor Justinian I. had a church built in Constantinople under the invocation of St. Anne, about the year 550. The body of the saint was removed, it is said, from Palestine to Constantinople in 710. (See Godescard, t. v. p. 319.) Luther had a great devotion for St. Anne previous to his heresy; it was to that saint that he promised to embrace the monastic state, in presence of the corpse of a comrade killed by lightning before his eyes.

because in Israel barrenness was a disgrace.

Joachim, who loved his wife for her exceeding mildness and her eminent virtues, would not increase her misfortune by giving her those letters of divorce which the law then granted so easily;* he kept her with him, and that pious pair, humbly resigned to the divine behest, passed their days in labor, prayer, and alms-deeds.

So many virtues could not go unrewarded; after twenty years of barrenness, Ann conceived, as it were by a miracle, and brought forth that favored creature who was more perfect, more holy, and more agreeable to the Lord than all the elect taken together.

* It was the Pharisees who had introduced this abuse of divorce, so loudly censured by our Lord (*Matth.* ch. xix. v. 8); they taught that a wife might be put away for the most trifling cause; for instance, for having cooked her *master's* meat over much, or even for not being sufficiently handsome. This was the opinion of Hillel and of Akiba. (*Basnage*, l. vii. ch. 22.)

† The 8th of September, according to the teaching of the Church. Baronius has it that Mary was born in the year of Rome 733, twenty-one years before the vulgar era, on the 8th of September, being Saturday, at the dawn of day. Le Nain de Tillemont says that the Virgin was

It was about the beginning of the month Tisri,† which is the first of the civil year of the Jews, whilst the smoke of holocausts was ascending to heaven for the expiation of the sins of the people, that the promised Virgin was born—she who was to repair the primitive transgression;‡ her birth was humble, like that of her divine Son; her parents were of the people, although descended from a long line of kings, and led, to all appearance, an obscure life; that mystical rose, whom St. John afterwards beheld clothed with the sun as with a radiant garment, was to blossom, in the scorching wind of adversity, on a withered and leafless stem.§

The cradle of the Queen of Angels

born in the year 734 of the Roman era. This opinion is the most generally followed.

‡ Here is what the Turks relate regarding the birth of the Blessed Virgin. The wife of Amram (*Joachim*) said to God, "Lord, I have consecrated to thee the fruit of my womb; vouchsafe to receive it, O Thou who knowest and hearest all." When she had brought forth, she added, "Lord, I have brought a daughter into the world; I have called her Miriam (Mary); I place her under thy protection, she and her posterity, to the end that thou mayst preserve them from the snares of Satan." (*Koran*, ch. iii.)

§ Isaias had foretold it, saying: *There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a*





From the Bible of the Old Testament

was neither adorned with gold nor covered with the richly-embroidered quilts of Egypt, neither perfumed with spikenard, myrrh, nor aloes, like those of the Hebrew princes; it was formed of flexible branches, and bands of coarse linen confined the little arms which were one day to cradle the Saviour of the world. The children of kings, whilst yet wrapped up in their sumptuous swaddling-clothes, behold the great ones of the land humbling themselves before them, and calling them by high-sounding titles. The woman who was to be the Spouse and the Mother of God bestowed her first smile on poor humble women, who perhaps said within themselves, as they remembered the obscurity and hardship of their lot, "Another slave is born!"

It was the custom amongst the Israelites to assemble the family on the ninth day, in order to give the new-born child its name. The daughter of Joachim received from

* her father the name of Miriam (Mary), which means in the Syriac language, *lady, sovereign, mistress*, and in Hebrew, *star of the sea*.

"And assuredly," says St. Bernard, "the Mother of God could not have a name more appropriate, nor more expressive of her high dignity. Mary is, in fact, that fair and luminous star which shines over the vast and stormy sea of this world."

There is hidden in that divine name a spell so potent, and of such marvellous sweetness, that merely to pronounce it softens the heart, merely to write it beautifies the style. "The name of Mary," says St. Anthony of Padua, "is sweeter to the lips than honey,* more grateful to the ear than the sweetest music, more delicious to the heart than the purest joy."

Eighty days after the birth of a daughter, the Jewish woman was solemnly purified in the temple where she offered her first-born child. Conformably to the law of

flower shall rise up out of his root; for this word *root* signifies, in Hebrew, as St. Jerome observes (*in Is. c. xi.*) a stem without branches and without leaves, to denote, continues this holy doctor, that the august Mary was to be born of the race

of David, when that family should have lost its splendor and its royalty.

* *Nomen Virginis Mariæ, mel in ore, melos in aure, jubilum in corde*, is the poetical expression of St. Anthony of Padua.

Moses, she then offered to the Lord, * a lamb or two doves; the latter was the holy offering of the poor, and was that of Joachim's wife.

But the gratitude of the pious mother went still farther than the customary sacrifice; worthy imitator of Anna, the wife of Eleana, she offered to the Lord a victim more pure, a dove more innocent, than those which fell bleeding and palpitating under the sacrificing knife. She had no votive crown of purest gold wherewith to adorn the walls of the temple; * she laid at the feet of the Most High the crown of her old age, the child whom He had given her, and solemnly promised to bring back her daughter to the Temple, and to consecrate her to the service of the holy place as soon as her mind was capable of knowing good from evil. Mary's father ratified

this vow, which then became binding. †

The ceremony being finished, the holy couple took their way back to their own country, to that country so barren in regard to great men that Israel was far from expecting a prophet to arise there, ‡ and they returned to their humble dwelling, which was ever the asylum of the poor and the stranger. There it was that the child of benediction, the child of grace and of miracle, passed her early years, the delight of her family, growing up like one of those lilies whose loveliness is praised by Jesus Christ himself, and which have, as St. Bernard poetically says, "the odor of hope," *habens odorem spei*. Anne was herself to nurse the child, according to the custom of her people. §

Mary's understanding, like the

* *Mach. lib. i. cap. 4.*

† There were amongst the Jews two sorts of vows; the first, *neder*, was a simple vow, after which men could purchase a dispensation of what they had vowed to the Lord (of this kind was the vow of Ann, mother of Mary); the second, *cherem*, was a vow indispensably binding, whereby all right and title to the thing promised was irrevocably given up. Every Israelite could thus consecrate whatever belonged to him—houses, lands, cattle, children, slaves, *

&c.; and the things so consecrated could neither be sold nor redeemed at any price whatsoever.

‡ "Can anything good come forth from Nazareth?" asked Nathaniel of those who spoke to him of CHRIST. "Because the place was small and contemptible," says St. John Chrysostom, "and not only that particular place, but the whole of Galilee." (*Serm. 9; in S. Matth.*)

§ In Judea, the women did not often dispense with nursing their children; there are only three

day in some favored regions, had scarcely a dawn, and shone clearly out from her earliest days. Her precocious fervor and the wisdom of her discourse, at a period of life when other children still enjoy but a purely physical existence, made the parents judge that the time of their separation was come; and when Joachim had offered to the

Lord, for the third time since the birth of his daughter, the first-fruits of the crops and fruits of his small inheritance, the husband and wife, grateful and resigned, set out for Jerusalem, in order to deposit within the sacred precincts of the temple the treasure which they had received from the HOLY ONE of Israel.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRESENTATION.



HE Cison rolled majestically on, its reddish waves swelled by the equinoctial rains,* and the green mountains of Galilee were beginning to put on their snowy covering, when Mary's pa-

rents undertook the journey to Jerusalem. There is no knowing the motive which induced them to leave their native province during the rainy season. It might be that they wished to assist at the grand solemnities of the Feast of the Dedication; or perhaps it was that they simply regulated their departure by the

nurses mentioned in Scripture; they are those of Rebecca, of Miphiboseth, and of Joas; then it is to be observed that Rebecca was a foreigner, and the others royal personages.

* The Cison is a small river which flows between Nazareth and Mount Carmel; shallow and insignificant in summer, like all the water-courses of Palestine, it becomes a considerable

period of Zachary's service in the temple which only took place at regular intervals.*

Having before them a journey of several days, in the midst of the rainy season, with an infant child, the pious and prudent travellers journeyed not towards the Holy City by the wild and pebbly road which winds amid the arid plains, the foamy torrents and deep ravines of the mountains of Samaria, where the frosts of winter had already set in. They descended by the woody slopes of Carmel, into the charming plains which extend between the mountains of Palestine and the

coasts of Syria, that fair and favored region, whose climate is so mild that the orange-trees blossom in the depth of winter, and the flowers of summer bloom in December.† Having left behind them the rich pasturage-lands where rose of old the tents of Issachar, that race of pastoral astronomers ‡ whom the burning breath of the wrath of God had scattered, like a handful of straw, over the wild and mountainous regions of Media; having admired as they passed, the groves of palms, banana-trees and pomegranates clothing the hills which were once the fair inheritance of the children

stream during the rainy season. The troops of Sisara, general of the army of Jabin, were drowned in the swollen waters of this river while trying to force a passage.

* According to the ordinance of David, the priests were divided into twenty-four classes or courses, each of which served its week. Each course was subdivided into seven parties, of which each officiated in its turn; each individual of these parties had his share of the service assigned to him by lot. (1 Par. ch. xxiv.) Zacharias belonged to the course or service of Abiu. (*Prid., Hist. of the Jews.*)

† Volney mentions having seen, on the coasts of Syria, orange-trees loaded with fruit in the open air, in the month of January. "With us," says he, "nature has divided the seasons by months: there, it may be said, that they are only divided by hours. At Tripoli, we suffer

from the excessive warmth of July: six hours' journey brings us to the adjacent mountains, where the air has the temperature of March. On the other hand, we are chilled by the frost of December in the mountain districts: a day's journey brings us to the shore, where we find the summer-flowers in bloom."

‡ St. Jerome says that the sons of Issachar were the sages who made the chronological calculations, and marked the festivals. (*Hieron., Quæst. in 1 Paral.* 112, p. 1390, *et in Gen.*, 49.) This tradition agrees with that of the rabbins, who relate that the tribe of Issachar were much given to the study of astronomy. (*Maimon., in Kiddosch, hachodesch, et Zachuth, in Juchasin.*) Finally, the Scripture authorizes this tradition, since it mentions that the sons of Issachar knew all times to order what Israel should do. (1 Par. xii. 32.)

of Joseph, that noble and warlike race, renowned for their skill in archery, our Galilean travellers sped along by the small stream of Gaas, overhung by its graceful willows, traversed the groves of Ramatha, that pretty town, which resembles a cameo laid in a basket of roses, and at length gained the confines of the ancient territory of the Jebusites. There, all was changed: no more flowers, no more verdure, no more balmy breezes, laden with the perfumes of the citron-tree. All around were sterile rocks, profound ravines through which the wind swept in mournful murmurs; abrupt and craggy mountains, resounding with the hoarse cry of the eagle; in a word, a landscape the grandest, the most desolate, and the most cheerless that can well be imagined.

The little party had been following, for some time, a rugged path which crossed the table-land of a barren mountain, when Joachim suddenly stopped at an abrupt turn of the road, and stretched his arm

* towards the south with an emotion of religious exultation mingled with national pride. The object which he thus pointed out to his companions was well worthy of being remarked, for Asia had then nothing more magnificent or fantastic. It was a city about thirty-three stadas in circumference; set in stone like a ruby of Beloochistan; a city of marble, of cedar, and of gold, whose splendor had in it something gloomy, ferocious and suspicious, denoting an unsettled power and a permanent dread of the stranger; a state of things abounding in strange contrasts. There were seen enormous towers, magnificent as palaces, and palaces fortified like citadels. Its temple, radiant with gold, stood glittering on a narrow table-land of the highest mountain, like the full-orbed moon when it rises over the snowy heights of Lebanon.* It was an almost impregnable fortress, held in awe by the people of God, whilst the tower of Antonia, with its four elegant turrets of pol-

* The exterior front of the Temple was so thickly covered with plates of gold that, when the day began to appear, it was no less dazzling than the rays of the rising sun. As for the other

sides, where there was no gold, their stones were so white that, at a distance, that superb pile of building, looked like a mountain covered with snow. (Joseph. *De Bello*, b. v. ch. xiii.)

ished marble, kept jealous and unceasing watch over the precincts of the temple.

A triple inclosure of massive stone walls,* with ninety forts, encompassed that singular city, and all around it lay gloomy valleys, dizzy heights and inaccessible rocks. That stately and warlike city, which seemed as though it were transported by magic from the fabulous regions of Ginnistan,† to be placed under the cloudless sky of Palestine, was that Jewish Paradise (*Ghangh-dix-houcht*), so poetically mourned on the banks of the Euphrates,—the city of David and the Maccabees; that Jerusalem which, even in its slavish abjection, is still hailed throughout the East by the ancient appellation then given it by the father of Mary: *el Cods* (the Holy City)!

The parents of the Virgin entered the capital of Judea by the gate of

Rama, which was shaded by a tower‡ so lofty that its flat roof commanded a view of Mount Carmel, the great sea, and the mountains of Arabia. From its summit still floated the green banner of Judas Maccabeus with its sacred device; no longer understood by the soldiers who kept guard around, for they were Thracians, Galatians, Germans, and the fair-haired sons of Gaul, whom Herod, in his fear of the Jews, kept always in pay, and who were almost as odious to the people as himself.

The travellers then took their way through some dark and winding streets, bordered with heavy-looking square houses, without windows, their flat roofs forming long unbroken lines that looked like fortifications, and stopped in the eastern part of the city, in front of a house of unpretending appearance, pointed

* "Extrema rupis abrupta: et turres, ubi mons juvisset, in sexaginta pedes, inter devexa, in centenos vicosque attollebantur; mira specie, ac procul intuentibus pares." (Tacit. *Hist.* cap. v.)

† Ginnistan, which is placed by the marvelous legends of the Arabs and Assyrians, at the foot of Mount Caucasus on the shores of the Caspian Sea, was the abode of the Peris, a fair

and fabulous race bearing much resemblance to our fairies. These powerful beings, born before the Deluge, were supposed to command the elements, and to create whatever they wished. Their capital city, which they had carefully fortified in order to keep off the incursions of the Dives, a formidable race of evil spirits, was of marble, gold, rubies, and diamonds.

‡ The tower Psephina.

out by tradition as the dwelling of St. Ann.*

Having purified himself for seven days, according to the custom of those who went to offer sacrifice in the temple,† Joachim provided himself with the lamb which he was to present to the Lord, put on white garments,‡ gathered together such of his relations and friends as were in Jerusalem, and went up with them to the temple as resolutely as though he were about to make an assault.§

That temple of the Lord of Hosts, where the Virgin then presented herself like the dove with the olive branch, had undergone numerous vicissitudes. One of the ancestors of Mary, the wise son of David, had made it the glory of the East. He lavished upon it the gold of Ophir, the perfumes of Saba, the cedar of

Lebanon, brass which the fleets of Tyre brought from far-off lands, and silver, which was then so plenty that it had become a base metal. That splendor had passed away like a vision of the night, thanks to the insatiable greed of the tribes of Egypt and Chaldea, a score of times had it been despoiled, and as often restored to its former splendor, and finally it arose from its ruins under Zorobabel, who built it, sword in hand, notwithstanding the active opposition of many envious nations. Nevertheless, the second temple, with all its unheard-of magnificence, was as inferior to the first in grandeur as in sanctity. It was in vain that the Jews poured forth upon it with a liberal hand *the strength of wheat and the blood of the vine*; that rivers of gold, flowing in from every point of the compass, unceasingly

* A monastery was erected on this house of St. Ann, but it has since been converted into a mosque. Under the Christian kings it was inhabited by nuns. (See *Itinéraire de Paris à Jerusalem*, vol. 2, p. 211.)

† It was not only that they had to present themselves in the temple with their victim; the law required that they should remain outside for seven entire days, and that they should solemnly purify themselves on the third and seventh days with ashes and hyssop; that done, they

might offer their sacrifice. (Philo, *Tract de Sacrif.*, c. 3.)

‡ According to the Rabbins, the sacrifice was null when he who offered it was not clothed in white. (Basn. b. ix. ch. iv.)

§ This was of obligation; the Hebrews were to go up to the temple with as much ardor as a soldier goes up to battle; they found this precept in the fifty-fifth Psalm, where David said that he went to the house of God as to a strong city. (See Basn., *Histoire des Juifs*, b. vii. ch. 17.)

replenished its sacred treasury; that the pagan kings, recognizing the awful sanctity of the God of Israel, sent thither the most magnificent offerings.* Nothing of all that could supply the absence of the Ark, with which had disappeared the tables of the law, that is to say, the decrees of God written by Himself amid the lightnings of Sinai; the miraculous rod, which constituted the most ancient title of the sons of Aaron to the supreme priesthood; and the manna of the desert, which confirmed by the miracle of its long preservation, so many ancient prodigies wrought for the deliverance of Israel.

Those precious objects were lost, together with the sacred fire, which was only to be fanned by the breezes of the holy mountain on the brazen altar of holocausts; and the oil of unction, prepared by Moses, from which the priests and the kings

* Josephus gives a minute description of the magnificent table of massive gold incrustated with precious stones, and the equally splendid vases given by Ptolemy Philadelphus to the Temple; nearly all the princes of Asia had enriched it with their gifts, and, about the time of the Presentation of the Virgin, the Empress Livia sent there in her name and that of Augustus, some superb vases of gold. (Joseph. *de Bello*, b. ii. ch. 17.—Philo, *ad Cajum*.)

derived their lofty title: *anointed of the Lord*. But most mournful of all, the *Schekina*, that radiant cloud which attested the divine presence, had never been seen in the sacred temple, and even the jewels of the breast-plate, that last and most brilliant oracle of the God of hosts, had lost their prophetic lustre.† This it was that filled the hearts of the sons of Aaron with bitterness when they compared the house of Zorobabel with the temple of the son of David; and this it was that made the doctors of the law declare that the fulfillment of the prophecy of Aggeus was not to be hoped for, unless the Messiah himself appeared in person in the new temple.

Having passed that magnificent gate of Corinthian brass which twenty Levites could hardly close at night, and which, to the great dismay of the Deicide people,‡ opened

† God made use of the precious stones which the high-priest wore on the breast-plate in order to presage victory; for, before they encamped, these stones emitted so bright a lustre that the people thereby recognized the presence and assistance of his divine majesty; but for two hundred years past, the breast-plate has ceased to emit that light. (Fl. Joseph. *Ant. Jud.*, b. iii. ch. 8.)

‡ Joseph. *de Bello*, l. vi.

of its own accord four years before the ruin of Jerusalem, Mary and her parents found themselves in a vast inclosure paved with black and white flags, and surrounded by lofty piazzas which, in time of war, served as ramparts.* A crowd of strangers and of natives, whose brilliant costumes of glaring colors recalled the idea of an immense bed of tulips, walked to and fro in conversation in that forum of Jerusalem, which was not considered sacred, and was called the Gentiles' Porch, because idolators could not, under pain of death, advance farther.†

At some distance from the crowd, under Solomon's porch, stood the proud aristocrats of Israel, clad in scarlet and purple, or in those long Babylonian robes embroidered with gold, which cost enormous sums, awaiting the hour of prayer, and detaching themselves from the strangers with a haughty reserve that savored of contempt. Joachim,

* whose birth, notwithstanding his poverty, was as noble as that of any of the princes of his people, bent his steps in that direction, sure of a cordial reception; for those Jews, so disdainful towards the Gentiles,‡ were amongst themselves like brethren, especially when they belonged to the same line. Scarcely had they perceived him when a number of illustrious ladies, warriors, and princes of the house of David, came to meet him, and, after the usual salutations, they joined the Galilean family, as though to form a suitable train for Mary.§ The Fathers, who note this circumstance, have piously supposed that those great personages, the flower of the Jewish nobility, were not there by mere accident, but that God, who would have the future mother of the Messiah enter his temple in triumph, had divinely inspired them to be there at that particular time.

* Tacit., *Historiarum*, l. v.

† Joseph. *de Bello*, l. v. and vi.

‡ Basnage remarks that at the time of Jesus Christ the Jews regarded the Gentiles as dogs, and mortally hated them. "If idolators are drowning," taught the doctors, "no one is to take them out of the water, or render them any assist-

ance; the utmost that can be done for them is not to plunge them deeper into the water, or throw them farther down the precipice." (Basnage, l. vii. ch. 25.)

§ "Primarios quoque Hierosolymitas viros et mulieres interfuisse huic deductioni, succinentibus universis angelis." (Isid. *de Thess.*)

From the middle of the Gentiles' * Porch arose two other inclosures, both sacred, which composed the temple. Seen from below, that majestic and resplendent edifice presented a quadrangular mass, whose walls, of alabaster whiteness, were pierced with ten superb gates, covered with thick plates of gold and silver. As the temple, properly so called, crowned the summit of Mount Moria, a becoming site for the dwelling of the *God of Mountains*, the ground had a gradual ascent, and the walls were completely surrounded by marble steps, which somewhat concealed their height.

Having ascended the steps of the temple, the purified group, in whose midst was the holy child about to be consecrated to God, paused a mo-

* The *chel* was a space of ten cubits between the court of the Gentiles and that of the women.

† The *tephilim* were small pieces of parchment whereon they wrote four sentences of Scripture, with ink made expressly for the purpose; the Jews wore them at the bend of the left arm and on the middle of the forehead. These *tephilim*, or *phylacteries*, were much in use at the time of Jesus Christ, since they were paraded as marks of distinction, and called forth his censure. (Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, b. vii. c. 17.)

‡ The Pharisees always walked with their heads bowed down, in order to affect a more

ment on the narrow platform of the *chel*.* There the Pharisees displayed their *tephilim*,† and threw back over their subdued brows‡ a flap of their taled, which was composed of fine white wool,§ adorned with purple pomegranates and small violet twists. The undaunted captains of Herod half concealed their dazzling breast-plates under their long cloaks, and the daughters of Sion wrapped themselves more closely in their veils of purple, of azure, or of Syrian gauze embroidered with gold, through respect for the holy angels of the sanctuary.|| That done, they entered the temple by the eastern gate, the most gorgeous of all; that gate which poured forth streams of liquid gold when the Romans, unable to force an en-

humble appearance, and sometimes even with their eyes closed, so as to avoid seeing anything that might be a cause of temptation; hence it often happened that, in passing along the streets they knocked their head against the walls. (Basn., b. iii. ch. 3.)

§ *Taled*, a species of square cloak, which the Jews wore while praying in the temple; some fastened it around their neck, others threw it over their head; this last custom was the most general. (Basnage, tom. v. book vii. chap. 17.)

|| Ideo debet mulier potestatem habere supra caput propter angelos. (1 Cor. xi. 10.)

trance through it, opened it by means of fire.*

In our cold northern regions vast edifices are required to shelter the people from the inclemency of the weather. Hence, we have immense cathedrals, made to contain whole multitudes; but in ancient Asia the temples were for little else than the use of the priests; the people prayed without. In Israel, the *engdah* or sacred assembly was usually held in the women's court. The second inclosure was so called because the Jewish women, whom the old law, in its severity, assimilated to slaves, could not advance farther. Separated from their sons and husbands, who remained, during the religious ceremonies, either in the open air of the square or under the arches of the peristyle, they prayed apart in the upper galleries, their heads humbly inclined towards the house of Jehovah, whose magnificent roof

of cedar, bristling with needles of gold, they beheld at some distance.†

The ceremony of the presentation undoubtedly took place in the women's court, and not in the very interior of the sanctuary, as some authors have said. It opened with a solemn sacrifice. The gate of Nicanor, opening to admit the victim, gave a perspective view of the inner inclosure, like a glimpse of that lost paradise, whose golden palaces, shaded by lofty cedars, were, as the Pharisees taught, the dwelling of the just.‡ Through the marble columns of a stately portico, overhung by the gigantic leaves and fruit of a golden vine, there was seen a structure which, at first sight, seemed of massive gold, so dazzling was the effect of its golden front of a hundred cubits as it reflected the rays of the Asiatic sun. An incredible number of votive garlands,

* Josephus mentions that, when Titus gave orders to set fire to the gates of the second inclosure of the temple, the molten gold and silver ran down in streams, as water streams from a fountain. (*De Bello*, c. xxiii.)

† This precaution had been taken in order to prevent the doves and pigeons, who were very numerous in Jerusalem, from resting on the temple and soiling its roof.

‡ The Jews believed that the souls of the just went to the Garden of Eden, from which the living were debarred by the angel of death. They are sublime in their descriptions of this place, whose palaces, they say, are of precious stones, and its rivers of odorous perfumes. In hell, on the contrary, a river of fire flows over the damned, who suffer the extremes of heat and cold. (Maimonides, Menasse, &c.)

whose ears of corn, lilies, pomegranates, and vine-leaves were composed of emeralds, topazes, carbuncles, rubies, according to their color, were attached to the walls by cords of gold; and when the wild mountain-breeze agitated their leaves, you would have taken them for real flowers, so exquisite was the workmanship and so perfect the imitation of nature. Here and there were seen tattered and blood-stained banners, wrested by the brave Asmonian princes from the Greeks of Syria in the glorious wars of the Independence, and consecrated to the God of Hosts by their priestly and warrior hands. Herod, that cruel prince but valiant leader, had recently added thereto the standards taken in his successful expeditions against the Arabs; and the sight of those warlike trophies filled with patriot pride and martial ardor those Jewish hearts, who regarded death as a trifling thing when there was question of fighting for what was dearer to them than gold, family, and life—the temple!

The priests and the Levites assembled in the inner inclosure received from the hands of Joachim the victim

* of *prosperity*.* Those ministers of the living God were not crowned with laurel, like the Pagan priests. A sort of round mitre, composed of very thick linen; a linen tunic, long, white, and without fullness, confined by a broad zone embroidered with sky-blue and purple; these composed the sacerdotal costume, which was worn only in the temple. One of the sacrificers took the lamb, and, after a short invocation to the God of Jacob, slew him, turning his head towards the north; the blood was caught in a vase of brass, and sprinkled around the temple. These preliminary rites being gone through, the priest arranged on a golden dish a portion of the flesh of the victim, together with part of the entrails, which had been carefully washed by the Levites in the hall of the spring. He wrapped up the oblation in a coat of fat, covered it with incense, and threw upon it the salt of the covenant; then, ascending barefoot to the platform in front of the brazen altar, he deposited the offering on the sound, firm logs, which, stripped

* Whether they asked a favor of God, or thanked him for having bestowed one, it was called the *sacrifice of prosperity*.

of their bark, fed the sacred fire. The remainder of the host, with the exception of the breast and the right shoulder, which belonged to the priests, was given back to Joachim, in order to furnish a banquet for his friends and neighbors, according to custom.*

The last sounds of the priestly trumpets were dying away along the arched roof, and the sacrifice was still burning on the brazen altar, when a priest descended to the women's court in order to complete the ceremony. Ann, followed by Joachim, and bearing Mary in her

* arms, advanced, veiled, towards the minister of the Most High, and (if we may believe an Arabian tradition which Mahomet himself inserted in the Koran) presented to him the young servant of the Lord, saying, in a tremulous voice, "I come to offer you the gift which God gave to me."†

The priest accepted, in the name of God, who fructifies the womb of mothers, the precious deposit which the gratitude of blessed Joachim and his pious companion confided to him;‡ then extending his hands over the assembly who bowed to receive his pontifical blessing:§ "O

* This festival, which was considered sacred, might be kept up for two days in succession, but the law expressly prohibited keeping anything of it for the third. While it lasted, the poor were to have their full share, and that for two reasons, says Philo. Firstly, because the victim belonged to God, who is bountiful by nature, and wished that the needy should be relieved; secondly, for fear that avarice, which is a slavish vice, might creep in and dishonor a pious practice. (Philo, *Tract de Sacrif.*, c. ii.)

† According to a Mahometan tradition, when St. Ann was delivered of the Blessed Virgin, she presented her to the priests, saying these words, which are also found in the Koran, "*Dhouncon hadih alne-dhirat*;" that is to say, "Behold the offering which I make to thee." Hossain Vaër adds to these words, in his Persian paraphrase, "*Kih ez an Khodāi*," which signifies, "For this is a gift which God has

given me;" or rather, word for word, "For it is from this gift that God is to come." (D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, tom. ii. p. 620.)

‡ Eli blessed Elcana and his wife, and said to the former, "May the Lord give you yet other children by this woman, because of the deposit which you have placed in his hands." And they returned to their home. (Kings, b. 1 ch. ii. ver. 20.) See Père Croiset on this ceremony. (*Exercices de Piété*, t. xviii. p. 48.)

§ Whilst the high-priest gave his blessing, the people were obliged to place their hands on their eyes and to hide their face, because they were not permitted to look upon the hands of the priest. The Jews imagined that God was behind the pontiff, looking at them through his outstretched hands; they dared not raise their eyes, then, to look upon him, for no man could see God and live. (Basn., l. vii. ch. 15.)

Israel," said he, "may the Lord shed his light upon thee; may He prosper thee in all thy ways, and grant thee peace!" A canticle of thanksgiving, harmoniously accompanied by the priestly harps, terminated the presentation of the Virgin.

Such was the ceremony which took place towards the end of November, in the holy temple of Sion. Men, who usually go no farther than the surface, saw there only a young child of marvellous beauty and precocious piety, consecrated by her mother to the God who had granted her to her tears and mortifications; but the angels of heaven, hovering over the sanctuary, beheld in that fair and fragile creature *THE VIRGIN* of Isaiah, the spouse whose mystic hymn was sung by Solomon, the celestial Eve who came to restore to a fallen race the hope of a glorious immortality. Penetrated with joy to see the dawn of the Messiah's day at last appear, "they thronged," say the ancient authors,* "to that earthly festival, and, covering with their snowy wings the youthful descendant of

the royal David, they strewed her path with the odoriferous flowers of paradise, and celebrated her entry into the temple by melodious concerts."

Who can tell what was then passing in Mary's soul—that soul prematurely matured by the breath of the sanctifying Spirit, wherein all was peace, and light, and love? By what secret bonds was she united to Him who had preferred her before the virgins and queens of so many nations? This is a secret between her and God; but we may reasonably suppose that never was oblation more favorably received; and St. Evodius of Antioch, St. Epiphanius of Salamina, St. Andrew of Crete, and a number of the Latin fathers, agree in regarding the consecration of the Virgin as more pleasing to God than any act of religion that man had yet accomplished.

We know not the name of the priest who received the Blessed Virgin amongst the daughters of the Lord; St. Germanus, patriarch of Constantinople, and St. George of Nicomedia, incline to the opinion that it was the father of St. John the

* St. Andrew of Crete and St. George of Nicomedia.

Baptist. The relationship existing between Zachary and the family of Joachim, the high rank which he then held in the priesthood,* and the tender affection wherewith Mary ever regarded him, as well as Elizabeth, make this supposition extremely probable.

Whoever it was, the blessed daughter of Joachim was solemnly admitted to the number of the *almas* or young virgins who were brought up in the sacred shade of the altar.

That Mary spent her best years in the temple, is proved by apostolic tradition, the writings of the Fathers, and the opinion of the Church, which is not apt to sanction doubtful facts.† Nevertheless, heretics have chosen to treat this circumstance as fabulous, and even some Catholic authors have considered it as an obscure

point, shrouded by the veil of time, and very difficult to determine. The denial of the former is not at all surprising, but the doubt of the latter is indeed wonderful; for if ever Christian tradition bore the stamp of authenticity, it is this. St. Evodius, a contemporary of the Blessed Virgin and the Apostles, was the first who recorded this glorious peculiarity of the childhood of Mary, in an epistle entitled *Lumen*, which Nicephorus has preserved. He was bishop of Antioch, a city of Syria, much frequented by both Jews and Christians; and the temple, where the early faithful followed, with profound veneration, the traces of the Son of God and his divine Mother, was still standing in all its splendor. This tradition, which came from the Church of Jerusalem,—a Church which was composed of the

* The Jews believed that John the Baptist was much greater than Jesus Christ, because he was the son of a *high-priest*. (S. J. Chrysostom, *Serm. 12 in Matt.*)

† In 1373, Philippe de Mazière, a French gentleman, chancellor of the King of Cyprus, came to the court of Charles V. and informed him that in the East, where he had long resided, they celebrated every year the feast of the presentation of the Blessed Virgin, in memory of her having been presented in the temple at the age

of three years. Philippe added, "I began to reflect that this great festival was not known in the Western Church, and, when I was ambassador from the King of Cyprus to the Pope, I spoke to him of that festival, and presented its office to him; he had it carefully examined by cardinals, bishops, and doctors of theology, and then permitted the feast to be celebrated." The Greeks began early to celebrate it under the title of *The Entrance of the Blessed Virgin into the Temple*. It is mentioned in their most ancient martyrologies.

first disciples of Jesus Christ, many of whom were relations of the Virgin and St. Joseph,—was very early consecrated by a religious monument, a demonstrative proof even in the eyes of Protestants.* Finally, the majority of the Fathers,† and espe-

* cially St. Jerome, who lived amidst the scenes of the Redemption, and while the traditions were still very recent, have related it and held it as true. We may, therefore, place this traditional belief amongst the best authenticated facts of history.

CHAPTER V.

MARY IN THE TEMPLE.



WITHIN the fortified inclosure of the temple rose that part of the sacred edifice which was set apart for the virgins consecrated to the Lord.

* Thither did Zachary conduct his youthful relative.† On this site the Christians of Jerusalem erected an oratory, which was afterwards replaced by a church with a gilded dome, by Godfrey de Bouillon's companions in arms. This church the valiant knights of the temple

* Gibbon himself could not help admitting the authenticity of the religious traditions in Palestine. "The Christians point out," says he, "by *undoubted* tradition, the scene of every memorable event" (vol. iv. p. 101), an admission of considerable importance coming from a man of such research as the English historian, and at the same time so little favorable to religion. —According to M. Chateaubriand, if there be

anything on earth clearly proved, it is the authenticity of the Christian traditions of Jerusalem.

† St. Epiphanius, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Germanus, patriarch of Constantinople, St. George of Nicomedia, St. John Damascene, &c.

‡ St. Germanus states that it was Zachary who took charge of the Virgin, and placed her in the

took pleasure in adorning with the rich spoils which they took from the Saracens.*

Although virginity was, in Israel, but the virtue of a season, and was soon to give place to the conjugal duties, it was not without its honors and its special prerogatives. Jehovah delighted in the prayers of spotless children, of pure virgins; and it was a virgin rather than a queen whom he had chosen to co-operate in the redemption of mankind. Hence, when the seers of Juda disclosed to that chosen but often chastised people the prophetic picture of its miseries or of its triumphs, they always painted a virgin

either joyous or in tears, to personify the cities and provinces. In the wars of extermination, when the broadsword of the Hebrews smote the women, the children, and the old men of Moab, the virgins were spared; and the high-priest, who was prohibited by a severe law from fulfilling the last duties to a friend *whom he loved as his own soul*, and even to the prince of his people, could assist, without contracting legal impurity, at the funeral of his sister, who died a virgin.†

The virgins, or *almas*, figured in the ceremonies of the Hebrew worship before that worship had a temple. We see them, under the guid-

temple. The Arabian traditions also have it that God gave the Virgin in charge to Zachary, *ouacafalha Zacharia*. The Koran, in the *Surat* which treats of the family of Amram, adds to this fact a marvellous legend handed down amongst the Christian tribes of the desert. It says that Zachary, going now and then to visit his young relative, always found near her a quantity of the finest fruits of the Holy Land, and that, at seasons when they were not to be had, which at last induced him to ask Mary where she got all those fine fruits. Mary answered, *Hou men and Allah iarroc man iascha begaïr hissa*: All that you see comes from God, who provides for whosoever he will, without number and without measure. (D'Herbelot, *Bibl. Orient.*, t. ii. art. Miriam.)

* The mosque of Omar (*el Aksa*) represents for

Christians the ancient temple of Solomon; *el sakhra* (the rock) is built on the place where Mary lived from the age of three years till her betrothal with Joseph.... This place was at that time a dependency of the temple of Solomon, as *el sakhra* is now of the mosque of Omar. Before the crusades, *el sakhra* was but a chapel; the Franks added thereto a church, surmounted by a gilded cupola. When the victors threw down the great cross which shone on the cupola of the *sakhra*, the acclamations of the Mussulmans and the lamentations of the Christians were so great, says an Arab writer, that it seemed as though the whole world were about to be swallowed up. (*Correspondence d'Orient*, t. v.) According to Schonah, it excited so great a tumult in the city, that Saladin himself had to interfere.

† *Levit.* ch. xxi. v. 3.

ance of Mary, the sister of Moses, celebrating by songs and dances the passage of the Red Sea.* Those dancing-choirs of young maidens, transplanted from Egypt to the desert, were long kept up amongst the Hebrews. The virgins of Silo, who seem to have been, from the time of the Judges, more especially consecrated to the service of Adonai than the other daughters of Israel, were singing canticles and dancing to the sound of the harp, within a short distance of the holy place, during a certain festival, when they were carried off by the Benjamites. But that event did not abolish the custom, which was kept up till that disastrous period when the ark was lost and the first temple destroyed.†

It is probable that all the *almas* were admissible to those sacred choirs, when their reputation was

untarnished; but there was amongst them a select number who gathered around the altar with more fervor, and more perseverance. Whilst the ark of the Lord was yet encamped under the tents, *the women who watched and prayed at the door of the tabernacle*, offered to God the brazen mirrors which they had brought from Egypt. These were probably pious widows who had refused to contract new ties, in order to apply themselves more constantly to heavenly things, and *almas* devoted by their parents to the service of the sanctuary, who had been placed under the care of those righteous matrons. St. Jerome thus understands this passage of Exodus:

As the vow of the parents was usually redeemable, and the ransom, fixed at a moderate sum,‡ always took place after the expiration of a

* Mary and her young companions (the *almas*) sang canticles on the passage of the Red Sea, accompanying themselves with the timbrel. (R. sal Yarahhi.) Exod. xv.

† These sacred dances, which commemorated the passage of the Red Sea, and were accompanied by hymns of praise, were regarded by the Jews as a practice so pious as to be adopted even amongst the austere therapeutæ. "The sacred dance of the devout therapeutæ," says Philo, "was

composed of two choirs, one of men, the other of women; the effect of which was very musical and harmonious, because the words that were heard were very fine, and the grave and modest dancers had only in view the honor and the service of the God of Israel." (Philo, *de Vita cont.*)

‡ Moses had, by a special law, fixed the redemption of this vow at a sum of fifty shekels or more. The shekel of silver was, at least, four Attic drachms.

few years,* these temporary vows were called a loan given to the Lord.† *I have lent him to the Lord*, said Anna, as she conducted her young Samuel to Silo.‡

After the return from captivity, the influence of the Persians operated against the institution of the *almas*, as that people excluded women from their religious celebrations.§ They ceased to form, as it were, a body in the state, and to figure ostensibly in the public worship. Under the pontiff-kings they lived shut up, and their days flowed on in such profound seclusion, that when they ran in terror to the high-priest Onias, at the moment when the sacrilegious crime of Heliodorus

* threw all Jerusalem into confusion, the fact was considered so unusual and so remarkable, that the Jewish historians give it a place in their annals.||

It appears, then, that whatever may be said to the contrary, there were virgins attached to the service of the second temple at the time of Mary's presentation. The institutions of the first Christians certify that such was the case,¶ and St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, and, before them, the proto-gospel of St. James affirmed it. But what took place during the Virgin's sojourn in the temple? What were, at that most interesting period of her life, her tastes, her habits, her practices of devotion?

* Children in this sort of bondage retained their rights to the paternal inheritance, and might redeem themselves, in case they were not redeemed by their parents. (*Abbé Guenée*.) Josephus (*Ant.*, b. iv.) remarks that those men and women who, after having voluntarily consecrated themselves to the ministry, wished to break their vows, paid the priests a certain sum, and that those who were insolvent placed themselves at the disposal of the priest.

† Père Croiset, *Exerc. de Piété*.

‡ *Ideirco et ego commodavi eum Domino*.

§ In Bombay, the descendants of the Persians have a temple consecrated to the fire. They come in crowds to the esplanade, with their snow-white garments and colored turbans, to

salute the rising sun or to offer their homage to his departing rays, humbly prostrating themselves before him. Their women do not then appear, for it is at that time that they go to fetch water from the wells. (*Buckingham, Tableau de l'Inde*.)

¶ II. Mac. iii.

¶ It is known that the first Christians, especially those of Jerusalem, who were of Hebrew origin, preserved some of the institutions of the old law; of this number was that of the virgins and widows, whom we find attached to the primitive churches for the exercise of various good works suitable to their sex. (*See Fleury, Mœurs des Israelites et des Chrétiens*, p. 115.)

There remains to us, on this head, but few authentic documents. These details were most probably given in a traditional life of the Mother of God, which St. Epiphanius, in 390, regarded as very ancient, but that life is lost. The "Gospel of the Childhood of Mary" and St. Jerome, when they mention that Mary was admitted amongst the daughters of the Lord, say very little more on the subject. To fill up this vacuum in a life which God seems to have taken pleasure in surrounding with mystery, we have only some inconclusive lines, some detached pages from the Fathers, from which it is very difficult, even with the utmost care, to make a satisfactory sketch. No matter; like the Indian workman who joins a broken tissue thread by thread, and patiently tries to tie the ends together, unweaving, knotting, sending his shuttle with infinite care along that worn-out and attenuated woof, we are going to apply ourselves assiduously to our work, and gather together the scattered fragments of the precious tissue of the Virgin's life, so as to connect, if possible, the broken thread. With the persevering patience of the ban-

* *ian*, we will endeavor not to make a suppositious narrative—which our profound respect for our subject forbids—but to give, with the help of the best authorities, and a long study of the customs of the Hebrews, the most precise idea, and the nearest to the truth that can possibly be given, of the almost monastic life of the Blessed Virgin in the temple.

Many of the old legendary writers took pleasure in surrounding the childhood of Mary with a multitude of prodigies. These we pass over in silence, because they are not sufficiently authenticated. But there is one thing which we cannot omit to mention, viz., an inaccurate, or rather an inadmissible assertion, which has been adopted credulously and without examination by some holy personages and religious writers.* From the fact that the Virgin was always sanctity itself, which no one disputes, they inferred that she must have been placed in the most sanctified part of the temple, which is materially false. The HOLY OF HOLIES, that impenetrable sanctuary

* St. Andrew of Crete, St. George of Nicomedia, &c.

of the God of Hosts, was closed to the whole Hebrew priesthood except the high-priest, who entered it but once a year, after much fasting, watching, and purification. He only presented himself there in the midst of a thick cloud of incense, which interposed between him and the Divinity, "whom no man can see and live," says the Scripture. Finally, he remained there but a few minutes, while the people, prostrate on the ground, sobbed and wept, fearing lest he should meet his death. He himself afterwards gave a grand banquet to his friends, to rejoice with them for having escaped such imminent and fearful danger.*

From this we may judge whether it be possible that Mary was brought up in the HOLY OF HOLIES.

The local traditions of Jerusalem, no less loudly than common sense, protest against this rash opinion. The *sakhra*, which was first a Chris-

* tian church, built on the site of the apartments of the Virgin, is distinctly detached from the mosque of Omar; yet the mosque of Omar is built on the very ground of the temple.

Father Croiset, in his *Exercices de Piété*, did not adopt this opinion; but, unwilling to reject it altogether, he attempted a sort of compromise. According to him, the Mother of God was not brought up in the HOLY OF HOLIES, but the priests, touched by her admirable virtues, permitted her to pray there from time to time. The Jesuit Father, in adopting this *mezzo termine*, has forgotten several things: first, that amongst the Hebrews, woman was considered an unclean creature, assimilated to the slave, and scarcely bound to pray; † that she was banished to an inclosure whose boundaries she might not cross, and that the interior of the temple was to her a forbidden place,

* Prideaux.—Basnage, *Histoire des Suisses*, l. v. ch. 15.

† The uncleanness of the woman, according to the Jewish doctors, dates from the seduction of Eve by the serpent, and is only to be extirpated at the coming of their Messiah. Her prayer is not so obligatory as that of man, and she is not even bound to the observance of most of the

affirmative commandments. Finally, the Jews still say, in their morning prayer, *Blessed be thou, O Lord, King of the universe, for that thou hast not made me a woman*. Woman, on the other hand, said, in her humility, *Blessed be thou, O Lord, who hast made me according to thine own will*. (Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, lib. vii. ch. 10.)

even though she were a prophetess or the daughter of a king; the second is, that the priests could not grant to Mary a privilege which they did not themselves enjoy, and which would, moreover, have exposed her to certain death;* finally, that even supposing the priests of Jehovah to have been without these fears and prejudices, they would by no means have suffered any one to penetrate to the HOLY OF HOLIES, seeing that it was important to conceal from the people the disappearance of the ark, lost in some obscure grotto of the mountains since the days of Jeremiah.†

This second version, then, is not more admissible than the first.

The education which Mary received

* "The sanctuary," says Philo, "is so holy a place, that none amongst us, save the high-priest, is permitted to penetrate there, and even he only once a year, after a solemn fast, to burn perfumes in honor of God, and humbly to beg of Him that the year may be favorable for all men. If any one, even a prince of our nation, dared to enter, or if the high-priest himself went in a second time in one year, or more than once on the day that he is permitted to do so, it would cost either of them his life, without any chance of escape, so strict was the ordinance of Moses, our legislator, concerning the veneration of the temple. (Philo, *ad Cajum*, c. 16.)

ed in the temple was the best that those times and the customs of the Hebrews permitted. It was chiefly confined to the domestic labors, from which even the wife and daughter of Cesar Augustus did not exempt themselves in their imperial palace and amid the delights of Rome.‡ Brought up in the strict observance of the Mosaic law, and conforming herself to the customs of her people, Mary arose with the lark, at the hour *when wicked spirits are silent, and when prayers are most favorably heard.*§ She dressed herself with the greatest modesty, through respect for the glory of God who is every where present, and beholds all the actions of men, even through the gloom of the darkest night. At the

† The Jews do not agree concerning the fate of the ark after the ruin of the first temple. Some will have it, that Jeremiah concealed it in a cavern of the mountains, the entrance to which was never found; others say that the holy king Josias, warned by Holda, the prophetess, that the temple should be destroyed shortly after his death, caused that precious deposit to be placed in a subterraneous vault, which had been constructed by Solomon.

‡ Augustus wore no other garments than those which were spun by his wife or daughter, and Alexander the Great by his mother and sisters.

§ Basnage, l. vii. ch. 17, p. 308.

same time, she gave thanks to the Lord for having added another day to her life, and for having preserved her during her sleep from the snares of the evil one.* Her toilet was extremely simple, and occupied but little time. She wore neither bracelets of pearl, nor chains of gold *inlaid with silver*, nor purple tunics, such as were worn by the daughters of the princes of her race. A robe of sky-blue, a white tunic, confined at the waist by a girdle with flowing ends, a long veil, simply but gracefully arranged, so as completely to cover the face when necessary; these, with a species of shoe corresponding to the robe, composed the oriental costume of Mary.†

* Basnage, *place quoted*.

† The *Annunciade* of Genoa wore, in the sixteenth century, the costume of the Blessed Virgin, that is to say, *white under and blue over*, in order that such dress might continually remind them of her. The slippers of the choristers are also composed of blue leather. (*Rule of the Annunciade of Genoa*, ch. 2.) M. de Lamartine found in that Eastern land, where nothing seems to change, that the costume of the women of Nazareth is still that which was worn by Mary. "They wear," says he, "a long tunic of sky-blue, confined by a white girdle, the ends of which reach the ground; the soft folds of a white tunic fall gracefully over the blue." M. de Lamartine

After the customary ablutions, the Virgin and her young companions, with certain pious women who were answerable to the priests and to God for that sacred deposit, took their way towards the gallery‡ where the *almas* sat in the place of honor.§ The sun began to gild with his radiant beams the distant mountains of Arabia, the eagle cut circles in the clouds above, the sacrifice burned on the brazen altar to the sound of the morning trumpets, when Mary, her head bowed down beneath her veil, after repeating the eighteen prayers of Esdras, demanded of God, with all Israel, that CHRIST, so long promised and so tardy in appearing—

"Let thy name, O God! be praised and glori-

traces this costume to the time of Abraham and Isaac, and his supposition is not at all improbable. We see that there is but a very trifling difference between the costume adopted in the sixteenth century, from the traditions of Italy, and that which the French traveller found in the Holy Land.

‡ During the feast of the drawing of water, the men were placed under the galleries which surround the women's peristyle.

§ Origen, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Cyril, have preserved to us a tradition which assigns to the virgins of the temple an honorable and distinct place in the women's peristyle.

fied in this world, which thou hast created according to thy good pleasure ; vouchsafe to establish thy reign ; let redemption flourish, and the Messiah quickly come." *

And the people, in chorus, responded, " Amen ! Amen ! "

Then were sung the concluding verses of that beautiful psalm attributed to the prophets Aggeus and Zacharias.

" The Lord unbinds those who are fettered ; the Lord enlightens those who are blind.

" The Lord upraises those who are crushed down ; the Lord loves those who are just.

" The Lord has care over strangers ; he will protect the widow and the orphan, and the ways of sinners he will destroy.

" The Lord shall reign for ever and ever ; thy God, O Sion ! shall rule the nations." †

The reading of the *schema* ‡ and the blessing of the priest terminated this public prayer, which took place every morning and evening. §

* This prayer, which is called the *kaddisch*, is the most ancient of all those which the Jews have preserved, and, as it is read in the Chaldean tongue, it is thought to be one of the prayers composed after the return from Babylon. (Basn., l. vii. ch. 17, p. 314.) Prideaux affirms that it was in use long before the coming of Christ, and that the Apostles frequently offered it up with the people in the synagogues. It was often recited during the service, and the assembly was obliged to answer *Amen* several times.

† Leo of Modena.—Maimonides.

‡ Leo of Modena, c. xi. p. 29. By the *schema* they meant three different sections of Deuter-

Having fulfilled, with indescribable fervor, this first religious duty, Mary and her young companions resumed their wonted avocations. Some rapidly twirled in their agile fingers spindles of cedar or of *ithel* ; || others embroidered the veil of the temple, or the rich girdles of the priests, with purple, blue, and gold ; whilst groups, bent forward over a Sidonian loom, applied themselves to the execution of those magnificent carpets which won for " the strong woman " the admiration of all Israel, and were extolled by Homer himself. ¶ The Virgin surpassed all the daughters of her people in those beautiful fabrications so highly prized by the ancients. We learn from St. Epiphanius that she excelled in embroidery and the art

onony and Numbers. It was a sort of profession of faith recited morning and evening, whereby they acknowledged that there is but one God, who drew his people out of Egypt.

§ It is certain that the Blessed Virgin must have assisted very often at the morning and evening service. Those prayers were considered more efficacious than any others, and some of the Hebrew doctors even maintain that God hears none but these.

|| The *ithel* is a species of acacia which grows in Arabia ; it is of a beautiful black, resembling ebony ; it is thought to be the setim wood of Moses.

¶ See the *Iliad*, b. vi.

of working wool, in byssus, and in gold.* The proto-gospel of St. James represents her seated before a distaff of purple wool, which moved under her taper fingers like the trembling leaf of the poplar;† and the Christians of the West have perpetuated the traditional opinion of her unrivalled skill in spinning the flax of Pelusia,‡ by giving the name of *Virgin's thread* to that net-work of dazzling whiteness, and of almost ethereal texture, which floats over deep valleys in the damp mornings of autumn. The chaste and modest brides of the early Christians, in memory of these domestic avocations of the Queen of Angels, never failed to consecrate to her a distaff

adorned with fillets of purple, and charged with spotless wool.§

But the talents and acquirements of the Virgin did not end here. St. Ambrose ascribes to her a perfect understanding of Holy Writ, and St. Anselm will have it that she was thoroughly acquainted with the old Hebrew, the language of the terrestrial paradise,|| in which God himself traced, on tables composed of precious stones,¶ the ten precepts of the Decalogue. Whether Mary, studying the idiom of Anna and of Deborah, became conversant, during her solitary vigils, with the lofty conceptions of the *seers* of Israel, or that she received from the sanctifying Spirit, who had so richly

* In the middle ages, in commemoration of the Virgin's works in flax, weavers were ranged under the banner of the Annunciation. The makers of gold brocade and silken stuffs had for their patroness *Notre Dame la Riche* (*Our Lady the Rich*), and bore her image on their banner, heavy with superb embroidery. (Alex. Monteil, *Histoire des Français des divers états*.)

† The Church of Jerusalem early consecrated this remembrance by ranking amongst its treasures the spindles of Mary. Those spindles were subsequently sent to the Empress Pulcneria, who placed them in the Church of the Guides in Constantinople.

‡ The garments worn in the morning by the chief priests were, says the Misnah, of the fine

flax of Pelusia, a city of Egypt famous for the excellent quality of its flax.

§ This custom is still kept up in some hamlets in the north and west of France.

|| According to the Rabbins and the Commentators on the Bible, the language of Paradise was the ancient Hebrew.

¶ A Hebrew tradition. (Basnage, vi. ch. 16.) According to some Oriental writers, the tables of the law were either of rubies or carbuncles; but the most common opinion, amongst the Arabs and Mussulmans, is, that they were of emeralds, within which the characters were cut, so that they could be read on every side. (D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, tome ii.)

endowed her, a breath of poetic inspiration, like the harmonious breezes which swept the Æolian harp of the Royal Prophet,* it must be acknowledged that the youthful prophetess, who gave to the new law its finest canticle, could not have been a stranger to the sweetest or the most sublime inspirations of genius. Undoubtedly, the woman who composed the *Magnificat* was not a mere common girl, as some Protestant authors have not hesitated to assert, and must have united to unequalled sanctity talents of the highest order. But then this brilliant aspect of her character was scarcely perceptible, so carefully did she cover it with her angelic modesty. Knowing the delicate duties and the real interests of her sex, she shrank from all display, and passed silently along the way of life, like some fair star gliding through the clouds. The rich treasures of her mind and heart were but partially revealed on earth; they were as the

* roses of Yemen which the Arab maiden conceals beneath her veil, and whose gentle perfume is scarcely felt.

An ancient poet said servilely to Augustus that he alone was the work of several centuries, and that, ever since the creation, all the industry of nature had been employed in producing him. That which was an outrageous hyperbole in speaking of the sanguinary nephew of Cesar, becomes a demonstrated truth when applied to the Virgin. In reality, Mary is the masterpiece of Nature, the flower of the ancient days, and the wonder of ages. Never has the earth seen, and never will it again see, so many perfections re-united in a mere mortal. In that blessed creature all was grace, sanctity, and grandeur. Conceived in the friendship of God, sanctified before her birth, she knew nothing of the passions which agitate the soul, or the sin which corrupts the heart. Having a sweet and natural inclination

* According to the ancient Jewish tradition, David had a harp which played by night when a *certain wind* came to blow. Basnage ridicules the idea of chords, which only echo to the night wind, and plainly sets it down as an absurdity.

The invention, or rather the re-invention of Æolian harps, whose magic sounds enchant the English parks, gives probability to the statement of the Rabbins.

to virtue, thanks to her immaculate conception, her pure and innocent acts were like the wreath of snow which silently falls on the mountain-top, adding purity to purity and whiteness to whiteness, till it rears itself into a shining cone, which attracts the rays of the sun, and dazzles the eye of man. It has not been given to any other creature to present such a life to the Sovereign Judge of men. Jesus Christ alone surpassed her; but Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Mary entered the temple of Jerusalem like one of those unspotted victims shown by the Spirit of the Lord to Malachi. Young, beautiful, nobly born, and qualified to aspire to the highest place amongst a people who often raised beauty to the throne,* she bound herself to the horns of the altar by a vow of virginity which her infant lips could barely articulate, and which her heart subsequently ratified, with a perfect renunciation of the pomps and vanities of the world. By that

vow, till then unheard, Mary crossed the boundary which divides the old law from the new, and plunged so deep into the sea of evangelical virtues, that one might think she had already sounded its depths when her divine Son came to reveal it to the children of men.

God does not alter his course abruptly. He announces, he prepares long beforehand the great events which are to change the aspect of the world. A precursor was required for the Messiah, and he found one in the person of St. John the Baptist. A preliminary was required for the new law, and the virtues of Mary were to the Gospel what the fresh and roseate dawn is to the risen day.

St. Epiphanius, cited by Nicephorus, has left us a charming description of the Virgin. That portrait, traced in the fourth century from traditions now lost, and manuscripts which are no longer in existence, is yet the only one which remains to us.

* It is certain that David, Solomon, and the other kings of Juda, often took to their royal bed women of obscure condition; the famous Sulamite of Solomon was, it is said, a young country

girl from the little village of Sulam, situated at a short distance from Jerusalem. In the time of Mary, Herod the Great espoused Mariamne, the daughter of a priest, because of her beauty.

The Virgin, according to this holy bishop, was not of tall stature, though somewhat above the middle height; her face was of that fine oval which characterizes the Jewish women, and her eyes were of a soft hazel color. Her person was, in fine, a casket worthy of the priceless jewel it contained, and was like it *all beautiful*.

All the Fathers agree as to the admirable beauty of the Virgin. St. Denis the Areopagite, who had seen the divine Mary, assures us that she was of dazzling beauty, and that he would have worshipped her as a goddess, had he not known that there is but one God.

But it was not to this assemblage of physical perfections that Mary owed the power of her beauty; it emanated from a higher source. This was well understood by St. Ambrose when he said that her charming exterior was but a transparent veil which disclosed all her virtues; and that her soul, the no-

blest and the purest that ever was, after the soul of Jesus Christ, revealed itself fully in her look. The physical beauty of Mary was but the distant reflection of her intellectual and imperishable beauty; she was the fairest, because she was the purest and holiest, of the daughters of Eve.*

God has incased the Green Sea pearl in a mother-of-pearl shell,† but it is the pearl and not its brilliant case that men set in gold and place in the diadem of kings. The Fathers were well aware of this, and, in their glowing descriptions of Mary's loveliness, they dwelt particularly on the charms of her mind—those which belong not to the earth, and perish not with the frail body. We are about to collect the gems scattered here and there throughout their works, to form them into a mosaic, which may present a second portrait of her who was, as Sophronius says, "a garden of pleasure to the Lord."‡

* It is neither climate, nor food, nor bodily exercise, which forms human beauty; it is the moral sentiment of virtue, which cannot subsist without religion. The beauty of the countenance is the true index of the

soul. (Bernardine de St. Pierre, *Études de la Nature*, étude 10.)

† *Bahr-al-Akhdhar*, one of the names of the Persian Gulf.

‡ *Vere Virgo erat hortus deliciarum in quo con-*

The greatest decorum reigned in all the actions of the Virgin. She was kind, affable, compassionate, and never tired of hearing the complaints of the wretched. She spoke little, always to the purpose, and never did falsehood defile her lips. Her voice was mild and penetrating, and her words had in them something unctuous and soothing, which infused peace into the soul. She was the first in vigils, the most exact in fulfilling the divine law, the most profound in humility, the most perfect in every virtue. She was never seen in anger; never offended, annoyed, or rebuked any one. She was averse to all pomp, simple in her apparel, simple in her manners, and never once thought of turning to account either her beauty, her noble birth, or the rich treasures of her mind and heart. Her presence seemed to sanctify all around, and the very sight of her was sufficient to detach the mind from earthly

* things. Her politeness was not an idle formula, consisting of empty words; it was an expansion of universal beneficence proceeding from her inmost soul. In fine, her look already denoted the Mother of Mercy, the Virgin of whom it has been since said, "She would even ask pardon of God for Lucifer, if Lucifer would ask it for himself."

Although she had but little of this world's wealth, yet Mary was bountiful towards the poor, and her childish alms fell often unperceived into the poor-box attached to one of the pillars of the peristyle; the same into which Jesus, in after-times, saw the widow drop her mite. St. Ambrose reveals the pure and sacred source whence Mary derived her alms. She deprived herself of all, granted nothing to nature but barely what was necessary for preserving life, and seemed to live, like the grasshopper, on air and dew.* Her frequent and rigorous

sita sunt universa florum genera et odorem virtutum. (Sophro., *Serm. de Ass.*)

* The ancients believed that the grasshoppers lived on air and dew. (Philo, *de Vita cont.*, p. 831.) Homer, book third of the *Iliad*: "Like the grasshoppers which, perched on the top of the forest-trees, send forth their harmonious strains

(after having drunk a little dew)." "The grasshoppers feed only on dew." (Theocrit. idyl 4.) "Does he feed only on dew like the grasshopper?" And Virgil:

Dum thymo pascentur apes, dum rore cicadae.

"Whilst the bees shall feed on thyme and the

fasts were also made profitable to the poor. The fasts observed by the Virgin were not like our northern fasts, which last but for a single morning, and are confined to the abstaining from certain kinds of food; it was a total abstinence from all things, which began at sunset and continued the whole of the next day till the stars were in the sky.* During that time, Mary deprived herself of every thing that might gratify her taste or her appetite. She imposed on herself the hardest labor, the most disgusting works of mercy, clothed herself in her meanest garments, slept on the bare ground, and allowed herself nothing during this time of penance and mortification (often prolonged for whole weeks) but a light repast composed of bread baked under the ashes, some bitter vegetables, and a cup of water from the fountain of Siloë.† Her meditations were frequent, and her prayer so collected, so attentive,

grasshoppers on dew." Hence it was that Calimachus called the dew "*the grasshopper's food*."

* The Jews considered that no fast, on which the sun did not set.

† Basnage, l. vii., ch. 18. Fleury, *Mœurs des Israélites*, p. 104.

‡ Augustus, if we may believe Suetonius, was

so profound, that her soul seemed to melt in adoration before the Eternal God. The roar of the tempest and the crash of the thunder, which drove Cesar to the subterraneous vaults of his palace,‡ reached not the ear of the youthful Virgin; completely absorbed in her religious duties, her soul was at the feet of the great Author of the universe, far beyond the confines of the world and the region of storms. "Never was any one endowed," says St. Ambrose, "with a more sublime gift of contemplation. Her mind, ever in accordance with her heart, never lost sight of Him whom she loved more ardently than all the seraphim put together. Her whole life was but a continual exercise of the purest love of her God, and, when sleep weighed down her eyelids, her heart still watched and prayed.§

Such were the virtues, such the occupations of Mary in the temple.

as much afraid of thunder and lightning as any female could be. At the slightest appearance of a storm, he went and hid himself in the deepest vaults, whither the noise of the thunder and the glare of the lightning could not penetrate.

§ St. Ambrose, *de Virg.*, l. ii.

She shone amongst her young companions like a rich diamond which, placed amidst other precious stones, effaces them all by its splendor. Hence it was that men who had

* grown gray in the priesthood never passed her without a murmured blessing, and considered her as the fairest ornament of the holy house.

CHAPTER VI.

MARY, AN ORPHAN.



T must be admitted—though it is a strange thing—that the history of the Virgin is barren of facts and full of gaps. It may be likened to the majestic remains of some ancient city of the desert. Here, gigantic columns standing firm as the mountains; there, porticoes which the Arab, in his love of the marvelous, proclaims as the work of genii; farther on, temples buried in the sand which the imagination delights to raise again; and then, here and

* there, a bleak and sterile area, without a single blade of grass for the camel of the Bedouin. In default of the Apostles, who were too much occupied, it would seem, with the grand figure of Christ to think of his earthly relatives, the Fathers have made us acquainted with the virtues of St. Ann. We follow them into her humble dwelling; we behold her piety, we hear her vows and her fervent prayers; we witness the joys of her late maternity, and the outpouring of her gratitude; but there the thread of tradition becomes so frail that it incessantly snaps asunder, and the remainder

of St. Ann's life is almost entirely conjectural. That mother, who had obtained her blessed daughter after so many fasts and tears, who had so lovingly watched over her infancy, who had brought her in her arms to the Lord,* and had laid her weeping in his sanctuary, reappears but for a moment on the scene, and that only to die. It is, however, very unlikely that the wife of Joachim would have remained nine years without seeing her child again. The outer buildings of the temple, where the consecrated children were brought up, could not have been closed against their mothers. The rights of a mother are both sacred and religious: all nations declare them to be imprescriptible; and, moreover, the Scripture tells us that Anna, wife of Elcana, freely visited her son at Silo, on solemn days, and that she never failed to bring a tunic spun by her own hands, to the young prophet, whom she had *lent*

to the Lord. Anna had had, after the birth of Samuel, several children, whom she beheld growing up around her like olive-trees, and who shared with the young servant of the tabernacle her maternal solicitude. St. Ann had none but Mary;† that dear child was, therefore, the sum of her happiness, the hope of her old days, and the source of her earthly joy. It is, then, almost certain that, in company with her husband, she came to see her as often as her piety drew her to the temple, and that she also sat up, by the light of her lamp or the silvery radiance of the moon,‡ to spin the virginal robes of her child.

It is thought that St. Joachim and St. Ann returned to their home after the presentation of Mary, and that they remained there for some years before their final settlement in Jerusalem. Joachim, who was not an artisan like Joseph, seems to have cultivated the small patrimony

* Liguori, *Glories of Mary*, discourse iii., p. 59.

† It has been said that St. Ann had another daughter of the name of Mary, born twenty years before the Blessed Virgin; this tradition has not been accepted by the Church.

‡ The Jewish women spun together in the

summer evenings by the light of the moon, since the Jewish doctors authorize a husband to put away his wife when slandered by the *women who were spinning by moonlight*. (Sotah, cap. 6, p. 250.) This custom of spinning by moonlight is still kept up in many southern countries.

which he had inherited, and enjoyed that happy mediocrity for which sages and poets have ever sighed when weary of the great world.* Churches have been erected in Sephoris, in Nazareth, and in Jerusalem, on sites which had formed part of his inheritance. But the vineyard, or farm of his fathers, must have been in the vicinity of Sephoris; hence his return to Lower Galilee. Joachim was a true Israelite, strongly attached to the law of Moses. He went to the temple on every solemn festival with his wife and some of their kinsfolk, according to the custom of the Hebrews, and it is likely that the desire of seeing his daughter, made him still more eager to visit the temple. How joyfully did his good and pious spouse set out for the Holy City! How endless did the way appear, as she beheld it winding far and away over hill

and dale! Looking eagerly forward, she passed a score of times in imagination before she reached them in reality, the nopal bushes, the thickets of rose-bay, the clumps of oak or sycamore which marked the road; for, each of these points gained, she was so much nearer her daughter—her daughter, the gift of the Lord, the child of miracle—she whom an angel had announced as the glory of Israel! With what emotion did she hail, from the depth of the valley, that tower of Antonia rising proud and menacing on its base of polished marble,† to protect the house of prayer! and how her holy and tender heart must have throbbed at the sight of that temple which contained her child and her God!

When evening came, and the sacerdotal trumpets summoned the people to the ceremony,‡ Ann hastened to adore God, and catch a

* According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, the father of the Blessed Virgin was *an honorable citizen*, God-fearing, and of singular piety. Father de Valverde states, on the testimony of some of the Fathers of the Church, that Ann and Joachim, being in easy circumstances, gave one part of their savings to the temple and the other to the needy. (*Vie de Jésus Christ*, t. i., p. 46.)

† The tower of Antonia might be considered *

as the citadel of the temple; it was of old the palace of the Asmonian princes. The rock on which it was seated was fifty cubits high, and inaccessible on all sides. Herod had this rock covered with marble from base to summit, so that no one could either go up or down. (Joseph., *Ant. Jud.*, l. xv., ch. 14, and *de Bello*, l. ii., ch. 16.)

‡ The religious festivals of the Jews began always in the evening.

glimpse of her daughter, whom she had not seen for months long. The court-yard had no other covering than the sky, and the dazzling radiance of its candelabras* mingled with the glimmering light of the stars. Thousands of lights were gleaming beneath the porticoes, garlands of fresh flowers were wreathed around the pillars,† and the chief priests walked through the crowd with their splendid ornaments, brought from Indian lands by the caravans of Palmyra.‡ Now and then the chords of the harp seemed to accompany the murmurs of prayer, which, like the voice of many waters,§ went up from that multitude of Hebrews assembled from the banks of the Nile, the Euphrates, and the Tiber, to bend the knee before the only altar of their fathers' God.|| In the midst

* of this immense concourse of native and foreign believers, Ann, absorbed in prayer, raised her head but for a moment; it was when Mary and her young companions passed, veiled and robed in white, with lamps in their hands, like the wise virgins of the gospel.

The festival over, Ann, after having blessed and embraced Mary, took, with Joachim, her homeward way through the mountains; slowly did she depart from Jerusalem, not daring to cast a look behind, and bearing with her a fund of happiness and of joyous reminiscences for all the time that was to elapse before the next festival.

When years and toil had exhausted Joachim's strength, so that he was no longer able to cultivate his ground, he began to think of moving nearer to his daughter. Accordingly,

* These candelabras were of gold, and fifty cubits high. The light which they shed, say the Rabbins (who are noted for exaggeration), was seen at an incredible distance from Jerusalem, while within the city the houses were so well lit that cooks could pick the grain for their pottage without the assistance of their lamps. (*Talmud. tract. Lucca.*, fol. 3.)

† These green wreaths were used during the feast of Tabernacles. (Basn., l. vii., ch. 16.)

‡ The garments worn in the evening by the

priests on solemn festivals came from India, and cost very dear. (Basn., l. vii., ch. 15.)

§ It is well known that the Jews and the Arabs pray aloud.

|| So long as the temple stood, the Jews made a special devotion of visiting it. More than eleven hundred thousand persons perished in the destruction of Jerusalem, under Titus, because they were assembled for the feast of the Passover when the city was besieged. (Joseph., *de Bello*, l. vii., ch. 17.)

he and his spouse bade a last farewell to Lower Galilee, and took up their abode in Jerusalem, in the neighborhood of the temple. Ann was then at the summit of her wishes; she could serve the Lord in his holy house, and see her daughter frequently. How often, during the fine evenings of summer, as she sat spinning before her door, would she twirl her spindle mechanically, whilst her maternal glance was pensively fixed on the glittering roof of the temple! *Where a man's treasure is, says the Holy Scripture, there is his heart.*

St. Ann might have shortened the duration of that painful separation, as the law of Moses accepted compensations. This she would not do; her gratitude to God spoke still louder than her maternal tenderness, and when the voice of religion made itself heard, that of nature became silent.

The Virgin had been nine years shut up in the temple* when the

* first dark cloud obscured her young life. Her beloved father, Joachim the Just, fell dangerously ill, and the symptoms of approaching dissolution very soon appeared. Apprehensive for his life, his friends and kinsfolk crowded around, with every manifestation of kindness and sympathy; for the families of Juda were closely united amongst themselves, and lived in the utmost harmony. The dying man smiled benignly on his friends and neighbors. Like Jacob, he had been long a wanderer on the earth, and it gave him little concern that the wind of death came to beat down his tent, for, beyond this earthly planet, he saw in spirit those blissful regions where he was going to repose for ever in Abraham's bosom.

When his increasing weakness gave him to understand that life was ebbing fast away, the holy old man confessed his sins aloud, in presence of all, according to the custom of the Hebrews,† and offered

* Père Croiset, *Exercices de Piété*, t. xviii., p. 59.

† The Hebrew confession is from all antiquity; the Jews made it, at the article of death, not merely aloud, but before ten persons and a Rab-

bin. Aaron ben Berachia, in his book entitled *Maavar Jobbok*, treating of the art of dying well, and the assistance to be rendered to the dying, records the method of confessing and the prayers for the agonizing. Abraham ben Isaac

up his death to the Supreme Judge in expiation of the faults inherent in our nature, from which even the just are not exempt. This duty accomplished, Joachim asked for his daughter, in order to give her his blessing. Mary came;* her ardent prayers for the preservation of her father's life had not been heard. The *jealous God* would sever, one by one, the earthly bonds of his chosen Spouse, to the end that she might lean on Him alone.

Some pious authors have thought that, at the moment when Joachim extended his hands to bless his child, a revelation from on high suddenly disclosed to him the glorious destiny awaiting her; the joy of the elect diffused itself over his venerable countenance, his arms fell by his side, he bowed down his head and died.

Laniado also wrote a book, entitled *The Shield of Abraham*, a work much esteemed by the Jews, wherein he treats of the confession of sins. See also Basnage, l. vii., ch. 24.

* It was customary, from the very times of the patriarchs, for the dying father to bless his children. Mary had to conform to this custom. Her seclusion in the temple was not monastic, and St. Joachim then resided in Jerusalem.

† St. Jerome remarks that, in his time, most of the Jews still slashed their skin on the

* The house then resounded with cries and lamentations. The women hacked their breasts and tore their hair;† the men covered their heads with ashes and rent their garments, whilst some of the matrons, moved by charity and devotion, spread a thick veil over the pale calm face of the just man, which was never more to be seen in this world, and folded the thumb within the hand, which was left open to denote the total abandonment of all earthly things.

After having washed the body in water, mingled with myrrh and dried rose-leaves, those pious women wrapped it up in a linen shroud, which they tied round with bands, after the manner of Egypt. Having then opened all the doors and windows of the house,‡ they lit near the corpse

death of their friends, and made themselves bald by tearing out their hair, which they sacrificed to death.

‡ Dead bodies, amongst the Jews, defiled those who touched them, and rendered them unclean. (*Misnah, Ordo puritatum.*) "When the doors are closed, the house of death is regarded as a sepulchre, and, consequently, it is defiled; when the doors are open, on the contrary, the impurity goes away." (*Maimonides.*)

a brazen lamp, with several sockets —the lamp of the dead—which cast its mournful reflection on the bed of death.

On the following day, a numerous train, in which the flute-players were conspicuous,* stopped before the house of death. The nearest of kin ascended to the upper chamber, wherein Joachim had been laid out, and placed the corpse on a bed,† which they then took upon their shoulders. The funeral procession traversed the streets of Jerusalem chanting funeral hymns, accompanied by the soft wailing sound of the flutes, drowned at times in the noisy lamentations of the weepers. Ann and Mary were present at the funeral, and walked with downcast eyes amongst the

matrons of their family, whose tears flowed profusely.‡

The procession passed through the Gate of Flocks, since known to Christians as the Virgin's gate. On reaching the place of sepulture, the sound of the flutes, the hymns, and the lamentations all ceased awhile, and the chief mourners thus apostrophized the dead: "Blessed be God, who formed and nourished thee, and has now deprived thee of life. Oh, ye dead, he knows your number, and will one day raise ye up! Blessed be He who taketh life and restoreth it again!" §

They then put a small bag of clay on the head of the corpse, and proceeded to open the sepulchre—a gloomy grotto, which was called *the house of the living* ||—wherein the

* Jesus found the flute-players making a great noise at the door of a nobleman whose daughter he restored to life. Maimonides says that the poorest of the Jews is obliged to hire two flute-players and a weeper for the burial of his wife, and that the rich are to increase the number in proportion to their wealth. See also *Fleury, Mœurs des Israélites*, page 106.

† These funeral beds were used long before coffins: the latter are still unknown to the Arabs, who bury their dead only in a shroud, which enables the jackals, who prowl at night through the cemeteries, to disinter the bodies and devour them.

‡ Women and children assisted at the funerals of their husbands and fathers. The widow of Naïm followed the corpse of her son; Joseph mourned for his father. This custom is still observed in Judea. The Hebrew children received the blessing of their parents, closed their eyes, and accompanied them to their last resting-place, amongst the bones of their fathers. (M. Salvador, *Histoire des Institutions de Moïse et du peuple Hébreu*, t. ii., p. 398.)

§ Léon de Modena, *Cout. des Juifs*. Buxtorf, *Syn. Hebr.*, p. 502.

|| The sepulchre, which should be called *the house of the dead*. They gave it, on the contrary,

patriarch was to sleep his last sleep, awaiting the other members of his family. Then the most heart-rending cries arose on every side. Ann threw herself on the mortal remains of her husband to bid him a last farewell, and was soon taken away almost insensible. Having committed to the earth the holy remains of the just man, they rolled to the mouth of the sepulchral cave an enormous stone, which no man was to remove under pain of excommunication. The cries of lamentation began once more, and the spectators, pulling three different times a tuft of grass, and casting it each time behind them, said, in a sorrowful tone, *They shall flourish like the grass of the fields!* These rites terminated the obsequies of the descendant of the kings of Juda—the father of

* Mary—the grandsire of Jesus, according to the flesh.*

The tender heart of the Blessed Virgin was crushed by this first affliction—the prelude to so many others. It was her apprenticeship in sorrow. Misfortune greeted her on the threshold of adolescence, but the noble child shrank not from its approach. She wept; for her soul—like that of her divine Son—was never cold or insensible; but she drained the bitter chalice, saying, “Jehovah, thy will be done!” The mother and daughter put on mourning after the manner of the Hebrews; they clothed themselves in tight robes, made of a coarse camlet, called hair-cloth; their head and feet bare, their face concealed in a fold of their robes, fasting and abstain-

the title of *the house of the living*, to denote that the immortal soul survives its separation from the body. This title is attributed to the Pharisees. (Basn., l. vii., 24.) The Rabbins give an exact description of these sepulchres. The door is usually made very narrow, for they are generally closed by a stone rolled to the entrance. A large space is left in the middle of the sepulchre, where the bearers go in and rest the coffin before it is put in its place. In the sides and at the end were hollowed out a certain number of niches, wherein the dead bodies of each family

were placed. Tombs were held in great respect. No one was allowed to cross them in making a road or an aqueduct, nor to cut wood there, nor bring flocks to graze. They were placed on the side of the highway, in order to remind the passengers of death, and to keep the dead in their recollection. (Lightfoot, *Cent. chorogr.*, c. 100.) We see in the Gospel that the tomb of Lazarus was a cave closed by a large stone.

* Salom. ben Virgæ., *Hist. Jud.*, p. 193. Léon de Modena, *Cout. relig. des Juifs*. Basnage, l. vii., ch. 25.

ing,* they remained for seven days seated on the ground, weeping and lamenting with their kindred, and praying for the departed soul.† When the seven days were ended, Ann had lamps lit in the synagogue, and prayers offered up for her husband, giving alms in proportion to her means. Mary, on her side, fasted every week on the day of her father's death, and prayed morning and evening for the repose of his soul. These fasts and prayers for the dead lasted for the space of eleven months.‡

"Thou art welcome, O Misfortune! if thou comest alone," say the Greeks. Thus, this first affliction of Mary's was followed by one more poignant still, and she was soon called upon to renew her mourning. Scarcely had the death-lamp been extinguished in the melancholy dwelling of St. Ann when it had to be lit again;

* the last tears which Mary had shed for one parent were scarcely dry on her cheek, when she had to bewail the loss of the other.§ One evening Mary, accompanied by some of her kindred, went down from the temple to the narrow and obscure street in which her mother lived. The lurid glare of a lamp shone out through one of the latticed windows of the humble dwelling. Before the threshold were grouped, in silence, some of the women who, even now, throughout all the East, make a trade of weeping for the dead; like those birds of ill omen which seem to foresee deaths, these sinister creatures were waiting for the moment when an afflicted family should come to engage their hired lamentations.||

St. Ann collected all her failing strength to bless her daughter, pathetically recommended her to her

* Fasting was very severe amongst the Jews; there was nothing allowed but some vegetables, beans, for instance, or lentils, which were considered mourning food. Eggs were permitted, for the figure of the egg being round and globular, is the image of an afflicted man. Wine was no less forbidden than meat.

† During the days of mourning they recited the 49th Psalm. (L. de Modena, *Cout. des Juifs*, p. 182. Lightfoot, in *John.*, p. 1072.)

‡ Basnage, l. vii., ch. 11, p. 182.

§ According to the best authorities, St. Ann survived St. Joachim but a very short time.

|| All over the Levant, people hire, as mourners for their dead, women who have no other means of earning their living. They pay them so much an hour, and they endeavor to earn their wages by uttering the most heart-rending cries. (Burkhart, *Voyage en Arabie*, t. ii., p. 139.)

friends, but especially to Him who is the Father of the orphan, and then calmly slept the sleep of the just.* Mary bent in anguish over the lifeless body of her mother; her fair tresses mingled with the snowy locks of the dead. It seemed as though she hoped that her tears would restore her to life; but it is only the breath of God that can reanimate the dead. When the first paroxysm of her grief was over, Mary closed the eyes of the saint, and took leave of her by a long, last kiss, according to the custom of her people.†

The sorrow of the young orphan was deep and silent, and endured with heroic patience. Having now no other support on earth but Providence, she took refuge in the bosom of God. Thence, as from the depth

of a peaceful harbor, she overheard the distant roaring of the world's storms, and comprehended all the vanity of earthly things; the vanity of rank, of greatness, of wealth, of beauty, things which glitter and pass away like the bubble on the wintry torrent, which itself disappears at the end of a season.

It is at this period of sorrow, of isolation and lonely watching, that a historian has judiciously fixed Mary's vow of perpetual virginity;‡ in fact, we do not anywhere find that either Ann or Joachim knew of that vow, and without their knowledge it was not valid in the eyes of the law, either civil or religious.§ It was, therefore, after their death that Mary chose the Lord for her portion, and devoted herself to his service without any limitation of

* Grave historians state that the Blessed Virgin was present at the death of her mother, which is quite conformable to the customs of the Hebrews.

† This custom is very ancient; for Philo, relating the complaints of Jacob for the untimely death of his son, makes him say that he will not have the consolation of *closing his eyes, and giving him the parting kiss*.

‡ Descoutures, *Vie de la Sainte Vierge*, page 27.

§ A young girl might make vows amongst the

Jews, and she could even make a vow of virginity; but such vow was annulled by paternal authority, because that, being subject to her father, she could not violate the law of nature by disobeying him. All vows made by a young maiden or a married woman, unknown or contrary to the will of a father or husband, were null. (*Num.*, ch. xxx.) Some Rabbins maintain, nevertheless, that the father or husband had to annul the vow within twenty-four hours after he had cognizance of it, otherwise it was valid. (*Basnage*, l. vii., ch. 19.)

time, says Bernadine de Busto, and with the intention of remaining always in the temple. Like the august founder of her race, the Virgin found that a day spent in the tabernacles of the God of Israel was worth a thousand, and she also would rather be the last in the holy place than the first under the tents of cedar.

CHAPTER VII.

MARRIAGE OF THE VIRGIN.



HETHER Joachim, on his death-bed had placed the Virgin under the special protection of the priesthood; or that the magistrates who took care of orphans had themselves chosen guardians for her in the powerful family of Aaron, to which she was related by the mother's side; or that the tutelage of children devoted to the service of the temple belonged of right to the Levites, it is certain that Mary, after the death of her parents, had guardians of the sacerdotal race. It is probable (and the Arab traditions say so) that the cares of this tutelage devolved chiefly on Zachary, the holy spouse of St. Elizabeth, whose high reputation and near relationship* entitled him to that

*The Jews, as also Celsus, Porphyry, and Faust, have taken occasion from this relationship to maintain that the Blessed Virgin was of the tribe of Levi. Catholic doctors combat this opinion. They maintain that Mary was of the tribe of Juda, and the family of David. In fact, St. Matthew tells us that Jesus Christ is called

the son of David according to the flesh. Now, he can only be the son of David through Mary, since he had no father amongst men. When it is asked how it is that Mary, being of the tribe of Juda, was the cousin of St. Elizabeth, who was of the tribe of Levi, St. Augustine answers that there is nothing improbable in the supposi-

office.* The alacrity wherewith the Blessed Virgin traversed all Judea, two or three years later, to assist and congratulate the mother of St. John the Baptist, and her prolonged sojourn in the mountains of Hebron, seem, indeed, to indicate a closer connection than that of mere relationship; the roof which sheltered Mary for so long a time must have been, according to the rigorous propriety of the Hebrews, as sacred to her as the paternal roof.

Whoever the priests might be that were honored with the tutelage of the blessed daughter of St. Ann, they scrupulously acquitted themselves of the obligations of their charge; and, when the Virgin had attained her fifteenth year, they began to think of providing her with a suitable husband. This hymeneal project gave Mary the utmost uneasiness; that soul, so lofty,

so pure, so contemplative, had anticipated the Gospel, and regarded virginity as the most perfect, the most holy, and the most desirable of all states. An ancient author, quoted by St. Gregory of Nyssa, relates that she long refused, with much modesty, to accede to the proposal made her, and that she humbly entreated her family to consent to her remaining in the temple, and leading a life of innocence, of seclusion, of freedom from all ties except those of the Lord. Her demand was wholly unaccountable to those who had care over her. They could not understand her imploring as a favor that barrenness which was considered disgraceful, and was solemnly condemned by the law of Moses†—the celibacy of an only child,‡ involving the total extinction of her father's name—a thought which was almost impious amongst the Jews,

tion that a man of the tribe of Juda had taken a wife of the tribe of Levi, and that the Blessed Virgin, the issue of that marriage, was related by her mother to St. Elizabeth. It is elsewhere proved that the prohibition of marrying into another tribe regarded only heiresses.

* The Koran, which contains many Arabian traditions relating to Mary, says expressly that Zachary took her under his protection. (*Koran*, ch. iii.)

† Origen remarks that the law affixed a stigma on sterility; for it is written, "Accursed be he who leaves none of his race in Israel."

‡ Mary was an heiress, because it was proper that the line of David, whence the Messiah was to spring, should end in the person of an only daughter, who, bringing into the world the eternal Heir to the throne of David, crowned and consummated his race. (*Oldshausen*.)

who considered it the greatest misfortune if their name were not perpetuated in Israel. As to the vow of virginity whereby she had bound herself, she could make no excuse of that, since it might be annulled by a decision of the family council. It is known that woman was, everywhere and always, treated as a minor before the promulgation of that immortal code which has gloriously removed from her the curse of slavery.

Hence it was that the Virgin's supplications found but little sympathy even amongst the priests of Jehovah. Such virtues were far beyond their comprehension, and with all their learning and penetration, the angelic and all-holy soul of Mary was to them a seven-sealed book. Her thought, which was far in advance of her age, and contrary to all the ancient prejudices of her nation, remained incomprehensible, and all that she could bring forward, in order to excuse herself from entering on a state so wholly opposed to her dearest wishes, was of no avail. Besides, how could she

* have succeeded, since God himself was against her? It was the will of God that her marriage with a just man, who was to render testimony to the purity of her life, should screen her from the importunities of the young Hebrews, who might have sought her hand even in the temple, as St. Augustine observes,* and also to give to her and her divine Son a protector in the hour of peril. It was the only means of hiding the mystery of the Incarnation from the malevolent scrutiny of a perverse world, which would have laid hold of the miracle as a subject for the most abominable conjectures, and might even have been so infatuated by false zeal as to stone the Mother of the Saviour, as they afterwards sought to stone the woman taken in adultery; † for mercy was never one of the chosen virtues of the Hebrews, and God himself reproaches them, by the mouth of his prophets, with having their heart as hard as adamant.

In addition to these powerful reasons, which were hidden in the impenetrable obscurity of the coun-

* St. Aug., *de Sancta Virg.*, c. 14.

† St. John Chrys., *serm. 3, in Math.*

sels of God, there was another which had its source in the antediluvian traditions and in national pride, and that one reason, of itself, left little chance of success for the timid opposition of the Virgin. Perpetual chastity, which Christians have made the queen of virtues, was almost unknown amongst the disciples of Moses, who lived for so many ages in anxious expectation of the *Messiah-King* (*Melech-Hamaschia*). A young flower of the root of Jesse, a daughter of David, was not at liberty to reject the bonds of Hymen. She owed a son to the ambitious piety of her family, who would not have renounced, for all the treasures of the great king, the hope of one day numbering amongst themselves the Liberator of Israel. This hope, which had sustained the Jews when the Chaldeans, "mounted on horses swifter than eagles," violently rent asunder the embattled wall of Sion, and transplanted its people to the

* banks of the Euphrates—this hope was mingled with a bitter desire of revenge ever since the Romans ruled in Asia. The Hebrews hoped soon to see the day when the eagles should fly before the emerald banner,* and when the device of the Maccabees† should wave in triumph over that of the Roman senate. Never did the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies seem so near at hand, and hence the moment was unfavorable for obtaining the favor solicited by Mary.

According to the Gospel of the Nativity of Mary and the Proto-gospel of St. James, the guardians of the Blessed Virgin, regardless of her remonstrances, convoked a meeting of her nearest relations, all of the race of David and tribe of Juda, like herself,‡ in order to proceed to the choice of the husband whom they imposed upon her. Amongst those who were entitled to aspire to her hand, there were

* The standard of Juda was of a green color. (*Dom Calmet*.)

† This banner of the Maccabees bore the words: "Who is like unto thee, O Eternal? *Mi camocha baelim, Jehovah?*"

‡ Every maiden who inherited a prop-

erty—and not maidens in general, as the Vulgate says—was bound to marry a man of her own family and tribe, and not her nearest relation, as Montesquieu asserts. This was in order that patrimonies might not pass from one tribe to another.

a number of young Israelites, some handsome and brave, others the possessors of fertile lands, vineyards, flocks and groves of olives. The captains of Juda would have added to Mary's portion a part of the spoils and slaves taken in battle; the nabobs of her tribe would have covered her with the gold-embroidered stuffs of India, and with thrice-dyed Tyrian purple; whilst the sons of commerce, who traded in the emeralds of Egypt, the turquoises of Iran, and the pearls of the Persian Gulf, would have laid at her feet chains of precious stones, costly bracelets and ear-rings, that were worth a prince's ransom—in short,

* all the brilliant insignia of female servitude. But these were all weighed in the balance and found wanting. Despising the advantages of youth, beauty, high rank, wealth, and martial glory, the priestly guardians of the Blessed Virgin and the ancients of her house fixed their choice on a man of advanced age,* a decayed patrician, whose fortune had been swallowed up in the political revolutions and religious wars of Judea as the sea absorbs a drop of rain, leaving him only his arms and his trade. This poor, but high-born old man, who, according to the Proto-gospel of St. James, was a widower,† but according to St. Jerome had

*The Proto-gospel of St. James, ch. 2, and the *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary*, ch. 8 (books whose contents have been, for the most part, approved of, even by the Fathers of the Church), merely say that he was already old. St. Epiphanius gives eighty years to Joseph at the time of his marriage, Father Pezron fifty, and *l'Histoire divine de la Vierge*, by Marie d'Agrada, thirty-three. The supposition of St. Epiphanius will not bear examination; it is, moreover, solemnly refuted by the Hebrew law, which forbids the union of a young woman and an old man, and places it in the most disgraceful category. (Basn., l. vii., ch. 21.) *Hist. de Institutions de Moïse*. Neither the priests nor Joseph would have done that which was condemned by the law. The age given by Marie d'Agrada to Joseph does not agree with the opinion of the

Fathers; there remains but that of Father Pezron, which is altogether the most probable.

† Many of the Fathers have thought that St. Joseph was a widower when he espoused the Blessed Virgin. The Proto-gospel of St. James, and the Gospel of the Nativity of the Virgin both mention it as a fact. St. Epiphanius asserts that he had had four sons and two daughters. St. Hippolytus of Thebes, calls his first wife Salomé. Origen, Eusebius, St. Ambrose, and several other Fathers, have adopted the same opinion. Yet still it is by no means generally received, and it is commonly thought that St. Joseph led a life of virginity. Such is the opinion of St. Jerome, who expressly says, writing against Helvidius, "We nowhere read that he had had any other wife than Mary; *aliam eum uxorem habuisse non scribitur*." St. Augustine

never been married—and this last is the prevailing opinion of the Church—this old man was Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth.

When we think of the rare beauty of Mary, the education which she had received in the temple, the great connections of her family, and her quality of heiress, which was a desirable and even brilliant lot amongst the Jews, who endowed their wives and received scarcely anything with them,* we might be astonished at this decision of her family, were we not informed by the Fathers that Joseph was chosen by lot and by the express manifestation of the divine will.† An ancient tradition, inserted in the Proto-gospel of St. James and mentioned by St. Jerome, relates that the candidates, after having invoked Him who *decides lots*, left each his own almond-tree rod in the temple in the evening,

and that next day the dry and withered branch of Joseph, son of Jacob, son of Nathan, was found green and blossomed like that which had of old secured the priesthood to the Aaronites. The history of Mount Carmel states that, at sight of this prodigy, which annihilated his hopes, a young and wealthy patrician, belonging to one of the most powerful families of Judea, broke his rod in pieces, with every token of despair, and hastened to shut himself up in one of the caves of Carmel with the disciples of Elias.‡

When the guardians had made their choice, they announced it to Mary, and that admirable young Virgin, accustomed only to works of fancy—reared amid the perfumes, the melodious songs, and fairy pageants of the holy house—hesitated not a moment in devoting herself to an obscure life, menial occupations,

leaves the question undecided; but St. Peter Damian declares it to be the belief of the entire Church that St. Joseph, who passed for the father of the Saviour, was a virgin like unto Mary.

* On the occasion of the marriage-contract, the woman only received from her friends the apparel necessary for her. It was the husband who gave the dowry. (M. Salvador, *Institutions de Moïse*, t. ii., ch. 1.)

† *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary*, ch. 7; *Proto-gosp. St. James*, ch. 8; *St. Hier. in Dam.*, l. iv., ch. 5; *St. Greg. Naz., hom. de St. Nat.*; *Niceph.*, b. ii., ch. 7.

‡ This young candidate for the Virgin's hand, who was named Agabus, afterwards became a Christian, it is said, and was famous for his sanctity. (See *Histoire du Carmel*, chapter xii.)

and arduous cares, with the humble artisan chosen by her friends. A divine revelation had, they say, made known to her that this just man would be to her only a protector, a father, and the guardian of her chastity.* What would she more? The Lord had heard her prayer. While leaving her faithful to the vow which she had made, he gave her, in addition, the merit of obedience.

The projected marriage of Joseph and Mary must have excited surprise both in Nazareth and in Jerusalem, for there was little similarity of age, fortune, or condition between the pair. It would, however, be a great mistake to think that this union, apparently so disproportionate, was regarded by Jewish society (whose habits were simple and primitive) as in any degree improper. Though not holding a distinguished rank in the state, the trade of a mechanic

was neither abject nor degrading in Israel.† We see in the genealogy of the tribe of Juda a family of workers in fine flax, and another of potters, whose memory is held in honor, and Scripture has handed down to posterity the names of Beleseel and Hiram. It is well known that St. Paul, brought up to the study of the law, the famous Pharisean doctor, Hillel, and since them many doctors who, according to the emphatic language of the Rabbins, *shed light on the holy nation*, were not ashamed to apply themselves to the most common mechanical arts. But what is more: all the Israelites were artificers; for every father of a family, whatever might be his social position, was bound to make his son learn a trade, *unless*, said the law, *he would make him a thief*.‡

Those Jews whose patrimony had

* *Vie de la Sainte Vierge*, by Descoutures, p. 49. *Vie de Jésus Christ*, by Valverde, t. i., p. 71.

† Mechanics are still highly respected in Judea. "In Syria and Palestine," says Burckhardt, "the corporations of mechanics are almost as much respected as they were during the middle ages in France and Germany. A master-tradesman is there considered equal to a merchant of the second class. He can

marry into the respectable families of the city, and has usually more influence in his own locality than a merchant who has three times his wealth." (Burckhardt, *Voyage en Arabie*, t. ii., p. 139.)

‡ Any man who does not give his children a profession, said the Pharisean school, prepares them for a bad life.... "Be not burdensome to any one.... Never say, I am a man of

passed into the hands of strangers, had no other alternative than to quit the country or support themselves by the labor of their hands, awaiting the arrival of that grand epoch which restored all property to its original owners. They whose love of country induced them to adopt the latter course, were in no way degraded thereby, or incapacitated for any office in the state. Unlike Egypt and India, Israel had no *castes*; her pride was based on her religious belief, and her descent from the patriarchs. "To be the issue of Abraham according to the flesh," says the great Bossuet, "was a distinction beyond all others." In fact, the lowest of the Hebrews was held as a prince in comparison with strangers.* There were, however, amongst the Jews, as amongst the Arabs, some tribes more illustrious and some houses more noble than others. The tribe of Juda, which carried the national standard at the head of the embattled thousands of Israel, and with whom the sceptre

was to remain till the coming of the Messiah, had always the preëminence; and the family of David was the first and most honored amongst the families of Juda. Now Joseph, although poor, was of the Davidical race. The blood of twenty kings flowed in his veins, and it was Zorobabel, one of his ancestors, who brought back the people of God from the land of exile. Since that time, the splendor of his house had gradually declined; his family had become identified with the people, like that of Moses and of Samuel, but its illustrious origin was not forgotten. In our own days, the humble Abassides, who vegetate in the depth of the Hedjaz, are still honored as the descendants of Haroun-al-Raschid, and the highest family in Arabia would not disdain their alliance.

The holy daughter of Joachim did not lower herself, therefore, as much as might be thought by espousing the CARPENTER. This is said in a worldly sense; for, if we regard this

quality—that occupation does not suit me. Rabbi Johanan wrought as a skinner, Nahum as a copier of books, another Johanan made sandals, and Rabbi Juda knew the baking

trade." (*Talmud.*, Tract. *Kidouschim*, *Pessarah*, *Aboth*, *Soto*.)

* The Jews have not lost this opinion with their nationality; they hold it still.

union from a higher point of view, we find that it was in fact a noble alliance. God gave not to his chosen Virgin a man whose merit consisted in his lands, his vines, or his shekels of gold—things which often change masters, and are not more inherent in the rich than the clothes which they leave off at night. He gave her a just man, the most perfect of his works. The Lord takes no account of the vain gewgaws which delight mankind; before Him there is no distinction between the poor creatures who crawl a moment in the dust, soon to become the pasture of worms. Man judges by appearances, says the Scripture, but Jehovah beholds the heart. If God chose the humble Joseph to be the spouse of the Queen of Angels, the adoptive father of the Messiah, it was because he possessed treasures of grace and of sanctity which the angels themselves might envy; it was because his virtues had made him first amongst his people, and that his

name stood far higher in the book of life—the heraldic annals of eternity—than that of the imperial Cesar. The Virgin was not confided to the most powerful, but to the most worthy; thus the ark, which the princes and captains of Israel dared not touch for fear of being stricken with death, drew down the blessing of heaven on the house of a simple Levite wherein it was sheltered.

Joseph, in presence of the guardians and some witnesses, presented her with a small piece of money, the value of which is not now known,* saying, "If thou consentest to become my wife, accept this pledge." Mary, by accepting the gift, was solemnly bound, and thence forward nothing but a formal divorce could restore her to freedom. The contract was drawn up by certain of the Scribes. It was concise, and not overburdened with technical terms.† The husband promised to honor his wife, to provide for her

* Hillel and Schammai warmly discuss the value of this marriage-coin, mentioned by the Talmud, but have come to no conclusion on the subject. (Basn., l. vii., ch. 21.)

† The following is the literal form of the mar-

riage contract of the Hebrews. It was in use from the very earliest times, and must, therefore, have been employed at the marriage of Joseph and Mary. "In the year . . . , the . . . day of the month of . . . Benjamin, son of . . . , said to

support, according to the custom of Hebrew husbands, and secured to her a dowry of two hundred zuses (fifty crowns), being just the same for the daughter of a prince as for the daughter of a mechanic, but it might be increased according to the wealth of the husband. After having insured this dowry by pledging all his possessions, and even his cloak, which, nevertheless, the law did not allow to be claimed until after his death,* Joseph signed the contract, to which Mary likewise affixed her signature. A short benediction in honor of God terminated this ceremony, which took place several months before that of the marriage.

The marriage of the Blessed Virgin was solemnized in Jerusalem, and the most dignified members of

her family made it their duty to appear on the occasion, with all that magnificence so characteristic of the East, and which excites the wonder of European travellers—even the common people exhibiting at such times the most unheard-of splendor.† Not to invite all their relatives, on an occasion so solemn, would have been tantamount to rejecting the ancient customs of their fathers—a thing which could never happen amongst that traditionary people, as unchanging in its customs as in its religious practices, as Philo, the Jew, truly said to the emperor Cæsar. It would, moreover, have outraged all the observances of Hebrew society; and the presence of Mary at the wedding of Cana proves, on the contrary, that she conformed to them.

Rachel, daughter of . . . , Become my wife under the law of Moses and Israel. I promise to respect thee, to provide for thy maintenance, in food and clothing, according to the custom of Hebrew husbands who honor their wives and maintain them in a proper manner. I give thee at this present . . . (the sum fixed by the law), and I promise thee, over and above thy food, clothing, and all other necessities, that conjugal love, which is common to people of all nations. Rachel consents to become the wife of Benjamin, who, of his own

free will, and in order to make a dowry proportioned to his means, adds to the dowry aforesaid the sum of . . .” (*Institutions de Moïse.*)

* Basnage, l. vii., ch. 21.

† “We in Europe have no idea of the splendor displayed in the East on such occasions,” says Baron Geramb in his *Pilgrimage to Jerusalem*; “the nuptial garment of almost every woman is of crimson velvet, embroidered with gold; with this they wear numerous diamond and pearl ornaments.” M. de Lamartine was likewise

It was a bright winter's day,* and the new moon was slowly rising behind the mountains,† when a long train of richly-dressed women was seen to approach the dwelling of Mary. The light of the torches, borne by a number of slaves, flashed on their cinctures of gold, their strings of pearl, the jeweled crescents which they wore on their foreheads, and the diamonds of their Persian tiaras.‡ Those daughters of Sion still retained the use of paint, which was known even in the days of Jezabel; their brows and eyelashes were painted black, and the tips of their fingers were red as the berries of the eglantine.§ Being ushered into the inner room, where the young and holy bride was seated in company with some pious matrons of her family, they blessed God for giving her a husband to protect her,

and complimented her on her approaching marriage, the festivities of which they came to share.

Belonging to Jewish society, with whom the bridal adornment was a Biblical reminiscence, and could not be dispensed with, Mary was obliged to submit for a while to the requirements of Eastern luxury, although it had no charms for her. Gold, pearls, and rich stuffs are not, of themselves, reprehensible; it is only the thoughts of pride and vanity which they engender in weak minds that are positively evil. Queen Matilda was more humble under her embroidered garments, studded with jewels, than the coarsely-clad women with whom she shut herself up, after her glorious regency; such is the simple testimony of the chroniclers of those times.

Taking care, then, to avoid that

dazzled with the superb costumes and profusion of jewels displayed by the women of Syria at the weddings of their friends.

* In the middle of the sixteenth century the Church authorized the celebration of this festival. It is solemnized on the 22d of January, being, it is said, the day on which the marriage took place. The city of Arras holds this festival on the 23d of January, and some of the Flemish churches on the 24th of the same month.

† Amongst the Jews marriages were not celebrated indiscriminately on every day of the week; they were usually solemnized at the time of a new moon, and on Wednesday rather than any other day. (Basn., l. vii., ch. 21.)

‡ Isai, cap. iii.

§ Throughout all the East, the women color the tips of their fingers with *lausonia inermis*. (Linn.) This plant abounds in the isle of Cyprus.

disregard of dress which would have * been sure to give offence, at a time when custom required even of the wedding-guests a certain richness of costume—failing in which they were expelled, as we see even by the Gospel—the young descendant of the kings of Juda was bound to wear, on that occasion, a rich and becoming costume, and we see by authentic relics that such was the case.* Her robe was carefully preserved in Palestine, and thence conveyed to Constantinople in 461 (as we learn from Nicephorus). It was exceedingly valuable both in ornament and design. The ground was of a buff, or nankin color, interspersed with flowers of blue, white, violet and gold. It is now the holy relic of Chartres.†

* There are two of the Virgin's tunics still preserved, and they are made of very precious stuff. Chardin saw one of these in Mingrelia; it was of a nankin color and richly embroidered.

† This tunic was given by Charles the Bald to the Church of Chartres in 877. Numerous miracles have been attributed to it.

‡ The Christians of Damascus have retained this custom. Some days before the nuptial feast, the bridegroom sends to his betrothed a pair of bracelets either of gold or of jewels, according to his means, a piece of gold brocade, and 160 dollars for the expenses of the bath and the wedding banquet. (*Corres. d'Orient*, lettre 147.)

§ The bride's crown was usually of gold, and *

In memory of ancient times and the patriarchal customs of her fathers, she wore, like Rebecca, earrings and bracelets of gold—a modest and indispensable present which Joseph had to send some days before the ceremony,‡ and to which the richer Hebrews added necklaces of pearls, and magnificent sets of jewels. Instead of the pointed golden crown,§ worn by the brides of the more opulent classes, there was placed on Mary's fair tresses|| a simple wreath of myrtle, which in spring would have been intertwined with roses.¶ Her bridal veil covered her from head to foot, and floated around her like a cloud.**

A canopy of precious stuff, borne by four young Hebrews, awaited the

made in the form of a tower like that of Cybella. This custom was abolished during the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, but the wreaths of myrtle and roses were retained. (Basn., l. vii., ch. 21.)

|| Amongst the Jews, even the women's apparel was within the province of tradition. "Hair-dressers were called in to curl the young bride's hair, because, said the Rabbins, Jehovah himself arranged Eve's hair in curls, when he gave her to Adam in Paradise." (Basnage, l. vii., ch. 21, p. 393.)

¶ Garlands of myrtle and roses were worn by brides of the lower classes. (Basnage, l. vii., ch. 21. *Misnah*, *Tit. Sotah*, c. 9, sect. 14.)

** These nuptial veils, embroidered in gold and silver, are still in use all over Syria.

bride outside her dwelling.* Mary was placed under it, between two matrons, the one on the right representing her mother; the other was probably that Mary of Cleophas, supposed by some authors to have been the elder daughter of St. Ann, but who was only the sister-in-law of the Virgin.† After them came all the nuptial train, waving palm and myrtle branches in token of rejoicing.‡ The procession moved along to the sound of cymbals, harps and flutes playing grave and simple airs in concert;§ these were probably identical with the choirs of David. Then came the bridegroom, his brow adorned with a fantastic crown, clear as crystal, and peculiar

to his people.|| He was surrounded by a number of friends singing an epithalamium, imitated from Solomon's Canticle of Canticles, that mystic and sublime marriage-song whose lofty metaphors have each a divine and hidden meaning. They sang the beauty of the young bride, whose locks were as branches of palm-trees, her form light and graceful as that of a young hart, her teeth (white) as a flock of sheep, which come up from the washing; her eyes as doves upon brooks of waters; they said that the odor of her renown was as sweet as the perfume that exhaled from her garments; that she was the lily of virgins and the object of women's praise. Pass-

*The order of this bridal pomp, which goes back to the most remote ages, is still found in Egypt. Niebuhr thus describes an Egyptian marriage. "The bride, covered from head to foot, walks between two women under a canopy borne by four men. Several slaves go before, some of them playing the tabor; others carry fly-flaps, while others again sprinkle perfumes around as they pass along. They are followed by a number of women, and by musicians seated on asses. The ceremony takes place by night, and torches are borne by the slaves." (Niebuhr, *Voyage en Arabie*, t. 1.)

†According to M. Peignot, a conscientious historian, who made many inquiries on the subject, this holy woman was the wife of Cleophas, brother of St. Joseph, and consequently a sister-

in-law of the Blessed Virgin. (See *Recherches historiques sur la personne de Jésus Christ et celle de Marie*, p. 249.)

‡See Fleury, *Mœurs des Israélites*.

§The music of the East is altogether different from ours. It is grave and simple, without any labored modulation. All the instruments play together, unless one may take the notion of keeping up a continued bass, by repeating incessantly the same note. (Niebuhr, vol. 1, p. 136.)

|| This crown, which, according to the Jewish doctors, contained a mysterious lesson, was composed of salt and sulphur. The salt was clear as crystal, and upon it were traced various characters with the sulphur. (*Codex*, M. S. apud Wagenseil in *Mismam. Tit. Sotah, adul. de uxore suspect.*, c. 9, sec. 14.)

ing then to the eulogium of the bridegroom, they praised his mien, majestic and imposing as Lebanon, the mildness of his voice, the gracious urbanity of his manners, and they added, that he was distinguished amongst men as the cedar amongst trees. Then, proceeding to matters of a higher and more general nature, they said that the husband ought to be to his wife as the bunch of myrrh which she wears on her bosom; that she ought to pass through life resting on him, and as heedless of all other men as though she were in a desert, because that jealousy is inflexible as death, and its lamps are lamps of fire and flame. They added, that conjugal love was a thing so precious that the richest of men, were he to buy it at the expense of all he possessed, might still reckon that he had it for nothing.

Now and then the young people, who brought up the rear, formed dances of the same kind as the relig-

* ious dance, which was associated, in its origin, with the religious festivals.* Again, they would burst out into those shrill and prolonged cries of joy still in use amongst the Arabs,† which are compared by a recent traveller in Syria to the loud shouts wherewith the vine-dressers of southern France accost their brethren on an opposite hill. The whole procession, as it passed along, scattered small pieces of silver‡ amongst the poor, who were loud in their blessings and gratulations. These silver coins bore either the device of a vine-leaf, or the three ears of corn which were the emblem of Judea.§ The women of Israel, grouped along the wayside, strewed palm-branches before the bride and bridegroom, and now and then they stopped the former to sprinkle her garments with essence of roses.|| Mary, too, was to have her day of triumph in Jerusalem.

Arrived at the nuptial dwelling,

* Dancing, which, in its origin, was intended to imitate the motion of the stars, mingled in all the religious feasts of antiquity. It was, doubtless, of antediluvian origin, and must even have preceded the invention of musical instruments.

† See Niebuhr, *book quoted*.

‡ Basnage, l. vii., ch. 21

§ Some of these Jewish coins have been found of the time of Herod and the Maccabees. They bear the effigy of no prince, but merely ears of corn and vine-leaves.

|| This custom, like many others, was borrowed from Egypt.

the friends of the bride and bridegroom cried in chorus, *Blessed be he who cometh!* Joseph covered with his taled, and Mary with her veil, sat side by side under the canopy; Mary taking the right side—because the Psalmist said, the queen (thy spouse) stood on thy right hand*—and turning towards the south.† The bridegroom placed a ring upon her finger,‡ saying, “Behold, thou art my spouse according to the law of Moses and of Israel.” He took off his taled and threw it over the shoulders of the bride, in imitation of what passed at the marriage of Ruth, who said to Booz, *Spread thy coverlet over thy servant.*§ One of the nearest kinsmen then poured wine into a cup, tasted of it, and then presented it to the new-married pair, blessing God for having created man and woman, and instituted marriage. Whilst they carried to their lips the sacred marriage-cup, the assistants sang to the God of Israel

* Psalm xlv., 10.

† Basnage, l. vii., ch. 21.

‡ It is said that this ring is at Perouse, where it is carefully preserved. (Basnage, lib. vii., ch. 21.)

§ See Buxtorf.

a hymn which contained six blessings. Joseph then poured out the remainder of the wine in token of liberality, and the assembly scattered handfuls of wheat, as the symbol of abundance; then the cup was broken to pieces by a child.||

All the assembly, surrounding the newly-married pair with torches, blessed the Lord, and then passed on to the banquet-hall, where they proceeded (according to an ancient bishop of Bresse,¶ who traces back this Hebrew tradition to the days of Christ) to choose the king of the feast, who was to be “of the sacerdotal race,” and to preside over the meats and the wines, and to see that the guests did not infringe on the rules of religion and propriety. Joseph and Mary also arose; but, before they followed their guests, they exchanged a few secret words in face of the firmament with all its stars, which attest the glory of the Most High.** “Thou shalt be as a

|| Basnage, l. vii., ch. 21. *Instit. de Moïse*, l. vii., ch. i., p. 336.

¶ Gaudent, Serm. 9, B. P., t. ii., p. 38.

** St. Thomas is of opinion that it was immediately after the celebration of their marriage that St. Joseph and the Blessed Vir-

mother unto me," said the patriarch to the holy Virgin, "and I will respect thee even as the altar of Jehovah." Thenceforward they were no more, in the eyes of religious law, than brother and sister in marriage, although their union was strictly maintained.*

Those festivals, which were accompanied by the religious ceremony of sacrifice, lasted seven days, as in the time of the patriarchs. The week being ended, Joseph and Mary, escorted by a brilliant cavalcade of their relations, took the way to Galilee. The little caravan set out to the merry sound of cymbals, and only broke up at the fountain of Anathot,† where those of Jerusalem took leave of the newly-married pair, with tears in their eyes, blessings

on their lips, and hands solemnly placed on their heart. The Nazarenes went on their way; they crossed the mountains of Samaria, where the eagle watched them from his eyrie on high, regardless of their presence. Sichem then presented itself to the eyes of the travellers, with its evergreen woods, its limpid streams, and its stately edifices rising above the foliage. They passed the reddish sides of the mountain of Garizim, where stood the ruins of the schismatic temple, the shameless rival of the holy house, which John Hircan had destroyed by fire, and which was afterwards replaced by a church dedicated to Mary herself; then the lofty heights of Mount Hebal; then Sebastes, where a new and stately

gin made, by mutual consent, their vow of virginity.

* This vow of chastity in married life, which has given rise to so much impious sarcasm, was not unknown amongst the Hebrews; but with them it was dictated by passion and anger, whilst that of these holy spouses was the result of piety. If a husband said to his wife, "Thou art as my mother," he was never again allowed to consider her in any other light; especially if he had introduced into his vow the altar of Jehovah, the temple, or the sacrifice. Women sometimes did the same thing. And although these vows were

scarcely approved of, because they proceeded from wrath and malediction, they were still considered binding, and had to be religiously fulfilled. (Basnage, lib. vii., chapter 19, page 352. Leo of Modena, *Ceremon. et Cout. des Juifs*, ch. 4.)

† All the relations went on horseback to escort the bride home, in case her husband's house was not far off. This is still customary amongst the Arabs. We have represented the bridal party as separating at Anathot, a small town about five leagues from Jerusalem, because it is the first stage.

palace was rising up under the protection of Augustus, and which Herod delighted to embellish, as the only altar whereon he might sacrifice to the genius of Rome.

Towards the middle of the second day's journey they distinguished the summit of Mount Thabor, raising its verdant head towards the pale and silvery sky of Galilee, and beyond, the towering heights of Lebanon, hiding their snowy peaks in the clouds. From the woody slopes of Hermon, where the goats were browsing on the tender shoots of the bushes, they descended into a smiling plain, which lay like an immense basket of flowers between hills covered with green oaks and myrtles, vineyards, and groves of olives. Fields of barley, wheat and clover, in full verdure, were gently waving in the cool fresh breeze of opening spring, warmer and more rapid there than in our Western regions. The clear, bright sunlight

lay on that lovely land, vegetation was rapidly progressing, and the blue waters, soon to be dried up by the scorching summer sun, were running in silvery brightness through that new Eden. Thriving villages were seen peeping out here and there between rows of stately palms, and at intervals, on the summit of a rock, was seated the solitary fortress whose garrison, Hebrews as yet, and charged with a protecting mission, drew their Damascus blades only against nocturnal marauders, or the Arabs of the desert. This delightful valley, set, as it were, in the midst of high and gloomy mountains, was the vale of Esdrelon, and at its farther end appeared a small city, picturesquely seated on the declivity of a hill, and shining preëminent over all the neighboring hamlets; that fair and smiling town was Nazareth, the birth-place of Mary, the cradle of the Messiah!*

Doubtless, it was not without

*The philosophers of the last century took great pains to depreciate Palestine. The impression which they gave of it still remains, while the poverty and depopulation of that country, scarcely breathing under the sabre of the Musulman, has given them a show of reason in the eyes of superficial readers. Yet there is no doubt

that, with the exception of the environs of Jerusalem, whose sterility no one can deny, we find in that country, and especially that part of it which formerly belonged to the Canaanites, the promised land of Moses. In proof of this assertion, we will give two descriptions of Galilee, written eight hundred years apart. "Galilee,"

emotion that Mary once more beheld her native town, the memory of which, dimmed, but not effaced, had been wont to haunt her dreams. She had quitted it a child for the splendid walls of the temple; she returned fair, young, accomplished, and pure as when she left.

The travellers went into the house of St. Ann, an ancient and mysterious dwelling, partly hollowed from the rock, like the prophetic grottoes of former times,* and which was soon

to become holier than the temple at Jerusalem—the very dwelling-place of Jehovah. The women of Nazareth greeted the youthful bride with blessings as she modestly advanced, wrapped up in her veil like Rebecca of old; and Mary, amid the gratulations of those who had seen her in her early infancy, entered once more that calm paternal dwelling, which seemed still redolent with the good odor of the virtues of Ann and Joachim.

says Flavius Josephus, “is divided into Upper and Lower, both extremely fertile; the soil is at once rich and light, and abounds in pasturage; it is suitable for every production, and filled with trees of every kind, but especially with large plantations of vines and olives. It is watered by the torrents which fall from the mountains, and by a vast number of springs and rivulets which are never exhausted, and supply the want of the torrents when these last are dried up during the heat of summer. The fertility of the soil is so great that it induces all men, even those who are least laborious, to cultivate it. Hence it is well tilled, and there is not a spot of waste land to be seen. Its inhabitants are robust and warlike, the cities frequent, the villages numerous, and so densely peopled that the smallest can reckon fifteen thousand souls. (Joseph., *de Bello*, lib. ii., cap. ii.) “To give an idea of the aspect of Galilee,” says a modern traveller, speaking in his turn, “it is not in France that one can find a comparison, but in *l’Agro Romano*; around Nazareth, as around Rome, it is every where the same light, the same configuration of the soil. Nature is there as sublime as the Gospel itself

Galilee is an abridged picture of the Holy Land, and when once we have seen it under the different aspects of day and night, we are able to understand what it must have been in the time of Christ. For the artist, Galilee is an Eden; nothing is deficient; neither the accidents of the soil of Judea, nor the luminous solitudes of Palestine, nor the verdant fecundity of Samaria, Garizim, and the Mount of Olives, are more sublime than Hermon and Thabor; nor are the blueish plains of Ascalon more solemn than the fragrant shores of the lake of Tiberias, where the air is absorbed in light. The Galilean soil everywhere reminds us of history and miracles; everywhere it presents traces of heroes and the imprint of God; and one feels, in contemplating the land from the heights of Thabor, that it was the country where dwelt the Man-God; so strangely are religious reminiscences mingled with the marvels of earth and sky.” (*Corres. d’Orient*, t. v.)

* “There are still found in Nazareth,” says the Baron Geramb, “houses like that of St. Joseph, that is to say, very low, and communicating with a cave excavated from the side of the mountain.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ANNUNCIATION.



It is easy to imagine the blessed tranquillity in which Joseph and Mary passed the first months of their chaste union. The peace of God was in and around their humble dwelling, and their time was divided between labor and prayer, which sanctified and rendered it less rude. According to an ancient custom, still in use amongst the Arabs and nearly all over the East, Joseph wrought at his trade, in a house apart from his dwelling.* His workshop, the same in which Jesus himself subsequently worked, was a low room, ten or twelve feet in width by as many in length. Outside the door

was a stone bench, whereon the passer-by might rest, sheltered from the burning rays of the sun by an awning of palm-leaf matting.† There it was that the laborious workman fabricated plows, yokes, and rustic cars. Sometimes he put up the cabins of the valley, and at times his arm, still stout and strong, hewed down the lofty sycamore and the black turpentine-tree of Mount Carmel.‡ The pay which he received for so much toil was very trifling, and even that he shared with the needy.

On her side, his gentle and holy helpmate was not idle. Gifted with a mind enlightened, wise, and prudent, without regret for the past or delusive speculations for the future,

* This house of St. Joseph is about 130 or 140 paces from that of St. Ann. The place is still pointed out, under the name of *Joseph's Workshop*. This shop had been transformed into a spacious church, a part of which was destroyed by the Turks. A chapel still remains, wherein the Holy Sacrifice is daily offered up. (*Pèlerinage à Jerusalem*, par le R. P. Geramb.)

† These shops are still the same all over the Levant. (See Burckhardt, *Voyage en Arabie*, t. i.)

‡ St. Justin, Martyr (*Dialog. cum Triphone*), mentions that Jesus helped his adoptive father to make yokes and plows. St. Ambrose (*in Luc.*, lib. iii., 2) asserts that St. Joseph worked at the hewing and felling of trees, the building of houses, and other works of that kind.

seeing the world just as it is, and her own position in its true light, she piously conformed herself to it, and fulfilled with religious fidelity its sacred obligations. From the moment she took possession of her mother's dwelling, she clothed herself with poverty as with a garment sent by God, and became, what she ought to be, in the obscure condition to which Providence had reduced her, an humble and unassuming maiden. All the gay and brilliant works of elegant life were suddenly put aside, and replaced by the arduous cares, the monotonous occu-

pations of a poor household, whose mistress has neither slaves nor servants. The delicate hands of Mary, accustomed to handle silken tissues, plaited, with date-leaves, or reeds pulled on the banks of Jordan, the mat which covered the earthen floor of her dwelling. Her spindle was charged with the coarsest flax. She had herself to grind the wheat and barley,* which she kneaded into round thin cakes. Wrapt in her white veil, an antique urn on her head,† she went to draw water from a neighboring fountain,‡ like the wives of the old patriarchs, or to

* The first mills that were invented were hand-mills. In Egypt, in Arabia, in Palestine, and even in Greece, it was the women who worked them. There is still shown at Mecca, in a fine house which is said to have been that of Khadidje, a cavity wherein Fatima, surnamed *the dazzling*, daughter of Mahomet, turned her hand-mill. (See Burckhardt, *Voyage en Arabie*.) The wives of the Arab Sheiks have still to perform this laborious duty. In the time of the sons of Clovis, St. Radegonde, queen of France, ground, in imitation of the Blessed Virgin, all the grain that she used during Lent. (Le Grand d'Aussy, *Hist. prisee des Français*.) The invention of water-mills is attributed to Mithridates. It is certain that they have existed from his time. Amongst other proofs of this, that pretty epigram of Antipator of Thessalonica is quoted, and we will here give a translation of it. "Ye women, who have hitherto been employed in grinding

our grain, sleep in peace, and let your arms rest; it is no longer for you that the birds usher in the morning by their songs. Ceres has commanded the Naiads to do your work; they obey, and swiftly turn a wheel which, in its turn, moves the heavy mill-stones." The Romans did not perfectly succeed in making water-mills until Constantine had abolished slavery.

† These urns are enormous earthen pitchers of immoderate height. The Nazarenes carry them on their head; and under such a weight, and sometimes with a child in their arms, they walk with astonishing lightness. (De Geramb, t. ii., p. 239.)

‡ This fountain is called in that country *Mary's Fountain*. Tradition says that the divine Mother of Jesus went habitually thither to draw what water she required; and it is easy to believe that such was the case, when we consider the scarcity of water in Nazareth. The path which

wash her blue robes in the running stream, like the princesses of Homer.

Jesus, witnessing the toilsome avocations of this *strong woman*, frequently alluded to them in his parables, and these simple occupations of Mary are preserved in the Gospel tissue as a sea-flower is in amber. We there see the thrifty housewife putting the leaven in three measures of meal,* carefully sweeping over her house in search of something that she lost,† and patiently mending an old garment.‡ When Jesus seeks a similitude to recommend purity of heart, he draws it from the remembrance of her cleanliness who carefully washed *the inside and outside of the cup*; § and we may guess that he thought of Mary when praising the offering of the widow *who giveth not of her abundance, but of her poverty*. Hence the chanter of Chio represents Justice under the likeness

leads to this fountain, where the pious mother of Constantine constructed fine basins and reservoirs, is bordered with nopals and fruit-trees. (De Geramb, *place quoted*.)

* St. Luke, ch. xiii., v. 21, and St. Matthew, ch. xiii., 8, 33.

† *Ibid.*, ch. v., v. 36.

of his mother, a poor humble woman, carefully weighing the wool which she is going to spin for her own maintenance and that of her son, remaining just and honest towards the rich in the midst of all her poverty.

At nightfall, || when the birds seek their lofty nests, Mary placed on a clean, bright table, the work of Joseph's hands, the little cakes of wheat and barley, the savory dates, milk-meat, fruits, and dry vegetables, which composed the frugal meal of the descendant of the Jewish princes. These articles, plainly cooked, formed the principal food of the ancient Hebrews, a sober race, who at need could well content themselves with bread and water. ¶ As to the Virgin, she lived on so little that ancient authors—lovers of the marvelous—thought she must have been fed by angels.

When Joseph, tired after the labors of the day, entered his humble

‡ *Ibid.*, ch. xv., v. 8.

§ *Ibid.*, ch. xi., v. 39.

|| In Israel, people eat after having worked, and late enough too. (Fleury, *Mœurs des Israélites*.) The principal meal of Joseph and Mary was taken about six in the evening.

¶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

home at sunset, he found his young spouse waiting to present the water which she had warmed to bathe his feet, and the clear, cold water from the fountain, in a vase free from all unclean touch,* for the ablutions necessary before meals. That grave and simple man, with his fine patriarchal countenance, where the passions had left no trace, and that angelic maiden, so eager to serve him with the solicitude of a tender child, formed a group worthy of the golden age.†

Meanwhile the hour was come—the hour which the Eternal had marked out in his divine counsels for the Incarnation of his Son. The angel Gabriel, one of the four‡ who stand always before the Lord, received a mysterious mission which

withdrew him for a time from the heavenly court. Assuming one of those radiant coverings of thick air wherewith the celestial spirits clothe themselves when they are to fall under the gross senses of the children of men,§ the angel left behind him the golden palaces and emerald walls of the heavenly Jerusalem, whose gates are twelve pearls,|| and spread his vast white wings,¶ his face all radiant with benignant joy; for he was bearing to earth a message of peace, and the holy angels take as much pleasure in the happiness of men as the wicked spirits do in their sufferings and their ruin.

Having crossed the measureless wastes of heaven, in which every star is an oasis, the angel who had

* Amongst the Jews there were numberless precautions to be taken for purifying the vessels in which water was drawn or food prepared. They were not only careful in regard to their having belonged to strangers, but they carried their scruples much farther still, for a thousand circumstances rendered them unclean. (*Misnah, Ordo Puritatum.*)

† *Non dedignabar parare et ministrare quæ erant necessaria Joseph.* Such are the words put in the mouth of Mary by an ancient author, and it is in perfect conformity with the still existing customs.

‡ “There are four angels who are scarcely ever

seen on earth,” say the Rabbins, “because they stand around the throne of God; these angels are: Michael, who is on the right; Gabriel, on the left; Uriel, who is before God; and Raphael, who is behind him.” (*Bibl. Rabbin. i., page 206.*)

§ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Question unique des creatures spirituelles*, Art. 6.

|| Apocalypse, ch. xxi., v. 21.

¶ The Jews represent the angels, as Christians do, with wings. The Koran gives the angel Gabriel one hundred and forty pairs of wings, and says that it takes him only an hour to come from heaven to earth. (*Legend of Mahomet.*)

foretold to Daniel the coming of the Messiah, and who was now setting out for the accomplishment of that great promise of God, directed his course with the rapidity of thought towards a little planet, which his piercing eye descried at an immense distance, first, in the state of a nebulous star; then shining with a pale milky light; then, at last, with the rotundity and tranquil light of the moon, whose phases it has.

On approaching this little globe, which man has proudly divided into zones and hemispheres—where he toils with senseless ardor to amass some treasures which he makes his god—the angel began to distinguish ponds of blue, shining water, surmounted by dark peaks like little submarine rocks. These were our oceans and our lofty mountains. The cities did not yet appear, nor men. At length the earth, which

* had first appeared under a microscopic form, gradually expanded into vast countries of many kingdoms, intersected with deserts, and planted with forests. Arrived at the zenith of Palestine, the angel cast a gracious glance on the pretty town of Nazareth, and, descending softly through the clouds after the manner of a falling star, he gracefully lowered himself to the humble, but holy dwelling of Joseph, the carpenter of Galilee, whose fathers were kings.

The sun was declining towards the lofty promontory of Carmel, and was soon to set behind the horizon of the Syrian Sea, when the angel presented himself in the simple oratory of the Blessed Virgin.* Faithful to the religious customs of her people, Mary, her head turned towards the temple,† was then engaged in her evening prayer to the God of Jacob.‡ “Hail, full of grace,” said the heavenly messen-

* It is commonly believed that the angel's visit to the Blessed Virgin took place about the close of the day.

† The people of the East turn towards a certain point of the heavens when they pray; this is what they call the *Kebla*. The Jews turn towards the temple of Jerusalem, the Mahometans towards Mecca, the Sabeans to-

wards the south, and the Ghebers towards the rising sun.

‡ The Jews prayed three times a day; at sunrise in the morning, at three o'clock in the afternoon, when sacrifice was offered, and in the evening at sunset. According to the Rabbins, Abraham established the morning prayer, Isaac that of the afternoon, and Jacob

ger, bending his radiant head; "the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women."

Mary was alarmed at this marvelous apparition. Perhaps she feared, like Moses, to see God and die. Perhaps, as St. Ambrose thought, her virginal modesty was alarmed at sight of that son of heaven, who introduced himself, like a sunbeam, into that solitary cell, where no man ever entered. Perhaps it was the respectful attitude and splendid eulogium of the angel that disturbed her humility. However it was, the Gospel mentions that she was troubled within herself, and tried in vain to understand the object of that surprising visit, and the hidden meaning of that mysterious salutation.

The angel, perceiving her alarm, mildly said, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy

womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father: and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever." At these words, which would have overwhelmed another with joy, the chaste and prudent Mary thought only of her virginal wreath, which she was resolved never to tarnish, and inquired how this prediction was to be reconciled with her vow of perpetual chastity.*

Virginal purity is a thing so holy in the eyes of the angels that Gabriel, in order to reassure Mary, feared not to reveal a part of the chaste mystery of the Incarnation. "The power of the Most High shall overshadow thee," said he, "and the Holy which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God."† Then, according to the custom of the

that of the evening. (Basnage, lib. vii., chap. 17.)

* Calvin, that haughty heresiarch, who burned Servetus while preaching toleration, dared to calumniate the Virgin, taking occasion from this text to accuse her of incredulity. St. Augustine had met the objection long beforehand. "The Virgin does not doubt," said he, "*non quasi in-*

credula de oraculo; she only seeks to be informed as to how the miracle is to be wrought." St. John Chrysostom adds that this inquiry is the effect of respectful admiration, and not of vain curiosity.

† This Gospel record has been received by the Mussulmans themselves. Here is how the Koran relates the interview between the Blessed Virgin

heavenly ambassadors, he would give her a sign which should confirm the truth of his words. "And behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren: because no word shall be impossible with God."

Sarah had smiled an incredulous smile when the angel, seated under the oaks which shaded her tent, announced that she, old and barren, should bear a son. Mary, to whom a new prodigy was announced, a thing unprecedented under the sun—in fine, a virginal maternity—immediately believed the divine promise, and humbling herself before Him who exalted her above all women, she answered submissively, "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord*, be it done unto me according to thy will!" At these words the angel disappeared, and the

and the angel. "The angel said unto Mary: 'God announces his Word to thee: he shall be called Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of Mary, great in this world and in the other, and the confidant of the Most High; men shall hear his Word from infancy to old age, and he shall be numbered amongst the just.' 'Lord,' answered Mary, 'how could I have a son? I know not

* WORD WAS MADE FLESH to dwell amongst us.* Thus it was that the angel of light treated of our salvation with the second Eve, when the crime of the guilty Eve, who had conspired our ruin with the infernal angel, was gloriously repaired. Thus it was that a simple mortal was raised to the unequalled dignity of Mother of God, and that, virgin and mother both together, she united by a new miracle the two most opposite and sublime states of her sex. "Let us dive no farther into this mystery," says St. John Chrysostom, "or seek to know how the Holy Ghost could work this prodigy in the Virgin; that divine generation is an unfathomable abyss which no curious glance may sound."†

We have adopted the opinion of the doctors and theologians who maintain that Joseph was legally the spouse of Mary at the time of the Incarnation. Yet this opinion

man.' 'Yet so shall it be,' replied the angel; 'God forms creatures as he pleases: if he wills that any thing should exist, he says, Be done, and it is done.' " (Ko., ch. iii.)

* The mystery of the Incarnation took place on the 25th of March, on a Friday evening, according to Father Drexelius.

† St. John Chrysostom, *Ser. 4.*

is controverted; and amongst the authorities who pretend that Mary was not yet the spouse, but only the betrothed of Joseph, we find in the first rank the great St. John Chrysostom himself.* Still, Mary was living in the house of Joseph, according to the same Father, at the moment of the Annunciation. "For," says that illustrious doctor, "in former times it was customary for betrothed brides to reside in the house of the intended husband, which is still occasionally done. We see that the sons-in-law of Lot dwelt in the house of their future father-in-law,"†

Notwithstanding her profound respect for St. John Chrysostom, the Church has not adopted his opinion. The example of the sons-in-law of Lot, which he brings forward to prove his case, is badly chosen. Scripture nowhere says that they lived with Lot; and all goes to prove the contrary, since the patriarch was obliged to *go out*, at a

moment of terror and consternation, whilst the wicked city was in an uproar, to warn "his sons-in-law that were to have his daughters." Even supposing that these young men had formed a part of Lot's family, since the flocks of that patriarch covered the hills and valleys of an entire province, they would have been, on the banks of the Jordan, precisely what Jacob was in Mesopotamia, active and vigilant servants, *day and night parched with heat, and with frost.*‡ We nowhere see that they had their betrothed in their tents; they lived under the protection of the patriarch, whose chief shepherds they were; there is nothing in this contrary to the customs of Asia. The Blessed Virgin, being an orphan and alone in the world, would have been in an awkward position, residing in the house of her betrothed husband. Such a supposition could only be authorized by a general custom amongst the Hebrews, and we find in their

* Descoutures has erred in placing St. John Chrysostom amongst those who maintain that Joseph was legally the husband of Mary at the time of the Incarnation; that writer, who is

in general very judicious, probably quoted him from supposition.

† St. John Chrysostom, *Serm.* 4.

‡ *Gen.* ch. xxxi., v. 40.

code an express law against it.* St. Chrysostom himself tells us, and in this he fully agrees with the ancient theologians, that God long covered with an impenetrable veil the miraculous maternity of Mary, in order to save her from a revolting suspicion, which would have been as hurtful to the divinity of the Son as to the universal respect due to the Mother. Now, marriage alone could cover with its honored mantle the mystery of the Incarnation, for a mere betrothal would not have sufficed. And then, if Joseph and Mary had been only betrothed at the time of the Incarnation of the Word, they would have been nothing more four months after, since the Gospel mentions that Mary, after the Annunciation, set out *with haste* to visit St. Elizabeth, and that it was only on her return from Hebron, after an absence of three months, that *she was found with child*, a phrase which indicates a position visible to all. Are we to suppose that the marriage of the Virgin was only celebrated when her maternity was known and estab-

lished? What would the two families have thought? What would the people of Nazareth have said as they thronged to witness the ceremony? What insulting remarks would have been applied to the most pure Virgin, amongst a people with whom female chastity was so sacred that its violation was inevitably punished with death! Would not the birth of the Messiah—that birth which was to be *pure as the morning-dew*—have been tainted and defiled by this foul slander? Would not the Jews, and especially those of Nazareth, who were so much opposed to Christ, and who called him *the carpenter's son*—would they not have taunted him with the irregularity of his birth? But this they did not do, and the evident conclusion is that they could not do it.

Here, then, undoubtedly, are the reasons which induced many illustrious theologians to hold that Mary was really married, notwithstanding the support which the opposite party seem to find in the words of St. Matthew—words which would seem to favor the other interpretation—but which are far

* Misnah, t. iii., *de Sponsalibus*. Selden, *Uxor Hebræica*.

from being so precise as to resolve the difficulty.* Finally, the dispute has never turned on the principal point. Whether wife or betrothed, no true Christian has ever doubted

that the Mother of God was the purest and holiest of virgins. The Mussulmans themselves agree that she was "the source and mine of purity."†

*The verse which has divided the doctors is this: *Christi autem generatio, sic erat: cum esset desponsata mater ejus Maria Joseph, antequam convenirent, inventa est in utero habens de Spiritu Sancto.* Those who dwell on the meaning of these words say that the Virgin was only betrothed, because the Greek verb which renders the Hebrew expression of St. Matthew means *desponderi*, to be promised, and because there is another term signifying to be married, just as there are amongst the Latins *desponderi* and *nubere*, so that St. Joseph had not yet taken the Virgin to his house. This they prove by that part of the 20th verse, *Noli timere accipere Mariam conjugem tuam: quod enim in ea natum est, de Spiritu Sancto est*, which they thus explain: "Fear not to take Mary for thy wife, for what is conceived in her is conceived by the operation of the Holy Gost." But in order to translate thus, there must be, *in conjugem tuam*. The opposite party, who are sustained by many of the Fathers, by respectable commentators, and nearly all the theologians, find wherewith to combat their opponents in the second chapter of St. Luke, where, notwithstanding that the Virgin was already married to Joseph, the Evangelist employs the Greek term *ἡ προχρησθαι*, which signifies *being promised*, and says, *Ut proficeretur cum Maria desponsata sibi*

uxre pręgnante: to the end that he might have an understanding with his betrothed wife, who was with child. And in the 19th verse of the first chapter of St. Matthew, St. Joseph is called *vir ejus* (her husband) and not her betrothed. Although St. Matthew calls the Blessed Virgin *sponsa* (betrothed) and she a wife, that does not prove that she had not yet contracted marriage; it is merely to show, as one of the Fathers remarks, that she had no closer connection with her spouse than if she was only his betrothed.

† The purity of Mary is fully recognized by the Mussulmans; hence we find that Abou-Ishac, ambassador from the Caliph to the court of the Greek Emperor, being present at a religious conference with the patriarch and the Greek bishops, the latter reproached the Mussulmans with many slanderous stories which had been formerly circulated against Aischah, the widow of their prophet, which had occasioned grievous disputes amongst them. Whereupon Abou-Ishac replied that these disputes were not to be wondered at, seeing that, amongst Christians, there had been so much difference of opinion regarding the glorious Mary, mother of Jesus, "who may be called," said he, "the mine and source of all purity," *genab ismet mealo kon offet.* (D'Herbelot, *Biblioth. Orientale*, t. ii., p. 620.)

CHAPTER IX.

THE VISITATION.



MEANWHILE, * Mary, informed by the angel of the miraculous pregnancy of Elizabeth, resolved on going to offer her tender congratulations to her venerable relative. It was not, as heretics have dared to assert, that the Virgin wished to have ocular demonstration of the reality of that extraordinary event. She knew that nothing is impossible to God, and could not suppose that an envoy from heaven would bring her words of falsehood and deceit from the Most High. She set out, not to assure herself, but because she was sure. She set out with haste, because charity, says St. Ambrose, admits neither hesitation nor delay; and because, with her wonted kindness and benevolence, she longed to impart to the venerable guardians of her childhood a portion of that sanctification,

and of those celestial graces, which sprang from her soul, as from a source of living water, ever since she bore in her chaste womb the Creator of the world.

With the consent of St. Joseph, whose simple but lofty soul was in perfect unison with her own, Mary set out from Nazareth in the season of roses, and took her way towards the mountains of Judea, where Zachary, the Aaronite, had his dwelling. The Scripture, omitting details, and barely mentioning facts, does not mention whether the Virgin was accompanied by any one on this journey. Some authors have thought that she travelled alone, which is altogether improbable. In fact, the distance from Nazareth to the city of Ain* is five days' journey. There was part of Galilee to be traversed, with the hostile country of Samaria, and nearly all

* Zachary lived at Ain, or Aen, two leagues south of Jerusalem. St. Helen had a beautiful church erected on the site of his house.

the lands of Juda. Then, the country is bristling with mountains, intersected by foaming torrents, and interspersed with deserts.* The roads, which the Romans subsequently repaired, were at that time only beaten by the heavy foot-fall of the camels, and were covered with round stones, so that the traveller was at every step in danger of falling. Then, when night came, the wayfarer was obliged to put up in some caravanserea, where there was nothing to be found but a small room covered with a rush-mat,† and no provisions of any sort; for the primitive hospitality had retrograded amongst the Hebrews in proportion to the advance of civilization. Such being the case, is it at all likely that a man of years and experience, like Joseph, would have wantonly exposed a young woman, fair, delicate, and totally

* unused to the ways of the world, to brave alone the thousand dangers of such a journey? Such a supposition is contrary to all the customs of Asia,‡ and especially of the people of God. Never was Jewish woman allowed to undertake such a journey without a fitting escort.

If St. Joseph, as Père Croiset thinks, could not accompany the Blessed Virgin, it is probable that she would join some of her pious relatives who were going to the Holy City, and that she thus travelled in safe company. In fact, we always find her travelling with some of her friends, whether in going to Jerusalem to celebrate the grand festivals, or with the holy women, following Jesus during his missions, at a much later period of her life. "Although she could have had no better guardian than her-

* Although Judea was then far more populous than it now is, there were still some districts so barren that they could not be cultivated. The Gospel speaks of deserts not far from the cities, whither Jesus retired to pray.

† "There is no inn in any part of Syria or Palestine," says M. de Volney; "but the cities and most of the villages have each a large building called *Keruan-serai*, which serves as an asylum for all travellers. These hostelries,

always placed outside the walls of the city or town, are composed of four wings surrounding a square court, which serves as a paddock; they contain neither furniture nor provisions."

‡ No one travels alone in Syria; they go in troops and caravans, and every one must wait until there are several persons bound for the same place. These precautions are very necessary in countries open to the Arabs, such as Syria and Palestine. (Volney, *Voyage en Syrie*.)



Jerusalem.

W. & J. Sadleir & Co.



self," says St. Ambrose, "yet she never went abroad without fitting company."*

Arrived at the sacerdotal town where the Levite dwelt with his blessed wife, Mary went straight to their well-known house. Elizabeth, apprised by a slave of her cousin's unexpected visit, came forth to meet her with every demonstration of joy.

Seeing her approach, the young Virgin bowed down, and laying her hand on her heart, *Peace be with you*, said she, eager to give the first salutation.† Elizabeth drew back. The pleased and friendly expression of her countenance gave place to that of profound respect. Her features kindled by degrees. It was plain that something strange and unusual was passing within her. The simple formula of politeness which the Virgin had pronounced in her low sweet voice destroyed Elizabeth's familiarity. Suddenly the prophetic spirit descended upon her, and she exclaim-

* ed, "*Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.* And whence is this to me," she added, "that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord."

Mary's answer was the sublime MAGNIFICAT, the first canticle of the New Testament, and the most beautiful in all the Scriptures.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour:

"Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

"For he that is mighty hath done great things to me: and holy is his name.

"And his mercy is from generation to generation, to them that fear him.

"He hath showed might in his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.

"He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble.

"He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich he hath sent away empty.

* St. Ambr. *de Virginibus*, l. ii.

† This salutation, so often used by Christ, is still common throughout the East. When two persons meet, after the usual greeting, "Peace *

be with you" (*salem alaicom*), they lay their hand on their heart. This salutation was in use in the days of Abraham. (Savary, *Note on the 11th ch. of the Koran*.)

"He hath received Israel his servant, being mindful of his mercy.

"As he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for ever."

It was thus that the Virgin suddenly saw, by a supernatural light, those ancient prophecies and their perfect fulfillment—herself a thousand times more enlightened and more privileged than all the prophets put together. "In that celebrated interview," says St. Ambrose, "Mary and Elizabeth both prophesied by the Holy Ghost, with whom they were filled, and by the merit of their children."

The Virgin remained three months in the country of the Hethites, within a short distance of the city of Ain, in the depth of a shady and fertile vale, where Zachary had his country-house.* It was then that the daughter of David—herself, too, a prophetess, and gifted with a genius equal to that of the illustrious founder of her race—could contemplate at her leisure the starry firmament, the stately forests, and

the vast ocean as it stretched in ever-changing majesty along the blueish coasts of Syria. The Blessed Virgin never looked without emotion on those magnificent scenes of the creation. All the works of nature spoke to her heart of their great Author, and gently animated her soul while charming her eyes. The plain, which spread far and away towards the mountains of Arabia, the blue dome of heaven, rising like a tent over the habitations of men, gave her an idea of the immensity of the creating God; the rich yellow of the crops, the delicious fruitage, and the fresh mountain-spring to her announced his providence; the voice of the tempest, his power; the order of the heavenly bodies, his wisdom; and his care over the birds of the air and the insects of the earth, his supreme goodness.

In these rural excursions, she sometimes rested on the verge of a gushing spring, whose sparkling spray she loved to watch and to

* This country-house was within a short distance of Ain, in the depth of a pleasant and fertile valley which now serves as a garden for the

village of St. John. There was formerly a church erected in this place in memory of the Visitation, but it is now nothing more than a heap of ruins.

listen to the gurgling of its water. This spring, called Nephtoa in the time of Joshua, now bears the name of *Mary*.*

To the rear of the Hebrew pontiff's *villa* lay one of those gardens, called by the Persians *Paradise*, the arrangement of which had been borrowed by the Jewish captives from the people of Cyrus and of Semiramis. In it were seen the most beautiful trees of Palestine; and the tufts of flowers thrown carelessly here and there through the glades, the sweet perfume of the orange-trees, the rivulet gliding along beneath the drooping branches of the willows, gave a thousand charms to the shade. There it was that Mary's mild persuasions made Elizabeth forget her fears for the issue of an event whose anticipation filled her with hope and joy, but which was full of danger to a woman of her advanced age. How pure, how lofty must have been the discourse of these two holy women!

* This fountain has so great an abundance of water that it irrigates and fertilizes the whole valley. Tradition says that Mary sometimes went thither. It was called Nephtoa in the days of Joshua; it now bears the name of the *Virgin's Fountain*.

the one young, artless, and ignorant of evil, like Eve when she came from her Creator's hand; the other full of days, and enriched with a long experience of the things of life; both profoundly pious, and both well-pleasing to Jehovah: the one bearing in her womb—so long barren—a son who was to be a *prophet, yea, more than a prophet*; the other, the blessed germ of the Most High, the Chief and Liberator of Israel.

In the fine evenings of summer, when the silvery radiance of the moon brightened the foliage, the elegant meal of the family was spread beneath a large fig-tree, or under the green leaves of a spreading vine.† There was lamb, fed on the aromatic slopes of the mountains; fish, taken by the Sidonian fishermen; the wild honeycomb, from the hollow of some ancient oak; then, in green baskets, skillfully made of palm-leaves, were the dates of Jericho,‡ which figured

† The Hebrews made it a practice to eat in gardens, under trees and arbors; it is so natural, in warm countries, to seek the fresh air. (Fleury, *Mœurs des Israélites*, p. 101.)

‡ The dates of Syria and Judea are yellow

even on the table of Cæsar; the apricots of Armenia, the pistachionuts of Aleppo, and the water-melons of Egypt: finally, the golden wine of Lebanon, the fragrant juice of vineyards in the far-off islands of the Cyprian Sea, and wine from the hills of Engaddi, preserved in stone jars,* was sparkling in costly cups. Mary, temperate as ever in the midst of this profusion, contented herself with some fruit and a cup of water. Frugality was not in her a forced virtue, it was one of choice.†

Some, with a view to enhance the humility of the Virgin, which requires no such aid, have pretended that she acted as a *servant*,

and almost as a slave towards St. Elizabeth.

This is mere folly. Elizabeth would never have permitted a woman whom she had herself proclaimed as the mother of her Lord, and whom she had loudly extolled beyond all the daughters of Sion, thus to humble herself before her. The holy spouse of Zachary‡ had no want of either servants or slaves. Christians and Jews all agree that this family was of distinguished rank, and the illustrious birth of St. John the Baptist seemed even to throw some discredit on that of Jesus Christ, whose reputed parents were much more obscure, and lived the life of the common people.

and black, round like apples, and very sweet. Pliny reckons forty-nine sorts of dates.

* The Jews who are settled in Yemen still make use of these jars. (*See Niebuhr, Voyage en Arabie.*)

† With her, abstinence seemed no longer a privation; it was rather her custom not to make use of meat, if we may so speak. (P. Valverde, *Vie de Jésus Christ*, t. i., p. 6.)

‡ Zachary was descended from Abdia, father of the eighth sacerdotal family. These ancient families were rare, several of them having remained in Persia after the captivity. Elizabeth was descended from Aaron and from David. The Jews place John the Baptist far above Jesus, because he passed his life in the desert and was the son of a pontiff. Jesus, on the

contrary, was born of a poor woman, and seemed to them only an ordinary man. (St. J. Chrysos. in *Matt*, Sermon. 12.) The Mussulmans have retained a great idea of St. John the Baptist, whom they call *Jahia ben Zacaria* (John son of Zachary). Saadi, in his *Gulistan*, makes mention of the sepulchre of St. John the Baptist, venerated in the mosque of Damascus. He himself had prayed there, and he mentions an Arabian king who had come there on a pilgrimage. "The Caliph Abdalmalek would fain buy that church from the Christians," says d'Herbelot, "and when they refused to take four thousand *pistoles*, which he had offered them for it, he took it from them by force." (*Bibliothèque Orientale*, t. ii.)

The attentions which the mild and amiable Virgin lavished on Elizabeth had in them nothing of servility; they were just such attentions as she would have bestowed on her mother had heaven spared her to her; and we may, indeed, suppose that she was often reminded of her own parents by the sight of that loving, devoted, and venerable pair, who loved her so paternally, and who, after that first interview wherein her greatness was so marvelously revealed, never failed to treat her with a profound respect which Mary's humility would fain avert, but could never wholly destroy.

It is easy to imagine, say the Fathers, how many blessings were drawn down on this excellent family by the visit of the Blessed Virgin. If the Lord blessed Obededom and all that was his—even so as to excite the envy of the holy king David—for having had the ark of the covenant three months in his house, what blessings must not Zachary and his household have received from the three months' sojourn of *Her* of whom the ark of old was but the figure, so holy and so

venerable was she? "The purity in which St. John passed his whole life," says St. Ambrose, "was the effect of that unction and that grace infused into his soul by the presence of the Blessed Virgin."

It is not precisely known whether the Mother of God assisted at the delivery of Elizabeth. Origen, St. Ambrose, and other grave authors, both ancient and modern, pronounce in the affirmative, and their opinion is highly probable. It would, indeed, have been very strange if, after so long a visit to her cousin, Mary had suddenly left her at the critical time, and without any reasonable motive for such a hasty and untimely departure. Custom required that all the matrons of the family should be with the new mother to share in her happiness. We see by the Gospel that Elizabeth was surrounded by her friends on that solemn occasion, and that the birth of St. John the Baptist drew to his father's house a great number of friends and kinsfolk. It is objected that virgins were not usually present at such times, and the objection is very proper; but Mary was married, and therefore bound by

certain rules of decorum, which she could not violate without going in express contradiction to customs which had been handed down from the patriarchal times. The retiring habits of the Virgin are also brought forward to prove that the very rumor of the festivals which were to celebrate the birth of the Precursor would have driven her away like a frightened dove. But Mary could easily reconcile her distaste for the world with that exquisite sense of propriety attributed to her by the Fathers, and her tender solicitude for her mother's niece. It

is, then, most probable that she remained in the house of the pontiff until Elizabeth was out of danger; when, withdrawing herself from the admiration which she never failed to excite, she quitted the mountains of Judea, after having embraced and blessed the new Elias.*

A religious author observes that the blessed daughter of Joachim went with haste to visit her cousin, but that she slowly and reluctantly departed from those fresh valleys whose oaks had sheltered angels.† Perhaps, like the sea-bird, she had a presentiment of the coming storm.

* Some theologians, embracing an opinion contrary to that of Origen and St. Ambrose, maintain their position by quoting that passage of St. Luke which only mentions the delivery of Elizabeth after having brought the Virgin back to Galilee. It seems to us that the subject demanded more reflection than these writers seem to have bestowed upon it. For ourselves, we have carefully examined the Gospel of St. Luke, and that minute investigation has convinced us that the proof brought forward is anything but conclusive; for it is the manner of St. Luke to make just such transpositions, as we can show by two instances of a similar kind. For instance, after having followed the preaching of St. John the Baptist, and announced his imprisonment, St. Luke speaks, in the following verse, of the baptism of Jesus Christ, which is well known to have taken place long before the Precursor was

cast into prison. In recounting the adoration of the shepherds, St. Luke enlarges on their marvelous accounts of their visit to the grotto of Bethlehem, and the astonishment wherewith they were heard; then, returning all at once to the scene of the adoration, he speaks of their departure from the stable. This, then, is our reason for adopting the opinion of St. Ambrose, which, of itself, is altogether the most probable. Father Valverde, who has closely studied the Holy Fathers, is also of opinion that the Blessed Virgin did not leave her friends till she had seen and blessed the young Precursor of the Messiah.

† In the vale of Mambre, which is but six stadas from Hebron, there was still to be seen, in St. Jerome's time, a tree of enormous thickness, said to be the identical tree under which Abraham received the visit of the three angels, who came to announce to him the birth of Isaac.

CHAPTER X.

THE RETURN FROM HEBRON.



IN her return to Nazareth, Mary cheerfully resumed her plebeian life, and the toilsome occupations which she had to suspend during her long visit. She became again the active and diligent young housewife, who finds time for work, time for prayer, time for pious reading; whose whole conversation was in heaven, and who seemed to have applied to herself those wise and beautiful words of the Psalmist, "All the glory of the king's daughter is within." Meantime she was advancing in her virginal pregnancy, and Joseph began to wax jealous.

The high and upright mind of the patriarch was tortured with doubt and grievous perplexity. At first he could not believe his eyes, and thought it more just to distrust the evidence of his senses than the virtue of a woman who had always appeared to him a prodigy of holi-

* ness and purity. But Mary's condition became daily more evident. "She was found with child," says the Gospel; which means that all Nazareth knew the fact, and that Joseph's friends, in the simplicity of their heart, came to offer their cruel congratulations, which he had to receive with a show of composure, while they gave a crushing certainty to what he had himself suspected. According to the Proto-gospel of St. James, he prostrated himself before God, bathed in tears, in the first paroxysm of his grief, and cried out, "Who has betrayed me? who has brought evil into my house?" Then, yielding to his tenderness for the young orphan, whom he had always regarded as the pearl and glory of her sex, he bitterly accused himself for not having taken more care of her. "Alas!" said he to himself, "my history is that of Adam; when he rested most securely in his glory and happiness, Satan suddenly beguiled Eve by deceitful words and

seduced her."* When his mind became calm enough to reflect, he found himself in a most painful predicament.

According to the Jewish law, adultery was punished with death. When there were no witnesses (even one would have sufficed), and that the woman denied the crime laid to her charge, she was conducted, by order of the Sanhedrim, to the eastern gate of the temple, and there, in presence of all, her veil was torn off, a cord from Egypt was put around her neck to remind her of the miracles which God had wrought in that country, her long hair was spread over her shoulders—because it was a disgrace for a Jewish woman to be seen with her hair disheveled—a priest pronounced a formal malediction, to which she had to answer *Amen*, and then presented to her the famous cup of the *waters of jealousy*, which was also called *the bitter waters*, because they had the taste of wormwood.† That accursed cup was sure to kill the guilty wife, un-

less the husband himself had been unfaithful. In that case, the miracle did not take place, "seeing," said the doctors of Israel, "that it would have been unjust if one criminal were absolved, whilst God himself punished the other."‡ A hasty, passionate husband would not have failed to drag Mary before the priests of the Lord, so as to have her go through the ordeal of *the bitter waters*; but Joseph, the most moderate as well as the most just of men, never so much as thought of taking such a step. Being unable to keep Mary under his roof, since the law of honor and the law of Moses both forbade it, he would, at least, take all possible precautions to prevent the separation from injuring her character, for he was *a just man, and unwilling publicly to expose her*. "I will divorce her," said Joseph sadly within himself, "but before God, and not before the judges who would condemn her to death and me to throw the first stone.§ I will save her from the reproaches of her fami-

* *Proto-gospel of St. James*, in the Apocryph of Fabric., t. i., p. 97.

† Basnage, l. vii., ch. 22.

‡ Wagenseil, in *Sotah*, p. 244.

§ It was decreed by the Jewish law that the accuser should cast the first stone at the person who was condemned on his accusation. (See *Instit. de Moïse*, t. ii., p. 65.)

ly and the contempt of the world. But how am I to get out of this labyrinth where death and dishonor stare me in the face at every turn? And the son of David was overwhelmed with affliction.

Mary could not but see the gloomy dejection of the just man to whom God had confided her, and certainly it must have cost her much to conceal from him the glorious embassy of the angel. But how was she to communicate an event so strange, so miraculous, as that of her divine maternity, and without other proof than her own assertion? Justly persuaded that the mystery of the Incarnation of the WORD must be revealed by supernatural means in order to be believed, and leaving to HIM who had wrought such great things in her the care of convincing Joseph of her innocence, "the daughter of David," says the great bishop of Meaux, "at the risk of seeing herself not only suspected and abandoned, but also lost and dishonored,

left all to God and remained in peace."

The Eternal, from the height of his starry throne, cast a look of compassion on the just man whom he had made to undergo so hard a trial,* before raising him to the supreme honor of being his representative on earth; and the angels, with their eyes fixed on the holy house of Nazareth, anxiously awaited the result of that secret struggle wherein humanity, duty, and the noblest feelings of the soul were engaged. At length, the patriarch conceived an idea so generous, so heroic, as almost to place him on a level with the Queen of Angels. He resolved to sacrifice his honor, the respect which he had gained by his spotless life, the means of existence which furnished his daily bread, and the air of his native land, so necessary to the aged, in order to save the reputation of a wife who did not even seek to justify herself, and who was so cruelly condemned by ap-

* "Undoubtedly," says Bossuet (*Elev. sur les Myst.*), "God could have abridged these sufferings of Joseph by sooner revealing to him the mystery of Mary's pregnancy; but his virtue would not then have been put to

the proof. We should not have seen Joseph triumph over the most indomitable of all passions, and the most rational jealousy that ever was would not have been cast down at the feet of virtue."

pearances. There was but one way to leave Mary without ruining her, for her family would have provoked explanations which must have ended fatally. It was, to expatriate himself, to go leave his bones in a foreign land, and to take upon himself all the odium of such a desertion. There is a species of resignation which is in itself a glorious triumph, and there are sorrows which, if patiently endured, Heaven repays as munificently as martyrdom itself. Of this class was the unknown sacrifice of the Virgin's spouse. In order to reconcile his duty and his humanity, he accepted beforehand the ignominious character of a heartless husband, an unfeeling father, a man without conscience and without faith. He accepted the contempt of his neighbors, the mortal hatred of Mary's friends, and resolved to give up his good name for the sake of her whose mysterious and unaccountable position filled his heart with sorrow, and made his life miserable.

St. John Chrysostom delights to dwell on the admirable conduct of St. Joseph. "It was expedient," says that great saint, "that coming on to the time of our Saviour there

* should appear many marks of greater perfection than the world had yet dreamed of. Thus, when the sun is about to rise, the East assumes a brilliant coloring long before the first streak of day has reached the horizon; so did Jesus Christ, about to emerge from the womb of the Virgin, already shed light on the world. Hence it was that, even before that divine birth, prophets leaped for joy in their mother's womb, women prophesied, and Joseph manifested a superhuman degree of virtue."

We have here adopted the opinion of St. John Chrysostom in preference to that of St. Bernard, who supposes that Joseph penetrated of himself the mystery of the birth of Christ, and that, seeing Mary pregnant, he doubted not—in his profound veneration for her—that she must be the miraculous Virgin of Isaiah. "He believed it," says the Apostle of the Crusades, "and it was only from a sentiment of humility and respect like unto that which made St. Peter afterwards say, 'Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man,' that St. Joseph, not less humble than St. Peter, thought of leaving the Virgin, not doubting but that she

was pregnant of the Saviour of mankind."

This interpretation—a very pious one, indeed, and worthy of him who was honored with the title of *devout chaplain of Mary*—is yet more in accordance with the ascetic notions of the middle ages than with the customs of the ancient Hebrews, and will not stand a close investigation. In fact, the words of the Evangelist are so clear, that it takes no small industry to make them obscure. It is not at all that instinctive feeling of religious awe, which makes us shrink from a religious object, that suggests to Joseph the idea of leaving Mary; it is the prompting of conscience and of duty. "He was just," says Bossuet, "and his justice would not permit him to remain in the company of a woman whom he could no longer believe innocent. As for his suspecting what had happened by the operation of the Holy Ghost, it was a miracle as yet unexampled, and could by no means present itself to the human mind."

The words of the angel would no longer have a meaning, and would savor of falsehood—which could not

be the case—if St. Bernard's hypothesis were carried out. "Fear not," said the ambassador of God, "to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." Does Joseph proclaim his unworthiness at the moment when he is made certain that Mary bears in her womb the very Author of nature? Does he reveal to the angel those scruples which must now be more urgent than ever? Does he beg that the cup of honor, presented to him by the celestial messenger, may pass to some worthier mortal? He does nothing of the kind. The storm of his soul is suddenly hushed, and he falls into that profound calm which follows great moral tempests.

Some will have it that the prophecies relating to the Messiah were familiar to Joseph, as to all the Hebrews; that he must have been aware that the time of the Messiah was at hand, and that he must have known at first sight, considering the sanctity of Mary, that she bore in her womb the Saviour of the world. But the understanding of those prophecies was then far from being as easy as may now be imagined

Whether it was that Isaiah's allegorical descriptions of the glorious reign of Emanuel had led the synagogue into error, or that the carnal mind of the Jews could not raise itself above the earth and earthly things, it is certain that the Hebrew people—that *hard-headed people*—had taken a wrong view of the subject, and did not choose to be set right. The ambassador of God, the desired of the nations, was to be a legislator, a great captain, a monarch magnificent and powerful as Solomon. The Apostles themselves were long mistaken as to the humble and pacific mission of the poor King, who passed silently along. They were seen to flatter themselves with gilded visions and kingdoms in perspective, even in sight of that deicide city where their Master was to be put to death. It was not without an effort that our Lord brought them back to spirituality, and rectified their ideas, ever ready to return within the narrow channel of material and palpable goods, whither they were directed by the

* ambitious dreams of doctors and traditionary Pharisees.*

If even the Apostles, then, had so much trouble in divesting themselves of their childish prejudices—they who lived amid the miracles of the Messiah, and in constant intercourse with him—how could Joseph have done it of himself, without assistance from on high? The coarse garments of the workman had little resemblance to the purple of the kings of Juda; and of all things, it was least expected that the Messiah should spring from the people. Galilee was, besides, the last country that would have been thought of. "Search the Scriptures," said the doctors of the law to the disciples of Christ, "and see that out of Galilee a prophet riseth not." In fact, the prophets had specially mentioned Bethlehem of Juda—Bethlehem, *the house of bread*—as the birth-place of the Messiah; and the Jewish commentators, outstripping the prophets, pretended to point out the quarter of the city in which he was to be born.† Joseph was too hum-

* Bossuet, *Elev. sur les Mystères*, t. ii., p. 135.

† Whence comes he (the Messiah)? From the royal city, Bethlehem of Juda. Where are

his parents? In the quarter Biral Harba of Bethlehem of Juda. (See *Talmud de Jerusalem*.)

ble to think that his lowly roof was to shelter so much greatness, and Mary's silence left him nothing to guess.

As for the project of sending back the Virgin to her own family, *through pure respect*, as some learned theologians of the Bernardine school will have it, it would have been utterly impracticable in a nation so jealous of all that concerned female honor. Mary was an orphan, and therefore under the care of her relations, all of whom were not of a pacific disposition, while it is probable that some of them were far from being pleased by the marriage of their young kinswoman with the obscure Nazarene. It is very improbable that they would have taken Joseph's word, and admitted, without further information, that the Virgin was pregnant of the *King-Messiah*. It is much more likely that they would have brought the husband before the tribunal of the ancients, there to give an account of his conduct; for the question was no longer of a simple divorce, but of the state of the child borne by Mary, a young woman of illustrious birth and unsuitably married, according to the eleven

who, St. Jerome says, had been themselves on the list of candidates for the hand of the young and lovely heiress of Joachim.

Thence there would have resulted two grave facts. Either Joseph would have kept silent, and then he would have been obliged to take back his wife and forbidden ever to put her away;* or he would have solemnly sworn that the child which Mary bore was not his, in which case that child became incapacitated for any employment. His birth, defiled in its source, would have debarred him from the national assemblies, public schools, and entrance to the temple or the synagogues. His posterity, inheritors of disgrace, would not be admitted to the privileges of the Hebrews till the tenth generation. He became a fugitive, without rights, without country, and the warrant which condemned his mother to be stoned would have stamped his brow and that of his children with the accursed mark of Cain. But such could never have been the case. Rather than suffer such a stain to be imprinted on their

* *Instit. de Moïse*, t. ii., l. vii.

royal genealogy, the proud descendants of David would have killed the Virgin with their own hands. Such examples are not rare, and are of frequent occurrence even now, in Judea as well as in Arabia.*

Joseph was too wise and too humane to place himself in either predicament, and he found, as is always the case, that the most generous part was the best. He resolved, then, to quit his native city and his dear, though suspected wife, who had made him so supremely happy ever since their chaste marriage. Whilst he was preparing for this sad separation, as he slept one night on his solitary couch, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream.

* Niebuhr relates that, "in a coffee-house of Yemen, an Arab having asked another who was present if he were not the father of a young and beautiful woman newly married in his tribe, the father suspecting an ironical meaning in the question, and thinking the honor of his family compromised, coolly arose, ran to his daughter's house, and, without saying a word, plunged his weapon into her bosom." Father Geramb gives an anecdote of the same kind. "The widow of a Bethlehemite Catholic," says he, "became an object of suspicion; not knowing where to conceal herself from the vengeance of her family, she took refuge in the convent of the Fathers of the Holy Land, and put herself under the sacred protection of the altar. Her asylum was discov-

"Joseph, son of David," said the celestial envoy, "fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins."

After this dream and the words of the angel, Joseph found himself completely changed. His humility was not in the least disturbed by the honor which God conferred upon him, in transferring to him the guidance of his only Son; but he had become a father and a spouse in affection, and he thought of nothing more but the care of Mary and her divine Infant.

ered, the doors of the monastery forced, and the young woman dragged out, her hair all disheveled, to the public place, amid the shouts of the populace, and the supplications of the monks, who demanded, in the name of the crucified God, pardon and mercy for that unhappy creature, who loudly asserted her innocence. She called, in despair, on her father and brothers beseeching them, in the most touching manner, to save her from a cruel death. They advanced in gloomy silence, each grasping a poignard: the unfortunate woman shuddered; a moment after, the three poignards were plunged into her heart, and the murderers, washing their hands in the blood of their daughter and sister, exulted in having washed away the disgrace of their family."





*W. H. H. of the Annunciation
The Annunciation scene*

St. John Chrysostom inquired why the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph, and not manifestly, as to the shepherds, to Zachary, and the Virgin. "It is," says he, answering his own question, "because Joseph had great faith, and required no clearer revelation. As for the Virgin, since there were things to be told to her greater and more incredible than all that was told to Zachary, it was necessary that they should be revealed to her before they were put into execution, and that by a manifest revelation. The shepherds, also, as more rude and simple, had need of a clear vision. But Joseph having already seen the pregnancy of Mary, *having conceived injurious suspicions of her*, and being ready to change his sorrow for joy, if he only had the opportunity, received with all his heart the revelation made by the angel This conduct of Providence was infinitely wise, since it served to prove the excellence of Joseph's virtue, and to render the Gospel history more credible, showing him actuated by the same motives that would have influenced any man on such an occasion."*

CHAPTER XI

THE BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH.



MEANWHILE, the *impious empire*† had planted its eagles even on the farthest shores. The Romans had caught the Eastern world as in a net. Sarmatia trembled

before them in the depths of its deserts, and the most distant tribes of Asia, the peaceable Chinese, sent a solemn embassy to Cæsar to seek his powerful alliance. Egypt

* St. John Chrysostom, *Serm.* 4.

† The Jews designated the Roman Empire by the name of the *impious empire*.

and Syria were nothing more than Roman provinces. Judea, herself, was tributary; and the Jewish king, paying dear for a capricious protection, was no more than a crowned slave. The time was come—the Messianic oracles were to be accomplished. The power of Rome was at its height, as Balaam had predicted; and, according to the famous prophecy of Jacob, the sceptre had departed from Juda: for the phantom of royalty, which still hovered over the Holy City, was not even a national phantom. Just then, there was published in Judea an edict of Cæsar Augustus, ordering all the people to be enrolled. This census, much more complete than that which took place under the sixth consulate of the nephew of Julius Cæsar,* comprised

not only persons, but property, and also the various qualities of the lands. It was the basis on which the tribute was to be levied.†

The Roman governors were charged with the execution of this edict, each in his own department.‡ Sextus Saturninus, governor of Syria, began first with Phœnicia and Celo-Syria, rich and populous cantons, which required long and patient toil. In fact, there is nothing like it on record, except the famous registry taken by William the Conqueror a thousand years later, and so well known in England as the Domesday-book. Having executed the orders of Cæsar in the Roman provinces, with the kingdoms and principalities belonging to it, at the end of three years from the date of the decree,§

* Augustus had three different enrollments made throughout the empire: the first, during his sixth consulate with Agrippa, in the year 28 before the Christian era; the second, under the consulate of Caius Marius Censorinus, and of C. Asinius Gallus, eight years before the same era; the third, and last, under the consulate of Sextus Pompeius Nepos and Sextus Apuleius Nepos, in the fourteenth year of the Christian era. It is of the second census that St. Luke speaks. The decree which ordained it was issued in the eighth year before the Christian era. (Sueton., in *Octa*, v. 27.)

† Augustus had a work prepared, just then,

containing the description of the Roman empire, and the countries subject to him. Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dion Cassius refer to this book, and its particular description of the provinces. From the way in which they speak, it must have been a most elaborate work.

‡ Tertullian states that such was the case with Sextus Saturninus, who was governor of Syria.

§ The three years which were employed in making this census can make no difficulty, for it certainly took that length of time to enregister the whole of Syria, Celo-Syria, Phœnicia, and Judea. Joab took nearly ten months to number the fighting-men of the ten

they at length reached Bethlehem, precisely at the memorable period of our Saviour's birth. Cæsar and his agents thought they were performing only an administrative operation, by ascertaining the population and resources of the empire; but God had other designs, which they were made instrumental in executing, though they knew it not. His Son was to be born in Bethlehem of Juda, the humble birth-place of King David. He had foretold it, by his prophet, more than seven hundred years before, and all the world was put in motion to accomplish that prophecy.

It appears that, faithful to an ancient custom, the Jews still had themselves enrolled by families and by tribes. David was born at Bethlehem; his descendants, therefore, regarded that small city as their native place, and the cradle of their

house. There it was, then, that they assembled to give in their names and the state of their property, conformably to the edict of Cæsar.

The autumn was near its close, the torrents were rushing wildly down into the valleys, the north wind whistled through the tall turpentine trees, and a gray cloudy sky announced the approach of the winter's snow. On a dark, gloomy morning, in the year of Rome 748,* a Nazarene was seen busily engaged in preparing for a journey, which could not be one of choice, for the time was unseasonable, and the woman who accompanied him, and whom he seated so carefully on the mild and patient animal which the daughters of the East prefer, was very young, and far advanced in her pregnancy. To the saddle of the beautiful animal† on which the young Galilean rode was attached a

tribes; and the census of Augustus, at the time of the birth of Christ, consisted of many other details, since it embraced not only the individuals, but the various qualities of their lands. It took William the Conqueror six whole years to make his register, although the Domesday-book contained neither Ireland, Scotland, Wales, nor the Channel Islands, but merely England itself.

* Never has date been more disputed than

that of the birth of Christ. We adopt that of the authors of *l'Art de vérifier les dates* (the Art of verifying dates), which seems to us the most correct, and which places the birth of the Saviour on the 25th of December, in the year of Rome 748. According to Baronius, our Saviour was born on a Friday.

† The asses in Palestine are remarkably beautiful.

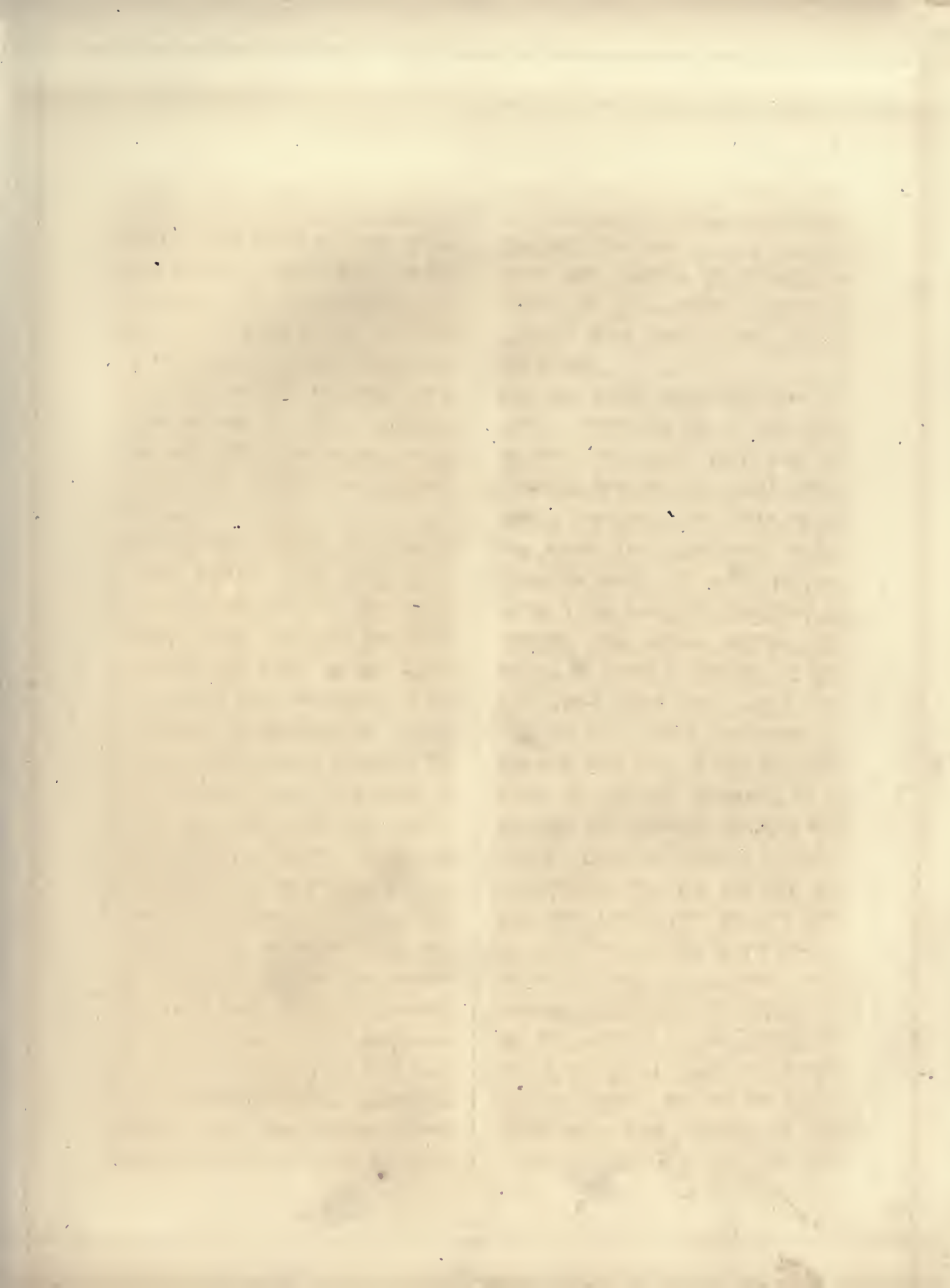
palm-leaf basket, containing provisions for the journey; dates, figs, and dried grapes, some barley-cakes, and an earthen pitcher for taking water from the spring or the cistern. A leathern flask, of Egyptian manufacture, hung on the opposite side. The traveller flung over his shoulder a bag containing some clothes, girded his loins, wrapped himself up in his goat-skin cloak, and holding in one hand his crooked stick, with the other he seized the bridle of the ass which bore his young wife. Thus they quitted their humble abode, and descended the narrow streets of Nazareth, amid the good wishes of their friends and neighbors, who cried on every side, "Go in peace!" These travellers, who thus set out on that cloudy morning, were the humble descendants of the great kings of Juda, Joseph and Mary, who were going, on the order of a pagan and a stranger, to inscribe their obscure names beside the most illustrious names in the kingdom.

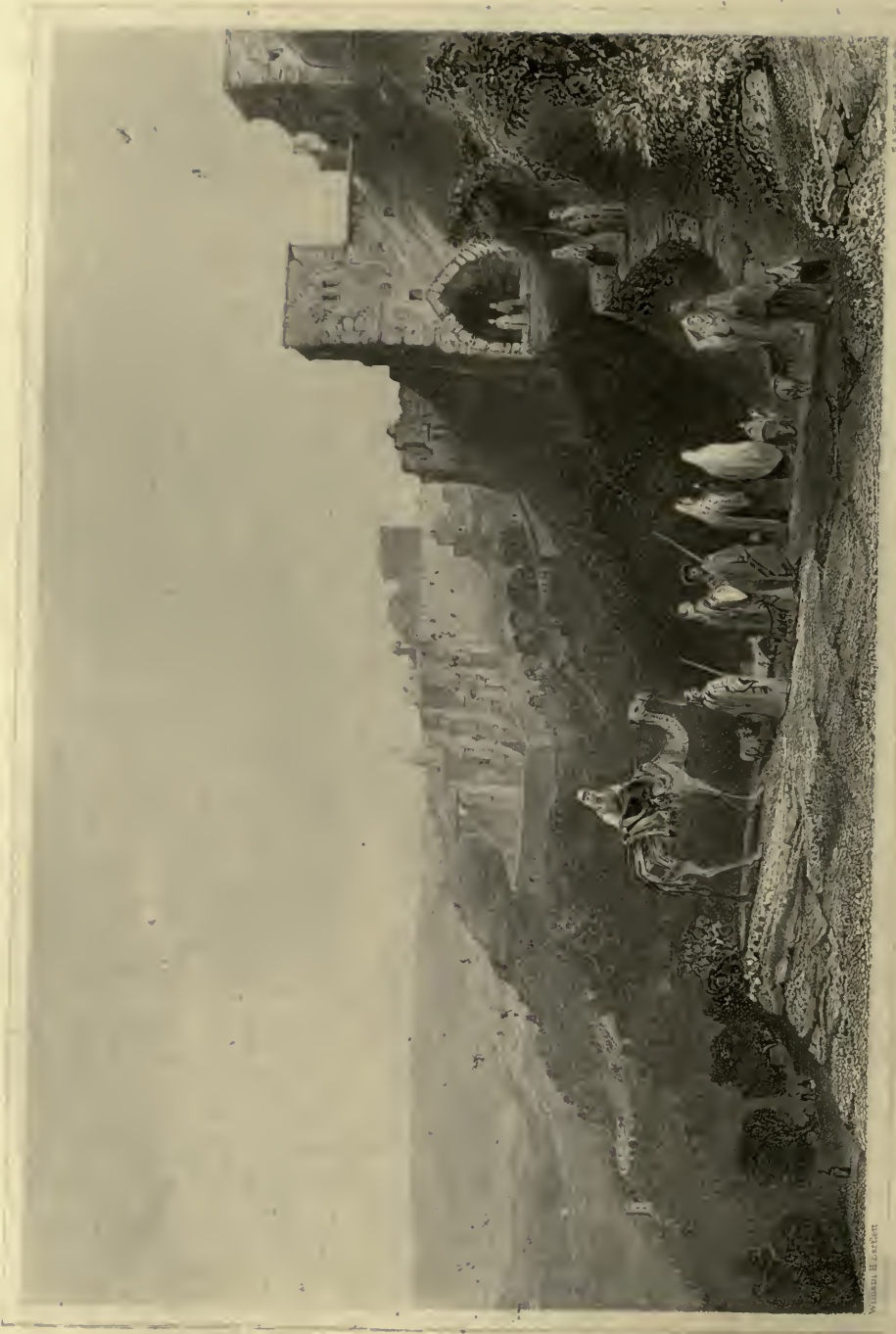
This journey, undertaken at such an inclement season, and in a country like Palestine, must have been

* extremely painful to the Blessed Virgin, in the position in which she was; but yet she did not murmur. That delicate and fragile creature had a soul both firm and courageous; a lofty soul, which greatness did not dazzle nor joy agitate, and which bore misfortune silently and calmly. Joseph, advancing by her side, was meditating on the ancient prophecies which promised, four thousand years before, a Liberator to his people. As he journeyed towards Bethlehem, at the bidding of a Roman, he reflected on the words of the prophet Micheas, "And THOU, BETHLEHEM EPHRATA, art a little one among the thousands of Juda; out of thee shall HE come forth unto me, that is to be the Ruler in Israel."* Glancing, then, at his humble equipage and his modest spouse, in her plain, unpretending apparel, he revolved in his mind the great prophecies of Isaiah, "He shall grow up as a tender plant before him, and as a root out of a thirsty ground; there is no beauty in him, nor comeliness: . . . despised and the most abject of men."† And the patriarch began

* Mich., ch. v., ver. 2.

† Isaiah, ch. liii., ver. 2.





Engraving

D. & J. SADLER & CO. NEW YORK

to comprehend the designs of God on his CHRIST.

After five days of a toilsome journey, the travellers caught a distant view of Bethlehem, the city of kings, seated on a rising ground, amid smiling hills planted with vines, olives, and groves of verdant oaks. Camels, laden with women wrapped up in purple cloaks, and covered with white veils; Arab *nakas*, dashing along at full speed, bearing gay and brilliant cavaliers; groups of old men, mounted on white asses, and chatting gravely together, like the ancient judges of Israel,* were all going up to the city of David, already crowded with Hebrews, who had arrived on the previous days. Outside the city, but a short distance from its walls, arose a large square building, whose white walls stood out in strong relief from the pale green of the olive-trees which covered the hill. It looked like one of the Persian caravansaries. Through

its open door were seen a crowd of slaves and servants coming and going in its vast yard. This was the inn. Joseph, hurrying the pace of the animal on which the Virgin rode, hastened thither in hopes of arriving in time to obtain one of those narrow cells, which belonged of right to the first comer, and was never refused to any one;† but merchants and travellers were already issuing in crowds from the caravansary. It could accommodate no more. Gold might, doubtless, have procured admission, but Joseph had no gold.

The patriarch returned with this saddening intelligence to Mary, who heard it with a smile of resignation, and taking hold of the bridle to conduct the poor animal, which was already sinking with fatigue, he wandered about through the streets of the little city, hoping, but in vain, that some charitable Bethlehemite might offer them a lodging for God's

* The horse was used, amongst the Jews, for military men; hence it was taken as the emblem of fight. Judges, on the contrary, rode on asses of perfect beauty; hence the scriptural words, "Speak, you that ride upon fair asses, and you that sit in judgment."—(Judges, v. 10.)

† There is nothing found in these cells but four walls, an abundance of dust, and sometimes scorpions. The keeper is only bound to give the key and a mat. The traveller has to provide the rest; hence he has to carry with him his bed, his cooking apparatus, and even his provisions. (Volney, *Voyage en Syrie*.)

sake. No one offered them anything. The evening wind fell cold and piercing on the young Virgin, who breathed not a word of complaint, though her face grew paler every moment, for she was scarcely able to support herself. Joseph, in despair, continued his fruitless attempts; and more than once, alas! he saw some wealthier stranger admitted where he had been rudely repulsed. Surely interest, that ruling passion of the Jews, must have petrified every soul, when Mary's situation excited no pity. The night closed in. The lonely travellers, seeing themselves rejected by all the world, and despairing of obtaining a shelter in the city of their fathers, quitted Bethlehem, without knowing which way to turn, and advanced at random through the fields, still partially lighted by the fading twilight, while the jackals made the air resound with their shrill cries,

* as they roamed in search of their prey.

Southward, within a short distance of the inhospitable city, there appeared a gloomy cavern, hollowed in the rock. The entrance was towards the north, and the cave became narrower towards its farther end. It served as a common stable for the Bethlehemites, and sometimes as a shelter for the shepherds on stormy nights. The pious couple blessed Heaven for having guided their steps towards this rude asylum; and Mary, with the help of Joseph's arm, made her way to a bare rock, which formed a sort of seat, though narrow and uncomfortable, in a hollow of the rock.

It was there, "in the fortifications of rocks," as Isaiah had predicted,* just as the rising of the mysterious constellation *Virgo* announced midnight,† that the *alma*‡ of the great Messianic prophecy, amidst the sol-

* Justin quotes the prophecy of Isaiah (xxxiii. 16), as applying to our Saviour's birth in a cave, "*The fortifications of rocks shall be his highness.*"

† "It is an incontestable fact," says Dupuis, "and independent of all the consequences which I will draw from it, that *precisely at the hour of midnight*, on the 25th December, in those ages when Christianity first appeared, the celestial

sign which appeared on the horizon, and ushered in the opening of the new solar revolution, was the *Virgin* of the constellations.

‡ The word *alma*, employed by Isaiah, signifies, in Hebrew, a virgin in all her innocence. We have already said, in note fifty-five of the first chapter, that this word has given rise to many controversies between Jews and Christians.

emn stillness of nature, concealed by a luminous cloud,* brought forth HIM whom God himself had produced *before the hills*,† and who was *begotten from all eternity*. He suddenly appeared, like a sunbeam emerging from a cloud, before the eyes of his young, astonished mother, and came to take possession of the throne of his poverty, whilst the angels of God, prostrate around, adored him under his human form.‡ That virginal childbirth was exempt from cries as from pains, and no groan disturbed the sacred silence of that night of wonders. Miraculously conceived, Jesus was born more miraculously still.

God was preparing for the world a new and grand sight, in the birth of a poor King. The palace which he destined for him was a deserted stable, a fitting asylum for him who, in the course of his life, was to say,

* *Proto-gospel*, St. James, ch. 17.

† According to the opinion of the Rabbins, the Messiah was in the terrestrial paradise with our first parents. (Sohar Chadaseh, f. 82, 4.) He existed even before the world. (Nezach Israel, ch. 35.) And before becoming man he was in glory with God. (Phil., ch. ii., v. 6.) Thus, immediately before the time of Christ, the idea of the Messiah's pre-existence found its way into the higher theology of the Jews.

* "The fox has his den, the birds of the air have their nests, but the Son of man has not where to lay his head." Moses, proscribed at his birth, had, at least, a cradle of bulrushes, when his sister, the young Mary, exposed him amid the reeds and the sacred lotus which at night-fall dip their leaves in the Nile;§ but Jesus, the divine outcast, who came amongst us to suffer and to die, had not even that. He was laid in a manger, on a handful of damp straw, providentially forgotten by some camel-driver from Egypt or Syria, hastening away before the dawn. God had provided a couch for his only Son, as he provides nests for the birds of the air.

But this new Adam was to be covered from the inclemency of the weather, and also because modesty required it. Mary tore her veil into bands, wherewith she wrapped up

‡ Hebrews, i. 6. Psalm xlvii. 7.

§ The *lotus*, which was consecrated to the sun, is an aquatic plant, the leaves of which dip into the Nile when the sun sets, and spring up again when he rises. This plant has a narcotic quality. It was said of those who made long voyages, that they had eaten of the *lotus*; that is to say, that they had forgotten their country. (Basnage, l. ix., ch. 15, p. 450.)

his delicate limbs; then the infant * God was adored, by her and her holy spouse, as Joseph of old, the finest type of Jesus Christ, was by his father and mother.

St. Basil, entering into the mysteries of fervor and of rapture which passed through the soul of the Virgin, shows her divided between maternal love and holy adoration. "What am I to call thee?" said she, addressing her infant God. . . . "A mortal? . . . not so, for I conceived thee by divine operation. . . . A God? but thou hast a human body. Am I to approach thee with incense, or to offer thee my milk? Am I to cherish thee as a tender mother, or to serve thee prostrate in the dust? A marvelous contrast! Heaven is thy dwelling-place, yet I rock thee on my knee! Thou art on earth, and yet retainest thy place in heaven! The heavens are with thee!"

* The village of the shepherds is situated on a very pleasant plain, about a quarter of a league to the north of Bethlehem, and in the depth of the valley is the celebrated field, where these shepherds were grazing their flocks on Christmas night. According to grave authors, both sacred and profane, the appearance of the angels to the shepherds was not the only prodigy that

Thus were accomplished the great prophecies of Isaiah and Micheas. "And there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night-watches over their flock. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them: and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them: Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying: GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST; AND ON EARTH PEACE TO MEN OF GOOD WILL."*

The marvelous vision had disap-

signalized the birth of the infant God. They relate that, during that holy night, the vines of Engaddi blossomed; that, at Comus, the Temple of Peace suddenly fell, and the oracles of the demons were silenced for ever. The mere birth of our Lord was a sentence of banishment for those heathen deities, who had hitherto been permitted to deliver oracles.



L.J. Hallez.

R. Dudensing

THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST



peared, the heavenly music had ceased, and the shepherds, leaning on their crooks, still listened for a renewal of those ravishing sounds. When they could hear nothing more save the night-breeze murmuring through the valley, and could no longer discover in the deep blue sky a single radiant point which fancy could convert into an angel, the shepherds took counsel together, and said one to another, "*Let us go to Bethlehem, and see this word that is come to pass.*" Then, taking baskets, with such simple presents as their cabins could afford, they left their flocks to their own guidance for a while, and set out by the glimmering light of the stars for the little city of David. At sight of the poor stable, they felt their hearts burn within them, like the disciples of Emmaüs, and they said to each other, "Perhaps this is the place." For they knew that the divine child who was born to them had not seen the light under gilded ceilings, nor was laid in a royally-

* adorned cradle. The angel had made no such announcement. They advanced, then, with faith, hope, and love, towards that deserted stable, where they well deserved to find the promised Saviour, since they came to seek him with pure hearts and single minds.

Looking into the cave, in order to assure themselves that they had really reached the term of their nocturnal pilgrimage, these "men of good will" discovered Him who came to preach the Gospel to the poor, and abolish the curse of slavery, under the humble form of a little babe peacefully slumbering in his crib.

The Virgin, bent over her newborn infant, was regarding him with touching humility and profound tenderness. Joseph stood close by, his venerable head bowed down before that adopted son, who was truly God. A ray of moonlight shone on the divine group, and on the reddish wall of rock; without, the earth was calmly reposing in the bright, silvery light.*

Milton, with true poetic inspiration, thus describes, in one of his earlier compositions, the flight of these pretended divinities on Christmas Eve.

* "The Persians call Christmas night *schab jaldai*, the clear and luminous night, because of the descent of the angels." (D'Herbelot, *Bibl. Orient.*, t., ii. p. 294.)

"This is the place," said the shepherds to themselves; and prostrating themselves, respectfully, before the manger of the King of kings, they offered to the infant God "the mite" and the homage of the poor.

There they related the apparition of the angels, their ravishing hymns, and their joyful words. Joseph admired this divine manifestation, and Mary, who heard the simple tale in silence, treasured up every word within her heart. This duty fulfilled, and their mission ended, the Judean shepherds retired praising God, and published in the mountains the marvels of that holy night. Those who heard them were seized with astonishment, and said to themselves, "Can it be possible? Are we, then, gone back to the days of Abraham, when angels visited shepherds?"

Perchance it was these tales, told

at evening in the skirt of the woods or in the deep ravine, whilst the camels drank together at the lonely spring, that induced one of the Arab tribes to deify Mary and the child. The sweet image of the Virgin, with her Son on her knee, was painted on one of the pillars of the Caaba, and solemnly placed amongst the three hundred and sixty deities of the three Arabias. In the time of Mahomet they were still seen there,* as we find from grave Arab writers. After the massacre of the Holy Innocents, that valiant tribe rose in a body, gave a long, loud cry of revenge, and, heedless of the enemy's superior numbers, attacked Herod's son, protected as he was by the Romans.†

This authentic anecdote, so curious and so little known, serves to confirm the supernatural fact related

* "El Azraki quotes the ocular testimony of many respectable persons," says Burekhardt, "in proof of a remarkable fact which has not hitherto been noticed, as far as I am aware. It is, that the figure of the Virgin Mary, with the young Asia (Jesus) on her knee, was carved as a divinity on one of the pillars of the Caaba" (Burekhardt, *Voyage en Arabie*, t. i., p. 221.)

† This fact, which confirms the account of the Arab historian, is mentioned in the *Toldos*, a very ancient Jewish book, written with the

most violent hatred of Christians. We there see that Herod the Great and his son had to maintain a war against one of the tribes of the desert, who adored *the image of Jesus, and Mary, his mother*. This tribe sought the alliance of several cities of Palestine, and especially that of Haï. But, since the Jews themselves place this event in the lifetime of Herod, it must have been because of the massacre of the Innocents, as the old king lived only one year after the birth of our Saviour.

by St. Luke; a fact which the scoffing philosophers of the Voltairian school, and the, if possible, still more pagan professors of pantheism, have not failed to set down as a fable. The fantastic devotion of these Arabs, who commit idolatry with the true God before the preaching of the Gospel, can only be accounted for by the miracles of the holy night of Christmas.

On the eighth day after his birth the Son of God was circumcised, and named Jesus, according to the command of his heavenly Father. He must have had a godfather, like all the Israelites, but there is no record of the name of that favored man. As to the ceremony of the circumcision, which was always performed under the patronage of Elias *

(who, according to the Hebrews, never failed to assist invisibly),* it took place, St. Epiphanius says, in the very cavern where Jesus was born; and St. Bernard presumes, with much probability, that St. Joseph was the minister on that occasion.

Some men of the lower classes, docile to the call of the angels, came to adore the infant God in his manger, and to share with him their black bread and goat's milk. A miracle of a higher order, and of greater renown, brought soon after, to the same crib, the first fruits of converted gentilism. The shepherds of Juda had led the way, it was for kings and sages to follow.

* See Basnage, l. vii., ch. 10.



CHAPTER XII.

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI.



IN the course of the autumn which preceded the birth of Christ, certain of the Chaldean Magi, skillful in the science of the heavenly bodies, discerned a star of the first magnitude, which they recognized, by its extraordinary motions and other unequivocal signs, as that star of Jacob, foretold by Balaam so long before—that star which was to rise on their horizon at the coming of the Messiah. According to the ancient traditions of Iran, collected by Abulfarages, Zoroaster, the restorer of the Magian religion, a man of

* science, a great astronomer, and well versed, moreover, in the Hebrew theology,* announced, under the immediate successors of Cyrus, and soon after the re-establishment of the Temple, that a divine child, destined to change the aspect of the world, should be born of a pure and immaculate Virgin in the extreme west of Asia. He added, that a star unknown in their hemisphere should signalize that remarkable event, and that, on its appearance, the Magi were to set out with presents to the infant King. Faithful and religious executors of Zoroaster's will, three of the most illustrious sages of Babylonia,† had no sooner remarked the star than they

* Some have made Zoroaster a disciple of Jeremiah, but the times do not agree. It is much more probable that he was a pupil of Daniel.

† The learned are not agreed as to the country of the Magi. Some make them come from the depth of Arabia Felix, others from the Indies, which is by no means probable. The best authorities point out Persia as their country, and that opinion seems the most correct. The

names Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, generally given to the Magi, are Babylonian. In fact, Babylon, and after it, Seleucia, situated at a short distance, were the seats of the most famous astronomers of antiquity. Finally, those cities are to the east of Jerusalem, and it is only twenty days' journey from the banks of the Euphrates to Bethlehem. Origen, who was judicious and well-informed, states that the Magi were addicted to astrology. Drexelius,

gave the signal for departure. * Leaving behind them the city of Seleucides, with its stately palm-wood buildings,* and Babylon, where the mournful desert-wind seemed whispering to the silent ruins the fatal prophecy of the son of Amos, they quitted the land of dates and took the sandy road to Palestine. Before them, like the luminous pillar which guided the flying cohorts of Israel towards the desert strand of the Red Sea, moved the star, of the Messiah. That new star, independent of the laws which govern the heavenly bodies, had no regular motion peculiar to itself. Now it advanced at the head of the caravan, moving in a straight line towards the west; now it remained stationary over the tents erected for the night, seeming to balance itself gently in the clouds like a sleeping

albatross. At the dawn of day it gave the signal for departure, as it had done at night for halting.†

At length the lofty towers of Jerusalem were visible in the distance, amid the bare, bleak summits of its mountains. The camels were quenching their thirst at a wayside cistern, when the Magi gave a cry of surprise and alarm. The star had disappeared in the far depths of heaven, like a rational creature who perceives impending danger.‡

Thus puzzled, like the mariners of ancient times when dark clouds concealed the polar star, the Magi consulted a moment. What meant the sudden disappearance of their brilliant guide? Were they, then, at the term of their long journey? It was very possible, and even probable, that the infant King whom they came from the banks

thereupon, takes upon him to scoff at Origen, which proves that he was but little versed in the ancient history of the East, where every astronomer was an astrologer. *

* Strabo, b. xvii.

† St. John Chrysostom, *Serm. 6 in Matth.* Chalcidius, a pagan philosopher, who lived about the end of the third century, makes mention of this star, and the Eastern sages whom it guided to the birth-place of CHRIST. St. Augustine, the doctor of doctors, says on this subject,

“A new star appeared at the birth of Him whose death was to obscure the ancient sun.” What, then, was that star which never appeared before or since in the firmament? Was it not the magnificent language of Heaven, proclaiming the glory of God and a virgin’s child-bearing?

‡ This cistern, or well, on the highway near Jerusalem, is still known as the *Cistern of the Three Kings*, or *of the Star*, in memory of this event.

of the Tigris to adore, might be found in Jerusalem. "The God of heaven," thought they, "does not idly prolong his miracles; they cease when human agents are sufficient. That is the usual order of things. What matter though the star has left us? We may easily, without its assistance, find this new king in the capital of his states. To find out the young Messiah, we have only to enter the first street which we shall find strewn with green branches, perfumed with essence of roses, and tapestried with cloth of gold. The sound of the Hebrew harps, their dancing choruses, and shouts of joy, will speedily show us which way we are to go." Then, quickening their pace, they passed the boundary gate, and penetrated into the ancient Zion between two files of barbarian soldiers.

The aspect of Jerusalem was cheerless. Its populace, busy, yet silent, had no appearance of either joy or festival. Groups gathered together, here and there, to stare at the strangers, whom they recognized by their long white robes, girt with magnificent Eastern zones, by their

* *bazubends*,* enriched with precious stones, and, especially, by the manly beauty of their features, as satraps of the great king. The Eastern cavaliers, as they passed along, bent over the neck of their dromedaries to ask some of the numerous spectators where they were to find the new-born King of the Jews, whose star they had seen in the East. The people of Jerusalem, regarding each other in surprise, knew not what to answer. . . . A king of the Jews! . . . What king? They knew none but Herod, whom they abhorred, and he had no infant son. Astonished, in their turn, that all whom they interrogated declared their ignorance, and, moreover, seeing no mark of festivity anywhere around, the Magi, in great consternation, ascended the populous street which led to the ancient palace of David, and erected their tents amid its ruinous, but shady courts.

Meanwhile, the appearance of these Persian nobles, who seldom visited the mountains of Judea,

* *Bazubends*, ancient bracelets adorned with diamonds, turquoises, and pearls, which the satraps wore above the elbow. The king of Persia and his sons still wear the *bazubend*. (See Morier, *Voyage en Perse et en Arménie*.)

their startling questions, which both amazed and intimidated a people who were kept in constant trepidation by the system of espionage organized by Herod,* soon excited a general tumult in that seditious city, the most restless in all the East. The name of the Messiah-king, pronounced by the Pharisees—ever careful to excite the fears of the aged monarch, as to the prospects of his house and the duration of his own power—fell amid the listening groups like a spark amongst stubble. The King-Messiah! There was freedom in that sound. There was conquest—there was glory! It spoke of the banner of Juda, waving in triumph over a conquered world. The satraps of Persia were considered the first astrologers in the world.† They had, doubtless, read the birth of the Hebrew *Goël*‡ in the stars. The heir of the kings of Juda was about

to ascend the great throne of his fathers, and to banish the race of the Herods, those half Jews, who were the slaves of Rome! A sullen murmur, like that which precedes the ocean-storm, quickly spread from street to street, from house to house. Never had the people of Jerusalem felt less disposed to obey the royal edict which forbade them “to meddle with any thing but their own affairs.”§ Vainly did the fierce soldiers of Herod fringe the ramparts of the towers. The people were roused: they were no longer afraid to talk together in the open street. “All Jerusalem was troubled,” says the Gospel, and it was soon the tyrant’s turn to be troubled himself.

Herod then dwelt in his palace in Jerusalem; but its flowery gardens, peopled as they were with rare birds, and intersected by limpid streams,|| could not divert his

* See Josephus, *Ant. Jud.*, c. xv., ch. 13.

† All the East then believed in Astrology; and Philo tells us that the satraps of Persia were esteemed as the first astrologers in the world.

‡ *Goël* (Saviour); one of the names by which the Hebrews designated the Messiah.

§ Herod had strictly forbidden the Jews to speak of state affairs. They could not even

assemble to hold those great family-festivals hitherto so common amongst them. His spies, spread over the whole city, and even along the highways, instantly arrested those who infringed on the royal edict. They were thrown secretly, and sometimes even openly, into the fortresses, where they were severely punished. (Joseph., *Ant. Jud.*, c. xv., ch. 13.)

|| Josephus, *de Bello*, b. v., ch. 13.

mind from the gloomy recollections and dark forebodings which rendered life a burden to him. Apprised by his chief spy of the arrival of the Magi, and their strange discourse, his massive brow, wrinkled with harassing thought, grew dark as a stormy sky, and his anxiety was visible to all.

The apprehensions of the Jewish king are easily understood, and are explained by his peculiar position. Herod was neither the anointed of the Lord nor yet the chosen of the people; a branch of laurel, gathered within the pagan precincts of the capitol, formed his tributary crown—a crown of slavery, intertwined with thorns, every leaf of which had been purchased by heaps of gold levied from the savings of the rich and the indigence of the poor. Hated by the nobles, whose heads he struck off at the first suspicion; dreaded by his relatives, whose lives he sacrificed without remorse, on the slightest pretext; detested by the priests, whose privileges he trampled under foot; abhorred by the people, for his speculative religion and his foreign extraction, he had nothing to depend on but his

* courtiers, his assassins, his artists, and the wealthy, but by no means numerous sect of the Herodians, who were infatuated by his magnificence. Often was the friend of Cæsar openly braved by his obstinate subjects. The Pharisees, an artful and powerful sect, had mockingly and insultingly refused to take the oath of fidelity. The Essœans, who were formidable from their martial courage, had followed the example of the Pharisees; while the young and impetuous disciples of the doctors of the law had recently cut down, in broad daylight, the golden eagle which, in compliment to the Romans, he had placed over the gate of the Temple.

Conspiracies were going on in every quarter against his life, hatched and fomented by his nearest and dearest, so that he might fall at any moment under the dagger of some young enthusiast, who would deem it a virtuous and patriotic act to rid the earth of a prince* who reigned

* The people were so far from applauding the discovery of this plot, or rejoicing in the king's escape, that they laid hold of the informer by whom it was revealed, tore him in pieces, and threw his flesh to the dogs. (Joseph., *Ant. Jud.* b. xv., ch. 11.)

like a madman. Ascribing this unaccountable boldness to the contempt inspired by his great age, he exhausted all the secrets of art to make himself young again.* He would fain have persuaded both himself and others that he was still that young and brilliant Herod who surpassed most of the Hebrews in all gymnastic exercises; Herod, the bold cavalier, the skillful huntsman, the proud and handsome prince, who had despised the love of that famous Egyptian queen for whom Antony had lost the empire of the world. But, alas! the silvery hairs which began to appear amid the dark locks of his sons, their impatience to reign, the spirit of revolt and sedition gliding in amongst the people, and the insolence of the brigands, who were again beginning their depredations in Galilee, all gave him but too clearly to understand that his reign—his dread reign—was drawing to a close. Harassed with suspicion, and distrusting even his spies, he some-

* times wandered at night through the streets and squares of his metropolis,† and heard with his own ears the deep imprecations, the bitter reproaches, the biting sarcasms heaped on the *upstart*, the *Ascalonite*, the *wild beast*, who had killed his innocent wife—that gem of beauty and pattern of chastity—and who had afterwards caused the two sons whom he had by her to be put to death—those two princes, so sad, so beautiful, so stately, and so dear to the people because of the Asmonean heroes, their ancestors, and their fair, but hapless mother. The day following these nocturnal rounds was sure to be one of mourning and death. None were spared. From the highest to the lowest, every offender was cut off. Hence, on every side, there were heard vows of vengeance; and as often as the delusive report of Herod's death was spread, whether by accident or design, through the distant provinces, the people, greedily snatching at the deceitful bait, so gratifying

* Herod painted his face, and had his hair and beard dyed black, in order to appear young. (Joseph., *Ant. Jud.*, b. xvi., ch. 11.)

† He often went out at night amongst the

people, under some disguise, in order to find out the opinion entertained of him, and woe betide those whom he heard censure himself or his doings. (Joseph., b. xv., ch. 13.)

to their hatred, hastened everywhere to kindle bonfires, which Herod quenched in blood.

In the midst of these elements of civil discord, when the army is in a state of all but open revolt, and the whole nation seemed merely awaiting the signal for a general insurrection, there arrives in Jerusalem certain foreigners of lofty mien, who inquire, without either mystery or concealment, for a newborn king of the Jews, whose star they have perceived. Herod is astounded. He anxiously questions his memory. The fatal predictions concerning his dynasty, which the Pharisees carefully kept afloat, the oracles of the ancient *seers*, to which he has hitherto paid but little attention, now recur to his mind. That warrior Messiah, that prophet-son of David, who was to overrun the world from east to west, begins now to give him some vague uneasiness.

* Some are surprised at the fears wherewith Herod regarded a branch of the family of David; nevertheless, Herod was not the only one who persecuted that noble house, because of its ancient rights and its glorious hopes. Eusebius relates, from Hegesipus, that after the conquest of Jerusalem, Vespasian gave orders to seek and destroy all the posterity of David. Under Trajan, the persecution still continued. Finally, *

It is not God who suggests these thoughts to the old king's mind; but the wily prince, the more he thinks of it, the more he is convinced that that mysterious event is connected with a vast conspiracy, tending to raise an occult and rival power on the ruins of his. What! he had shed like water the illustrious blood of the Maccabees, nor spared even his own wife and sons. He had crushed beneath the iron wheel of his despotism all that offered any sort of resistance. He had lost his soul, his honor, his peace of mind, his rest by night, when his bleeding victims haunted his dreams. . . . And why all that? to prepare the way for the race of David! * . . . That sceptre, so dearly bought—that sceptre, still reeking with the blood of his own kindred—was it, then, but a dry and accursed rod, to be broken over his tomb? Was he himself to

Domitian had two members of this illustrious family brought to Rome, who were the lineal descendants of the Apostle St. Jude. The emperor, having questioned them, found that they possessed only thirty-nine acres of land, which they tilled with their own hands. He sent them back to their home, being satisfied, on account of their poverty, that there was no danger from their ambition.

pass, like the meteor-glare of a tempestuous evening, over that earth whose former glory would break out anew after his death? And that nation, which hated him with a hatred so strong, so deadly, so infuriate, which his very favors could not propitiate—how it would love and cherish the descendant of its ancient kings! This last thought fell, bitter as wormwood, on the dark, desolate heart of the aged monarch; for, amid all his deeds of cruelty, he felt the desire of being loved—a strange desire, truly, but yet a real one, in that most extraordinary nature, which seemed made up of contrasts, and which had devoted some of the very noblest qualities to the service of the most absorbing and the most cruel passion which can ravage the human soul—ambition.

“Let this child be earthly prince or heaven-sent prophet,” said Herod, after a pause, “he must die; . . . yea, and he *shall* die, were I sure of extinguishing, with that feeble breath, all the glories which our *seers* behold in the future. Athalia, that strong woman, who knew so well how to reign, forgot only one

* infant in the massacre of the royal family of Juda. . . . That child lived to deprive her of her throne and life. . . . For me, I shall try to forget nothing. But where are they hiding this ‘new-born’ king of the Jews, whose birth the stars proclaim, and whom these insolent satraps come to seek at the very gates of my palace? . . . Can it, indeed, be that *Schilo* foretold by Jacob? . . . These are, perchance, only the idle dreams of astrologers. . . . No matter, . . . we must make all sure.” A few hours after, the doctors of the law and the chief priests were assembled in council, with Herod presiding, and were asked that question which seemed strange to them in the mouth of such a prince, “In what place is the Messiah to be born?”

The answer was prompt and unanimous, “In Bethlehem of Juda.” And the ancients of Israel, quite willing to annoy the friend of the Romans, failed not to add that, as the last week of Daniel was nearly at an end, the coming of the Messiah must be at hand. This information, by no means satisfactory, would not do for Herod, who must

ascertain where the blow was to be struck. He resolved to interrogate the Magi, and to find out, if possible, the precise period of the child's birth, computing by the appearance of the star. Too cunning to grant the Persian sages a public audience, which would have given notoriety to a rumor that it was most important to stifle, the king had them brought before him, and examined them closely as to the time of the star's appearance. "He inquires minutely, not after the child, but the star," says St. John Chrysostom, "in order to observe all possible circumspection in laying his snare." Having learned all that he wished to know, the man of blood dismissed the strangers in an affable and gracious manner. "Go," said he, "and diligently inquire after the young child: and when you have found him, bring me word again, that I also may come and adore him."

* The kings of Persia administered justice in quite a patriarchal manner. They had above their heads a golden bell, and to the bell was fastened a chain, the end of which hung without the palace. Every time that the bell rang, the officers of the prince went forth from his apartments, and introduced before the *great king* the suppliants, who demanded justice of

* Now, the Magi, like all lofty-minded men—sons of science and contemplation—were simple, sincere, and but little disposed to suspect evil. They understood despotism and cruelty in a prince, but they did not understand falsehood, for the first thing that the kings of Persia learn in their infancy is to speak the truth. They, therefore, gave implicit credence to the false words of the Idumean, and passing again under the stately porticos of the palace, which vied in magnificence with that of the great king, but which had not, with all its bronzes and arcades, the golden bell of the *suppliants*,* they quitted the Betzetha,† had their tents taken up, and once more traversed the Holy City to repair to the supposed birth-place of the Messiah. As they wound along the walls, enriched by trophies from the new amphitheatre, whose unusual style of decoration

the prince himself, who instantly examined their case, and gave his decision with equity. (*Antar. Translated from the Arabic by Terrick Hamilton.*)

† The quarter named *Betzetha*, or the new city, which Herod had joined to Jerusalem, was situated to the north of the Temple; it contained the lower pond, the pond of probation, and Herod's palace.

was an inexhaustible subject of ridicule for the Pharisees, they met King Herod, surrounded by a forest of Thracian and German spears, going in the direction of Jericho.*

The Persians quitted Jerusalem by the Damascus gate; then, turning to the left, they made their way through some hollow ravines, intersected with steep hillocks which they had to climb. They were nearly an hour's journey from the capital of Judea, and had permitted their camels to stop at a cistern to drink, when a brilliant point appeared in the heavens, and rapidly descended towards them like a falling star. "The star! our star!" cried the slaves, in a transport of joy. "The star!" repeated their masters, equally delighted; for they were now sure of being in the right way, and resumed their march with increased ardor.

They were preparing to enter the city of David, when the star, inclin-

* ing towards the south, suddenly stopped over a deserted cave, which had the appearance of a rustic stable, and down, down it went till it seemed to rest, almost, on the head of the infant God. The sight of that motionless star, its soft rays falling brightly on that dreary grotto, filled the Magi with a lively faith, and a lively faith it did require to discover the King-Messiah in a poor, unnoticed child, born in such a place, laid in a manger, and whose mother, though fair and full of grace, was evidently of very obscure condition.

God, who would make the Jews ashamed of their obduracy by contrasting it with the pious haste and the docile faith of infidels, allotted it so that the strange humiliation of the holy family should not shake the firm belief of the Magi.

The worshippers of the sun—the Gentiles—who were to be saved by the Cross as well as the children of

* We have followed the authors who state that Herod set out for Jericho, where he was some time sick, just when the Magi went to Bethlehem: this is quite conformable to the Gospel narrative; for if Herod had been in Jerusalem when the Persians returned thither, they would probably have seen him prior to the

angel's warning, which was not given until the night. The illness of Herod, by diverting his attention from the Magi and the child, left the former at liberty to return in peace to their own country, and gave the Holy Family time to set out for Nazareth.

the covenant, penetrated into the lowly abode of CHRIST with as much veneration as though it were one of their own temples, built over subterraneous fires, wherein starry spheres kept ever turning.* Following the custom of their people, they prostrated themselves as they crossed the threshold, and having taken off their rich sandals, they adored the new-born infant as all the Eastern nations then adored their gods and their masters. Then, opening their caskets of perfumed wood, wherein were the offerings intended for the Messiah, they took out some of the finest gold, gathered in the neighborhood of Nineveh the Great, and perfumes, purchased with fruits and pearls from the Arabs of Yemen. These mysterious gifts were not carnal, like the offerings of the Jews. The cradle of HIM who was come to abolish the sacrifices of the synagogue was not to be sprinkled with blood; hence, the Magi did not sacrifice to him

* These spheres, composed of golden circles, hollowed like our armillary spheres, turned with a loud noise at sunrise. They are still to be seen at Oulam, where the Ghebers have a temple. (*Rabbi Benjamin.*)

either spotless lambs or white heifers. They offered him gold, as an earthly prince—myrrh and incense, as a God.† Then, bowing down to the ground before Mary, whom they found “fair as the moon and modest as the pale water-lily,” they invoked the blessing of God upon her, and prayed that “the hand of misfortune might never reach her.”

This was the last scene of splendor in which the Virgin figured. The first period of her life, like a sweet dream of Ginnestan, had rolled away under roofs of cedar and of gold, amid sacred perfumes and the sound of harp and lyre; the second, full of mysteries and wonders, had brought her in connection with the inhabitants of heaven and the princes of Asia; the third was about to open under other auspices: it was now her turn for persecution, anguish and unutterable sorrow.

Meanwhile, the Magi prepared to leave Bethlehem, having nothing

† Much praise has justly been given to these verses of Juvencus—the most ancient Christian poet whose works have come down to us—on the gifts of the Magi kings:

Aurum, thus, myrrham, regique, Deoque, hominique
Dona ferunt . . .

more to do in Judea. They proposed, according to their promise, to seek the king in his palace at Jerichô, to let him know where the Messiah was; but the angel of the Lord apprised them in a dream of the dark designs of that perfidious prince, and commanded them to go home by another way.

The sons of Ormuzd returned thanks to the "Master of the sun and of the morning star," attributed this nocturnal revelation to their good genius,* and merited by their

* *Ormuzd*, *en zend ahurô-mezdeô* (the most learned king), and *Ahrimen*, *en zend ahyromaincus* (the wicked intelligence), according to the Persian mythology, sprang from good and bad genii, to whom are ascribed divers functions in the universe, whether for the diffusion of good or the propagation of evil. One of the good genii, named *Serosch*, went seven times every night around all the earth, to watch over the safety of the servants of *Ormuzd*. (See the *Amschaspand-Named*, and the *Book of Kings* of *Firdousi*.)

† Very ancient authors affirm that the Magi received baptism from St. Thomas; it is believed that they suffered martyrdom in India, where they preached the Gospel.

‡ "The date trees of Babylon," says *Diodorus* of Sicily, "bear exquisite fruit; they are six inches long, some yellow, others red, and others of a purple color, so that they are just as pleasing to the sight as to the taste. The trunk of the tree is of a surprising height, and is per-

* perfect docility the gift of faith, which they afterwards received.† Instead of journeying by the barren and dangerous shores of that accursed lake whose dark, stagnant waters cover the reprobate cities of the plain, they turned their camels' heads towards the coast of the Great Sea, where they could almost fancy themselves in the valleys of dates and roses‡ watered by the Euphrates and the Bend-Emyr, as they wound their way across the lovely strand of Syria.

fectly straight and even, but the head, or tuft, is not the same in all. Some date trees extend their branches in a round form, and the fruit of some grows out in clusters from the bark, about the middle; others have all their branches on one side, and their own weight bending them down towards the ground, gives them the form of a hanging lamp; others, again, divide their branches into two parts, and they then fall to the right and left in perfect symmetry." (*Diod. b. ii.*) Here is a description of the banks of the Euphrates, by an Arabian poet, anterior to Mahomet:—"They saw populous towns, plains abounding in flowing streams, date trees, and warbling birds and sweet-smelling flowers; and the country appeared like a blessing to enliven the sorrowing heart; and the camels were grazing and straying about the land; and they were of various colors, like the flowers of a garden." (*Antar. Translated from the Arabic by Terrick Hamilton.*) As to the fields and gardens of roses so common in ancient Persia, see *Firdousi's Book of Kings*.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PURIFICATION.



FOURTY days after the Saviour's birth, the Virgin prepared to return to Jerusalem for the fulfillment of the Levitical precept, which prescribed the purification of mothers and the redemption of the first-born. Undoubtedly, this law did not apply to Mary; for though she was the mother of the Redeemer, she was still a pure virgin, and that immaculate conception had been followed by a spotless maternity; "but she willingly submitted, for example's sake, to a law which was no way binding on her," says Bossuet, "because the secret of her virginal maternity was not known."

Meanly attired and undistinguished from the crowd, in their first appearance on the dusty road of

* This tree, under which Mary stopped to nurse Jesus, was destroyed in the 17th century, but the place where it stood is still pointed out.

Ephrata, Joseph and Mary, having attracted no observation, left behind them no remembrance to become traditional. It was far different, however, on their return to Jerusalem—thanks, we may suppose, to the wondrous tale of the shepherds, and the brilliant visit of the Magi. At some distance from Bethlehem, Mary stopped under a spreading tree to nurse her divine Infant; and that tree, according to the common belief, had ever after a secret virtue, which for sixteen centuries effected many marvellous things,—so it is said, at least, by the Christians of Asia, and also by the Turks, for whom that tree was, not more than two hundred years ago, an object of veneration and the term of a pilgrimage.*

After this memorable halt, the holy couple journeyed on to the tomb of Rachel,† where every He-

† According to the Jewish doctors, Jacob only buried his beloved wife on the highway of Bethlehem because his prophetic knowledge enabled

brew was to pray in passing. This primitive monument consisted of twelve large stones, overgrown with moss, on each of which was engraved the name of a tribe, and its only epitaph was a white Syrian rose—frail, sweet emblem of that lovely woman who withered away ere yet her beauty had reached its prime, like the flower mentioned by Job. While they stopped to say a prayer for the dead over the revered dust of one of the saints of their people, the Virgin and Joseph little thought that the wailing of the dove, ascribed by Scripture to that fair Assyrian, was so soon to have its application, or that the mother of Joseph and of Benjamin was the desolate type of the mothers who, some days after, in the mountains of Judea, were to mourn for their

* children massacred in place of Jesus Christ.

Going forth from the vale of Rephaïm, whose ancient oaks shaded the graves of the gigantic race of Enac, the Virgin observed a tree whose sinister aspect saddened and depressed her heart. It was a barren olive-tree, whose pale leaves rustled in the evening breeze with a mournful sound that seemed like the wail of human sorrow. As she passed under its gloomy foliage, uncheered by the song of any bird, Mary felt that sensation of blighting cold which belongs to the fatal shade of the manchineel-tree. That tree, if local tradition be not mistaken, was the *infamous* wood to which Christ was nailed.*

At the moment when Joseph and Mary made their way into the sacred

him to foresee that a number of his descendants should pass that way as captives of the Assyrians, and that he would have Rachel intercede for them with Jehovah, according as they passed her tomb. Protestants have loudly exclaimed against this passage of the Talmud, as being too favorable to the intercession of the Virgin and the saints. This tomb of Rachel was so highly venerated, that every Jew who passed by made it a sacred duty to engrave his name on one of the stones; these enormous stones were twelve in number. (*Talm. of Jer.*) It is well known *

that the tears of Rachel, mentioned by Jeremiah, were but the figure of the tears shed by the Jewish women after the Massacre of the Innocents. (S. Mat. ch. ii., v. 17, 18.)

* About half a league from Jerusalem stands the monastery of the Holy Cross. Inside its chapel is shown the spot which was occupied by the barren olive tree of which the Cross was made. The place where the trunk stood is now filled up by a block of marble in a niche under the high altar, where there is a lamp continually burning.

inclosure, with the shekels of silver for the ransom, and the two doves for the sacrifice, a holy old man named Simeon,* to whom it had been divinely revealed that he should not die until he had seen the CHRIST of the Lord, entered the Temple by an impulse of the Holy Ghost. At sight of the Holy Family, the eye of the just man became inspired. Discovering the King-Messiah under the poor swaddling-clothes of a common child, he took him in his arms, drew him close to him, and gazed upon him with delight, whilst the tears of joy rolled down his venerable cheeks. "Now," cried the pious old man—"now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word, in peace; because my eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people—a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." Having uttered these words, Simeon solemnly blessed the

* mother and her spouse; and then, addressing himself to Mary, after a moment's mournful silence, he added that this child was born for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which should be contradicted, and that grief, like a sharp sword, should pierce his mother's soul.

By this unexpected light, which partially disclosed the high destiny of Christ, the ignominies, the sufferings, and the agony of the Cross were suddenly revealed to the blessed Virgin. The ominous words of Simeon, like a stormy wind, made her bend her head, and her heart throbbed with anguish.† But Mary knew how to accept, without murmur or complaint, whatever came from God. Her pale lips touched that cup of wormwood and gall, she drained it to the dregs, and then, restraining her tears, she meekly said, "Thy will, O Lord, be done!" At that moment, the daughter of Abraham rose superior to the chief

* The Arabs give Simeon the title of *Siddik* (he who verifies), because he bore testimony to the coming of the true Messiah, in the person of Jesus, son of Mary, whom every Mussulman is obliged to receive as such. (D'Herbelot, *Biblioth. Orient.*, t. iii., p. 266.)

† "Mary, my sovereign," says St. Anselm, speaking on this subject, "I cannot believe that you could have lived a single moment with such a sorrow at your heart, had not God, the giver of life, given you strength to bear it."

and father of her people. She, too, sacrificed her son on the altar of the Lord; but she had the sad certainty that her sacrifice would be accepted, and *she was a mother!*

She was still revolving in her mind these lofty thoughts, when there came in a prophetess named Anna, wife of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser, who was far advanced in years. This holy widow remained continually in the Temple, serving God night and day in prayer and fasting. Seeing the divine child, she began to praise the Lord aloud, and to speak of him to all those who expected the redemption of Israel.

"Not only," says St. Ambrose, "did angels, prophets, and shepherds proclaim the birth of the Saviour, but also the just, and the ancients of Israel. A Virgin conceives, a barren woman brings forth, a dumb man speaks, Elizabeth prophesies, the Magi adore, the child in his mother's womb leaps for joy, a widow confesses that wondrous event, and all the just expect it."

* Prideaux, *Histoire des Juifs*.

† There was then, and still is, amongst the Jewish doctors, a horrifying doctrine: they

As women might not enter the inner court of the Temple, where the child was to be offered to the Lord, because of his sex, Joseph himself carried him into the *hall of the first-born*, asking himself whether the scenes which had marked the entrance of Jesus into the holy house were to be renewed before the Hebrew pontiffs. But nothing revealed the Infant-God in that privileged part of the Temple; all there remained dull and cold, notwithstanding the radiant presence of the young Sun of Justice. A priest who was unknown to Joseph carelessly received from the hard hands of the man of labor, whom he regarded as *the scum of the world*,* the timid birds prescribed by the law, and did not even deign to honor CHRIST with a look. The love of gold—that shameful idolatry, which conceals its unholy worship when it has still the grace to be ashamed of it—had totally petrified the narrow, selfish, vindictive† heart of the princes of the synagogue. Leaving a monopoly of the toils

hold that he who nourishes not his hatred, and takes not revenge, is unworthy the title of Rabbi. (Basnage, l. vi, ch. 17.)

and privations to the simple Levites, whom they reduced to live on herbs and dry figs,* they passed by the poor man lying on their marble threshold, the wounded traveller stretched on the mountain-path, coldly averting their head. At bottom, they loved neither God nor man. And hence it was that our Lord, who HIMSELF instituted a priesthood of charity, bitterly reproached them with this in the parable of the good Samaritan. Thus, as Malachy had foretold, *God cursed their blessings*, and turned away from his Temple, which he was soon after to deliver to the fire and sword of the Romans.

The presence of the Messiah, which inflamed the heart of the disciples of Emmaüs even before they had recognized him in the breaking of bread, passed over the soul of the Aaronites as the first ray of spring passes over the eternal snows of Ararat. That solemn moment, which suspended the angelic concerts, and fixed the attention of the heavenly

* hosts on a single point of the universe—that moment, foretold by Aggeus, when the glory of the second Temple effaced that of the first—that moment passed unnoticed before the darkened vision of the priests and doctors. There was none to recognize *the clean offering* mentioned by Malachy. The Desired of all nations—HIM whose way the angels had prepared—the great Redeemer, so long promised and so long expected, was there, bodily, in his holy house, and no one thought of welcoming him with palms, crying out on the watch-towers of the Temple and the house-tops of Jerusalem, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” They knew well, as the Gospel says, how to predict the approach of rain by the clouds that rose from the west; they could foretell heat by the blowing of the south wind: but these men, so clever in drawing presages from the different aspects of the heavens, saw not that the fig-tree of Solomon was about to put forth its fruit, and

* The luxury and avarice of the chief priests of Jerusalem were incredible. They sent out and collected the tithes through the country, taking all to themselves, and leaving the inferior priests wholly destitute. At the first remon-

strance, the unhappy Levites, accused of revolt and sedition, were given over to the Romans; and Governor Felix alone threw forty of them into prison, in order to propitiate the doctors and princes of the synagogue. (Joseph., *Vita*.)

they could not discover the God in that humble child. Oh, poverty! what a disguise thou art, even for the divine nature! The real CHRIST was in the midst of his own, but he was poor, and his own received him not; hence they remained without a Saviour, for no *Melech-Hamaschiak* ever came to justify their incredulous contempt for the divine Son of the Virgin, and they are reduced to cry, with cold, yet despairing malice, "Perish those who compute the time of the Messiah!"*

Meanwhile, the Infant-God, who had recognized, along the streets of Jerusalem, the different stages of the passion, silently distinguished his future executioners amid that grave and glittering crowd; among the choirs who sang on the harp hymns of praise to the Eternal, Christ distinguished the loud, discordant voices that were one day ere

* many years to cry, "Crucify him! crucify him!"

Race of Aaron, where art thou now? The vengeful breath of the Crucified has scattered thee, like chaff, over all the earth; swallowed up in those masses which thou didst so despise, thy companions in exile know thee no more! But caring little, at that time, for the clouds which darkened above their heads, the Hebrew priests offered to that God who spurned their gifts the chosen victims of both high and low. One of them took Joseph's doves, ascended the gentle slope of the altar of holocausts, and offered to the Lord that simple and humble sacrifice.

"After" Joseph and Mary "had performed all things according to the law of the Lord," says St. Luke, "they returned into Galilee, to their city Nazareth."†

* Basnage, l. vi., ch. 26. Talmud, 349.

† We have followed the opinion of St. Luke, St. John Chrysostom, and some other authorities, in making the Holy Family set out for Nazareth immediately after the Purification. It is the only way to reconcile St. Matthew—who says nothing of the marvellous events of the Presentation—with St. Luke, who is silent as to the Massacre of the Innocents and the flight

into Egypt. "What shall we say to reconcile these two evangelists," says St. John Chrysostom, "except that the return to Nazareth preceded the flight into Egypt? For God did not command Joseph and Mary to go into Egypt before the Purification, lest the law might be left unfulfilled. But, that duty accomplished, they returned of themselves to Nazareth, where they received the order to fly into Egypt."

CHAPTER XIV.

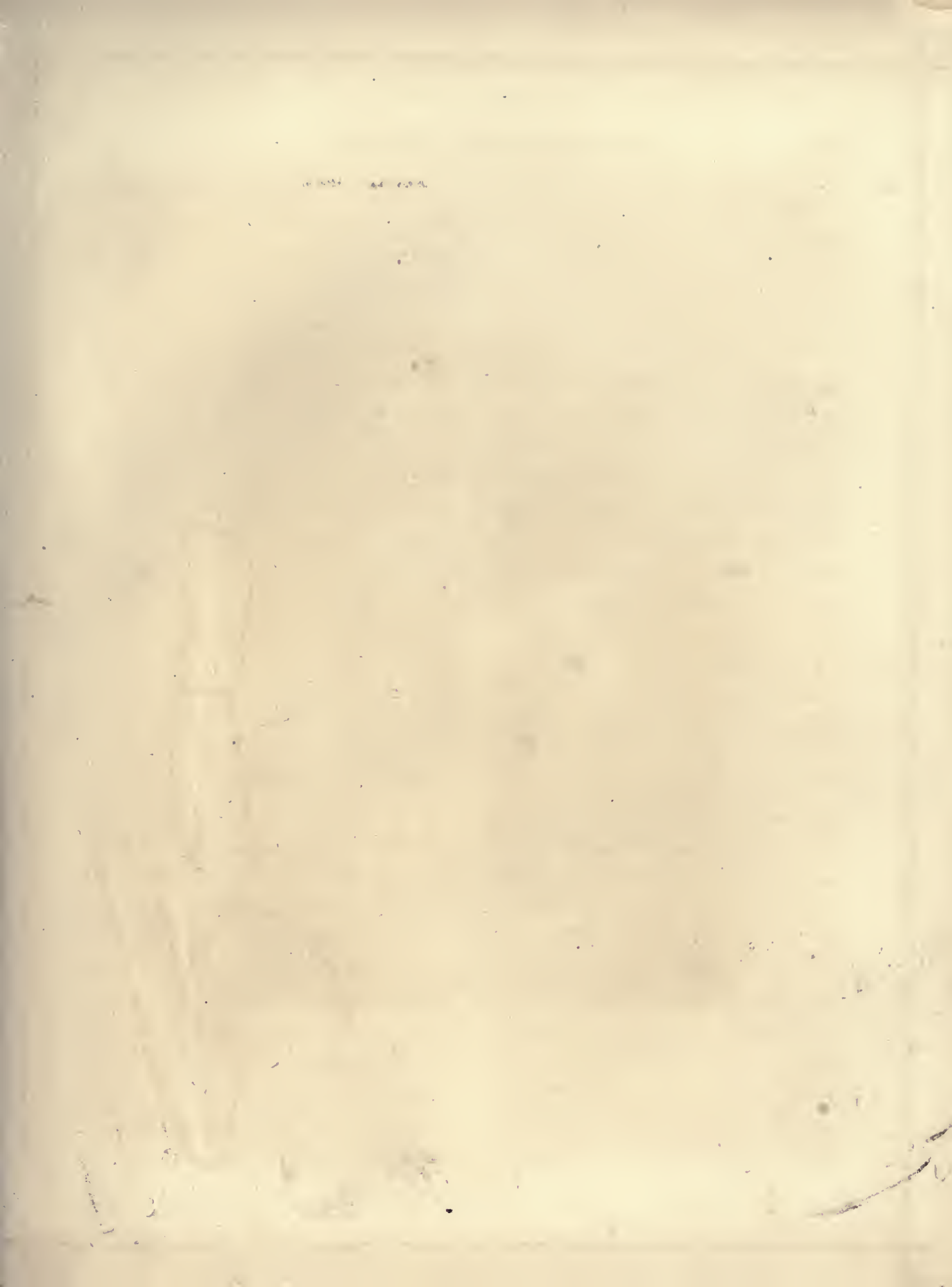
THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.



SCARCELY were they returned into Lower Galilee, when Joseph and Mary had to set out again on a long and perilous journey, ending in the land of exile. One night, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, during his sleep. "Arise," said he, "take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the child to destroy him." At these words, Joseph rose affrighted, adored the Lord, and ran to awake Mary, who was sweetly sleeping beside her child. The young mother quickly understood the necessity of this abrupt and secret departure. She casts a look of anguish on her son, and hastily collects a few clothes and some provisions for the journey; then, preceded by Joseph, and carrying Jesus in her arms, she

* quits her native city reposing in the calm star-light.

The prophecies of Simeon were speedily accomplished. Scarcely was Jesus born, when a tyrant's persecution sought him in his cradle, and his mother, so young, so holy, was forced to fly by night like a guilty creature, accompanied only by an aged man who could only oppose prayer and patience to the Arab spears which, perchance, lay in ambush in the mountain ravine, or the murderous attack of Herod's soldiers. It would seem as though God himself abandoned that holy family to its fate, for, when giving the order for Joseph to set out, his messenger had not promised, as Raphael did of old to the young Tobias, to guard them on the way. But the Virgin's spouse understood that the solemn moment of Christ's manifestation not being yet come, God would save them from the devices of Herod by means of mere





The Flight into Egypt

1744 J. Martin

human prudence. To Joseph, then, belonged all the care, and all the honor, of that arduous enterprise; it was for him—a poor, obscure old man—to thwart the plans, to defeat the schemes, to elude the jealous watchfulness of a gloomy, politic tyrant, who was served by his myrmidons like an Eastern despot. What was to happen, and what was to be done, if any danger presented itself on the Jerusalem road? The sudden departure of the Magi had aroused the suspicions of Herod, and those suspicions were strengthened by the words of Anna and Simeon; secret inquiries, dark investigations were already on foot, and none might say where that sanguinary prince would stop, he who filled with gold the red hand of the assassin. The more Joseph pondered, the more clearly he foresaw some horrible tragedy, the very thought of which made the blood curdle in his veins. Mary, on her side, pale and silent as death, kept looking forward into the depth of

* the valley, the shade of the woods, or along the windings of the rocky path which Joseph had chosen as the safest, and the most remote from the dwellings of men. The soft moonlight illumined the earth, and guided the silent march of the holy travellers.

“The weather was still cold,”* says St. Bonaventure, “and, while crossing Palestine, the Holy Family had to choose the wildest and least frequented roads. Where are they to lodge during the night? Where can they venture to rest a little during the day? Where are they to take the frugal meal necessary to sustain their strength?”†

Tradition is silent on most of the details of this touching and perilous pilgrimage. Doubtless, the holy travellers made long and painful marches through the mountains, availing themselves of the first hours of day, and often, too, awaiting the rising of the moon to resume their journey. Whilst their way lay through Galilee, they found

* About the middle of February, when it is still very cold in the mountains of the interior, where the temperature, according to M. Volney, is nearly like ours; on the plains of Syria, on

the contrary, it was already the heat of summer (See note 3 of ch. vi.)

† St. Bonaventure, *De Vita Christi*.

places of rest and shelter in its deep caves, with their secret branches winding no one knew whither; but even these had their dangers, for they were often chosen as a secure hiding-place by some of those numerous bands of robbers who had long bid defiance to all the forces of the kingdom, and who were now emboldened by the illness of Herod.* The fear of happening unawares into one of these murderous dens, must have made Joseph hesitate many a time at the mouth of a cave that would seem to offer a secure asylum.

At length, after a thousand dangers, and a thousand trials of various kinds, the Holy Family reached the environs of Jerusalem. Here caution and anxiety were increased in proportion to the imminence of the danger. The fugitives dared no longer approach cities, nor even populous villages, where a troop of spies and informers had their eye

on every stranger.† They followed the bed of the torrents, plunged into by-ways, or through the damp foliage of the woods, not daring to turn aside for a fresh stock of provisions, and suffering at once from fear, cold, and hunger. They had passed Anathot, and were making for Ramla, to descend into the low country; anxious to escape from a dangerous vicinity, they had borrowed some hours from the night, when they saw winding from a gloomy ravine just before them a number of armed men, who blocked up the way. He who appeared the leader of this troop of brigands stepped forward in front of his men to take a view of the travellers. Joseph and Mary stood still, looking on each other in terror and alarm; Jesus was sleeping. The bandit, who was on the look-out for blood and gold, cast an astonished glance on the defenceless old man, with his simple, patriarchal air, and

* These armed bands, often two or three thousand strong, were commanded by experienced chiefs, who gave both Herod and the Romans enough to do. Some of these had a political object in view, and made a *guerilla* war; others were simply a band of assassins, who carried long daggers under their robe, *

and murdered all obnoxious persons who fell in their way, even in the streets of Jerusalem. (*De Bello*, b. ii., ch. 5.)

† Herod, who perfected the spy system in the East, had his spies scattered along all the highways of Judea. (*Joseph., Ant. Jud.*, b. xv., ch. 13.)

then on the young veiled woman, with her infant clasped convulsively to her heart. "They are poor," said the robber to himself, "and, as they travel by night, they must be fugitives!" Perhaps he, too, had an infant son; or perhaps the atmosphere of mildness and mercy which surrounded Jesus and Mary had its effect on that ferocious soul; however it was, he lowered the point of his lance, and, extending a friendly hand to Joseph, offered him a lodging for the night in his rock-built fortress hard by. This frank offer was accepted with a holy confidence, and the brigand's roof was as hospitable, on that occasion, as the Arab tent.* On the following day, about noon, the Holy Family stopped in the shade of a vast forest of palms, nopals, and wild fig-trees, which is situated at a short distance

from Ramla;† a bed of amaranths, narcissuses, and anemones, received the Lord of heaven and earth; the heat of summer was abroad on the plain, and the warbling of birds, the odor of plants, the thick shade of the fig-trees, and the distant murmur of a rivulet, lulled the divine Infant to sleep. After a short and anxious halt, the travellers resumed their journey. There is no knowing why it was that they directed their course towards Bethlehem; tradition has preserved the memory of their visit, and Christians have erected an altar in the cave where Mary hid with her child‡ whilst Joseph went up to the city, either to inquire about the departure of a caravan, or to exchange Mary's gentle, but slow palfry, for a camel. Whatever motive it might have been that drew Joseph and Mary

* The site where local tradition places this scene, and where the ruins of the brigand's fortress are still seen, bears even now a bad character. During the Crusades, the Franks, to whom this tradition was familiar, converted the bandit chief into a feudal lord; "it is, nevertheless, a rare thing," says Father Nau, with amusing coolness, "for a great lord to turn highway robber." The Crusaders knew what they were about better than Father Nau. There has been added to this legend—which appears

authentic—an embellishment for which we do not vouch, viz., that the hospitable brigand was no other than the good thief in person.

† It is a charming spot which tradition points out as one of the resting places of the Holy Family; the ruins of a monastery are now seen there.

‡ This cave is called "The Grotto of the Virgin's Milk," because it is thought that some drops of Mary's milk fell on the rock while she nursed her divine Infant.

into the crater of the volcano, it is certain that they stayed but a few hours, and that they thence hastened to gain a maritime town of the Philistines, there to join the first caravan destined for Egypt.

According to the learned calculations of chronologers, who admit of no interval in this long journey, the holy couple must have found a caravan at once setting out from the Syrian coast. This is the more likely, inasmuch as the spring equinox was drawing near, so that every traveller would be anxious to outstrip the season when the *simoom* sweeps over the desert, rendering its sands as treacherous as the ocean-wave.* Excepting only the mortal dread of Herod's pursuit, the latter part of the journey was just as much marked by fatigue, suffering, and even insecurity. On leaving Gaza, whose dilapidated towers reëchoed the hoarse murmur of the waves, our travellers saw before them only immense wastes of sand, dreary, desolate, and fearfully naked,

* The Arabs call the hot wind of the desert *simoom*, or poison; some idea of it may be conceived by standing for a moment at the mouth of a common baking-oven, when the bread is taken out. These fiery winds are much more

agitated by the scorching wind of the desert, and overhung by a fiery sky. Not a trace of vegetation, save, perchance, an occasional patch of heath stretching here and there across the desolate waste; no water, except the brackish spring, which the Virgin and Joseph, who were tired, poor, and unprotected, were only allowed to approach after the rich merchants, their slaves and their camels, had drained it dry, so that they could barely take up a little of the thick, muddy water, in the hollow of their hand. According as they receded from the frontiers of Syria, the thirst became greater, and the water more scarce. At times, there was seen afar off, amid the interminable plain, a large lake, blue and sparkling as that of Gennesareth; the sky was reflected in its limpid waters, with one solitary date-tree; the camels were hurried on, and Mary raised her head, drooping like the rose of Jericho when bent by the rain.† That blessed lake was gained; already

frequent during the fifty days preceding and succeeding the solstice. (Volney, *Voyage en Syrie*.)

† This rose, whose corolla opens and shuts according to the changes of the atmosphere, is

was the raging thirst quenched in imagination; but, oh, misery! some mocking demon removed the lake some leagues farther, and left in its place only burning sand.*

Another optical illusion which frequently takes place in those arid and scorching regions, appears to the distant travellers in gigantic proportions. Arab horsemen, covered with their floating abbas with brown and golden stripes, and armed with the djombié—a dagger with a crooked blade, which every inhabitant of the desert wears in his girdle—appeared from afar of the height of lofty towers, seeming as though they moved in the air. The Virgin

consulted as a barometer by the Arabs. (Vicomte de Marcellus, *Voyage en Orient*, t. ii.)

* This is the phenomenon commonly known as *mirage*. During the expedition of the French to Egypt, in 1798, the soldiers crossing those fiery deserts, consumed with thirst, were often deceived by this cruel illusion. Every object rising from the soil, amid those seas of sand, appeared to them surrounded by water; thus a little mountain which they perceived afar off, seemed to them to rise from the midst of a lake. Dying with thirst, they hastened thither, but only to find themselves grievously mistaken; the lake had fled, and was now farther than ever from their longing eyes. (See De Felliens, *du Mirage*, Art. 6.)

† "I had occasion," says Niebuhr, "to remark a phenomenon which struck me as very singular, but which, in time, became familiar to me.

shuddered, and drew Jesus closer to her bosom; but her fears were calmed by the serene countenance of Joseph, though even he could assign no reason for the strange phenomenon.†

At the approach of night, the song of the camel-drivers ceased,‡ the leader of the caravan hoisted the flag which was the signal for halting, and all the travellers gathered around the spot. An animated scene quickly followed. The camels, squatting down at the feet of their masters, were freed from their heavy burdens; bales of goods were heaped up pyramidically; a circle of stakes was planted around,

An Arab mounted on a camel, whom I saw at a distance, appeared to me as high as a tower, and seemed to move in the air; nevertheless, he was walking on the sand like ourselves. This optical illusion proceeds from the stronger refraction of the atmosphere in those arid regions laden with vapors of a very different nature from those which fill the air in temperate climates." (*Voyage en Arabie*, t. i., p. 208.)

‡ It is an almost universal custom in the East for people to enliven their journey or their work by singing. A Mussulman pilgrim has given a very picturesque description of the nightly march of a caravan from Mecca, lit by the lanterns placed on the camels, and cheered by the modulated song of the drivers. (*Travels of Abdoul Kerim*.) The camel-drivers still sing songs peculiar to themselves, in Syria and in Egypt. (*Corresp. d'Orient*, t. vi.)

and to these the beasts of burden were fastened; the wealthy travellers had their tents erected, and the master of the caravan placed sentinels, who were to give notice of the approach of the Bedouins—those pirates of the desert—who were then, and still are, plunderers like Ishmael, and hospitable as Abraham. Each merchant, after having taken his repast of dates and milk, lay down to sleep under his tent, awaiting the rising of the moon. The slaves, and the poorer travellers—amongst whom were the Son of God, his divine Mother, and Joseph—seated themselves on a rush mat spread on the ground, with no other covering than the sky, with the cold night air falling chill and moist on their shivering and exhausted limbs.* Now and then there was heard a cry of alarm: some band of Arabs was discovered prowling around the sleeping caravan; disconcerted by the vigilance of the watchmen, a shower of arrows an-

nounced their departure, instantly followed by the groans of the wounded. Then the Virgin, who had bent over her divine Son, so as to make a rampart of her own body, raised to heaven her tearful eyes and her grief-worn brow: she knew but too well that her Jesus was subject to death, like all the children of men!

When the moon shed her mild light over the shadeless and noiseless desert, where no blade of grass waved in the midnight air, the tents were folded up, and the dreary journey resumed, with all its inconveniences, all its sufferings, all its terrors.

At length, the outskirts of that strange and silent region were gained. Egypt—that ancient nursery of all knowledge and of all idolatry—presented itself to the travellers, with its red granite obelisks, its colossal pyramids, its temples crowned with burnished steel,† its island-like villages, and its pro-

* Though at this season it is burning hot during the day, in the desert, yet the nights are extremely cold. (Voln.—Sav)

† On the dome of the sanctuary in the principal temple of Heliopolis, there was an immense mirror of polished steel, which reflected

every ray of light. There was just such another on the top of the lighthouse of Alexandria, and the image of vessels coming into port was reflected in it long before they appeared on the horizon. (*Corresp. d'Orient*, t. v. *Lettres de Savary*.)

vidential river fringed with reeds and covered with boats. That country appeared more rich, more populous, more commercial, than Judea, but still it was the land of exile! Beyond the desert was *home*, and there lay the heart of the banished children of Israel.

After a journey of one hundred and forty leagues,* the fugitives reached Heliopolis, where there was a colony of their people. In that city arose the Temple of Jehovah, which Onias had constructed on the plan of the Holy House. The ornaments of that Egyptian temple almost equalled those of the other, only, as a token of inferiority, a massive golden lamp, suspended from the roof, replaced the famous

candlestick of Jerusalem with its seven branches. At the gate of that city, which was chiefly inhabited by Egyptians and Arab idolaters, there was a majestic tree, of the mimosa kind, to which the Arabs of Yemen, settled on the banks of the Nile, paid a species of worship.† At the approach of the Holy Family, this idol-tree slowly bent its shady branches, as if saluting the young Master of nature, whom Mary carried in her arms;‡ and, if we may believe the historian Palladius, at the moment when the divine travellers passed under the granite arches of the gate of Heliopolis, all the idols of a neighboring temple fell prostrate on the ground.§

* *Vid. Barad.*, t. i., ch. 8. The author of *Voyages de Jesus Christ* reckons but a hundred leagues, but he probably overlooks the winding and turning of the roads.

† The Arabs, who had gradually forgotten the God of Abraham, at that time adored a multitude of idols, one more fantastic than the other. "The date-tree," says Azraki, "was worshipped by the tribe of Khozua, and the Beni-Thekif venerated a rock; a large tree, named *zat arouat*, was adored by the Koreisch, etc. The Persians contemptuously distinguished the Arabs as *worshippers of stones*."

‡ We owe this incident to Sozomenes, and it is rather hazardous to bring it forward in this scoffing age, though it is, after all, scarcely a

miracle. It is certain that there exists in Arabia a tree of the sensitive kind, which bends its branches at the approach of man. Niebuhr, who is not at all suspected of credulity, found that tree in Yemen; and the Arabs, who call it *the hospitable tree*, hold it in such high veneration that no one is permitted to pluck a leaf. If that mimosa, by a natural phenomenon, bends its branches at the approach of man, how much more likely is it to do so at the approach of the Son of God?

§ Palladius is not the only one who relates this miracle: Dorothy martyr, Sozomenes, St. Anselm, St. Bonaventure, Lira, Denis the Carthusian, Testat, Ludolphus, Baradius, etc., likewise attest it.

Joseph and Mary only passed through the city of the sun, and repaired to Matarieh, a pretty village shaded with sycamores, and having the only fountain of fresh water to be found in Egypt. There, in a habitation like a bee-hive, where the doves made their nest, the persecuted family found rest and peace, being at last free from the power of Herod.

That cruel prince, having vainly expected the Magi in his palace of Jericho, his favorite residence, learned, at last, that they had repassed the frontiers of his kingdom, and that, regardless of his injunctions, they had returned to Persia, without letting him know the result of their mission. Pale already from the slow fever which was wearing him away, the king of the Jews became paler still with anger. He was himself duped at the very moment when he revelled in the thought of his unrivalled dexterity in deceiving others duped by those "uncircumcised dogs" who had so unexpectedly penetrated the

* very depths of his tortuous policy! If the Magi had not found the child to whom they were led by the star, they would have come back and told him. . . . They had, then, discovered his secret asylum, which must be somewhere about Bethlehem, since they had extended their search no farther. . . . Now, how was that dangerous child to be distinguished from all others? There was but one way to make sure of his destruction: to include all in a general massacre. . . . But the people! At that thought the old king paused a moment; then a strange, a contemptuous smile curled his haughty lip. "The people dare nothing," said Herod, "against kings who dare all!" "And sending, he killed all the men-children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men."*

According to many grave authors, supported by tradition and probability, the Holy Family re-

* This evangelical fact, which the disciples of Voltaire have called in question, is proved not only by our sacred books, but also by the testi-

mony of Jews and pagans. (Macrobius, b. xi., ch. 4, *des Saturnales*. Orig. *Contr. Cels.*, b. xi., ch. 58. Toldos Huldr., pp. 12, 14, 20.)

mained seven years in Egypt.* † Traces of their sojourn are still found there; the fountain where Mary went to wash the Child's swaddling-clothes, ‡ the bushy knoll where she dried them in the sun, the sycamore in whose shade she loved to sit with her Son on her knee, § are still pointed out, after the lapse of eighteen hundred years. The pilgrims of Europe and of Asia know these objects well, and they are held in reverence by the Egyp-

* *Vid. Trombel, in Vit. Deipn.—Zachariam, in diss. ad hist. eccl.—Anselm.—Cantual.—Euseb.—S. Tho.*

† This is still called "Mary's Fountain." There is an ancient tradition to the effect that the Blessed Virgin used to bathe the child Jesus in its limpid water. In the first ages of Christianity, the faithful built a church there; in later times, the Mussulmans also constructed a mosque; and the disciples of both creeds went to Mary's Fountain for the cure of their diseases. The fountain is still there; the pilgrimages still continue; but both the church and the mosque have long since disappeared. (Savary, t. i., p. 122. *Corresp. d'Orient*, t. vi., p. 3.)

‡ "Not far from the fountain, I was shown an inclosure planted with trees; a Mussulman, who acted as our guide, made us stop before a sycamore, saying, "That is Jesus and Mary's Tree." Vansleb, priest of Fontainebleau, relates that the ancient sycamore fell, from age, in 1058; the Franciscans of Cairo piously preserve in their sacristy the last remains of that tree; in the garden there only remained a stump, of which the tree we saw was doubtless a shoot. *

tians themselves. To each of these clings, like the moss to the damp walls of the ruined monastery, some simple legend of other days. §

In Nazareth, Mary had led an humble and laborious life; but in Heliopolis, she descended into the depths of poverty, and saw misery under every aspect.

The holy couple were left entirely to their own resources, amongst a people who were parcelled out into national and hereditary corpora-

General Kleber, after his victory of Heliopolis, made a pilgrimage to the Holy Family's Tree; he carved his name on the bark of one of the branches, but that name has since disappeared, effaced by time, or by some envious hand." (*Corresp. d'Orient*, t. vi., lettre 141.)

§ The following is one of the legends brought from Eastern climes by one of our old French barons, the Seigneur d'Englure; we give it verbatim, in all its artless grace:—"When Our Lady, the Mother of God, had crossed the desert, and reached this place, she laid Our Lord on the ground, and went all around in quest of water, but there was no water to be found. She went back, sad and sorrowful, to her dear Child, where he lay on the sand, but, behold! he had stuck his heels into the ground until a fountain of clear, sweet water gushed out. Our Lady was overjoyed at this, and thanked her son, Our Lord. She then washed Our Lord's clothes in the water of this fountain, and spread them on the ground to dry, and every drop of water that trickled from those clothes sprang up into a bush, which bushes bear balm," etc.

tions, and who were by no means favorable to strangers. "They being poor," observes St. Basil, "it is clear that they had to work very hard in order to procure the necessaries of life, . . . and even those—were they always able to obtain them?" . . . "Often," says Landolph, of Saxony—"often did it happen, that the child Jesus, pressed by hunger, asked his mother for bread when she had none to give him." . . .

Meanwhile, Herod had died of a horrible and nameless malady, after being literally eaten alive by worms. Occupied to the last with thoughts of how the people would rejoice at the news of his death, he implored his sister Salome—a very wicked woman—implored her with tears to have some Jewish nobles—the flower of their nation, whom he

had kept imprisoned for that purpose—put to death, in order that the people might be forced to weep at his funeral.* He was borne to his castle of Herodion in a golden litter covered with scarlet cloth and adorned with precious stones. His sons and his army followed his remains with a dejected air, whilst the people, proud of their deliverance, heaped curses upon him as the procession passed along.

Apprised in a dream, by the Angel of the Lord, that Herod was dead, Joseph returned with Mary and the Child into the land of Israel; "but hearing that Archelaus reigned in Judea in the room of Herod his father, he was afraid to go thither: and, being warned in sleep, retired into the quarters of Galilee."

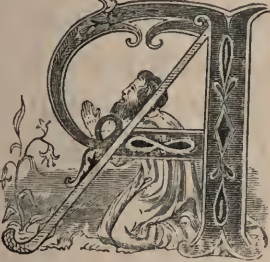
* Joseph., *Ant. Jud.*, b. xvii., ch. 8. The memory of Herod was held in such detestation by the princes of the people and the priests, that they instituted a festival to be celebrated on the 25th of September in joyful commemoration of that prince's death. "There is a feast on the

7th of September," says the Jewish calendar, "on account of the death of Herod, for he had hated the wise; and they rejoice before the Lord when the impious leave this world." (Basnage, t. 1, liv. ii., ch. 8.)



CHAPTER XV.

MARY IN NAZARETH.

H! how mournful are the days of exile, and how sweet it is to breathe once more the air of our native land! The bread of the stranger, like that of the wicked, is hard to eat, and bitter to the heart; the streams of the foreign land murmur not tales of our childish sports; the song of its birds wants one melodious note; its scenes, however fair, have not that sweet, that soothing charm which endears every object in our native land!

How great must have been the joy of the holy spouses on again beholding that land of Chanaan, whose stately hills, waving outlines, harmonious scenery, and endless variety, contrasted so happily and so strikingly with the monotonous splendors of Egypt! Here, a bold and active population, martial, frank and gay, with a pure and holy

worship; there, slaves shackled by castes, addicted to theft, mixing up the most infamous practices in their senseless worship, and lavishing their treasures in building temples to the ox Apis, the crocodile, and the sea-onion. One must be profoundly religious, like Joseph and Mary, and love his country as the Hebrews loved theirs, in order to comprehend the delightful emotions wherewith they greeted the land of Jehovah and their pretty town of Nazareth.

The Holy Family returned to their humble home, after so long an absence, amid the congratulations and endless questions of their friends and neighbors, who celebrated their return as an event of great joy. But the scene was soon and sadly changed. The neglected dwelling of Joseph was scarcely habitable; the roof, in some places broken and falling in, had given free admission to the winter storm and the equi-

noctial rains;* the lower chamber was cold, damp, and overgrown with weeds; wild doves made their nests in the sacred and mysterious cell where the Word was made flesh; the little court was overrun with briars; everything, in short, in and around that time-honored dwelling had assumed that ruinous and desolate aspect which rests on deserted houses like the seal of the master's absence. These needful repairs were, then, to be made; furniture and tools, lost or broken, had to be replaced; and perhaps a debt contracted in Egypt, to defray the expense of the return, had to be discharged. It was, doubtless, at this juncture that the little patrimony of Joseph was sold till the jubilee. All that remained of what they had possessed before their departure was the ruined house, the workshop, and their own arms; but Jesus was there. Young as he was, Jesus took an axe and followed his foster-father to the villages, where

work was procured for them;† his labor, proportioned to his age and strength, was always devoted to his mother. Comfort had long disappeared; but they succeeded, by hard work and persevering industry, in obtaining the necessaries of life. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph led a life of ceaseless toil; and He who might command legions of angels, asked nothing from God for himself or his but their "daily bread."

The interior life of that blessed family, surnamed the *earthly trinity*, has not come to the knowledge of men; it is like the streamlet hidden in the long grass, or, more properly, it is the Holy of Holies, with its cloud of perfumes and its double veil. Nevertheless, by studying minutely, and examining one by one, under every point of view, the evangelical facts, what we know enables us to guess to a certain extent at what we do not know, and the public life of Jesus Christ throws some bright rays of light on

* The rainy season, in Judea, is that of the equinoxes, and especially the autumnal equinox; it is also the time of storms, accompanied by violent showers of rain or hail. (Volvey, *Voyage en Syrie*.)

† St. Justin Martyr (*Dialog. cum Tryphone*)

states that Jesus Christ assisted his foster-father to make yokes and ploughs. And Godescard, t. xiv., p. 436, *Vie de la Sainte Vierge*, says:—"A very ancient author asserts that, in his time, there were yokes to be seen which Our Saviour had made with his own hands."

his own hidden life and that of the Blessed Virgin. That sacred abyss we are about to sound with all the reserve, all the conscientious application, that so grave a subject requires.

Jesus, in whom were hidden all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge,* had no need of human teaching; and the contrary supposition is positively condemned by the Church. St. John also, in his Gospel, mentions that the Jews, contemporaries of Jesus Christ, regarded him as a man who had "never learned;"† and the surprise of the Nazarenes, on seeing him so profoundly versed in sacred letters, shows clearly enough that he had not been, to their knowledge, brought up, like St. Paul, *at the feet of a master*. The Talmudists and the Jewish authors of the Toldos maintain, on the contrary, that a celebrated rabbin initiated Jesus in the mysteries of science and of magic; but, deducing from the second part of the assertion, which is wholly absurd, and viewing the matter in a purely human light, as

* do the rationalists, this is evidently false, for two reasons. In the first place, Jesus was neither a zealot nor a traditionist, and it is everywhere apparent in the Gospel that he openly disapproved of the narrow views, the captious distinctions, and shallow subtilties of the Synagogue. In the second place, Rabbi Joshua Perachia, whom they name as his preceptor, was yet unborn, as he flourished an hundred years later.

To place Jesus amid the Rabbins in the capacity of a pupil would be just about as illogical as to try to support an oak by surrounding it with reeds. He taught not as the scribes and Pharisees, says an evangelist,‡ and that is easily conceived, for he derived his wisdom from himself; and his teachings, even viewing them in a natural way, seem to emanate from a soul lofty, pure, upright, and from a mind so vast, and so uniformly sound, that it never could have been perverted by scholastic disputes.

Strauss admits that all the wisdom and all the science of the

* St. Paul, *Ep. Colos.*, ch. ii., ver. 9.

† St. John, ch. vii., ver. 15.

‡ St. Matthew, ch. vii., ver. 29.

period would have been unable to form such a man as Jesus Christ. "Even if Jesus had exhausted," says he, "all the sources of instruction then to be had, it is no less true that none of these elements would suffice, even remotely, to effect a revolution in the world, and the heaven necessary for so great a work he must have drawn from the depths of his own soul."

His eloquence, like his morality, was peculiar to himself. It was not the emphatic exaggerations of the Rabbins, nor yet the majestic, overwhelming, and violently-contrasted diction of the ancient prophets; it was, as he himself said, a source of living water, reflecting in its course the birds of the air, the crops, and the flowers of the field. That eloquence, so simple, penetrated to the very bottom of every thing, and was easily connected with high and lofty ideas. Every word was a precious seed of virtue;

every lesson threw afar, over the mysterious wastes of the future, a long train of light, which was insensibly to spread into the perfect day of the world's regeneration. Even those who have audaciously denied his miracles, were yet forced to acknowledge that his words were those of a God.*

Jesus was endowed with a high and meditative soul, which required a vast space for its expansion. Confined during the day at manual labor, which occupied every moment of his time, he made up by night for his obscure toil, and was again the legislator and the prophet in presence of the starry heavens. Standing on the lofty terrace which commanded a view of the mountains and forests of the land of Chanaan, he poured out his soul before the Author of Nature, whose Ambassador, whose Son, and whose equal he was. These communings with God, in the silence of the

* "I confess to you," says J. J. Rousseau, "that the majesty of the Scriptures astonishes me, and the sanctity of the Gospel speaks to my heart. Behold the books of our philosophers, with all their pretensions; how small they are, when compared with this! Can it be that a book, at once so simple and so sublime, *

is the work of men? Can it be that he whose history it records is himself but man? Is his tone of an enthusiast or of an ambitious sectary? What sweetness! what purity in his morals! what touching grace in his instructions! what elevation in his precepts! what profound wisdom in his discourse!" (*Emile*, t. iii., p. 365.)

night, of the desert, and of thought, were customary with Jesus, as we see in many places of the Gospel. The model-man, the incarnate WORD, would thus, we may suppose, instruct his own to distinguish the pure gold of prayer from the monstrous alloy of ostentation and hypocrisy wherewith the Pharisees of his time were wont to mix it up.

The Virgin, who was never either troublesome or exacting, placed no obstacle in the way of her Son's solitary habits; she knew that he was then sounding the depth of the unfathomable abyss opening under the feet of men, and that the world's redemption was to be the fruit of these silent meditations. Respecting the workings of that mighty spirit folded up within itself, and ever looking forward to that glorious future which every passing moment brought more near, Mary already beheld heaven opened, death overcome, and the Messiah gathering the nations around his standard. . . . But all of a sudden she remembered the prediction of the old man in the Temple, and its image

arose, gloomy as a funeral-pall, at the end of that enchanting prospect; a shudder ran through every vein of the poor mother, and her heart, so absorbed in the love of Jesus, was torn asunder with anguished forebodings. A secret voice seemed to cry, "Blood must expiate sin! CHRIST must die!" Then, leaving off the manual toil to which her poverty condemned her,* the daughter of David went to seek her Son; she longed to see him, to assure herself, by a maternal embrace, that he was still there, that he was yet living!

At her approach Jesus withdrew his pensive glance from the starry heavens; his youthful brow, contracted by a thought as vast as the universe, became again the smooth, fair brow of the child. Mary then, driving back into her heart every mournful apprehension, advised him to seek repose. Strength must be recruited for the morrow's fatiguing labor. . . . The Son of God followed his mother in silence, for he loved and *was subject to her*.

The entrance of Jesus into adoles-

* Tertullian said, in the third century, that Mary earned her living by working; and Cel-

sus, in the second century, said that Mary was a woman who lived by the labor of her hands.

cence was marked by an extraordinary incident, which gave Mary's soul a most violent shock. Joseph and Mary, faithful observers of the law of their fathers, went regularly every year to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. This journey, which they made in secret so long as the throne of the Maccabees was filled by the son of the enemy of God, had now become more easy since the banishment of Archelaus and the occupation of the Romans. When Christ had attained his twelfth year, his parents, having the fear of Herod no longer before their eyes, brought him with them to Jerusalem. They set out from Nazareth in a crowd; and, on the way, the Hebrew pilgrims formed themselves into little bands, according to age and sex, and the ties of family or friendship.*

With the Virgin were Mary of Cleophas, the sister-in-law of Joseph; another Mary, mentioned in the Gospel as *altera. Maria*; Salome,

* wife of Zebedee, come from Bethsaida with her husband and sons; Joanna, wife of Chus; and a number of Nazarean women, her neighbors and friends. Joseph followed at some distance, in grave conversation with Zebedee, the fisherman, and the ancients of his tribe. Jesus walked with the young Galileans, whom the Gospel, according to the idiom of the Hebrew tongue, calls his brethren, they being his nearest relations.

Amongst this youthful group, who went before the others, the sons of Zebedee might be distinguished; James, impetuous as the sea of Tiberias on a stormy day; John, still younger than Jesus, and seeming, as he walked beside his brother, the true personification of the lamb of Isaiah dwelling in peace with the lion of the Jordan. Beside the fishermen of Bethsaida, whom Jesus afterwards surnamed *Boanerges* (sons of thunder), were the four sons of Alpheus; James,

* St. Epiphanius and St. Bernard inform us that, in these journeys, the men went in troops, separate from the women, and that St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin being thus one in one company and one in another, gave themselves at first no concern about the disappearance of

Jesus, and indeed knew nothing of it till the evening, when all the travellers assembled together. See likewise Aelrede, abbot of Reverby, *Serm. seu tractatus de Jesu duodeni, Dominica intra octav. Epiphan.*

who was subsequently bishop of Jerusalem, an austere and grave young man, with long hair, pale face, and cold, subdued manner. Proud of having taken the Nazarite vow, he put on provoking airs of superiority towards him whom he then considered as the carpenter's son. In the character of Jesus were seen the virtues and the imperfections inherent in the soil; immovable firmness, upright and religious inclinations, but, at the same time, a strong contempt for all who were not of the race of Abraham, and an excellent opinion of himself. Jude, Simon, and Jose, the other sons of Alpheus, were youths of a rustic, simple, and warlike mien, already arrived at adolescence, and regarding the son of the humble Mary as their inferior in every way—a feeling of which they could with diffi-

* culty divest themselves in after times, as we see by the Gospel.* And Jesus? Jesus affected nothing, neither devotion, nor austerity, nor wisdom, nor science, because he possessed the fullness of all those things, and people seldom affect anything but what they have not.

To see him clad so simply—like an Essenian—his long hair, of the color of ancient bronze,† parted on his high sun-browned forehead, and floating gracefully over his shoulders, one would have taken him for David as he presented himself to the prophet Samuel, small, timid, attired in a shepherd's dress, to receive the sacred unction. Yet there was something more in the soft brown eye of Jesus‡ than even in that of his great ancestor, gleaming as it was with the brightness of poetic inspiration; there was some-

* St. John Chrysostom, *Serm.* 44.

† The Rabbins have taken occasion to make the most odious insinuations against Jesus on account of the color of his hair; but what is most extraordinary is that they make precisely the same remarks on David. *He was red as Esau; he had blood on his head; the soul of Esau had passed into him.* They have only forgotten the *evil eye* wherewith they endow the prophesying.

‡ Nicheph., *Hist. Eccles.*, t. i., p. 125. His portrait of Our Lord, drawn from tradition, is

the most authentic that we now have. The Rev. Mr. Walsh, author of a recent work devoted to the rare and unpublished monuments of the first age of Christianity, calls attention to a very curious medal, which was known so early as the 15th century. The front side represents the head of Our Lord in profile; the hair is divided after the manner of the Nazarenes, smooth to the ears, and waving on the shoulders; the beard bushy, and not very long; the features fine, as also the bust, over which the tunic falls in graceful folds.

thing penetrating and divine which laid bare the inmost thoughts and reached the most secret recesses of the soul; but Jesus then veiled the splendor of his look, as Moses did his radiant brow on going forth from the tabernacle. He walked, then, in wise, yet appropriate conversation with his young kinsmen according to the flesh, whom he designed to make his apostles; he discovered, beneath their rough exterior, the weight and the value of those unpolished diamonds which were one day to shine with such surpassing splendor, and he loved them by anticipation. He was not deceived in his expectations; those men, who had had, like the rest of the nation, their dreams of gold and power regarding the Messiah, cast away at his bidding all their prejudices, both national and religious, and adopted a calumniated doctrine, whose principles and whose promises, like the maledictions of the old law, spoke only of sufferings to endure and persecutions to encounter. They bound themselves to him by ties so strong that neither the princes of the earth, nor cold, nor nakedness, nor hunger, nor the

* sword could separate them from his love; they walked in his footsteps, courageously trampling on the thorns which the world threw in their way, and allowing themselves to be treated, for his sake, as the very scum of mankind. They were neither ashamed of the Son of man, nor of his Gospel, nor of *the folly of the Cross!* And why should they? It is for impostors to be ashamed; and the Apostles never preached but from sincere conviction. Those honest and simple hearts enforced their testimony by all that could render it credible and sacred amongst men; they abandoned all, suffered all, forgave all, and sealed with their blood the Gospel of their divine Master.*

But at the period of which we speak, these heroic virtues were not even in blossom, and those young Galileans little thought that they should one day maintain with their life the divinity of their fellow-traveller.

After a journey of four days, the pilgrims reached the Holy City, then filled with an immense con-

* Pascal said, "I am ready to believe any history the witnesses of which suffer death for it."

course of Jewish strangers.* The family of Joseph and Mary assembled to eat the Paschal lamb, which the priests took care to immolate between the two evening prayers,† in the court of the Temple; to this was added unleavened bread, wild lettuce, and all that belonged of right to that ancient ceremony. The festival days being over, the parents and kinsfolk of Jesus met together, in order to return home; as they went back in the same order in which they came, it was not, at first, perceived that Jesus was missing. Mary thought him with Joseph, or the two James's; Joseph, on the other hand, thought him with his young kinsmen, or with Mary. At night-fall, the various companies came together, and the Virgin sought Jesus in vain amongst the crowd of travellers who arrived successively at the inn; no one knew what had become of him. The grief of the holy spouses was inexpressible. "The deposit

* of heaven, the Son of God!" murmured Joseph sadly. "My son!" said the poor young mother, her voice choked with sobs. All that night they sought him and all the following day, asking every one they met along the road, calling him in the woods, looking fearfully down the precipices, now fearing for his life, now for his liberty, and not knowing what was to happen if he were lost. They returned to Jerusalem; ran to the houses of their friends, and, tired of wandering through every part of that large city, they, at last, entered the Temple. In the porch, where sat the doctors of the law, was a child who charmed the ancients of Israel by the depth of his observation and the clearness of his answers to questions, even the most difficult; they all stood in a circle round him, every one wondering within himself at his marvellous and precocious wisdom. "It is either Daniel, or an angel," said some one within a

* The feast of Easter gathered to Jerusalem about two millions, five hundred thousand persons. (*De Bello*, l. vii., ch. 17.) Cestus, wishing to persuade Nero that the Jewish nation was not so contemptible as he thought, caused the people to be reckoned by the priests. At

the feast of Easter, they killed two hundred and fifty-six thousand six hundred lambs; there was a lamb for every family.

† That is to say, from noon or one o'clock, till sunset. (*Basnage*, t. v., l. vii., ch. 2.)

few paces of the sorrowful Virgin. "It is Jesus!" said the young mother, making her way through the doctors. Then, approaching the Messiah, with a look of tender reproach—"Son!" said she, mildly, "why hast thou done so to us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing?"

The child had disappeared before the God: the answer was dry and mysterious. "How is it that you

* sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" The holy couple were silent; they did not, at first, comprehend the drift of this reply.

Jesus arose and followed them to Nazareth; his perfect submission to their will very soon effaced this light cloud. "And his mother kept all these things in her heart; and Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men."

CHAPTER XVI.

MARY AT THE SERMONS OF JESUS.



HERE are two worlds in history," says one of the finest writers of our time: "one beyond, the other on this side, the Cross." The primeval world, old and decrepid at

* the time of Christ's regenerating mission, presented a strange spectacle, for the ridiculous went hand in hand with the horrible. The Arab and the Gaul, after having for ages retained the primitive idea of the unity of God, adored the acacia and the oak;* the Hindoo deified the Ganges, and sacrificed human

* The pagan Gauls of the 6th and 7th centuries deified oaks; they burned torches before those trees, and invoked them as though they could have heard them; the enormous stones

which were found near had their share of the divine honors. (*Histoire Ecclesiastique de Bretagne*, t. iv., 7th century.—*Capital. Caroli Magni*, lib. 1, tit. 64.)

victims to Sactis, goddess of death ;* the Egyptians—wisest of nations—rendered devout worship to the garlic, the lotus, and nearly all bulbous plants ;† the unknown tribes of young America adored the tiger, the vulture, the tempest, and the roaring cataract ;‡ finally, the Greeks and Romans confessedly filled their temples with demons,§ and those nations so intellectual, so polished, so prolific of great men, had deified vice under its most hideous aspects, and peopled their Olympus with robbers, adulterers, and murderers. Their morals corresponded with their creeds ; corruption, descending like a vast river from the height of the seven imperial hills, overspread all the prov-

* See *Tableau d'Inde* (Picture of India) by Buckingham.

† Juvenal's sarcasm is well known : "O sanctas gentes, quibus hæc nascuntur in hortis numina." (Sat. xv., v. 10.)

‡ Garcilasso, l. 1, c. 2 and 12.

§ Porphyry, who was so well acquainted with the sources of polytheism, admits that the devils were the objects of Gentile worship. "There are," says he, "unclean spirits, malicious and deceitful, who wish to pass for gods, and be adored by men ; these must be appeased, as otherwise they might injure us. Some, being gay and playful, are propitiated by games and festivals ; others, of a more gloomy

inces. Judea, which had, no more than the others, escaped the contagion of vice, was falling with fearful rapidity ; its religion no longer consisted in fundamental dogmas, but in a multitude of parasitical superfluities, and the dreams of its Rabbins had taken the place of the Mosaic law.||

And what had become of haughty Reason amid all these deplorable aberrations—of Reason, that queen of intelligences, who takes her own limited horizon for the bounds of the universe, and stretches gods on the bed of Procrustes ? Where did she hold dominion ? where had she hoisted her colors, whilst her ramparts were thus universally attacked ? If she could, without foreign

turn, must have the smell of grease, and delight in bloody sacrifices."

|| It is a saying amongst the Jews, that the Covenant was made with them on Mount Sinai, not on the basis of the written law, but on that of the oral law. They annihilate the former to install the latter in its stead, and finally reduce all religion to tradition. This corruption was so prevalent amongst the Jews, even at the time of Our Lord, that he reproaches them, in St. Mark, with having nullified the word of God by their traditions. But it is now much worse ; they compare the sacred text to water, and the *Misnah*, or *Talmud*, to the best wine ; again, the written law is salt, but the *Talmud* is pepper, cinnamon, etc.

assistance, reconquer the earth which she had lost, why did she not do it? . . . Alas! she felt that the torrent would sweep away her frail barriers; and, powerless to restrain it, she contented herself with noting its ravages. Resting on philosophy, she mourned over the lifeless remains of the social body, whose fall she could not prevent; Christianity came forward, and said to the dead body, "Arise and walk." . . . And it was done according to her word.

From that day forward a new race, cured of all diseases, cleansed from all impurity in the sacred laver, gathered around the Cross which the Son of Mary had set up over the regenerate world, as the triumph of God over hell.

That glorious revolution which placed Charity on the throne, attended by all the other virtues—that ever-memorable event which changed the aspect of the world, and whose results shall be felt till the end of all things, had its origin in Nazareth: from the hollow of that nameless rock flowed the humble stream of Christianity. "An obscure spring, an unnoticed drop

of water, in which two sparrows could not drink, which one sunbeam might have dried up, and which now, like the great ocean of mind, has filled up all the depths of human wisdom, and bathed with its exhaustless waters the past, the present, and the future."*

Nothing is known of the means which brought about that grand fact which stands pre-eminent above all modern history. From the day of his manifestation in the Temple, the Son of God led a hidden and meditative life with his mother and his adoptive father. This period, lost to the world, was undoubtedly that in which the Virgin spent her calmest and happiest days. It is not when human life rolls noisily on, like a wintry torrent, that it is the happiest; but when it resembles the streamlet gliding in silvery ripples through the flower-bespangled meadows. Mary, deprived of all the enjoyments of luxury and all the pleasures of affluence, but living near her Son, working for him, studying his tastes, seeing him every hour, offering to him, as it were, the first-fruits of his sacred

* M. de Lamartine. *Voyage en Orient.*

harvest; the first, the humblest, and the most docile of his disciples, and bending her cultivated understanding before the divinity and superior mind of her Son—Mary must then have been a happy mother! If, at times, whilst Jesus was explaining to her the most profound meaning of the prophecies, he came on some passage which spoke of sufferings to be endured, a dark cloud gathered on the modest brow of the Virgin, it soon passed away, and that mild, benign countenance resumed its wonted serenity. The storm was still afar off, and their bark was moored in a quiet harbor. Her Son was there; she hung on his look, on his words, on his slightest gestures. And how she loved to serve that Son! how joyfully would she sit up all night to sew, or weave his working tunics, his festival robes, and that seamless garment, a masterpiece of art and skill, which was afterwards! But as yet the Lord had only anointed His Son with the oil of gladness. The companion of the Spouse, the wise Virgin of the Gospel, *left the morrow to provide for itself*, “and the peace of God, which surpasseth

* all understanding, dwelt in her heart and mind.”

Jesus was perfection itself, the omniscient, the thrice holy, the mighty and the wise; as God, he could owe nothing to His creatures, but as man he owed something to Mary. She it was who initiated him, from his earliest childhood, in the humble virtues appertaining to humanity, and to her own simple and poetic tastes. That patient and unalterable meekness which he knew how to unite with the firmness of the prophet and the legislator; that merciful compassion which tempered the wrath of an angry God, and rendered HIM—the model man, the Just by excellence—the Advocate of sinful man; that tenderness so kind, so simple, towards children whom he delighted in blessing and caressing during his divine mission; a thousand imperceptible shades, a thousand beams half absorbed in the blaze of light which constitutes the mortal life of Jesus Christ, all bear the seal of Mary.*

* Nel vestire il Verbo d'umana carne non gli diede ella (la Vergine), punto, o di potenza, o di santità, o di giustizia che egli (Gesù) già da sè solo non possedesse; ma gli diè molto bensì

Thus heaven is pleased to inhale the sweet scent of flowers, although the flowers are creatures of the earth.

We cannot doubt but that Jesus returned, with interest, all the Virgin's tenderness and solicitude; a woman so noble in blood and in heart was entitled to the respect of all, and especially of a Son for whose sake she had imposed on herself, in the early spring of life, so many privations, so much toil, and so many sacrifices. He who takes note in heaven of a glass of cold water given in his name, must assuredly be mindful of the obligations which he owed to Mary; and, if we see in the Gospel that he sometimes spoke to his divine mother less as her son than as her Lord, it is that at such times he detached himself from all earthly connections in order to promote the glory of his Father, whose interests were ever paramount with him. The Virgin knew too well the sacred mission of her son to be disturbed by this occasional severity; she calmly awaited the moment when

di misericordia. (P. Paolo Segneri, *Magnificat spiegato*.)

* the legislator should give place to the young Galilean whom her milk had nourished, and never had she to wait long: the human nature very soon granted what the divine nature had refused.

Jesus had just attained his twenty-ninth year when the angel of death summoned away the venerable head of the Holy Family. Joseph—that patriarchal man—whose submissive faith and simplicity of heart recalled the memory of Abraham and the era of the tent; Joseph, on whom the Holy Ghost himself bestowed the title of Just; Joseph slept calmly in the Lord, in the sweet presence of his adopted son and his chaste spouse. Jesus and Mary mourned him, and kept their melancholy watch by his cold remains; the night wind only was heard to mingle in the lamentations of the poor family. The great ones of Galilee died not thus; their death was attended by more show and greater ostentation, although they had not, at the final moment, the glorious prospects of the carpenter of Nazareth.

The obsequies of the son of David were humble as his fortune, but

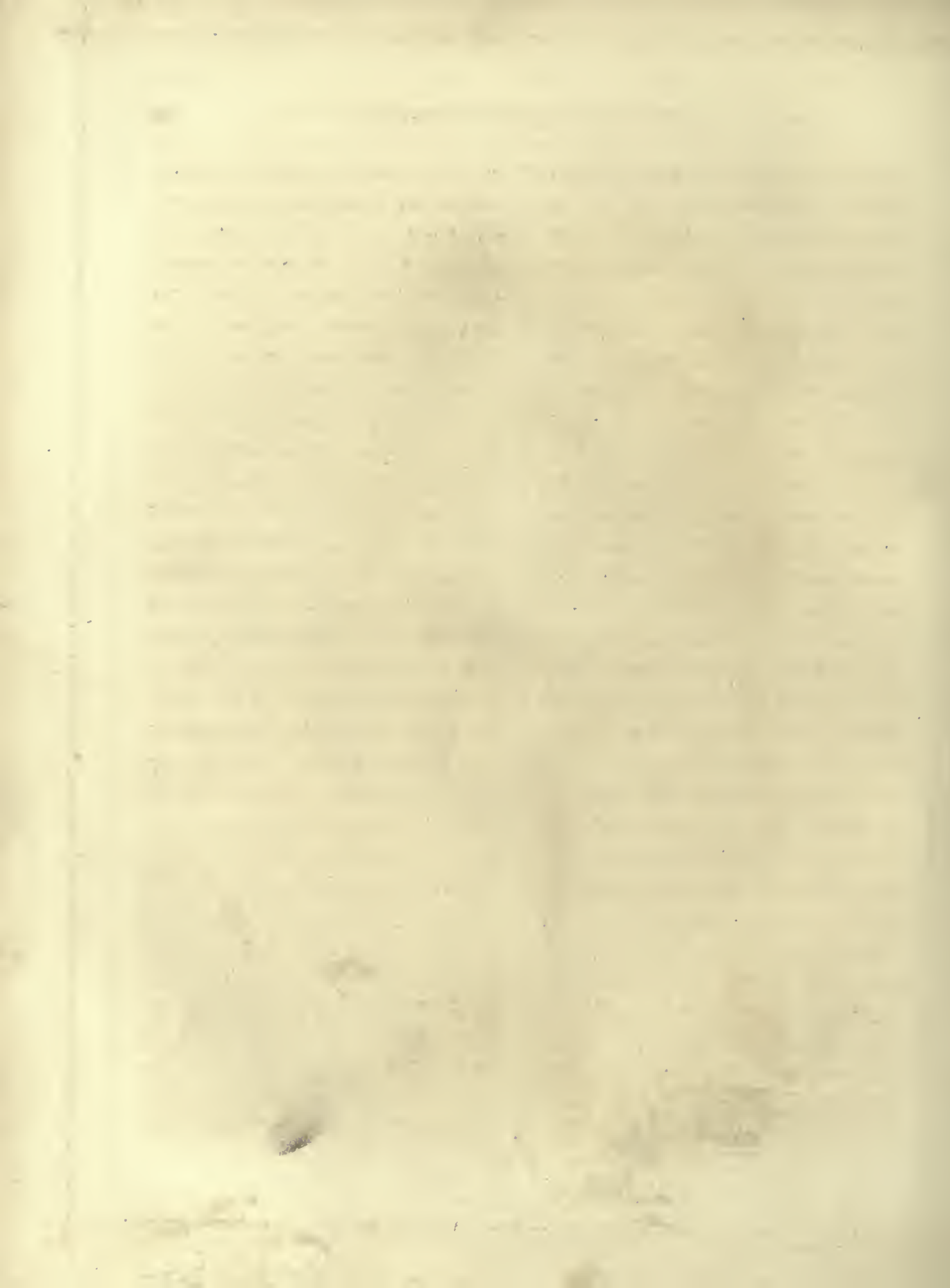


W. H. P. 1841

1. APRIL 1

RIVER JORDAN.

T. & J. SAULIER & CO. NEW YORK.



Mary shed abundant tears over his funeral bed, and the Son of God was himself chief mourner. What emperor was ever so highly honored?

At length, the time for preaching the Gospel began to approach, and He whom God ordained from all eternity to be its pontiff and apostle quitted Nazareth to repair to the banks of the Jordan, where John was baptizing. That parting of the Blessed Virgin and her Son must have been both solemn and affecting. The public life of Jesus was about to commence. Unfriendly, poor, of humble origin, without other resource than his courage, his patience, and that gift of miracles which he never employed for his own personal advantage, he was going to confront an order of things "not strong enough to resist him, but strong enough to cause his death."* The Virgin could not help feeling an emotion of terror on seeing Jesus commit himself to that stormy sea—the Jewish world—on which so many illustrious prophets had perished. She knew the insurmountable pride of the Pharisees,

* the narrow and revengeful fanaticism of the Synagogue, the sanguinary whims of Herod Antipas; she also knew the Messianic oracles which spoke of suffering and ignominy! The daughter of the kings of Juda, who was not of the race of the feeble, and who knew that her son was God, was none the less overcome by that first separation, which seemed the prelude and the image of one much more cruel. With a breaking heart she saw Jesus set out, and when the sound of his footsteps died away in the distance; when she found herself alone—all alone—in that house where she had passed so many happy hours with her Son and her holy spouse, she hid her face between her hands, and remained long silent and motionless.

The absence of Christ was prolonged; the Virgin learned with profound admiration, but without surprise, the wonders of his baptism, when the Holy Trinity was, as it were, made palpable and revealed to men: the white dove extending its divine wings over the Saviour who was, at the same time, announced as the Son of God by a

* M. de Lamartine, *book quoted*.

voice from heaven. Her maternal joy was, however, replaced by grievous apprehension when she heard that Jesus, almost immediately after his baptism, had plunged alone into the deep and perilous ravines of the lofty Mount Quarantine,* to prepare for the work of the world's redemption by fasting, prayer, and meditation. What must she suffer as she thought of Jesus wandering through a labyrinth of naked rocks, where the bird found not a particle of moss to make its nest, or a wild berry to maintain life—where all is rock and fire! What anguish when the tempest roared without! Where was Jesus? What was he doing, alone and unsheltered, on the high mountains of Jericho, whose

* The desert wherein Jesus fasted forty days—whence it was called the Desert of Quarantine—is situated in the mountains of Jericho, about a league from that city, and towards the western bank of the Jordan. Mount Quarantine is one of the highest on the northern side, presenting a profound chasm, hollowed out below, as though to prevent all access to the upper part; from west to north it displays a series of steep rocks, which open in many places, and contain caverns. The fourth part of the ascent is only gained by a precipitous slope, strewn with stones which roll from under the foot. When one has reached this fourth part of the mountain's height, he finds a very narrow pathway, which conducts to a flight of

* steep pathways—full of rolling stones—wound amid frightful precipices.† Certain death awaited him if he missed his foot on the edge of an abyss; and no aid was near, if, during that fast—so complete, so long, so far beyond human strength—he fell fainting on the way. Those forty days were, to Mary, so many ages—maternal anxiety making every minute thus passed an eternity; but Jesus returned to Nazareth with his disciples, and his loved presence was, for Mary, like the balmy breath of spring, after the piercing frosts of winter.

Just then it was that the wedding took place in Cana of Galilee. The bride and bridegroom, who

steps surrounded by fearful precipices; this must be climbed at the most imminent risk, catching at certain stones which project here and there, and to which one is obliged to cling with feet and hands; if one of these stones chanced to give way, one would fall into a terrific chasm. (*Voyages de Jesus Christ*, 11ème voyage.)

† The sacred retreat wherein the Man-God spent forty days is a natural grotto, which is only to be gained by climbing a path cut in the rock. A niche has been made in one of its sides as if for an altar. Therein are seen some frescoes, almost effaced, representing angels. A thick wall closes up this species of chapel, which is lit by a window whence one cannot look down without a shudder. (*Ibid.*)

were relatives of the Blessed Virgin,* invited Mary, with Jesus and his disciples. All accepted the cordial invitation, and the Virgin, ever kind and obliging, undertook to assist in making preparations for the banquet, in which custom required a certain degree of splendor. But the company was large, and the family poor; the bridegroom had been mistaken in his reckoning, and the wine-jars were almost empty, when Our Lord—who would raise marriage to the rank of holy things, purifying it by his presence—entered the banquet-hall, followed by Peter, Andrew, Philip, and Nathaniel—four young fishermen whom he had impressed with confidence in his genius and power. The wine ran out in the middle of the repast, and Mary, having first perceived it on a sign of distress from the hosts, turned to Jesus, who was sitting

* near her, and said, pointedly, "They have no wine!"

Jesus answered her in a low voice, and with much emphasis, "Woman, what is it to me and to thee? My hour is not yet come."†

The Virgin, anxious to save her friends a most painful humiliation, was yet not at all discouraged by these words; she knew that, if the hour of his manifestation were not come, Christ would anticipate it for her sake; and, with that faith which would remove mountains, she mildly said to the servants, "Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye." Now there were there six water-pots of stone used for purifications; at the bidding of Jesus, these were filled to the brim with fresh water from a neighboring spring, and that water was changed into delicious wine.

Thus it is that the Blessed Virgin had the first fruits of the miracles

* The Eastern tradition, which the Moham-medans have received from the Christians, is, that St. John the Evangelist was the bridegroom at the wedding of Cana, and that, after having witnessed the miracle which Jesus wrought, he immediately quitted his wife to follow him. (D'Herbelot, *Biblioth. Orient.*, t. ii.)—Baronius, t. i., p. 106.—Mald. (*in Johan.*) also adopts this opinion, for which we cannot certify.

† Our Lord's reply to his blessed mother must have been in an under tone, as may even be inferred from the Gospel narrative. It is wholly impossible that Jesus Christ could have given his mother such an answer aloud; the guests, who were not in the secret, would have considered it extremely disrespectful towards her. It is clear that the servants, hearing what the Blessed Virgin said, were ignorant of the Saviour's apparent refusal.

of her divine Son, and that her intercession changed the very will of God.

The miracle of Cana was soon followed by a number of others, which stamped with the seal of the Divinity the high and providential mission of the Saviour. At his voice, the storm was hushed, human infirmities disappeared, the devils were hurled back to their gloomy kingdom, corpses arose from their coffins, and, all over that spot of earth which his blessed footsteps marked, there was a great amelioration of both spiritual and corporal suffering.* People came to him from Sidon, from Tyre, from Idumea, and from Arabia; and whole multitudes, gathering along his way, kissed the hem of his garments, and humbly asked him for health and life—things which only a God can give.

Mary, whom Our Lord had not as

yet thought proper to associate in his painful and wandering life—Mary heard these extraordinary tidings with great joy, not unmixed, however, with trouble and anxiety. Her fears were well founded; for, if the people followed the Messiah, loading him with blessings, the Pharisees, the scribes, and the princes of the Synagogue began to be greatly scandalized—worthy souls!—by the conduct of the Son of God. He remitted sins—blasphemy! he consoled and converted sinners—degradation! he healed the sick on the Sabbath-day—open and shameless impiety! His doctrine fell from his lips like a beneficent dew rather than a stormy rain, so that he was in every way unlike the ancient prophets. He preached humility, forgiveness of injuries, voluntary poverty, alms given for God's sake alone, universal charity. . . . What novel doctrines these were!

* A Mussulman poet has described, in graceful verse, the dominion which Jesus exercised over the diseases of the soul; the following is their substance:

"The heart of the afflicted man draws all its consolation from thy words."

"The soul recovers life and vigor by the mere hearing of thy name."

"If ever the mind of man can arise to the contemplation of the mysteries of the Deity.

"It is from thee that it obtains the lights whereby to discover them, and thee it is who givest it the attraction which leads it thereto."

"—A Christian," says the learned Orientalist, D'Herbelot, "could not express his ideas with greater force."



Scene at the

D. & J. B. S. D. I. P. & CO. NEW YORK

A host of enemies rose up against him after every sermon, whether in the desert or in the city. He could not attack hypocrisy without offending the Pharisees, nor condemn avarice without exciting the ire of the doctors of the law; the discontented—ever ready to engage in dark conspiracies which broke out in rash and bloody revolt—were scandalized because he did not preach up sedition against Cæsar; the Herodians accused him of aspiring to the throne; and the Sadducees could not bear to hear him announce eternal life. These men, divided in their views, their creeds, and their political interests, made a truce amongst themselves in hatred to the *Galilean*; they girt up their loins to attack him, which they did on every side. Every word was a snare, every smile one of treachery. Some openly treated him as an impostor and a *Samaritan*; others

gently hinted that he was mad; the whole phalanx of the envious, tired of hearing the people praise this new prophet, and being unable to deny his miracles, would fain give the honor thereof to Satan. "If he drives out devils," said they, "it is through Beelzebub, the prince of devils; *in Beelzebud, principe demoniorum, ejicit demonia.*"* These vague rumors alarmed Mary, and the evil dispositions of her neighbors were calculated to do anything but reassure her. Of all the cities of Galilee, Nazareth was the most incredulous, and the most hardened against the divine word; and of all the families of Nazareth, that of Jesus was the least disposed, it seems, to accept him for the King-Messiah. As the divine maternity of Mary had never been revealed to her relatives, and the miracles which had been wrought during the LORD's infancy had taken place in

* The *Methnevi-Manevi*, speaking of the envious and impotent hatred of the Jews for Jesus Christ, expresses its opinion in these terms concerning these attacks—so common against all that obtains success; attacks which are, in the end, hurtful only to those who make them:—"The moon sheds her light, and the dog barks," says the Persian author, "but the barking of the dog prevents not the moon from shining."

We throw sweepings into the running water of a river, and that scum swims on the surface of the water without either stopping its course or disturbing it. The Messiah, on the one side, raises the dead, and you see, on the other, the Jews devoured with envy, biting their nails and tearing their hair." (Hussein-Vaëz.—D'Herbelot, *Biblioth. Orient.*)

distant countries, so they saw in the supposed son of Joseph only a young Israelite without learning, brought up amongst themselves, fed like them, more poorly lodged, more simply clad, and living from day to day by hard work, which brought him chiefly in contact with the lower classes. Christ, who would ennoble poverty by taking it for his portion, incurred the consequences of the position he had chosen. "Neither did his brethren," says St. John, "believe in him."* The report of the miracles which accompanied the preaching of the Gospel astonished, but could not convince, these obstinate Nazarenes. Knowing that Jesus was saluted all over Galilee by the dangerous title of *Son of David*, and that crowds of two or three thousand persons gathered to hear him, they feared that these numerous assemblies might excite the suspicions of Herod Antipas, and that themselves might be brought into trouble on account of the young prophet. For this reason they publicly gave out that Jesus was mad, and swore that they would bring

* him back to Nazareth in safe keeping. Concealing this family plot from Mary, they induced her to go with them to Caphernaum, in order that they might gain access to his presence by the authority of her name.†

The Messiah was teaching in the synagogue, in the midst of a silent and attentive audience, when the Nazarenes arrived. Ostentatiously displaying an authority which they were quite willing to magnify in the eyes of the crowd, as St. John Chrysostom remarks, they deliberately sent word to the Saviour that his mother and his brethren were without, and wished to see him; but Jesus, knowing the secret thoughts of his relations according to the flesh, and availing himself of the occasion to extend the narrow limits of the old law by solemnly and unreservedly adopting all the great human family, gave this admirable reply to the impudent message of his kinsfolk—"Who is my mother and my brethren?" Then, looking around on his numerous disciples—"Whosoever," said he, "shall do the will of God, he is my brother, and

* St. John, ch. vii., v. 5.

✱

† St. Mark, ch. iii., vs. 21, 31-35.

sister, and mother." After this severe reprimand, which the sons of Alpheus could well understand, the Son of God immediately went out, says St. John Chrysostom, to do his mother all the honor that decorum required.

When he had saluted Mary, and stopped some time with her on the sea-shore, the Saviour went up into a bark, whence he began to teach the people. The Virgin, lost in the crowd, but profoundly attentive, heard, in religious silence, the parable of the sower. The Nazarenes, petrified by the resistless eloquence and the superhuman dignity of Jesus Christ, asked each other, in surprise, if he were indeed the son of Mary. They experienced that kind of fascination which attracts the snake of the American savannahs when he hears afar in the woods the sound of sweet music. They had come with the swiftness of fear, with the eloquence of egotism, with the arrogance of superiority, to withdraw Christ from his perilous mission, and they quailed under his very look, and could not even open their lips in his presence. This is clearly indicated by the text

of St. Matthew, which, after having informed us of their hostile intentions, gives us nowhere to understand that they ventured even to speak to Our Lord.

Some time after, Jesus returned to Nazareth, and great was the joy of the Virgin. To see her son seated on the mat where he used to sit in his childish days; to eat the bread which he had blessed and broken; to lead him silently to the sick bed of some poor sufferer, whom he healed, with an injunction of secrecy; to see him mighty in word and work, he who had been so long the man of toil and silence—this was too much happiness in the cup of her existence! And God, who often afflicts those whom he loves, soon mingled gall with its sweetness. On the Sabbath-day, the son and mother went together to the synagogue. A great concourse of people had assembled there to see and hear Jesus; but the curiosity of the Nazarenes had not that character of confidence and respectful attention that Christ had so often met elsewhere. They were there, scandalized beforehand by what the son of Mary was to do

and say, and admirably disposed to stone him if occasion offered.

There are countries decidedly hostile to all that does them honor, until the grass of the grave grows over the object of their envy.

Nevertheless, one of the ancients presented the Saviour of men with the book of the prophet Isaiah, and Jesus, unrolling the parchment, read this passage with simple grace and marvellous dignity: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me; he hath sent me to preach to the meek, to heal the contrite of heart, and to preach a release to the captives, and deliverance to them that are shut up: to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

Having closed the book, he sat down, and, speaking with that lively and natural eloquence which so strongly impressed his auditors, he made to himself the application of the Messianic oracle, and taught, not as a disciple of the synagogue, but as the very master of the synagogue. A low murmur ran through the assembly. Some were amazed at the force and the grace of his discourse; others, faithful to their

system of contemptuous calumny, said aloud, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" And Jesus, penetrating their thoughts, and reading their false and envious hearts, spoke to them those words which have become proverbial: "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country and in his own house." Knowing that they intended to ask him for prodigies like unto those which he had wrought in Caphernaum, he told them plainly that their incredulity rendered them unworthy of any such, and that, in order to obtain miracles, they must be asked in simplicity and with faith. Thence, alluding to the propagation of his Gospel, and to that wild olive grafted on the ancient tree of the synagogue, symbolical of the call of the Gentiles: "In truth I say to you there were many widows, in the days of Elias, in Israel, when heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there was a great famine throughout all the earth. And to none of them was Elias sent but to Sarepta of Sidon, to a widow woman. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and

none of them was cleansed but * Naaman the Syrian."

These last words were the drop of water which makes the cup overflow. Wounded in their national pride, in their hereditary hatred, in their traditional hopes, the assembly in the synagogue were filled with fury, and thirsted for blood. They rose up tumultuously, and thrust him out of their city: and they brought him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

Seated amongst the humbler women, in a grated gallery, the Virgin had observed, with intense anxiety, the rise and progress of the storm. Reading the sinister projects of the Nazarenes in their fierce glances and furious gestures, she hesitated not to brave the danger in order to make her way to her son; but her

* Between the steep mountain whence the Jews intended to cast Jesus and the city of Nazareth "there is seen half way," says Father Geramb, "the ruins of a monastery formerly inhabited by monks, and those of a very fine church built by St. Helena, and dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, under the name of Our Lady of Terror. According to some, Mary was standing there when the Jews dragged her son along towards the summit of the mountain to cast him

strength was not equal to her courage. The Jews ran swiftly—they were always swift to shed blood—and Mary, trembling like a leaf, hardly able to support herself, walked slowly after them, like one in a dream. She sees Jesus at the summit of a steep rock which overhangs a fearful precipice; she hears from afar the death-cry ringing; her knees bend under her; a mist gathers over her eyes; her voice dies away in a piteous moan; she falls like a flower stricken down by the wind, and lies prostrate on the ground.*

Meanwhile, the ferocious wolves in pursuit of the lamb had been grievously disappointed; the hour of sacrifice was not yet come for the Son of man, and no one could take his life until he chose to give it up. Striking that murderous crowd with blindness,† Jesus passed unseen

thence. According to others, she had hastened thither, on hearing of the diabolical project in contemplation, but had arrived too late; overcome with terror, *she could go no farther.*"

† The most ancient heretics—preparing the way for modern rationalism, which unwittingly dons their tattered rags—pretended that Our Lord escaped through the illusion of a mist, *illudere per caliginem*. Tertullian strongly opposes this supposition. (*Adv. Marc.*, 4, 8.)

through the midst of his enemies, and returned once more to Caphernaum, where he was soon after joined by his mother, Mary of Cleophas, and the sons of Alpheus.

After having preached the Gospel in the country bordering on the fair lake of Tiberias, whose waves are radiant as the light, and having wrought the great miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes in the desert of Bethsaida, Jesus went up the Jordan again, with his disciples, to Cæsarea Philippi, the ancient Dan of Nephtali (which name had just been changed by Philip, son of Herod), visiting all the different towns and villages on his way.

It was probably at this period—for Euthymius,* who relates this traditional fact, leaves its date undecided—that the waters of the Jordan, already sanctified, beheld another affecting ceremony. Jesus, the Virgin, and the Apostles set out one morning at sunrise, for that sacred river “which flows through

two lakes,” says Tacitus, “and empties itself into the third.”† Its banks were robed in a magnificent vegetation; islets, rising here and there from its bosom, sparkled amid its shining waves like baskets of verdure, fruit, and flowers; blue herons hovered over those flowery isles, where the wood-pigeon and the white turtle still hang their mossy nests on the branches of the wild pomegranate. The dew glittered on the green leaves of the willows like a shower of pale diamonds, and the rushes of the Jordan, which sometimes conceal tigers, were gently bending beneath the light breeze which shook the tops of the tall palm-trees, with their clusters of coral-colored dates. Far away, on the opposite shore, troops of gazelles were seen skipping around on the slopes of the gray, mottled mountains; and over the sandy plain flew some of the fierce children of the desert, mounted on coursers fleet as the wind, and armed with those long spears made

* According to St. Euthymius, Our Lord baptized none but the Blessed Virgin and St. Peter, who afterwards baptized the other Apostles. “Some,” says this holy abbot, who flourished in Palestine in the 4th century—“some have writ-

ten that Jesus Christ himself baptized the Virgin and Peter.”

† Nec Jordanes pelago accipitur: sed unum atque alterum lacum integer perfluit; tertio retinetur. (*Taciti historiarum*, lib. v.)

of reeds from the banks of the Euphrates, which they used even in the first ages after the Deluge, if we are to believe the Persian legends.* Clouds of the richest violet hue, or of soft and tender rose-color, floated like flowers in the deep blue sky; and the nightingale, that loves to sing in the lofty sycamores which overhang the sacred river of Palestine, was heard to warble its most melodious strains: Nature had donned her gala dress for the baptism of Mary.

The Virgin was clothed in white, according to the custom of the Hebrews when they figured alone in any religious ceremony, and she stood calm and collected by the side of her Saviour and her son; they both stepped into the river. Raising then, with his divine hand, the Eastern veil worn by his chaste and beautiful mother, Jesus fixed his mild and penetrating eyes upon her with a look of infinite tenderness; then, pouring on the Virgin's forehead the sacred water of regenera-

* tion, he baptized her in the name of the most Holy Trinity, HIMSELF one of the three divine persons.

It was then that the Blessed Virgin left off her solitary habits to follow her son in his journeys. She had ministered to him for thirty years both abroad and at home; she had worked for him, wept over him, suffered for him, and had worshipped him, without fail, evening and morning, even when he lay crying in his cradle, as we learn from Albertus Magnus. It was natural that, attaching herself to his persecuted lot, she should abandon the peaceful roof under which he was born to follow his blessed footsteps whilst he evangelized the Hebrews. Amidst all the trials of that troubled life, the Virgin was admirable as ever. Loving Jesus more than ever mother loved her child, yet never did she intrude into his presence when, by so doing, she might interfere with the duties of his regenerating mission; never once did she speak to him of her fatigue, her fears, her melancholy forebodings, or her personal wants. Mary was not only a sacred dove hiding in the cleft of a rock; a pure

* There grows on the banks of the Euphrates a certain kind of reed which almost equals the Indian bamboo. In early times, the Arabs and Assyrians made lances of them. (Firdousi, *Book of Kings*.)

virgin, called to nourish with her milk and to cradle in her arms a celestial guest; she was also a strong woman, whom the Lord was pleased to place by turns in every situation of life, in order to leave the daughters of Eve an example to follow, and a model to imitate.

It was not proper that the Mother of God should follow Jesus and his Apostles alone through all Judea; hence Mary's retinue consisted of Mary of Cleophas, mother of James, Simon, Joseph and Jude, vulgarly called the brethren of the Lord; Salome, mother of the sons of Zebedee, whom most the Saviour loved; Susanna, wife of the tetrarch's steward, together with some wealthy women of Galilee, who had given up all for Jesus. One of these, a Jewess, young, rich, well-born, and surpassingly beautiful, was the most tenderly attentive to the divine mother of *her Lord*. This woman—whose noble heart, storm-tossed like the waves of the Ægean sea, had burned with an unholy flame before the eyes of men, and braved public opinion with mockery and disdain—had come, penitent and submissive, to prostrate herself before

Christ, and to ask of him, whom she acknowledged as God, a cure for the wounds of her soul. And the chaste love of the LORD had absorbed all the vain love, all the worldly attachments of the young lady of Magdalum. She had trampled under foot her pearl necklaces, her jewels and chains of gold, and sold her castle by the lovely sea of Galilee; and now, without other ornament than a coarse brown garment, and those magnificent dark tresses wherewith she had dried the Lord's feet, the young patrician, rich in her alms, adorned with her new virtues, poured out her penitent tears in the pure and pitying bosom of Mary. The immaculate Virgin had received her with open arms, and having thus won her heart, she cultivated in that fertile, but long-neglected soil, the flowers that bloom for heaven.

After many and divers sufferings—many fears and apprehensions, which it were tedious to enumerate—the Virgin entered Jerusalem, the fatal city, in the train of Jesus Christ, to celebrate the last pasch which the Lord made with his disciples. She saw the people of the



W. D. G.

W. D. G.

*My father, if it be possible, let this thalce pass from me
nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

Matthew 26:39

royal city trooping out to meet the son of David, who came to them full of sweetness, mounted as the young princes of his race were wont to be, and graciously receiving the simple honors so eagerly and so spontaneously offered by the multitude, thirsting for a sight of their prophet; for Jesus never rejected the humble testimonies of love and gratitude offered by his creatures. Trifling as were those

pledges of grateful affection, they were yet received with divine goodness the moment they came from the heart.

Magdalen, by turns regarding *her Lord*, and that multitude of people who made the air resound with their *hosannas*, wept in silence behind her veil. Mary's eyes were likewise moist; but her gaze was turned towards the northwest, in the direction of Calvary.

CHAPTER XVII.

MARY ON CALVARY.



THE branches of the palm, cast by the Hebrews under the feet of their Messiah, were still lying green and fresh on the steep road to Bethany; the echoes of the Valley of Cedars* were still murmuring the expiring

sounds of the glad, triumphant shouts wherewith the daughters of Sion had welcomed the *poor king*, when Jerusalem was again agitated by a new event of great and melancholy importance.

The chief priests, the senators, and the Pharisees, sought to get hold, even at a golden price, and without shrinking from domestic treachery, of a *great criminal*, who, they said, was endangering both

* "Valley of Cedars," the ancient name of the Valley of Josaphat.

religion and the state. Dangerous indeed must this man have been, since those *honorable* personages had imposed upon themselves an extraordinary fast in order to get possession of him,* and had even distributed certain alms through the city, by sound of trumpet, with the same intention. The Pharisees—those *conscientious* Jews who robbed only the uncircumcised, and who would have left their neighbor at the bottom of a well rather than draw him out on the Sabbath-day, although they would have quickly taken out their ox or their ass—these had undertaken to spread amongst the people, who are so easily influenced one way or the other, ominous reports and vague rumors, which had produced a sort of feverish uneasiness that could only end in a violent outbreak. Things thus pre-

*pared, there was seen descending, one evening, from Mount Moria, a well-armed troop, accompanied by some senators, and commanded by the captain of the Temple guards;† after them came the footmen of the chief priests, and at the head of this batallion marched, with a measured step, by the light of those large lanthorns which the Asiatics hoist on long poles with some flaming torches, a man with a downcast brow, an unsettled look, a mean and unprepossessing countenance, whose belt was stuffed with gold stolen from the poor,‡ increased, in imagination, by the thirty pieces of silver which he was to gain by delivering up to the wily Synagogue his Master, his Friend, his God! For it was, indeed, the Son of David, the Conqueror of the preceding days, Jesus of Nazareth, the

* This anecdote is found in the *Toldos*, published by Huldin, pp. 56 and 60.

† This office is known to the Gospel, which often speaks of these captains of the Temple, who must be distinguished from the Roman officer who kept guard with his cohort around that sacred edifice to prevent the tumults and disorders which the multitude might cause. These captains of the Temple were necessarily Jews, and descended from sacerdotal families; to them was intrusted the ward and the keys of

the Temple in order to provide for the security of the sacred vessels; this officer, in right of birth, was entitled to a place in all the priestly councils. (Basnage, b. i., ch. 4.)

‡ Then Judas Iscariot, who was to betray Jesus, said, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" Now he said this, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and, having the purse, carried the things that were put therein. (St. John, ch. xii., v. 4-6.)

great Galilean prophet at whose voice greedy Death gave up his prey, and whose orders the winds and seas obeyed; it was he whom the myrmidons of the chief priests and Pharisees were going to seek on the Mount of Olives, whither he retired at night, after having taught by day in the Temple, as St. Luke relates. They did not dare to arrest him in open day, fearing some resistance from that multitude of disciples who thronged, from the dawn of day, to hear him in Solomon's Porch.

The armed band, led on by Iscariot, crossed the ravine through which flows the Kedron, that gloomy torrent* which King David crossed of old when he fled, with a handful of faithful servants, from the rebellious soldiers incited to revolt by his son Absalom. Whilst the soldiers of the Temple, fierce and silent, followed the course of the torrent, which reflected the light of their torches, in order to gain the

* heights of Gethsemani, and the evening wind rustled in the drooping branches of the willows, from one of which Judas was soon to hang—a punishment too mild for such a traitor, but to which the imperishable contempt of succeeding generations continually adds—a sad and solemn scene was passing in that same Garden of Olives, where the unworthy Apostle was going to seek his Master to destroy him.

After having prayed a long time, prostrate on the ground, in that fearful agony which bedewed his divine brow with a bloody sweat, Christ arose in submissive resignation to the terrible will of his Father, and ready to drain the bitter chalice even to the dregs. He raised his large soft eyes to the midnight heavens, studded with brilliant constellations, and illumined by the meridian moon, that fair lamp of the firmament whose useful light the children of Abraham bless in their prayers;† she was then at

* The *Kedron* is a torrent which passes through the Valley of Josaphat, between Jerusalem and Mount Olivet. It has been named *Kedron* because its course lies through dark and obscure places: its Hebrew name signifies *tenebrosus fuit*.

† The day of the new moon is a festival day for the Hebrews; the women abstain from work, and the devotees fast on the previous day. After reciting a number of prayers in the synagogue, they keep the remainder of the day as a joyous festival. Three days after, the Jews

her full, and cast a sheet of radiant light over that austere landscape whose dark mountains, rising one above the other, were traced on the clear blue of the sky. Jerusalem, half hid in shade, and in some places brilliantly lit up by the moon's rays, sent afar an aromatic odor from the rare plants of its gardens, and its groves of palm-trees rose stately and grand, interspersed with towers of white marble. Silence reigned amid the mountains, but a low murmur arose from the depth of the valley, and Jesus shuddered. "It is they!" he said within himself, and he walked slowly towards the spot where he had left the three Apostles whom he had chosen to share his lonely watch. Alas! either fatigue or the drowsy murmur of the wind through the pale olive branches had gradually overcome those careless sentinels. Jesus stood looking on them a moment with holy bitterness; he had told them that his death was

assemble on a platform, and fixing their eyes steadfastly on the moon, they bless God in a long prayer for having created, and also for renewing her, to teach the Israelites that they ought to become new creatures: "O moon! blessed be thy Creator, blessed be he who made

* near at hand, that the hour of danger had arrived, and yet they slept—they, his kinsmen, his friends, his chosen disciples—apparently indifferent to his danger and death. . . . O vanity of favors, of the ties of blood and friendship! They could keep awake on Thabor, at the time of the glorious transfiguration, but they slept in the hour of trial and misfortune!

A confused noise was heard on the hollow road leading to the little village of Gethsemani, and soon after the light of many torches flashed on the trees. Jesus then, bending over his sleeping Apostles, said in a low, deep voice, "Arise! he who is to betray me is near at hand!" He had scarcely spoken these words when Judas and his band arrived. Advancing to Jesus, audacity in his eyes, and the false smile on his lips, he pointed him out to the hostile troop who came to seek him, giving him, at the same time, that sacrilegious kiss which

thee;" and then they jump three times as high as they can, saying to the moon: "Even as we leap towards thee, but cannot reach thee, so may our enemies rise against us without power to harm us!" . . . (Basnage, l. vii, ch. 16.)

has since taken his name. This was the signal. Jesus received the traitor kindly, and said to him, with touching sweetness, "Friend, whereto art thou come?"

Whereto was he come! He was come to earn the thirty pieces of silver promised by the Synagogue. Cupidity—a cold and calculating passion—commits tenfold more crimes, and crimes of a darker dye, than violence.

Judas had not time to answer this embarrassing question, for all the others, advancing, threw themselves on Jesus and laid hold of him. Then arose the hot blood of Peter ben Cephas,* Prince of the Apostles; he drew his sword and smote one of the servants of the high-priest; but Jesus, arresting the only arm that was raised in his defence, commanded the sword to be restored to its scabbard. "That the Scriptures may be fulfilled," said the sacred Victim, "so it must

* be done." The Lamb of God was willing to be immolated for the sins of the world.

Thereupon, there was heard within the garden a confused sound of hasty footsteps, of breaking branches, and cries of terror; and men were suddenly seen scaling the low fence† which surrounded the garden: these were the disciples making their escape!

The hostile troop, having bound Jesus like a criminal, retraced their steps to the holy city, bending their course towards the stone bridge which the Asmonean princes had thrown over the Kedron; but the people of Jerusalem, coming in crowds, had it already occupied; and tradition relates that Jesus was dragged across the stream; whereby the prophecy was literally fulfilled, "He shall drink in the way the water of the torrent." The holy marks of the Saviour's feet and of one of his knees are imprinted in

* *Peter ben Cephas* (Peter son of Peter). This is the name by which the Prince of the Apostles is known in the East.

† The Garden of Gethsemani, or Olives, at the foot of the mountain of that name, is surrounded by a wall about three feet high; it is two

hundred paces long by one hundred and forty wide. It contains a rock, forming a reddish grotto, where it is said that the three Apostles slept. (*Voyages de Jesus Christ*, 44th voyage).—Its name of Gethsemani is derived from the richness of its soil: Gethsemani, in Hebrew, signifies *fertile valley*.

the bed and on the stone margin of the brook; so, at least, say the Christians of Jerusalem, who still point them out. Having climbed the hill of Sion, they entered Jerusalem by the Sterquilian gate, and repaired to the house of Caiaphas, the high-priest, where the scribes and the ancients were assembled. The chief priests and the scribes then demanded of Jesus whether he was the CHRIST. "If I tell you," replied the Saviour mildly, "you will not believe me." "Art thou the Son of God?" demanded Caiaphas. "Thou hast said it," answered Jesus; "I am." "He has blasphemed!" cried the high-priest, rending his garments. "He has deserved death," said the scribes and Pharisees.

Then they spat upon his face, struck him with their fists, and marched him to and fro, crying out in bitter mockery, "Prophecy unto

* us, O Christ! and tell us who it was that struck thee!"

Meanwhile, Peter, who had sworn rather to die than to abandon him, denied him three times in the courtyard of the high-priest!

Next day, the chief priests and the Pharisees dragged Jesus before Pontius Pilate, who was exceedingly unpopular with them since the affair of the imperial ensigns which he had introduced by night into Jerusalem;* but as they hated the Son of God still more, and that the Romans alone could condemn him to death,† they submitted to appear in the pretorium of that idolater, taking every precaution, however, to avoid coming in contact with his garments, his banners, or even his judgment-seat, which would have rendered them unclean for the whole day. Having, therefore, done all that depended on them to avert such a misfortune, these *scrupulous*

* Josephus, *Ant. Jud.*, b. xviii., ch. 4.

† Before Judea had fallen under the Roman domination, the Sanhedrim had the power of life and death; but the conquerors took that privilege to themselves. It was the custom of the Romans to leave vanquished nations their temples and their gods; but in civil matters they obliged them to follow the laws and ordinances of the Republic. At the time when

Christ was condemned, the Romans were absolute masters of the temporal jurisdiction, and the authority of the Jewish senate was confined to matters purely religious. The Talmudists admit the fact, for they acknowledge that the power of judging was taken from the senate forty years before the ruin of Jerusalem—that is to say, three years before the death of Christ. (See Basnage, liv. vii., ch. 4.)

men accused Jesus of having perverted the people by his doctrine, of having prevented them from paying tribute to Cæsar, and, finally, of having assumed the seditious title of King of the Jews. . . .

As many lies as words.

Jesus listened in silence to these false accusations. Pilate, convinced of the profound malignity of the accusers, and the innocence of the accused, would have wished to save Jesus, but could not succeed. The Pharisees, skillful in the art of raising popular tumults, worked upon the people, who kept crying out for the death of the descendent of their ancient kings; and the governor,

* They preserve in Jerusalem the sentence pronounced by Pilate on Jesus Christ. We give it here, not as an authentic document, but as a local tradition. "*Jesum Nazarenum subversorum gentis, contemptorem Cæsaris, et falsum Messiam, ut majorum suæ gentis testimonie probatum est, ducite ad communis supplicii locum, et cum ludibrio regiæ majestatis in medio duorum, latronum affigite. I, lictor, expedi cruces.*"—"Conduct to the ordinary place of execution, Jesus of Nazareth, the seducer of the people, who has despised the authority of Cæsar, and falsely announced himself as the Messiah, according to the testimony of the ancients of his nation; crucify him between two thieves, with the derisive title of *King*. Go, lictor, prepare the crosses." (*Ardicom. In descript. Jesus.*)

† Pilate undertook to construct an aqueduct

* who well knew how to appease the clamors of the Jews when it suited himself, contented himself with faintly defending, against the fury of his iniquitous accusers, the innocent man whom he should have firmly protected. Tired of their cries, overcome by their perseverance, the Roman washed his hands of his sentence, and pronounced it.* He then became anxious to make amends, as it were, for his display of clemency towards Jesus, and to regain the favor of the Jerusalemite populace, whom he had recently caused his lictors to cudgel because of a tumult† arising from his making too free with the sacred treas-

with the money of the sacred treasury, to bring water into Jerusalem from a distance of two hundred stadia. The people, violently excited against the Roman governor, whose real intention they penetrated, assembled by thousands in the streets and public places of Jerusalem; the whole city resounded with execrations against Pilate; "and some even provoked the governor," says Josephus, "by violent abuse, as is usual in popular outbreaks." Pilate, who was not so easily intimidated, ordered his men to take large sticks under their garments and surround the mob; when the latter, after a short respite, began again with their clamors and euterics, Pilate made a sign to his soldiers, who instantly fell on the people, and even went beyond their instructions, beating those who said nothing as well as those who were loudest in the clamor. "Those poor people having no

ury, under pretence of constructing an aqueduct, with which he had nothing to do,—so he ordered the son of David and of Solomon to be scourged, amid the acclamations of the deicide people, who had dared to take upon their own heads and those of their children the dread responsibility of his death. That done, he delivered him up, though regarding him with pity and with admiration,* to the taunts and insults of a soldiery whom the princes of the Synagogue, despite their hatred of them, had stooped to bribe, in order to secure their co-operation in the execution of their revengeful projects.† They well

arms," adds Josephus, with compassionate sympathy for the Jewish riot, "were therefore inhumanly treated; some were killed, others wounded, and thus the tumult was quelled." (Joseph. *Ant. Jud.*, l. xviii., ch. 4.)

* Tiberius, acting on the report sent by Pilate, proposed to the senate to deify Jesus. Tertullian mentions this as a notorious fact in his *Apology*, which he presented to the senate in the name of the Church, and he would not have weakened so good a cause by making any statement that could not be verified. (Tert., *Apol.* 5.)

† Salvador would fain exculpate his co-religionists by casting on the Roman soldiers the odium of the treatment inflicted on Jesus in the pretorium; but it is clear that the Romans only acted as they did on the instigation of the enemies of Christ. The following is the opinion of

* knew how to hate—those *zealots* of the law of Moses, who would kill and mock the Christ, *for God's sake!*

When Jesus had reached the court of the pretorium, they seated him on a fallen pillar,‡ and the entire cohort amused themselves by offering him every imaginable species of insult. It was the season when the dangerous *rhamnus*§ was in full bloom—that bush in whose green thorny mass the symbolical ram of Abraham's sacrifice|| was, of old, entangled; one of the soldiers ran out and gathered a branch to form a derisive crown for Christ; the fresh green blossoms were soon

St. John Chrysostom on this subject: "It was, in reality, the Jews themselves who condemned Jesus to death, although they attribute the act to Pilate. They would that his blood should fall on themselves and their children. It was they alone who offered him all the insults that he received, who tied him, led him to Pilate, and had him so cruelly treated by the soldiers. Pilate had ordered nothing of all this." (Sermon 77, in *Matth.*)

‡ This pillar, of gray marble, and not more than two feet high, is in Rome, in the Church of St. Praxeda.

§ The detached thorns of this crown, which are still preserved, are now recognized for the *rhamnus spina Christi* of Linnæus.

|| St. Jerome (in *Philem.*) says that the ram which Abraham saw entangled in the bush was the figure of Jesus crowned with thorns.





stained with his sacred blood, every thorn making a deep and insupportable wound. Having stripped him perfectly naked, they threw over his shoulders a purple rag, placed a reed in his hand by way of sceptre, and, with irony and mocking genuflexions, they saluted him as king. His whole body was but one gaping wound, for the sharp, pointed lashes mangled the flesh, and sent it flying in pieces through the hall; his sacred face was covered with spittle, and the blood which flowed from his divine brow, which his chained hands could not wipe away! The princes of the priests, the Pharisees, and the doctors of the law, regarded this scene with secret satisfaction; *compassion* was a degrading weakness* in the eyes of those *honorable* men!

When the Pharisees thought that the idolatrous soldiers had sufficiently degraded Jesus before the people to destroy the idea of his

divinity, the approach of the Sabbath rendering expedition necessary, they took their Victim, whom the Roman procurator reluctantly gave up, and, after placing the enormous Cross on his bleeding and mangled shoulders, they spurred him on with the shafts of their lances in his slow and painful journey to Calvary, where they were to crucify him.

The streets were thickly lined with the multitude of spectators; some displayed a ferocious joy, and loudly anathematized the son of David; others deplored the hard fate of that young prophet who had done nought but good to men, by whom he was now abandoned and betrayed. But these barren proofs of sympathy were scarcely perceptible; the good wept in silence; those whom he had fed with five loaves in the desert, those whom he had cured, those whom he had loved, were there, lost in the crowd,

* Basnage, l. vi., ch. 17.—The punishment of scourging was very ancient amongst the Jews, and was not considered infamous. According to the Talmud, kings themselves were punished in this way on certain occasions. "Tradition teaches," says Maimonides, "that the king must not have more than eighteen wives; if he mar-

ries one above that number, he is to be scourged. If he have more horses than his chariot requires, let him be scourged. If he amass more gold or silver than is required to pay his ministers, let him be scourged." (Maimon., *Halach., Malach.*, ch. 3.)

and no voice was raised to protest against his execution;* the Apostles whom he most loved had disowned him! the others had fled, with one single exception!

As he painfully toiled down the long street which leads to the Gate of Judgment, a woman made her way through the crowd; she was very fair, and her mild, sweet face wore the stamp of purity, but it was full of unutterable sorrow; she was pale as death, and trembled in every limb; her eyes, which could now weep no more, fell with a glance of such mortal anguish on the gaping wounds of the Saviour, that the daughters of Jerusalem wept as they saw her, murmuring, "Poor, poor mother!" She silently glided through the people, who made way for her through an instinct of sympathy and compassion. Some hardened Pharisees were loading Jesus with bitter taunts and

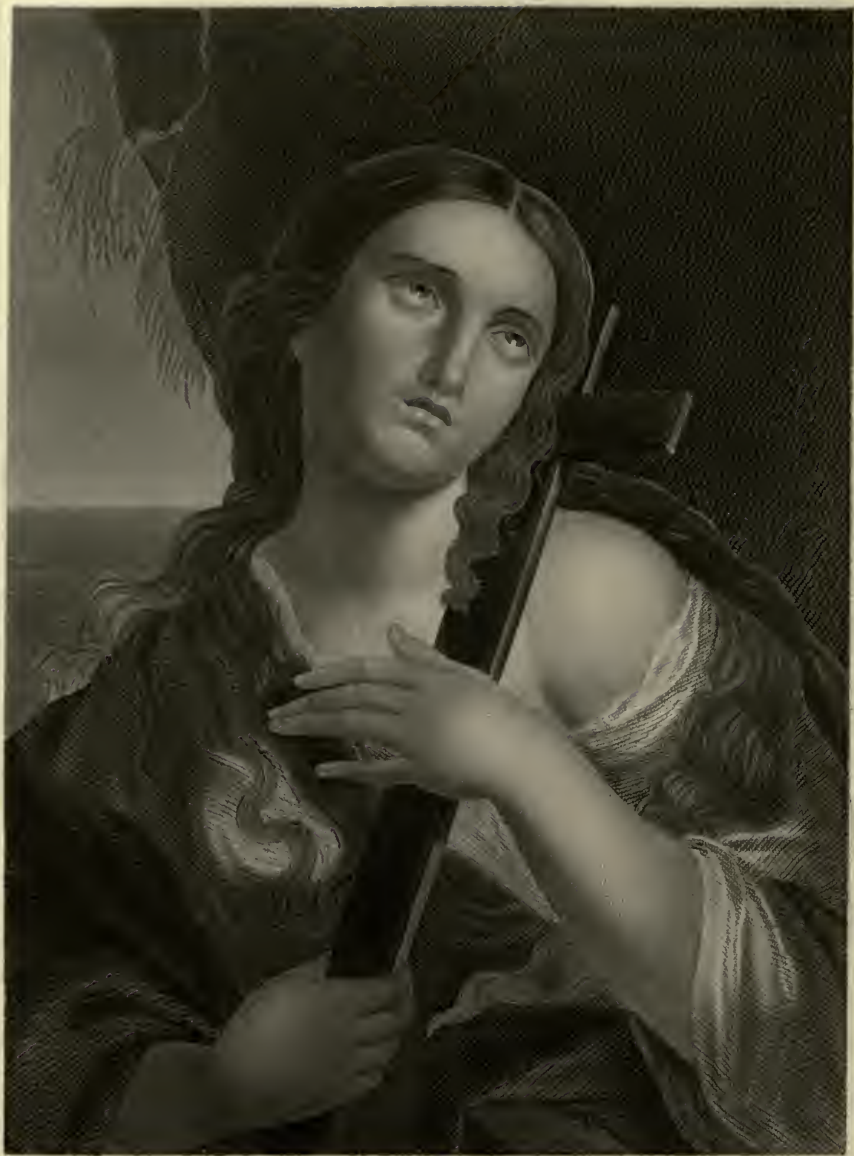
reproaches—he who was bathed in sweat, and almost expiring under the weight of the Cross; but his mother heard them not: the foreign soldiers who surrounded her Son made threatening gestures at her; she saw them not. But when a number of spears, pointed against her bosom, arose between her and Jesus, all the fire of the blood of David sparkled in her eyes, and she raised her beauteous head with an air of such majestic sorrow, such utter contempt of death, that the astonished soldiers slowly lowered their arms before that holy and heroic woman. Fierce as their martial life had made them, they still remembered their mothers.

Mary turned her trembling steps towards the Saviour; she fixed her sorrowful eyes on that humbled form moving slowly along, bleeding and half naked, under a heavy load; on that imposing countenance, so

* We read in the *Misnah* that, in the days when the Jews were governed by their own laws, when a criminal was led to the place of execution, a herald went before him on horseback, crying, "Such a one is condemned for such a crime; if any one has anything to say in his defence, let him speak." If any one came forward, the criminal was brought back, and

the reasons advanced in his favor were examined by two judges who walked beside him; the prisoner might be thus brought back as often as five times. (*Misnah, Tract. de Syned.*, ch. vi., p. 233.) Jesus Christ being condemned by the Roman laws, could not profit by this national custom.





Palma

F. Jadenang

ST MARY MAGDALEN

NEW YORK D. & J. SADLIR & CO.

mild and merciful, which she had scarcely ever dared to touch with her chaste lips, and which now, swollen and discolored, covered with blood and spittle, scarce retained the image of the Creator. She passed her hand sadly over her brow, as though to assure herself that the whole was not a fearful dream. No groan relieved her oppressed heart, no gesture of despair betrayed the secret of her agony; it only seemed that she was going to die, and die she must, in fact, a thousand times over, during that solemn and heart-rending pause, if He who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb had not divinely sustained her. Jesus soon perceived the presence of that mute and motionless figure, and bending still lower his already bowed head, he pronounced the name of "Mother."

* Tradition, supported by the authority of St. Boniface and St. Anselm, relates that Jesus saluted his mother with the words, "Hail, mother!" As the Blessed Virgin is known to have been at the foot of the Cross, there is nothing improbable in this tradition of the Fathers. "There is nothing contrary to faith in these traditions," says M. de Chateaubriand; "they serve to show how the marvellous and sublime history of the Passion was engraved on the minds of men. Eighteen centuries have

* At that word, which fell on the Virgin's ear like a funeral knell, a thrill of anguish ran through her heart; she was seen to totter and grow pale; then, sinking beneath the accumulated load of sorrow, she fell prostrate on those rough stones marked with the blood of Jesus.*

A young Galilean, with a gloomy, dejected countenance, and a young woman bathed in tears, quickly made their way to where Mary lay; thanks to their tender solicitude, the sorrowful Virgin recovered her senses, together with the consciousness of that physical and moral martyrdom which none, according to the Fathers, ever equalled. Doubtless, John and Magdalen did all they could to keep her away from the bloody scene about to be enacted on the Golgotha; but their

rolled away; endless persecutions and numberless revolutions fail either to hide or efface the trace of a mother mourning for her son." There was built in memory of Our Lady's swoon a church, which was consecrated under the name of Our Lady of the Spasm. "It was there," says M. de Geramb, "that Mary, repulsed by the soldiers, met her Son bending under the weight of the ignominious wood on which he was to die."

efforts were vain, for, raising herself with difficulty, Mary began to climb, under a burning sun, the steepest side of Calvary, which, being the shortest way, was that which they had made Jesus take.*

They had reached the fatal and sacred place where the Lamb of God was to satisfy the justice of offended Heaven, substituting Himself for all victims, and taking upon him all our miseries. It was there that he was to offer up that great sacrifice, the efficacy of which goes back, on the one side, to the original transgression, and extends, on the other, through the night of futurity, even to the consummation of the world. That little rocky platform was the altar whereon the blood of Christ was to flow in waves to wash away the sins of the world, and annihilate for ever the compact of perdition which made us over at our birth to the Enemy of Souls. But what had become of the sacred

Victim? Where had his executioners hid him from the desolate eyes of his mother? Mary cast an anxious glance over the dreary mountain; she saw the expecting multitude, the crosses laid on the ground, laborers carelessly digging out the deep holes that were to receive the three instruments of torture. . . . But where was Jesus?

He appeared, but in what a condition! stripped of his garments, without a rag to cover his lacerated flesh and his bleeding wounds—he, so chaste and so pure! His executioners, ignominiously dragging him along, exposed him thus for some time to the ridicule of the people; then, the Just One stretched himself on the Cross, that bed of honor prepared for him by the gratitude of men in return for his immense love! It was a sight too horrible for those who loved him; Mary was taken some paces thence, to a species of natural grotto,† where she

* This road, which formerly led to Calvary, and by which the Saviour passed, now exists no longer; it is covered with houses, in the midst of which is seen a large pillar, pointing out the ninth station; Turkish fanaticism has done all it could to make the place disagreeable, by heaping dung around it so as to shock the sen-

sibilities of the Christians. (De Geramb, t. 1er, p. 363.)

† Near the spot where Our Saviour was nailed to the Cross there is a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows. It was to this place that the Virgin retired during the doleful preparations for her Son's execution. (Id. ib., p. 151.)

remained standing, white and cold as marble. There was heard without a humming noise like that made by the bees of Engaddi when the Hebrew shepherd drives them from the hollow oak. At times there suddenly arose, amid that dull murmur, a storm of shouts, mocking cries, and hoarse bursts of laughter: the populace of all nations has ever had ferocious instincts, but that of the Hebrews surpassed itself on this occasion.

During an interval of profound silence, accorded perhaps to some new act of barbarity which captivated the attention of the multitude, there was heard the stroke of a hammer, a heavy stroke falling on wood and crushed flesh. Magdalen, with a shudder, pressed close to Mary, and the beloved disciple leaned for support against the side of the grotto. Then came a second stroke, heavier, duller, more sinister still; it was followed by two or three others, falling at equal intervals, and all was done! "They are nailing him to the Cross," coolly observed a Roman soldier. John and Magdalen exchanged a mournful glance; they felt a sensation

something like that which rends the heart during a nocturnal storm, when the waves bring to the shore the drowning mariner's piteous cries, without any possibility of our assisting him. But Mary! . . . a cold sweat bedewed her body, a convulsive trembling shook her limbs; she, too, was crucified—poor, feeble woman! for never did confessor on the rack, or martyr amid the flames, undergo such tortures both in soul and body.

Soon was heard the sharp rubbing of the cords on the pulleys; the Cross arose slowly in the air, and the Son of Man—his face turned towards those western regions where the light was so long expected—was hoisted like a standard before the heathen nations: even so was it written. Thereupon, the reprobate people raised a long, hoarse shout of joy. "Hail, King of the Jews! If God loves him, let Him now deliver him! If thou art the Son of God, Nazarene, come down from the Cross!" And the robber crucified on his left cursed him in the intervals of his agony; the wretch would fain be a Jew to the last. Jesus, maintaining with

calm and sublime dignity his great character of prophet and Saviour-God, silently sealed with his blood the high doctrines of the new law. No complaint, no reproach escaped him amid the infamous torture which he underwent, in presence of a whole city. He looked down on that misguided people with pity and forgiveness, and, seeking to bend the divine justice in favor of those who crucified him, "Father," said he, with his dying voice—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

"And yet for eighteen centuries the Father has *not* forgiven them, and they drag their punishment all over the earth, and everywhere the very slave has to humble himself to look at them."*

The Virgin left the temporary asylum where she had taken shelter, and walked, with her head bowed down, towards the place of execution. At some paces from the infamous tree, rude soldiers were

casting lots for the seamless robe which her own hands had spun,† and clamorously contending for the sacred garments which had wrought so many miracles.‡ A slight convulsion passed over Mary's features; she thought of the time when, rich only in the love of Jesus, but free from immediate anxiety, she worked, in the evenings, by his side, fabricating that festal robe; now, the remembrance was torture to her heart, for the light which gilded her past days of happiness did but darken the gloom of her present sorrow. She raised her eyes to heaven, seeking there, as usual, the strength to endure, and her eye met that of the crucified God. At that fearful sight, her feet were rooted to the earth, and she stood so petrified with horror that all she had hitherto suffered seemed no more than a dream, a half-effaced vision: all was absorbed in the Cross.§

Jesus, casting on the Virgin a sweet and mysterious look, seemed

* M. de Lamennais.

† It is an ancient tradition that the Virgin herself wove her Son's tunic.

‡ The cathedral of Trèves possesses one of these sacred garments, and at one of its recent annual expositions, the police reports announced

the presence of twenty-five thousand pilgrims in that city.

§ The Fathers and the great doctors of the Church place the sufferings of the Virgin on Calvary above those of all the martyrs. "Virgo universos martyres tantum excedit quantum sol

to say to her, as he did on the preceding evening to his Apostles, "Mother, the hour is come!"

And what hour was that?

It was the most memorable and eventful hour ever marked by the shadow of the sun since time began its course; the hour when the Son of God was to triumph over the world, death, and hell, and even over divine justice itself; the hour of the fulfillment of prophecies, of the abolition of sacrifices, of the restoration of woman to her primeval dignity, of the slave's emancipation, and of our eternal redemption. And the Virgin fancied she could see the patriarchs, the just kings, the prophets inspired by God, bowing down before CHRIST, like the sheafs of the sons of Jacob before the mystical sheaf of Joseph. She thought she could see Moses and Aaron laying before the new *tree of life* the ark of the covenant, the ephod, the rational, the golden plate and the almond-tree branch—symbols of the Hebrew priest-

ad reliqua astra," says St. Basil; and St. Anselm adds, "Quidquid crudelitatis inflictum est corporibus martyrum leve fuit aut potius nihil comparatione tuæ passionis." (*De Ex. Virg.*, cap. 5.).

hood whose mission was about to end; then, David placing his prophetic harp beside the sword of Phineas, the sacred knife of Abraham, and the brazen serpent. Priests and victims, rites and ordinances, types and symbols, grouped around the Cross, awaited their consummation; and the book with the seven brazen seals was opened at the foot of the High-Priest according to the order of Melchisedech, which replaced that of Aaron. The ancient world, receding like the waves, gave place to other images, and Mary seemed at that moment to behold all the nations of the earth waiting at the foot of the Cross to receive the Gospel. Ethiopia and the isles stretched out their hands towards the Messiah; the desert, beginning to rejoice, blossomed like the rose; the knowledge of God, filled the whole earth as the great waters cover the sandy bed of the ocean; and a thousand voices seemed to repeat in a thousand barbarous tongues, "Christ has conquered; blessed be his name!"

The noble and generous heart of Mary forgot, for a while, its own poignant sufferings, to sympathize

in the triumph of the law of grace, and in the world's regeneration; but the vision of glory quickly vanished, and grief returned in all its force; like Rachel, the Virgin mourned for her first-born, and would not be comforted.

Meanwhile, all nature seemed to sympathize in the sufferings of its God; the sky was gradually obscured, and the waning light gave a mournful coloring to that grand and sterile landscape so well suited to the crime of which it was the theatre. Every moment the darkness increased; the dew fell, from the sudden interruption of the heat; the eagles screamed as they sought their nightly shelter; the jackals howled on the banks of the Kedron, and Calvary, already so gloomy in itself, assumed the appearance of a great mausoleum of black marble. The people, strongly impressed by this unusual occurrence, were struck

* silent with fear, and only a few voices—those of the chief priests and Pharisees—continued to curse the CHRIST.

Soon, through the gloomy veil which shrouded the face of the firmament, the stars shone out like funeral torches burning around a coffin, shedding over the scene of the deicide a lurid, greenish light, which gave to the mass of spectators grouped on the sides of the mountain the appearance of an assembly of demons and spectres. They looked at each other and grew pale. Vainly did the scribes and Pharisees—too far advanced in crime to attempt to recede—endeavor to account for this prodigy by natural means; the longer the darkness continued, the less conclusive did their reasons appear. Old men, shaking their hoary heads, declared they had never beheld such an eclipse;* and the learned,

* Phlegon relates that in the two hundred and second Olympiad, corresponding with the 33d year of our era, there was the greatest eclipse of the sun ever seen, and that the stars appeared at noon-day; but astronomy proving that there was no eclipse in that year, compels us to acknowledge that the cause of this unheard-of darkness was altogether supernatural.

"We observed," says St. Denis, the Areopagite, who was then at Heliopolis, "that the moon suddenly interposed between the sun and the earth, although the time of that conjunction was not in accordance with the natural order of the laws to which the stars are subject," etc. (*Seventh Epistle to Polycarpe*).

who were versed in the science of the Chaldeans, maintained, on the other hand, that no eclipse was either foreseen or possible in the then position of the moon.

This eclipse, of three hours, was one of the Messianic prodigies which were to signalize the wrath of heaven when Christ was put to death. "It shall come to pass in that day," said the prophet Amos, "that the sun shall go down at mid-day; and I will make the earth dark in the day of light." This darkness extended even to Egypt, where St. Denis, the Areopagite, was studying philosophy at Heliopolis. Struck with terror, the young Greek cried out, addressing his preceptor, Apollopphanes, "Either the world is about to be destroyed, or the God of nature suffers!"*

In the midst of the general consternation, Jesus occupied himself with the faithful souls who gathered around his Cross in that hour of ignominy. Touched by the courage of John, and the profound affliction which that young and ardent disciple sought not to conceal, he

would leave him a pledge of his divine affection. He could leave him no worldly wealth—he, who had not had a stone whereon to lay his head, and who was even about to receive interment from the charity of a disciple—he had nothing in the world to leave but his mother! that mother who had clung to him through every trial, and who was now dying, as it were, with him. Her he solemnly bequeathed to his favorite disciple as an earnest of the celestial treasures which he reserved for him in the kingdom of his Father. Knowing how well he was loved by those two holy souls, he foresaw, in his adorable goodness, the fearful vacuum which his death would make in their hearts, and he would strengthen these two helpless shrubs by intertwining their detached branches.

By this arrangement, which gave her a new and dear interest in life, the Virgin was to understand that she was not permitted to follow her Son to the grave, and that the term of her earthly pilgrimage was not yet arrived. She submitted to the divine will through love for us, whom she adopted in the person of

* *Seventh Epistle to Polycarpe.*

the holy Apostle. Mary's sacrifice, humanly speaking, almost equalled that of Christ. He willingly consented to die; she to live! Both those noble hearts were consumed with love for men, and were alone able to understand each other; for their thoughts were not as our thoughts, and the gold of their virtues was without alloy.

The manner in which Jesus bequeathed Mary to the young fisherman of Bethsaida was dignified and simple, like all the acts of his mortal life. "Woman, behold thy son;" and to the beloved disciple, "Behold thy mother."

If he used not, in speaking to Mary, a more endearing appellation, it was because he knew the power of the name which he thought proper to omit, and would not reopen wounds already so deep and so painful.

Then Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst."

"Now there was a vessel set there full of vinegar. And they, putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, offered it to his mouth."

Infamous to the last!

Jesus having taken the vinegar, said, "It is consummated." Then, in order to prove to the world that he died, not by the power of death, but by a formal act of his own will, he gave a loud cry, bowed down his head and expired!

At that moment the pagan idols tottered on their pedestals; the star of Moses, which had shone, but for one single point of the globe, and that but for a season, sank then below the horizon, and the sun of the Gospel, destined to light the world from pole to pole, and to last through all time, arose radiant from the east.

But God owed prodigies to the despised dignity of his Son, and they were not slow in coming. The supernatural darkness, as it began to disappear, was succeeded by the violent shocks of an earthquake, which destroyed twenty cities in Asia.* At the same instant the veil of the Temple was rent asunder, rocks split, and several bodies of the saints who had

* Pliny and Strabo speak of this earthquake. "It was so violent," say both these authors, "that it was felt even in Italy."



THE CRUCIFIXION

slept in death arose and came into Jerusalem, to the great terror of the inhabitants.

Then it was that there was a marvellous reaction in favor of Jesus; the centurion and his soldiers, who had presided at the execution, cried out with one voice that the Nazarene prophet was certainly more than man; and that immense crowd of people who had heaped blasphemies and insults, mockery and derision, on Christ in his agony, went down from the mountain striking their breasts, and repeating in dismay, "INDEED THIS WAS THE SON OF GOD!"

In the midst of the despairing cries of the people, who fled in all directions without knowing where to turn their steps, and whilst the rocky flanks of the Golgotha were bursting open, there was seen by the pale, lurid light a woman standing completely motionless amid the

convulsions and ruins of nature. She seemed insensible to the general consternation; her hands joined in the attitude of prayer, she was wholly absorbed in the sorrowful contemplation of the crucified prophet.

And the daughters of Jerusalem wept again, saying with compassion, "Poor mother!"

Towards evening the Pharisees, unwilling that the sanctity of the Sabbath, which commenced at nightfall, should be endangered by allowing the bodies to remain on the Cross, went to ask Pilate's permission to have them removed. The permission obtained, they placed ladders against the gibbets whereon the two thieves were still in their agony, and, having rudely torn their hands and feet from the Cross, dispatched them by breaking their legs and arms. Jesus being quite dead,* a soldier contented himself

* According to the Mussulmans, Jesus is not dead. "The Jews," says Mahomet, "did not kill Jesus Christ; another body was substituted for his, so as to deceive their barbarity; they did not crucify him; God took him up to heaven." (*Koran*, ch. 4.) The Mussulman tradition says that when the last trumpet shall sound, *Aïsa* (Jesus Christ) shall come down from heaven and announce to all the children

of men the great day of general judgment; he shall then die and be interred beside Mahomet; when the dead arise from their graves, both shall go forth together and ascend to heaven. Burkhardt, who visited the great mosque in Medina which contains the three tombs of Mahomet, Aboubeker, and Omar, all three of black stone covered with precious stuffs, and surrounded with magnificent *ex-voto*, says that

with plunging his spear into his side, whereupon the sacred blood that was to purify the world of its crimes flowed in streams to the ground. At some distance stood two veiled women, one of whom leaned on the other for support with a helplessness that betrayed the most heart-rending grief; both were timidly watching the movements of the soldiers; it was Mary and Magdalen, for Magdalen was also there; and at a distance were seen the other women of Galilee who had quitted all for Jesus, and who had not abandoned him even in his hour of death and ignominy. "Honor to them!" says Abeilard, "for, when the disciples and Apostles fled like cowards over the mountains, these frail but courageous creatures accompanied Christ even to the foot of the Cross, and quitted him not till he was laid in the sepulchre!"

Then came Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy senator who had obtained from Pilate the body of Jesus,—whose disciple he was in

there was left near the tomb of Mahomet a vacant place, destined to receive Jesus after his death. Above this space and Mahomet's tomb

secret,—in order to give him decent burial. He took it down from the Cross and prepared to wrap it up in a shroud of fine Egyptian linen, which he had purchased in Jerusalem, when he saw at his feet a woman pale as death, holding out her arms, with all the touching and sublime energy of grief, to receive the crucified God. Her whole frame was convulsed with anguish, and her lips refused to utter the prayer that arose from her heart, but every feature of her beautiful face was expressive of the most earnest supplication. The senator, recognizing Mary, made a sign of compassionate sympathy, and laid on her trembling knees the divine burden which he had respectfully borne on his own shoulders. Thus, the Blessed Virgin had, at length, the mournful consolation of pressing to her bleeding heart the disfigured body of her Son, and to lay her bloodless lips on the wounds made by the nails. Magdalen, on her knees, bathed with her scalding tears the bloody feet of her Lord, and moaned like a

was hung a splendid brocade canopy, garnished with diamonds, which was stolen by Sioud when he took Medina.



The Descent from the Cross.



wounded dove. Behind them stood the weeping women of Galilee.* Meanwhile, some of Joseph's servants prepared the perfumes on the

* Some authors hold that these holy women picked up earth soaked with the precious blood of Jesus, and that this is how it came to be in some French churches, such as St. Denis and the Holy Chapel, in Paris.

stone of unction,† and others opened the sepulchre, hewn in the rock, which was to receive the mortal remains of the Son of God.

† The "stone of unction" is now in the chapel of Calvary. Those in whose keeping it is have been obliged, in order to preserve it, to cover it with white marble, and surround it with an iron balustrade.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DEATH OF MARY.



MARY was beginning to reappear, and the signs of divine wrath no longer terrified the Jews who had just shed the Saviour's blood. Like all other ferocious animals, the executioners of Christ had laid aside their savage instinct during the hour of peril. Frightened, at first, on account of what they had done, they feared that the riven rocks of Calvary might crush them in their fall, and that the rending earth might swallow them alive into

the gloomy depths of the *scheol*; but their remorse vanished with their fears, and according as the sky resumed its wonted serenity, so did their evil nature resume its sway.

Unable to deny the prodigies which a whole people had seen with their eyes, and which was still verified by the yawning rocks, the tombs scarcely closed, and the riven veil of the Temple, they ascribed them to magic, and maintained that this Jesus, so mighty in word and work, was but a son of Belial, who had infatuated the people and com-

manded the elements by the ineffable name of the God of Israel, which he had taken by surprise from the Holy of Holies.* And the people allowed themselves to be caught by this bait thrown out by their chiefs; for there is no slanderous absurdity which finds not credulous ears to receive, and nimble tongues to spread it. Meanwhile, a vigilant guard, chosen from amongst the satellites of the high-priest, watched by turns around the sepulchre; for Jesus had announced that he would rise on the third day, and the princes of the synagogue pretended to fear that his disciples might carry him off during the night.

The third day was beginning to dawn, but the east was, as yet, scarcely tinted with its roseate flush, when several women of Galilee, bearing perfumes and aromatic plants to embalm Jesus, after the manner of the kings of Juda,† appeared on the fatal mountain, moving pensively towards the garden wherein was the tomb of Christ.

* See Basnage, l. vi., ch. 27 and 28.

† It is clear that they intended a peculiar sort of embalming for Jesus, since Nicodemus had already wrapped him up in cloths perfumed with myrrh.

* Tradition has it that Mary was amongst these holy women. Her dejected countenance resembled some beautiful ruin prostrated by the fierce wind of adversity; but her look was expressive not only of grief, but of expectation. The deicide city still slept in the balmy breeze of the morning; the flowers were opening their cups heavy with dew, the birds were singing in the damp branches of the wild fig-trees, and the air was gradually assuming the warm coloring of the dawn; nature seemed to assume her robe of light with unwonted joy, and that grand, though gloomy, landscape which surrounds Jerusalem, began to wear a softer and gayer aspect, till then unknown, as though conscious of some glorious mystery passing near.

Suddenly, in the midst of that smiling scene, a shock is felt; the stone that closes the mouth of the sepulchre rolls back as if pushed by some mighty arm; the guards fall stupefied to the ground, and the women, who stood by Jesus during his long agony on the Cross, now shudder and grow pale, fearing that the terrible prodigies which accom-



The Death of the Virgin

JOHN H. B. 1840

panied the death of the Son of Man * are about to be renewed.

But an angel in snow-white garments, with a face radiant as the lightning, appears sitting on the stone, and reassures the servants of Christ. "Fear not," said he, mildly, "I know that you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is not here; he is risen, as he told you. Come and see the place where the Lord was laid." Whilst the pious Galileans looked timidly into the sepulchre, wondering at sight of the shroud and the perfumed cloths which remained there, the Virgin, her face radiant with a holy joy, stood leaning against an olive-tree at some distance. A young man, in the homely garb of the people, stood conversing with her in a low voice. That young man was the first-born amongst the dead, the glorious conqueror of hell, Jesus Christ.* No one knew what passed during that solemn interview, but we may believe that

* St. Ambrose, who lived in the 4th century, says that the Virgin was the first who had the happiness of seeing Jesus after his resurrection; and the poet Sedulius, who flourished shortly after St. Ambrose, likewise introduces that tradition into his poems. They both speak *

Mary, whose strong mind had been so severely tried by affliction, felt then a degree of bliss which we cannot know without dying.

Our Lord, during the forty days following his resurrection, frequently manifested himself to the Apostles, and talked with them on matters appertaining to the kingdom of God and the regeneration to be wrought amongst men by baptism. Pious authors have supposed that the Virgin was the most favored in these consoling apparitions, and that she found in them a foretaste of the joys of heaven. The bitter waters of her affliction were changed into sources of grace, and the Saviour "nourished her with the hidden manna which he reserves for those who practise the patience enjoined by his law."

At length, the hour came when, by the divine behest, the Son of God was to be recalled to heaven; his redeeming mission was accomplished, and the Apostles, fully con-

of it as a belief general amongst Christians. The Arab historians have preserved this tradition: Ismaël, son of Ali relates that Jesus came down from heaven to console Mary, his weeping mother. An altar has been erected on the site of this touching interview.

vinced of his divinity by his resurrection, had received from him the necessary instructions for converting the nations to his admirable Gospel.

At noon, on the fortieth day, he went out with them from Jerusalem towards the heights of Bethany. This direction was not taken by chance; there was that olive-crowned mountain whereon the Saviour, detaching himself from the crowd, had often prayed to his Father, while the silent moon shone brightly over the still waters of the Dead Sea, the green valley of the Jordan, and the gigantic palms of the plain of Jericho, for in that elevated position "all far things seemed near." There was, also, that famous garden where Christ had undergone the first of his agony. It was just that his glory should commence in the same places that had witnessed his generous sufferings, and that those fields, those woods, those shady wilds, where he had so often prayed and meditated, should receive the impression of his last footsteps before he again ascended to heaven.

Arrived on the summit of that lofty mountain, whence he could be-

* hold a great part of Judea, and make a farewell sign to those scenes which he had rendered famous by his miracles and his death, the Saviour stopped on an open place, near a grove of olives, whose pale foliage was parched and shrivelled by the scorching noonday sun. There, after raising his pierced hands towards his heavenly Father, as though recommending to Him his infant Church, he extended them over his mother and his disciples, as Jacob did over the sons of Joseph; then lifted himself up by his own power and slowly ascended into heaven. This last act of the Saviour worthily sealed his divine mission. During his life, he went about doing good; on Calvary, he prayed for his executioners; and he ascended to heaven blessing the humble friends whom he left behind him on the earth. While his hands were still raised over his prostrate disciples, they saw him enter a white cloud, which concealed him from their view.

The ascension of Our Lord had not that gloomy and awful character which terrified the people in ancient times. The law of Moses

had been proclaimed with sound of trumpet, amid the thunder's roar and the lightning's flash; Elias had been taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot; but the world's Redeemer was gently borne on a fleecy cloud, with that sort of calm and serene majesty which accorded with the genius of the Gospel and the touching character of its author.

The angels — those beneficent spirits who rejoice in the happiness of men — were also seen to figure in that closing scene of the great drama of Redemption. Their divine songs had announced to the shepherds the birth of the King-Messiah; their voice had proclaimed his resurrection from the dead; it was proper, then, that their words should confirm his glorious ascension.

Whilst the disciples were attentively watching Jesus as he ascended into heaven, two men clothed in white stood suddenly before them, and said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking up to heaven? This Jesus, who is taken up from you to heaven, shall so come as you have seen him going into heaven."

* *Apoc.*, ch. xxi., v. 4.

The Apostles and disciples cast down their eyes, dazzled by the glorious vision; but did the Virgin cast down hers? Was she denied the privilege of seeing her divine Son take his place in majesty at the right hand of Jehovah, amid the inaccessible light of the Saints? Was she really less favored than St. Stephen and the beloved disciple? That is scarcely possible. She who was morally crucified with Jesus on Calvary deserved to be glorified with him; it was her right, and she had dearly purchased it! Yes, Mary must have been permitted to catch a glimpse of that peaceful and happy country into which Jesus obtained admission for us by his blood, and where he himself wipes away the tears of the just;* then the pearl gates of the heavenly Jerusalem† slowly closed on the conquering God, and the Virgin, separated for a time from him she loved, remained alone on the earth.

Forty days after, we find her at prayer in the "upper chamber," where she received the Holy Ghost with the Apostles.

† *Ibid.*, v. 21.

Mary was the luminous pillar that guided the march of the infant Church. It was to her that the Apostles did homage for the numerous ears which they gathered from the barren field of the synagogue into the granary of the Lord. She accepted this tribute in the name of her divine Son with graceful humility, and was continually seen surrounded by the poor, the sinful, and the unhappy; for she always loved in an especial manner those to whom she could do good. The Evangelists came to her for light; the Apostles, for unction, courage, and constancy; the afflicted, for spiritual consolation,—and all went away blessing her. The Sun of Justice had set on the gloomy horizon of the Golgotha; but the Star of the Sea still reflected his softest rays over the renovated world, and shed a benignant influence on the cradle of Christianity.

The Virgin remained in Jerusalem till the terrible persecution, which broke out in the year 44 of Our Lord, forced her to leave it with the Apostles. Her adopted son took her with him to Ephesus, whither she was followed by Magdalen.

Nothing is now known of Mary's sojourn in Ephesus; this is easily accounted for by the engrossing anxieties of the time. After the resurrection of the Saviour, the Apostles, solely taken up with the propagation of the faith, considered everything as of minor importance that did not immediately bear on that all-absorbing object. Full of their lofty mission, entirely devoted to the salvation of souls, they forgot themselves so completely, that they have barely left us a few unfinished records of the evangelical labors which changed the face of the globe,—so that their history resembles a sublime but almost effaced epitaph, having neither beginning nor end. That the mother of Jesus shared the fate of the Apostles may well be conceived; the last years of her life having passed away, far from Jerusalem, in a strange land, where her dwelling was signalized by no striking incident, have left no durable impression on the fleeting memory of man. Nevertheless, the flourishing condition of the Church of Ephesus, its tender devotion to Mary, and the praise which St. Paul bestows on its piety, suffi-

ciently indicate the fruitful cares of the Virgin, and the divine blessing which followed her everywhere. The Rose of Jesse left a portion of her perfume on the air, and that vestige, however slight it be, is a precious revelation of her passage.

The coasts of Asia Minor, covered with opulent cities, rich in vegetation, and washed by a sea which bore thither a multitude of vessels, would have seemed, to ordinary exiles, a splendid compensation for the tall, bleak mountains of Palestine. It is doubtful whether such was the opinion of the Virgin of Nazareth: the steps of the Man-God had not hallowed that enchanted land, and the graves of her fathers were not there! . . .

How often did Mary and Magdalen sigh for their native land, as, seated under a plane-tree on the margin of that fair Icarian sea

* whose waves die away amid myrtles on the narrow sandy beach, they followed the course of some Greek galley bound for Syria! The stainless snows of Lebanon, the blueish peaks of Carmel, the sparkling waters of the Lake of Tiberias, were each, in turn, the subject of their discourse; the scenes of their own land, embellished by distance, passed successively before them, and seemed a thousand times preferable to that soft, luxurious Ionia which was, in fact, to the land of Jehovah what the lyre of Anacreon is to the harp of David.

It was during her stay at Ephesus that the Virgin lost the faithful companion who, in imitation of Ruth, had left her home and kindred to follow her across the sea: Magdalen died, and Mary wept for her, as Jesus had wept for Lazarus.*

Of all the ties of kindred and

* We read in some Greek authors of the 7th and following centuries, that, after the ascension of Christ, St. Mary Magdalen accompanied the Virgin and St. John to Ephesus, and that she died and was buried in that city. Such is also the opinion of Modestus, patriarch of Jerusalem, who flourished in 920; of St. Gregory of Tours, and of St. Willebald. The latter, in his account of his journey from Jerusalem, says that he saw at Ephesus the tomb of St. Mary *

Magdalen. The Emperor Leo, the philosopher, had the relics of the saint translated from Ephesus to Constantinople, where they were placed in the church of St. Lazarus, about the year 890.—Another tradition, maintained by some respectable authors, will have it that St. Mary Magdalen ended her days in Provence. We have adopted the contrary opinion, because it seemed more probable, but yet without attempting to decide the question.

affection, St. John alone remained to the Virgin—St. John, the kind and loving disciple whom her dying Son had bequeathed to her. She followed him, it is thought, in his travels, and it was doubtless in his conversations with the Queen of prophets that St. John acquired the marvellous knowledge which he displays in his Gospel. Assisted by light from Her whom the Fathers have compared to the golden candlestick with seven branches, the young fisherman of Bethsaida dived deeper than any other into the incomprehensible mystery of the uncreated essence of the Word, and his mind took so bold a flight amid the mysterious heights of heaven, that, compared with him, the other Evangelists seem but to skim the earth.*

Meanwhile, the sowers of Christ had sowed the good seed of the word over every part of the Roman world; the evangelical harvest was

* The Abbé Rupert (*in Cant. Cant.*) states that the Blessed Virgin supplied by her lights what the Holy Ghost, who had given Himself in proportion to the disciples, had not thought proper to reveal to them; and the Holy Fathers all agree that it was from the Blessed Virgin St. Luke obtained many of his marvellous and minute particulars of the infancy of Jesus Christ. *

green, and the laborers of the Lord worked with ardor in the sacred field. Mary considered that her mission on earth was accomplished, and that the Church could henceforward maintain herself. Then, like a tired workwoman who seeks rest and shelter during the heat of the day, she began to sigh after the cool shade of the tree of life which grows near the throne of God, and for the living, sanctifying waters which flow beneath its branches.† This desire of his mother was known to Him who fathoms the depths of the soul, and the angel who stands at his right hand came to inform the future Queen of heaven that her Son had granted her wish.‡

At this divine revelation, to which was added, as Nicéphorus tells us, that of the day and hour of her death, the daughter of Abraham began to sigh yet more ardently for her distant country; she would fain behold once more the lofty

† *Apoc.*, ch. xxii., v. 1 and 2.

‡ Tradition relates that the Blessed Virgin was apprised of her approaching death by the ministry of an angel, who made her acquainted with the day and the hour when it was to take place. (*Descoutures*, p. 235.—*Père Croiset*, t. xviii., p. 138.)

mountains of Judea, where the memory of the Redemption still floated on every breeze, and to die in sight of Calvary. St. John, to whom her wishes were at all times laws, made immediate preparations for returning to Palestine.

The Hebrew travellers probably embarked at Miletus, which was then famous as the *rendezvous* of all ships from Europe and Asia navigating those waters. While crossing the Grecian seas, the Virgin and the Evangelist recognized, in passing, the isle of Chio, whose people, long possessed of the empire of the sea, were the first to introduce that odious slave-trade which the Gospel was gradually to abolish; then Lesbos, the land of lyric poets, where the hymn to the most pure Virgin was to replace the burning odes of Sappho and the more masculine strains of Alceus. Seeing the top of the Temple of Esculapius soaring into the clouds—that temple which then attracted whole multitudes of people to the Island of Cos—the

* Virgin-mother was reminded of her divine Son, who, of all the children of men, had power instantly to heal the sick and raise the dead to life.* Delos, the birth-place of Apollo, Rhodes, the cradle of Jupiter, rose successively from amid the waters, with their green mountains and their ancient temples, peopled with gods who were soon to be banished to the depths of hell by the God who was crucified on Calvary. At some distance from Cyprus there was seen, far up amid the clouds, a dark point traced on the blue dome of heaven; it was the mount whereon the prophet Elias had of old erected an altar to the future mother of the Saviour, and where his disciples were then about to place themselves under her special protection. Next day, the galley entered a port of Syria—Sidon, perhaps—its commercial intercourse being frequent with Palestine, as the sacred books relate.

They returned to Israel after an absence of several years. Mary

* The followers of Mahomet have preserved the remembrance of the miracles of Christ. They pretend that the breath of Our Lord, which they call *bad Messih* (the breath of the

Messiah), not only raised the dead, but could even give life to things inanimate. (D'Herb., *Biblioth. Orient.*, t. i., p. 365.)

withdrew to the mountain of Sion, within a short distance of the ruinous and deserted palace of the princes of her race, to the house which had been sanctified by the descent of the Holy Ghost. St. John, on his side, went to seek St. James, a cousin-germain of the Virgin and the first bishop of Jerusalem, to inform him, as well as the faithful who composed his already numerous church of Jerusalem, that the mother of Jesus had returned to die amongst them.

The day and the hour were come; the saints of Jerusalem once more beheld the daughter of David, still poor, still fair, still humble; for one would have said that this admirable and holy creature escaped the destroying action of time, and that, predestined from her birth to a complete and glorious immortality, nothing in her was to perish.* Serious, but not sick, she received the Apostles and disciples seated on a small bed of mean appearance, suited to her unpretending garments.

* St. Denis, an eye-witness of the death of the Blessed Virgin, affirms that, at that advanced period of her life, she was still strikingly beautiful.

* There was in her modest yet noble mien something so solemn and so touching that the whole assembly burst into tears. Mary alone was calm, although the vast chamber was crowded with old disciples and new Christians, all equally anxious to see and hear her.

The night had fallen, and lamps, with many branches, seemed to shed, with their pale light, something solemn and mysterious over that sad and silent assembly. The Apostles, deeply moved, stood close around the bed of death. St. Peter, who had so tenderly loved the Son of God during his life, contemplated the Virgin-mother with profound sorrow, and his speaking glance seemed to say to the bishop of Jerusalem, "How much she resembles Christ!" In fact, there was a remarkable likeness;† and the bowed head of Mary, recalling that of the Saviour during the last Supper, completed the effect. St. James, who had received from the Jews themselves the surname of *Just*, and who

† Jesus hung his head a little, which took something from his height; his face had much resemblance to that of his mother, especially in the lower part. (Nic., *Hist. Eccles.*, t. i., p. 125.)

well knew how to subdue his feelings, sternly repressed the tears which moistened his eyelids. The Prince of the Apostles—a frank and impulsive man—was deeply affected, and strove not to conceal his emotion; St. John had wrapped a fold of his Greek mantle around his head, but his sobs betrayed him. There was not, in all the crowd, a heart unmoved, or an eye unmoistened by a tear. Mary, sympathizing in the general emotion, and almost forgetting the splendor which awaited her on high, in order to wipe away the tears of those who loved her, applied herself to confirm the faith of her children, to revive their pious hopes, and to inflame their charity; she told them with unequalled eloquence of those mighty and sublime things which people hold their breath to hear, which raise man above himself, and render him capable of any undertaking. Her speech, so mild that the Scripture has compared it

* to a honeycomb, became gradually strong; the daughter of David and of Solomon, the inspired prophetess who had extemporaneously composed the triumphal hymn of the *Magnificat*, soared up to considerations so high that the listeners forgot, in their ecstasy, that death was to close that mystic strain. But the fatal hour approached. Mary extended her protecting hands over the poor orphans whom she was about to quit, and, raising her beautiful eyes to the stars which shone brightly in the firmament, she saw the heavens open, and the Son of man extending his arms towards her from amidst a luminous cloud.* At this sight a roseate flush overspread her face, her eyes sparkled with maternal love, joy attained its height, adoration became ecstatic, and her soul, disengaging itself without an effort from its fair and virginal covering, fell gently into the bosom of God.†

* St. John Damascene.

† Some ancient Fathers, and, amongst others, St. Epiphanius, seem to doubt whether the Mother of God really died, or whether she remained immortal, being taken body and soul to heaven; but the opinion of the Church is, that the Blessed Virgin did really die according to

the condition of the flesh, and this opinion is clearly manifested in the Mass for the Feast of the Assumption. The Blessed Virgin died during the night which precedes the 15th of August. The date of her death is very uncertain. Eusebius fixes it in the year 48 of our era; so that, according to him, Mary lived sixty-eight years;

Mary was no more, but her countenance, which had assumed the expression of a tranquil slumber, was so sweet to look upon that it seemed as though Death hesitated to set his seal on that trophy which he was only to retain for a day.

The death-lamp was lit; the windows were all thrown open, and the summer breeze made its way into the room with the flickering beams of the stars. One would have said that a miraculous light filled the room when Mary had drawn her last sigh: it was, perhaps, the glory of God which surrounded the spotless soul of the predestined Virgin. When the death of Mary was no longer doubtful, there was nothing heard, at first, but tears and lamen-

* tations; then the funeral chant arose on the stillness of the night; the angels chimed in with their golden harps,* and the echoes of David's mouldering palace sadly repeated the wail over the tombs of the kings of Juda.

On the following day, the faithful brought in, with pious profusion, the most precious perfumes and the richest stuffs for the burial of the Queen of Virgins. They embalmed her, according to the custom of her people, but her blessed remains exhaled a sweeter odor than the perfumed bands wherewith she was bound. The preparations being duly completed, the sacred body of the Mother of God was placed in a portable litter filled with aromatics,†

but Nicephorus (b. xi., ch. 21) formally says that she died in the fifth year of the reign of Claudius, that is to say, in the year of Rome 798, or 45 of the Christian era. Then, supposing that the Blessed Virgin was sixteen years old when the Saviour was born, she would have lived sixty-one years. Hippolytus of Thebes states, in his chronicle, that the Blessed Virgin became a mother at the age of sixteen, and died eleven years after Jesus Christ. According to some other authors, the Virgin was sixty-six when she died.

* "All the host of heaven," says St. Jerome, "came to meet the Mother of God at the moment of her death, singing hymns and canticles,

which were heard by all present. *Militiam cœlorum, cum suis agminibus, festive obviam venisse Genetrici Dei cum laudibus et canticis, eamque ingenti lumine circumfulsisse et usque ad tronium perduxisse.*"

† Coffins, amongst the Jews, in Mary's time, were a species of litter so contrived that it was easy to carry the dead body; this litter was filled with aromatics. Josephus, describing the interment of Herod the Great, says that his litter was adorned with precious stones, that his body reposed on purple cloth, that he had the jewelled crown upon his head, and that his whole household followed the litter to the sepulchre.

and covered with a sumptuous veil, * and the Apostles bore it on their shoulders to the Valley of Josaphat.* The Christians of Jerusalem, bearing lighted tapers, and chanting hymns and psalms, followed sadly and reverently the remains of Mary.

Arrived at the place of sepulture, the mournful procession stopped. Through the care of the holy women of Jerusalem, the tomb was deprived of its gloomy aspect, and the sepulchral cave presented to the view only a flowery arbor.† The Apostles gently laid down the mortal remains of Mary, and, doing so, they wept. Of all the panegyrics pronounced on that occasion, that of Hierotheus was the most remarkable. St. Denis, the Areopagite, who describes the scene as an eye-witness, relates that as he praised the Virgin, the orator was almost beside himself.‡

* Metaphrastes relates that the Apostles carried the Blessed Virgin to the grave on their shoulders.

† Greg. Tur., l. i., *de Gl.*, ch. 4.

‡ *Books of Divine Names*, chapter 3. These books of St. Denis, the Areopagite, have been rejected by Protestants, but are not the less authorized by a multitude of proofs from the most ancient Fathers and doctors of the Church, *

For three days, the Apostles and the faithful watched and prayed beside the sepulchre, where they heard distinctly the sacred concert kept up by the heavenly spirits, § as though to soothe the last sleep of Mary. One of the Apostles, returning from a distant country, and not having been present at the death of the Virgin, arrived just then. It was St. Thomas, the same who had placed his hand in the wounds of his glorified Master. He hastened to take a last look, and to water with his tears the cold remains of the privileged woman who had borne in her chaste womb the Supreme Master of Nature. Overcome by his tears and entreaties, the Apostles removed the block of stone from the door of the sepulchre; but they saw within only the still fresh flowers whereon Mary's body had reposed, and her white

by the Third Œcumenical Council of Constantinople, and many others.

§ Juvenal, patriarch of Jerusalem, who lived in the 5th century, writing to the Emperor Marcian and the Empress Pulcheria, says that the Apostles, relieving each other, passed day and night with the faithful near the tomb, mingling their canticles with those of the angels, who, for three days, were constantly heard making the most divine harmony.

shroud of Egyptian linen, which shed a delicious fragrance. The pure body of the Immaculate Virgin was not a prey for worms. During

her life earth and heaven had each a share in that wondrous creature; after her death, heaven took all, and glorified all.*

* A very judicious remark of Godescard comes to the support of the Assumption: it is, that "neither the Latins nor even the Greeks, so greedy for novelty, and so easily persuaded in regard to relics and legends; no people, in a word, no city, no church, ever boasted of pos-

sessing the mortal remains of the Blessed Virgin, nor any portion of her body. Hence, without prescribing a belief in the corporal assumption of Mary into heaven, the Church gives us clearly to understand the opinion to which she inclines." (Godescard, t. xiv., p. 449.)



John & Ellen Keedy

for the Sky art.,

Rue



The Virgin and Infant Saviour

THE
HISTORY OF THE DEVOTION
TO THE
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY,
Mother of God.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF THE ABBÈ ORSINI,

BY

MRS. J. SADLIER.

*PUBLISHED WITH THE APPROBATION OF THE LATE MOST REV. JOHN HUGHES, D. D.,
AND THE MOST REV. J. McCLOSKEY, D. D., ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK.*

A NEW, ENLARGED AND REVISED EDITION.

New York:

PUBLISHED BY D. & J. SADLIER & CO., 31 BARCLAY STREET.

MONTREAL:—CORNER OF NOTRE DAME AND ST. FRANCIS XAVIER STS.

1872.

NOTICE OF THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

IN RE THE ESTATE OF JAMES M. HARRIS, DECEASED

FILED FOR RECORD

NOV 16 1886

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1853,

By D. & J. SADLER & CO.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of New York

HISTORY

OF THE

DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, *Mother of God.*

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN AND ANTIQUITY OF THE DEVOTION TO MARY.



THE invocation of Saints, which heretics impute to us as idolatry, and which a Protestant minister has been pleased to set down as "the malady of the Christians of the fourth century," is so far from being of modern date that it may, in truth, be regarded as of Apostolical tradition, and of Jewish origin. The Hebrews sought counsel and miraculous cures of the dead, when those dead had been accredited prophets of the Lord. The prophets were their saints, and saints who read

the future clearly, from the depths of the sepulchral cave where they slept beside their fathers. Behold Saul with the witch of Endor; the ghost of Samuel, though conjured up by enchantments which the law of Moses condemns, appeared by God's permission to terrify the reprobate monarch. The prophet, shrouded in his mantle, emerges slowly from the earth in awful majesty; the sorceress utters a cry of terror at sight of the illustrious shade which she takes for a god. Saul, bowing down before him who was so long the supreme judge of Israel, questions him on the issue of the battle which he is going to fight with the Philis-

times; and the prophet answers him in a voice which no breath of life accompanies, for his body is at Ramatha, mourned by all Israel: "To-morrow, thou and thy sons shall be with me: and the Lord will also deliver the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines!"

The Jews believed, then, that their saints knew the future.

In the fourth book of Kings, we see a dead man restored to life by touching the bones of Eliseus.

The saints of Israel, therefore, wrought miracles.

We read in the second book of Maccabees that the high-priest Onias and the prophet Jeremiah were seen, after their death, praying for the people; and we find in the Gemare that Caleb escaped from the hands of his pursuers, because he went to the tomb of his ancestors to ask them to intercede for him, that he might escape.*

Hence, the Jews believed that the intercession of the departed just was of some avail.

From the earliest times of their settlement in Palestine, the Israel-

* ites visited the tomb of Rachel, a primitive monument composed of twelve enormous stones, whereon every pilgrim inscribed his name; the tomb of Joseph, the saviour of his brethren—*whose bones prophesied*†—was likewise a place of prayer.

On the dispersion of the tribes, such immense crowds flocked to the sepulchral cave of Ezechiel, on the banks of the Chobar, where he had had his divine visions, that the Chaldeans, fearing lest these vast assemblages might conceal under the cloak of religion some political project, resolved to take the pilgrims by surprise, and disperse them at the point of the sword. A massacre would inevitably have followed, if the *dead* prophet had not wrought a miracle to save his people, by dividing the waters of the Chobar.‡ This sepulchre of a saint of Israel was surrounded by a superb edifice, and before it burned, day and night, a golden lamp, which the leaders of the captive people were charged to keep lit.§ It is now once more a mere cavern; but

* Wagenseil, *Excerpta ex Gem.*

† *Eccles.*, ch. xlix., v. 18.

‡ Benjamin of Toledo, *Itinerary*, p. 70-80.

§ Epiphan., *de Vitis Prophetarum*, v. ii., p. 241

still it is visited by all the Jews of Asia, who never pass through Bagdad without turning aside to pray there.

At the foot of Orontes, whose rich foliage waves over a thousand silvery streams which reflect the splendor of the Asiatic sun, there is a city—once royal and magnificent—lying extended amid ruined columns, prostrate temples, and mausoleums of red granite with inscriptions written in some language long unknown: it is Ecbatana, the ancient capital of the Medes, now the obscure Hamadan. At one of the extremities of the fallen city rises a brick monument, the door of which, according to the old sepulchral style of the country, is very small and made of one solid stone: it is the tomb of a young queen, fair and virtuous, who braved

death to save her people—the noble Esther, who was laid there on a bed of ivory overlaid with gold, embalmed in musk and amber, and wrapped in a shroud of Chinese silk,* beside the great Hebrew patriot Mardoचाई.† This illustrious tomb, which the Jews of Persia regard as a place of peculiar sanctity, and to which they repair in crowds at the time of the Feast of Phurim,‡ is still, and has been for two thousand years, the term of a pilgrimage.

In the Middle Ages, under the Saracen domination, the Arabs having threatened the Jews with a general massacre during a grievous drought which prevailed all over Syria and Palestine, if rain did not fall on a day appointed, they gathered in great numbers around the tomb of Zachary, which is still to be seen in

* "He built her a mausoleum after the manner of the Iranians (Iran was, before Cyrus, the true name of the vast kingdom which is now called Persia), filled her skull with musk and amber, wrapped her body in Chinese silk, placed her, as kings are placed, on a throne of ivory, and hung her crown above her; then they painted the door of the tomb red and blue." (Firdousi, *Book of Kings*, Kei Khosrou.)

† *Travels of Sir Robert Ker Porter in Persia and Armenia*. The present tomb of Esther and of Mardoचाई occupies the same

place as did the old, which was destroyed by Tamerlane.

‡ This festival, which was instituted at Suza by Mardoचाई and Esther, was solemnly celebrated on the 14th or 15th day of the month of Ader, which is our February moon. The Jews had formerly a custom of making a wooden cross on which they painted Aman, and dragged it through the city, so that every one might see it. They afterwards burnt it, and threw the ashes into the river. The emperor Theodosius forbade them to play this comedy, fearing that it might have reference to the death of Christ.

the vicinity of Jerusalem, fasted and prayed for several days in sackcloth and ashes, in order to obtain from God, through the intercession of that prophet, that he might save them from certain death by making it rain upon the earth.

The custom of applying to the living the merits of the dead, is of Hebrew origin; the proof of this is found in a liturgy of the synagogue of Venice. In the office entitled *Mazir nechamot* (*remembrance of souls*), we find a prayer conceived in the following terms: "Hear us, O Jehovah, for the sake of those who loved thee and are now no more; hear us, for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sara, Rachel," etc.

The invocation of saints is not, then, a *Catholic invention*.

Besides the saints, the Jews prayed to the angels, whom the ancient Arabs also invoked, and to whom

the Assyrians offered sacrifice, attributing to them charming functions on the earth.* Jacob confesses himself indebted to an angel for deliverance from the evils which threatened him, and beseeches him to bless his children: *Angelus qui eripuit me de cunctis malis benedicat pueris istis*.† This prayer is addressed to an angel. It is even thought that the Jews carried the worship of the angels too far, since they are suspected of adoring them.‡ This veneration, or worship, never ceased amongst the modern Jews till the time of the pretended Reformation, when they abandoned it in order to conciliate the German innovators. There exists in the Vatican library a Hebrew manuscript, containing a litany composed by R. Eliezer Hakalir, wherein is said to the angel Actariel: "Deliver Israël from all affliction, and quickly procure its redemption."

* Amongst the Persians, every month was under the protection of an angel; to the angels was confided the care of seas, rivers, springs, pastures, flocks, trees, herbs, fruits, flowers, and seeds; they also guided the stars; prayers were offered to the angels soliciting their protection in danger. The modern Persians still sacrifice to the angel of the moon. (Firdousi, *Book of Kings*.—Chardin, *Voyage en Perse*.)

† *Genesis* xlviii., v. 16.

‡ The author of the *Preaching of St. Peter*, which is very ancient, cited by St. Clement of Alexandria, makes that Apostle say that we must not adore God with the Jews, because, although they profess to acknowledge but one God, they adore the angels. (Clem. Alex., book v.)

Similar favors are asked of Barachiël, Wathiël, and other princes of the heavenly court. The litany ended by saying to Michaël, "Prince of mercy, pray for Israël, that it may be greatly exalted."

The tombs of the martyrs were early venerated by the Christians of Asia; the first to which pilgrimage was made was most probably that of St. John the Baptist, which, after the Holy Sepulchre and the tomb of the Blessed Virgin, is the most respected by Orientals of all creeds. The body of the precursor of the man-God was at Samaria, where it was visited by St. Paula in the fourth century, and his head, carefully embalmed by his disciples, was at Hems, whence it was transported to Damascus in the reign of Theodosius. It was placed in a superb church bearing the title of St. Zachary, which took, thenceforward, that of St. John. The caliph Abdelmelek took forcible possession of this

* church, and now the venerated tomb of him who was *a prophet and more than a prophet*, is inclosed within a Turkish mosque; but it is neither solitary nor without honor; the Mussulmans come there from all parts on pilgrimage, and the celebrated Saadi himself relates, in his Gulistan, that, going to pray there, he met with princes from Arabia. At the close of the first century, the faithful of Asia Minor were wont to repair in great numbers to Ephesus to visit the tomb of St. John the Evangelist, the dust of which, carefully gathered, was said to effect marvellous cures.*

St. Stephen, the first martyr, whose relics wrought so many miracles, as attested by St. Augustine, and who died before the Blessed Virgin, was likewise very early invoked by the primitive Christians, who also venerated the blessed remains of St. Ignatius and St. Polycarp.† St. Aster of Amasia has preserved to us, in a

* St. Augustine speaks of the miraculous cures wrought by dust from the tomb of St. John the Evangelist. There is now seen amongst the ruins of Ephesus, the church of St. John, of which the Turks had made a mosque.

† The history of the martyrdom of St. Polycarp, written in the form of a letter, in the name

of the church of Smyrna, by those who had themselves witnessed it, and addressed to the church of Philomel, contains these words: "We took from the fire his bones, more precious than gold or jewels, and we put them in a suitable place, where we hope to assemble every year to celebrate the festival of the Lord's martyr, to the

sermon on the martyrs, the prayer addressed by a Christian of the early days to a saint whose tomb she visited: "Thou didst invoke the martyrs before thou wert thyself a martyr; thou hast sought and found; be then liberal of the blessings which thou hast received."

Eusebius of Cæsarea, who flourished towards the end of the third century, defending our sacred dogmas against the sophisms of the idolaters, rests on the honors which they paid to their ancient heroes to justify the veneration of saints, and continues in these terms: "We honor as friends of God those who have fought for the true religion; we go to their tombs; we offer them our vows, professing to believe that through their intercession with God we are powerfully succored."*

These words of Eusebius, who, in his double capacity of bishop and historian, must necessarily have been well informed, clearly indicate an ancient usage, a custom approved by the Church and generally

end that those who come after us may be encouraged to prepare for similar combats." St. Polycarp consummated his sacrifice in the year 166, on the 23d of January, on which day the

received. On the other hand, Vigilantius and Arius, enemies of the veneration of saints, were openly treated as *innovators* and *heretics* by St. Epiphanius, St. Jerome, and St. Augustine. Now is it to be presumed that these great doctors would have dared to set down as heretics and *innovators* men who labored but to establish in its native purity the ancient doctrine of the Church? The word *innovators* explains all; and it must not be forgotten that Vigilantius lived at a period so near the times of the Apostles that there was between them and him not more than three generations!

St. Cyprian, who suffered martyrdom in Carthage in the year 261, shows us the Christians of Africa crowding to the glorious tombs of the martyrs, making a funeral repast there on the day of their anniversary, and so eager to invoke them that, not even waiting for their death, they went to solicit the prayers of those imprisoned confessors of the faith who had as yet survived

church of Smyrna kept his festival in the middle of the third century, as we see by the acts of St. Peter.

* *Prapar. Evang.*, b. xiii, ch. 7.

their torments.* St. John Chrysostom, on his side, asserts that in his time the tombs of the martyrs constituted the fairest ornament of royal cities; that the days which were consecrated to them were days of joy; that the great men of the empire, and even the emperor himself, laid aside the proud insignia of their power before they dared to cross the threshold of the sacred places which contained the revered sepulchres of the servants of the crucified God. . . . "How much more illustrious," exclaims the great Christian orator, "are the monuments erected to old men who were poor and humble while on earth, than the tombs of the mightiest kings! Around the tombs of kings reign silence and solitude; here do multitudes throng with prayer and homage."†

Behold, then, the worship of *dulia* (of saints), which Protestants style idolatrous and detestable—behold what it was in those ages which they themselves call the ages by excellence, *the pure ages*.‡

As to the worship of *hyperdulia*

(of the Blessed Virgin)—which, without being adoration—which God forbid!—is far superior to that of the saints—it commenced, apparently, at her very tomb. The Jewish doctors have preserved to us, in the Talmud, a historical fact long unknown, which establishes the high antiquity of this pious veneration so much blasphemed. A tradition of the Temple, recorded in their Toldos—that book wherein the Virgin is so grossly abused, and which they early circulated through Greece, Persia, and every place where it could at all injure Christianity—relates that the Nazarenes who came to pray at the tomb of the mother of Jesus underwent a violent persecution from the princes of the synagogue, and that a hundred Christians, kinsfolk of Jesus Christ, were put to death for having raised an oratory over her tomb.§ This act of barbarous fanaticism of which they boast, being quite conformable to their treatment of St. Stephen, St. James, and St. Paul, and the oratory erected over a venerated tomb being in no way ob-

* St. Cyprian, *Epist.* 28.

† St. Chrysost., *Hom.* 66 *ad pop. Antioch.*

‡ Daillé, *Latin Traditions*, b. iv., ch. 16.

§ *Toldos Huldr.*, p. 115.

noxious to their customs and traditions, this fact, it seems to us, may be regarded as authentic, even without any very great stretch of credulity.

Tradition, supported by religious monuments, asserts that the devotion to Mary is of Apostolic tradition. St. Peter, on his way to Antioch, raised, it is said, in one of the cities of ancient Phœnicia, an oratory to the Blessed Virgin, and gave it a solemn consecration; St. John the Apostle placed the beautiful church of Lydda under the invocation of his adoptive mother; the first church of Milan was dedicated to Mary by St. Barnabas the Apostle. Our Lady of the Pillar, in Spain, and Our Lady of Carmel, in Syria, dispute the priority with these churches, and their claims are bolder, but more contestable. According to Spanish tradition,* the Blessed Virgin appeared to St. James, before her death, on the banks of the Ebro, and commanded him to build a church on that spot. According to the Syrian tradition, the prophet Agabus, the same who predicted the famine which took

place under Claudius, erected also in the Virgin's lifetime, that church which is seen from so far at sea, and where pilgrims and travellers of all religions and of every region receive, in the name of Mary, such affecting hospitality. Without disputing the antiquity of these two sanctuaries, very venerable indeed, and justly revered by all nations, we must be permitted to say that it is very unlikely that the Blessed Virgin, the humblest of the daughters of Eve, would have solicited the Apostles, during her lifetime, to build churches in her honor. That the gratitude of nations and the piety of the Apostles may have erected them after her death, is both simple and natural, but that she gave orders for any during her life, is extremely doubtful.

As to the oratory of Carmel, Flavius Josephus, who particularly mentions the disciples of Elias in connection with Vespasian (to whom one of them promised the empire), nowhere says that they were then converted to Christianity, and the contrary is inferred from his recital. This negative authority is very important.

* *Cronologia sacra . . . al ano 35 de Cristo.*

First Period of the Devotion to Mary.

BEFORE CONSTANTINE.

CHAPTER II.

THE EAST—IDOLS.



AS we have already observed, the devotion to the Mother of God had its origin at her very tomb, and the first lamp lighted in honor of Mary was a sepulchral lamp, around which the Christians of Jerusalem came to pray. This, it would seem, did not last long; the Synagogue—oppressive, like all dominations beset by the fear of sudden overthrow, and suspicious, like all who are conscious of evil-doing—became alarmed at the simple homage rendered to the mother of the young prophet whom it had not only refused, after all his miracles, to acknowledge as the Messiah, but audaciously crucified, as a seditious man and an impostor, between two thieves. It extinguished the lamps, silenced the

* hymns, and mercilessly killed the first servants of Mary,—so, at least, we are informed by the Synagogue itself, and we know that it was very capable of doing it. This was done a little through fanaticism, a little through self-love, and a little through fear. The Jewish authorities would not that that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had unjustly condemned to an ignominious death, should arise, he and his, from the obloquy of the Golgotha. It was annoying to hear that the Galilean whom they called a son of Belial, and whose miracles they treated as vain illusions, was truly God, and his mother a great Saint; and then it feared that this new worship, connected with the religion of the tombs, and supported by the incontestable miracles wrought by the Apostles in Jerusalem, might operate injuriously on the fickle mind

of the multitude, and provoke a dangerous reaction in favor of the crucified prophet. In fine, as it frankly acknowledged to Peter and John, it had no wish to be called on by the people to account for the blood of Jesus.

For all these reasons, the senators and chief priests took another step on the slippery road of guilt, in order to justify the abominable sentence which they had wrung from the Roman, and they openly boasted of having stifled in the bud the devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Their iniquitous hopes were defeated. The most furious tyrants, even when most implicitly obeyed in the gloomy caprices of their cruelty, cannot kill remembrance—that flower of the soul which blooms, mysterious and consoling, in the inaccessible region of ideas, and is but rooted the more firmly by the wind of persecution. The memory of the Virgin-mother resisted this Jewish hurricane; people sang no more in her grotto, but they went there to weep, and the tears which

devotion sheds are equal to the incense of Saba, which, itself, trickles like tears from the pierced bark.

Violently uprooted by the sacrilegious hands of the princes of the reprobate people of God, the veneration of Mary was transplanted by the Apostles to the still idolatrous land of the stranger. In their own lifetime they saw it beginning to appear in Syria, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Egypt, and Spain. It is true that this devotion, so tender and so poetical, which was to replace the impure and seductive worship of the divinities of Olympus, shone, at first, but like a small star on the zenith of a few cities; for Christianity was, in the beginning, only the religion of cities, and of the common people in those cities. Paganism, repudiated by all serious minds, despised by philosophers, ridiculed on the stage, where men publicly read “The last will and testament of Jupiter, deceased,” and scoffed at in the true Voltairian style by the young Epicureans of the imperial court,* retained, never-

* Most people are familiar with the sarcastic jest of that courtier of Nero, who, being scolded and threatened by an old priestess for having

killed one of her sacred geese, threw her two gold pieces, saying, “There, you can buy both gods and geese.”

theless, an incredible number of partisans; connected with numerous interests, defended by prejudice and by ancient superstitions, attractive from the splendor of its festivals, and mingled with every glorious recollection, it still dazzled, though on its decline. Proud of its advantages, it did not, at first, condescend to fear "the carpenter's son" and the young "spinner of Nazareth."* How could it fear them? it saw them not. The religion of the poor God and his holy Mother advanced, noiselessly, by the rough and toilsome medium of the people; it addressed itself especially to the artisan, the woman, the slave—to all, in fine, who were weak and lowly, and oppressed by pagan society—that society so profoundly selfish, so avaricious, so effeminate and corrupt, and withal brilliant and cold as its marble gods.

It was soon perceived that the moral world—that old decrepit Titan—was growing young again under the mighty, though secret, influence of a regenerating charm. What magician had restored to that new

* See Celsus.

Æson the fresh, warm blood of its earlier years? What new Prometheus had scaled the heights of heaven to bring down to man, frozen to death by selfishness, a spark of the sacred fire? For there was no overlooking the fact that society was pregnant of something strange and grand which was to restore its pristine loveliness and strength; it was becoming again, to all appearance, what it was in the days so lamented by Horace, when it despised pomp, honored the gods, and esteemed poverty as an honor. Invisible, but persevering hands seemed already to have raised from their ruins, where they lay beneath the grass of ages, the altar of chastity and the austere temples of Faith, Honor, and Virtue. Beneficence, long unhonored with the smoke of sacrifice, in the frantic pursuit of material pleasures, began once more, it seems, to be mysteriously respected. The old equality of the age of Saturn re-appeared here and there on the earth. In fine, Humanity bore in her arms the children whom the elegant matrons of pagan society exposed on the banks of the river, in the depths of the forest, and on

the verge of the precipice, where the eagles, dogs, and wild beasts tore them to pieces.* Charity, sustaining with one vigorous arm the old man panting under his load of toil, extended the other to the infirm creatures abandoned on the steps of the temples. O gods of Greece! wandering gods, who were sheltered beneath the cottage-roof of Philemon and Baucis, did you again traverse the earth to restore thereon the fair reign of virtue? Not so, for you were, as the Scriptures say, deaf gods, powerless gods, blind gods,—or, rather, you were nothing.

Behold! In the midst of that society—luxurious, effeminate, crowned with roses, drinking to the gods of Olympus from golden cups—there are seen, here and there, groups of persons with noble aspect and austere demeanor, who avert their eyes from those pagan orgies with indig-

* Philo gives details of this abominable custom of exposing helpless abandoned children, which are enough to make one's hair stand on end. It was only the Jews who then condemned this barbarous practice.

† The vestals bore the name of *Amatæ*, in memory of Amata, the first Roman virgin who was consecrated to the worship of Vesta. (Aulu-Gell., b. i, ch. 12.)

‡ The austere chastity of the Christian women

nation mingled with ridicule. . . . Can these be Stoic philosophers? No; for they give a tear of pity to the supplicating poor, while placing in their hand the liberal alms, concealing themselves as they do so. Can that be a vestal, that young maiden who walks, with folded hands and eyes cast down, beside her mother, veiled like herself? No; for she has neither the embroidered zone nor the purple-bordered robes of the *amatæ*,† and modesty is her only ornament. Those youthful widows who light no more the hymeneal torch,‡ whilst the great ladies of paganism reckon on their divorces by consulates,§ whence come they? And those young men who bow with reverence before the aged, blush like young maidens, and yet, in war, are brave as lions, who are they? They are not seen in the theatre, they fre-

excited the admiration of the pagans themselves. St. John Chrysostom mentions that the famous sophist Libanius, from whom he took lessons in oratory, hearing from him that his mother had been left a widow at twenty, and would never take a second husband, exclaimed, turning to his idolatrous audience, "O gods of Greece! what women are found amongst these Christians!" (*Sancti Chrysostomi vita.*)

§ Seneca, *Treatise on Favors*, b. iii.

quent not the circus, they figure not in the pagan festivals with garlands of flowers or baskets of sacred fruit on their heads, and pass by the stately temples of Greece and Rome without entering. The sight of a sacrifice makes them fly, and they quickly shake off from their dark cloaks the drops of purifying water which fall on them by chance. Finally, they prefer to die rather than touch the meats offered to the gods. Can these men be impious, they whose hands close with gold the gaping wounds of misery, whose lives are the mirror of propriety? No; for they assemble thrice in the day, and sometimes in the night,* to pray in common, with uplifted hands, to an unknown God; and, on the altar of their ancient household deities, where the lamp still burns,† may be seen the graceful

image of a young Asiatic woman, half-veiled in a light blue drapery,‡ holding in her arms a Divine Infant. That woman, with the calm, deep eyes, is the Inspirer of chastity, modesty, devotion, mercy; the Guardian of honor, the Protectress of *home*—in a word, that sweet Virgin Mary to whom the Greeks have given the beautiful name of *Panagia*, which means *all holy*.

Asia claims the honor of having placed the first oratory and chapel under the invocation of Mary. The most ancient of these shrines was Our Lady of Tortosa, which St. Peter himself founded, according to the Eastern traditions, on the coasts of Phœnicia. These early Syrian churches were, at first, but very simple structures, with cedar roofs and latticed windows. The altar was turned towards the west, like

* The first Christians met to pray at the house of Terce, Sext, and None, as mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles; they passed the night in prayer on the eve of great festivals, singing hymns in honor of Jesus Christ, as St. Basil and Socrates testify.

† The gods that were indiscriminately named Lares or Penates were the tutelary gods of houses. They had their own distinct worship. Wine and incense were offered to them; they were crowned with flowers, and a lamp was kept

burning before their little statues. There was found, under ground, in Lyons, in 1505, a copper lamp with two sockets, the chain sealed in a piece of marble, bearing this inscription:

Laribus sacrum.

P. F. Romum—

which signifies, *Publicæ felicitati Romanorum*.

‡ In the oldest pictures of the Virgin, being those painted on wood, whose high antiquity is indisputable, she wears almost always a blue veil.

that of Jerusalem, and during the day a wooden screen concealed the sanctuary, in memory of the famous veil of the Holy of Holies. There were crosses in those churches; and there were also, at a very early period, pictures of Mary; for tradition relates that her image was painted on one of the pillars in the beautiful church of Lydda, which had been dedicated to her by her adopted son, and that St. Luke presented to the cathedral of Antioch a portrait of the Virgin painted by himself. This image, to which the Mother of God was believed to have attached signal graces, became so famous that the Empress Pulcheria had it brought to Constantinople, where she built a magnificent church to place it in.

Edessa, the capital city of that king Abgarus who was on the point of making war on the Jews to revenge the death of our Lord, and who was only prevented from doing so through fear of the Romans, their masters, as Eusebius tells us, had also, in the 1st century, its church of Our Lady, adorned with a mirac-

ulous image. Egypt boasts of having had, about the same time, Our Lady of Alexandria, and Saragossa, in Spain, then called Caesar Augusta, its famous shrine of Our Lady of the Pillar. But nowhere was the devotion to Mary carried on with such enthusiastic fervor as in Asia Minor. Ephesus, where the memory of the Blessed Virgin was still fresh and vivid, soon built in honor of Mary the Miriam, a superb cathedral, wherein was held, in the 5th century, the famous council which confirmed her proud title of Mother of God.

This example was followed from one end of the immense Roman provinces to the other. Phrygia, having become Christian, consigned to oblivion those Trojan gods sung by Homer; Cappadocia suffered those sacred fires to die away which the Persians had kindled side by side with the elegant temples of the Grecian deities; and the caverns whose gloomy vaults had so recently witnessed the bloody mysteries of Mithra* became, during the religious persecutions—which nowhere broke

* The worship of Mithra, before it reached Greece or Rome, had passed from Persia into

Cappadocia, where Strabo, who travelled there, says that he saw a great number of the priests

out with greater fury than amongst those Greek colonies—a place of refuge for the Christians and their proscribed God. At length, the gods of Greece, those indigenous deities, sprung from the sparkling foam of the Ægean sea, born under the still-existing palms of the Cyclades, or cradled in the shade of the woods which crown the lofty mountains of Crete—were abandoned for the God who died on Calvary, and the humble Virgin of Nazareth; so truly, so entirely abandoned, that Pliny the younger, on his arrival in Bythinia, of which province he had been named governor, wrote to Trajan that Christianity had not only invaded the cities, but the rural districts, so much so that he had found the temples of the gods of the empire completely deserted.*

Asia Minor possessed, from the earliest times, miraculous images of Our Lady. The two most famous were that of Didynia, where St.

of Mithra. The mysteries of Mithra, which were celebrated in the depth of caverns, were something horrible, according to the holy Fathers. Human victims were there sacrificed, as appears from a fact mentioned by Socrates in his "Ecclesiastical History," viz., that the Christians of Alexandria having

* Basil, during the reign of Julian, went to pray for the afflicted Church, and that of Sosopoli, an image painted on wood, from which there oozed out a marvellous oil, which effected the astonishing cures referred to in the second Council of Nice.

Greece, that brilliant land of arts and letters, was not more tardy in honoring Mary. In the time of St. Paul, Corinth—where Greek liberty, like an expiring lamp, had given one last brilliant flash—was converted almost entirely to Christianity. The faithful met, at first, in the spacious halls of private houses, where the Virgin was solemnly invoked. By degrees the temples of Paganism were deserted, and after the lapse of a hundred years the curious traveller made his way alone up the steep sides of the Acro-Ceraunes to visit the Temple of Venus, whose lofty porticoes, rising above the surrounding sea of

discovered a den which had been long closed up, and in which the Mithraic mysteries were said to have been formerly celebrated, they found therein human skulls and bones, which they took out to show to the people of that great city.

* Pliny, lib. x., Epist. 97.

green foliage, were traced on the Grecian sky, so deeply, darkly blue. The protecting goddess of the Corinthians had been dethroned by the holy woman who re-established in that effeminate country modesty, so long unknown, and maternity, so long despised. Thanks to her, the pure pleasures of the domestic circle, the touching joys of home, were easily substituted for the shameful disorders, the gigantic orgies, the depraved morals of that small republic which had ever led the van in the march of corruption. Corinth transfigured became a Christian Sparta, and the eulogy pronounced on its Church by St. Clement, the pope, towards the end of the 1st century, gives a marvellous idea of its fervor.

Arcadia, whose forests were peopled with rural gods—and where every grotto, every murmuring spring had its altar—likewise abjured, though not so promptly, the worship of Pan and the Naiads for the veneration of the humble Virgin, whose divine Child was pleased to receive his first homage from simple shepherds. But as ancient superstitions are more difficult to

eradicate from rural districts than from any other places, it was long believed in the Arcadian hamlets that Diana still followed the chase in the depth of the great woods of Menales and Lyceum. Young and credulous shepherdesses, divided between the Christian faith and their ancestral superstitions, sometimes imagined that they saw, by the flickering light of the moon, fair white Dryads amongst the trees, Naiads bending pensively over the springs, or playful elves dancing on the buttercups and daisies in the meadows. But, about the time of Constantine, the Blessed Virgin had definitely prevailed over deified nature; and the numerous churches bearing her name, which still adorn the rustic scenes of the land of the ancient Pelages, attest the profound devotion of the Arcadians to the Virgin-mother.

Elida, too, very early built a church in honor of the Blessed Virgin on the banks of its romantic river, the Alpheus, and as it was surrounded by noble vineyards, it received the name of Our Lady of Grapes.

Macedonia preceded Greece prop-

er in the veneration of Mary. Thessalonica had a bishopric even in the time of the Apostles, and its church was a superb edifice with jasper columns, dedicated by the pious Macedonians to the Blessed Virgin; this structure is still to be seen, but the Turks have converted it into a mosque.*

Nero, travelling in the Peloponnesus, did not dare to cross the frontiers of Laconia; the stern gloom of Sparta inspired him with fear. The mild, sweet Virgin of Galilee was more valiant than Cæsar; she passed the Eurotas, which hides its waves under rose-bays, and presented herself to the people of Leonidas, whose ancient virtue was preserved in the bitter but invigorating waters of poverty. She was welcomed with enthusiasm, and that brave people hastened to build the fairest church of Greece in honor of that young foreign Virgin who came to teach the daughters of Sparta to cast down their eyes.

Ever since that time Mary reigns in Sparta with absolute power; for her are culled the earliest violets that bloom by the Eurotas' stream;

* *Wheeler's Travels.*

† it is before her image, rudely painted in red and blue on the walls of their dwellings, that the young Lacedæmonians nightly light a lamp of clay or bronze; a pious act which is duly noticed when the Grecian women pronounce the funeral eulogium of the dead. Finally, the inhabitants of Laconia substituted the name of CHRIST and the Virgin wherever their ancestors introduced the name of Jupiter in affirmation, and this oath has become of such common use that even the Turks of Misistra, prior to the Greek revolution, instead of swearing by Allah and by Mahomet, like the other Mussulmans, swore, like the Greeks of Sparta, by the Blessed Virgin.†

Athens, the elegant and learned, celebrated for its monuments, the finest in the world, and its schools, which were frequented by the flower of the studious youth of Europe and Asia—Athens was slower in being converted to Christianity than the other countries of Greece. From the earliest times, however, it had had a bishop and a church dedicated to Mary, Our Lady Spiliotissa, or Our Lady of the Grotto; but Poly-

† Pouqueville, *Voyage en Morée*, t. 1er.

theism was sheltered under the brilliant æg's of Minerva, and Athens was at the same time full of Christian churches and of idols. It was in one of these churches that Julian filled the office of Lector, by command of the Emperor Constantius; but it was in the Parthenon that he was to plan the revival of idolatry, while reading Homer.

That the devotion to the Blessed Virgin had a powerful influence on the spread of the Gospel in Greece and in Asia, is a fact which the habits and tastes of the Levantines would have rendered probable even were it not attested, before all the bishops of the East, by St. Cyril, at the first Council of Ephesus, in a discourse which is still extant. "Hail, Mary, Mother of God!" said that holy and learned bishop; "it is through you that, in the cities, the towns, and the islands of those who have received the true faith,

* numerous churches have been founded!"*

Beyond the great sea, several tribes of Arabs were converted to Christianity, and greatly honored Mary, the Sultana of Heaven, as they still call her. Seated in the shade of the date-trees or tamarinds, which flourish best on the margin of brackish streams, and inhaling with delight the freshness which the night brings in those burning regions,† the story-tellers of the Christian tribes, by the light of those eternal lamps of God which they suppose fastened by chains of gold to the vault of the firmament,‡ related the principal facts in the life of the Blessed Virgin, coloring them with that marvellous tint so pleasing to the sons of Ishmael. They told, according to the Arab gospel of the holy childhood and the traditions of the desert, how the holy angels came to bring to the Virgin,

* S. Cyr. Alex. *Oper.*, t. v., p. 2.

† Whilst the sun is above the horizon, and as the heat is excessive in their climate, the Arabs most generally prefer to remain under their tents. They go out at the approach of sunset, and then enjoy the charms of a lovelier sky and cooler air. The night is partly for them what the day is for us. Hence their

poets never extol the charms of a fine day; but the words, "Leili! leili! O night! O night!" are repeated in all their songs. (Sav., note on the 7th ch. of the *Koran*.)

‡ The first sky is of pure silver; it is from its beautiful vault that the stars are suspended with strong chains of gold. (*Koran, the Legend of Mahomet*, by Savary, p. 15.)

in the temple where Zachary, her guardian, had placed her, delicious dates, amber grapes, figs sweeter than honey, and odorous flowers gathered in the celestial gardens where limpid streams and green trees abound; for Paradise, in warm climates, is always composed of fresh waters and cool shades. And there, they recite, in their own peculiar style, the prodigies of the birth of Jesus, which they still call (Muslimans as they have since become) *al Milad*—the birth by excellence. They placed the scene in the desert, on the banks of a stream and at the foot of a withered palm-tree, which was suddenly covered with leaves and fruit at the bidding of the angel Gabriel, whom God had sent to console Mary. These marvellous tales increasing their veneration for the Blessed Virgin, they believed, in time, that they might adore in heaven her whom angels had served on earth, and they offered her, in fact, oblations of cakes made of flour and

* honey; hence their name of *collyridians*, from the Greek word *collyre* (cake). St. Epiphanius warmly rebukes them for this worship, which exceeded the prescribed limits, explaining to them that oblation and sacrifice are only to be offered to God.

On the other hand, the idolatrous Arabs had placed the image of Mary in the Caaba, amongst the angels, whom they represented under the figure of young women, and called *the daughters of God*.^{*} Mary, whom they had made the sister of those pure spirits, came in for a share of the divine honors paid to them. They sacrificed to her victims adorned with leaves and flowers; they offered to her the first of their crops, together with the first dates from their trees, and, in golden vases, the frothy milk of the sacred camels.[†] The image of the Blessed Virgin with the Divine Child in her arms remained in the Temple of Mecca till the time of

* Geladeddin, note on the 16th ch. of the *Koran*.

† The idolatrous Arabs had several she-camels consecrated to the gods of the Caaba; the cream of their milk served to make libations.

(Savary, in a note on the 5th ch. of the *Koran*.) The inhabitants of Mecca offered one portion of their fruits and of their flocks to God, another to their idols. (Geladeddin, note on the 6th ch. of the *Koran*.)

Mahomet, who had it removed with the genii and the angels.

The holy name of Mary began to be invoked amongst the nations who dwell between the Caspian and the Euxine seas; but the shrines of Judea and the scenes of the Redemption were, alas! profaned

by Greek and Syrian idols which were only overthrown under Constantine. The statue of Jupiter was sacrilegiously raised on the spot where the weeping Mary saw Jesus crucified, and it was to Adonis that sacrifice was offered in the cave of Bethlehem.

CHAPTER III.

THE WEST—THE CATACOMBS.



HE sacred vine of Christianity already flourished in Asia so as to extend its branches over a multitude of nations;* but it did not take root so quickly in the West. Rome, thoroughly idolatrous—Rome, drunk with the blood of martyrs, which she shed like water—Rome

protected Polytheism with all her power, and her power extended over an entire world! In the East, a mysterious sign, which made Satan tremble in the depth of the fiery abyss, announced that the kingdom of God was near; but in Italy and the regions beyond the Alps, Christianity was, as yet, in the condition of a secret society; people were received into its ranks with all manner of caution and

* We learn from Arnobus and Eusebius that the Gospel, during the three first centuries, had spread far beyond the limits of the Roman empire, amongst the Persians, the Parthians, the

Scythians, and many other nations whom they do not name. (Arnob., *Adv. Gentes*, lib. ii., chapter 12.—Euseb., *Demonstr. Evang.* l. iii., ch. 5.)

even mystery; its members recognized each other by certain signs; and, doubtless, the sign of the Cross, the origin of which is unknown, was one of those mysterious signs, which revealed an unknown Christian to his brethren scattered through the crowd. It was not that the Christians were so few in the regions of the West; they were already sufficiently numerous to form armies; but persecuted by idolatrous governors, tracked like wild beasts, and finding no protection in the Roman laws, which recognized only to punish them, they lived isolated "as drops upon the grass, as a dew from the Lord, which waiteth not for man, nor tarrieth for the children of men."*

The first Latin churches were domestic chapels, and the first altars, portable wooden chests like

the Ark, having the same form and the same iron rings.† Those primitive churches of Rome, which were in existence before the arrival of St. Paul, were composed chiefly of Greeks and converted Jews; but the Roman people soon heard speak of that new law which said that all men are brethren, that they are all equals, and ought to love each other. They found this holy law both fair and good; they wished to follow it, and came in crowds to receive the regenerating waters of baptism. "It was then perceived," says Tacitus, "that Rome contained an incredible number of Christians."‡ The pagan priests were troubled; Nero, emperor and supreme pontiff, took the alarm, and the persecutions commenced.§

They assembled, at first, wherever they could, as St. Justin the

* Micheas, ch. v., v. 7.

† One of these altars, whereon St. Peter was thought to have celebrated the divine mysteries, and which Pope St. Sylvester inclosed under the high altar of St. John of Lateran, was examined on the 29th of March, 1658, under Alexander VII., by the Chevalier Baromini, in concert with the chief sacristan of the church; it is four palms long, by eight wide. Its form is that of a chest. The altar was moved from place to place by means of several rings.

‡ Tacitus, *Annal.*, lib. xv., ch. 44.

§ This first persecution had for a pretext the burning of Rome, of which Nero accused the Christians, though it was his own act; it was extremely cruel; they clothed the Christians with garments soaked in pitch, or some other combustible matter; they then set fire to them, so that they served as torches during the night, Nero had a festival on the occasion, in his gardens, where he drove his chariots by the light of those fatal flames. (See *Eccles. Hist.*, v. i., p. 98.)

Martyr said when asked by the prefect of Rome where the Christians were accustomed to meet; but the halls and upper chambers of private houses becoming too small, and the scrutiny of the senate daily more rigorous, it became necessary to seek a temple vast enough to contain a great multitude of people, and so hidden as to escape the eyes of that host of spies which then infested the empire, not unlike one of the plagues of Egypt. Some bold-hearted Christians proposed the Catacombs. Therein were found vast and gloomy halls, interminable avenues, "where the darkness was so profound," says St. Jerome, "that it seemed as though one went down alive into the sepulchre, and the walls around were sheeted with mouldering bodies." This labyrinth of coffins, from which there appeared no egress, and where any one venturing in without a guide was sure to perish—those dreary vaults, where all was silence, fear and death, had no terrors for the first Christians of Rome. On the sabbath-day, then first called Sunday, they assembled in that dismal metropolitan church to read the writings of

* the Apostles or the Prophets; then, they offered up, on an altar of unhewn stone, the sacrifice of bread and wine, which was preceded by a sermon, and followed by a collection for the poor."* Some rude frescoes, representing the Saviour or Mary, which are still to be seen, half effaced, in the Catacombs of Naples and of Rome, were the sole decoration of this place of prayer, whose congregation consisted of ten *dead* and one *living* generation. What a temple! Instead of golden vases, there were wooden cups! instead of the Roman lamps of massive silver, there were flaring torches! instead of martial spoils, there were the fearful trophies of the angel of death! Behind, before, and all around the spot where the faithful assembled, were endless subterraneous avenues, where distant torches gleamed from time to time, and veiled figures were seen moving, looking more like spectres than human beings! Beneath was the dust of a republic which had carried off its virtues in the folds of its great shroud: terror within; and without, in case of discovery, was the amphi-

* *Apolog. S. Just.*

theatre, red with the blood of martyred Christians!

When we come to reflect on these things, we ask ourselves in amazement, what intrepid heroes were they who braved these horrors? . . . Those heroes, who thus braved death and terror, were ignorant men who had grown up amid the auguries, the signs, and the thousand superstitious fears of paganism; they were timid virgins, *wont to bloom far from the world like solitary roses*; * fair and rich patricians, served by legions of slaves, who slept on beds of massive gold, eat from tables of citron-wood, inhabited apartments ceiled with ivory, and trod but on flags of marble strewed with gold or silver dust; young men, wrapt up in rich scarlet cloaks, and bearing such names as *Anicius, Olibrius, Probus, Gracchus* †—in a word, the flower of the Roman patricians; knights,

who might be known by their equestrian ring, great officers of the palace, tribunes of the people, favorites and kinsmen of Cæsar, whose sons were appointed to succeed him in the empire. ‡ . . . Who else? Imperial princesses who traversed by night, escorted by some faithful slaves, the *atrium* of their gilded palace on Mount Palatine, and glided like spirits out of the city of Romulus, to go worship the *Galilean* in the Catacombs—the Galilean so despised and ridiculed by the haughty pagan aristocracy—and to invoke that sweet Virgin Mary for whom the noble descendants of the Gracchi and the Scipios abandoned their favorite temple of Juno Lucina. §

If the Tiber overflowed, or the rain failed, or an earthquake happened, and the Roman people, to avert these disasters, cried out, ac-

* S. Ambr., *de Virg.*, lib. i., ch. 6.

† See Prudentius in his two books against Symmachus. According to that author, the family of Anicius was the first patrician family that embraced Christianity in Rome.

‡ Flavius Clement, cousin-germain of Domitian, whose two sons had been appointed by the Emperor himself as his successors, was put to death as a Christian shortly after

the expiration of his consulate. The princess Domitilla, his wife, a Christian like himself, was banished to an island. (*Hist. Eccles.*, t. i., p. 105.)

§ The temple of Juno Lucina was frequented in preference to any other by the great ladies of Rome; prostitutes were forbidden to enter; it was in this temple that mothers prayed especially for the advantageous marriage of their daughters.

according to custom, "The Christians to the lions!"* they brought before the altar coffins filled with bones gathered in the amphitheatre. Thereupon, a song of triumph, softly chanted, arising from the bosom of the earth, went up to mingle with the continued noise of the waters brought in by the aqueducts over the walls of Rome, and the low, sweet murmur of the tall Italian poplars, which sounds like the rippling of streams. Often would the bishop, a saintly old man, leaning on a crooked stick—true emblem of his pastoral charge—rebuke the deserters who came over from the camp of wealth to worship the poor King, for a lingering attachment to Roman luxury. He told the great ladies, who stood pensively listening, that it became not Christian women to wear in rings and in bracelets "the substance of a thousand poor." Some days after, a daughter of the Anicii was asked what had become of her jewels; the poor of her neighborhood, both pagan and Christian, might have answered, showing bread and gold! Or perchance he spoke of slavery; and, on the morrow, it

was everywhere told in wonder that a prefect of the palace had just set free fifteen hundred slaves. There it was that charity was taught; and what charity that was! "Almsgiving is a mystery," said the priest of Jesus Christ; "when you do it, close your doors."

And then, on going forth from these assemblies where fervor was renewed, poor toiling women went and took up from off the banks of the Tiber the helpless infants left there by pagan ladies of rank; the patricians set apart a portion of their palaces for hospitals; and the young Christian nobles undertook distant voyages to succor their brethren in Africa or Asia. These acts of charity, of abnegation, of devotion, astonished the pagans, to whom they were wholly unaccountable.†

The noble matrons of Rome then wore images of Mary engraved on emeralds, cornelians, or sapphires, and, dying, bequeathed them to their daughters as symbols of their faith. Galla, the widow of Symmachus, had a superb church erected, long after, to deposit therein one of these precious stones, the relic of a

* *Apolog.* Tertullian.

† *Lucianus, de Morte Peregrini.*

persecuted faith; the workmanship of this stone was so fine that it was thought to have come from a hand more than human, and was venerated as a gift from heaven.*

Besides these religious ornaments which served those Christian women as distinctive marks, they exposed, amid flowers, on the domestic altar where the *lares* had so long reigned, miniature figures in gold or silver, representing Jesus Christ, the Virgin, and the Apostles. These statuettes, the discovery of which brought a whole family to the amphitheatre, were usually so small that they could be put out of sight on the first alarm, and even concealed on the person.†

A little later, private chapels received the bodies of martyrs, which were clothed in costly white gar-

ments and inclosed in magnificent marble tombs. During the last persecutions, Aglaé, a fair and wealthy Roman matron, sent for these holy relics as far as Bithynia, where the Roman governors—who traded in every thing, even dead bodies—sold them at a high price.‡

In the interval between one persecution and another, the Christians gathered their dead into cemeteries outside the walls of Rome, and went thither frequently to pray. The walls of these cemeteries painted in fresco, represented Jesus Christ on his tribunal, in the majestic and severe attitude which becomes the sovereign Judge of men; near him, Mary, veiled in the Roman style, stood ready to implore his mercy for sinners.§

* Astolfi, *Delle Imagini Miracolose*.

† M. Kaoul-Rochette attributes the invention of these little statues to the Gnostics; but the Gnostics themselves make them go back much farther than their sect. According to all appearance, this custom was established amongst the patricians of Rome first converted to Christianity. The images of Jesus Christ, of the Virgin, and the Apostles, were substituted for those of *Fortune* and several other divinities, which were placed, crowned with flowers, on the altar of the *Lares*; they were small enough to be concealed about the person in case of necessity. One of these statuettes, representing Harpoc-

rates, god of Silence, has been found in Bretagne; it was of gold, and about two inches in height.—(See *Hist. Eccles. de Bretagne*, t. iii., page 358.) We know, moreover, that the ancients hung around their neck, or fastened to their clothes, little images of *Fortune*. Hence came the custom of wearing madonnas, crosses, and other sacred images in gold or precious stones. Being unable to destroy this ancient custom, the Church, in her wisdom, changed its object.

‡ Simplician, governor of Cilicia, sold to the servants of the martyr Bonifacius, the body of their master for five hundred gold crowns.

§ A very ancient painting in the cemetery of

During the halcyon days of the reign of Alexander Severus, the Christians of Rome, knowing that that prince honored Jesus Christ, whose image he had placed in his *lararium*, amongst the holy souls,* and counting on the support of his mother, the Empress Mamea, who was a Christian, demanded and obtained, notwithstanding the clamorous opposition of the pagan priests, permission to erect a church on a waste spot which had long been encumbered with mouldering ruins. This was the first that reared its cross beside the marble fanes of the gods of the empire; it was dedicated to Mary, and took the name of Our Lady beyond the Tiber.

Christianity, violently oppressed in Italy, was cruelly persecuted in the Gauls, where it progressed but very slowly, according to Sulpicius Severus, who wrote in the 4th century. Nevertheless, there were a few bishoprics established so early as the 3d century, amongst others that of Lyons, where St. Pothin had introduced the veneration of Mary; and

* missionaries, amongst whom were even Roman knights, went all over the Gauls. But these sowers of the Gospel often fell beneath the impious sword of the idolatrous governors—who hunted them like wild beasts†—before their task was tully accomplished. Their labors, however, though unfinished, were not lost; their generous blood fertilized the soil which they had cleared, and in after times other laborers came in to reap what they had sowed.

The island of Britain boasts of having preceded the Gauls in its conversion to Christianity, and, if we may believe its most ancient chronicles, it had the first Christian king. Venerable Bede relates that, in the time of the emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, a prince named Lucius asked of Pope Eleutherus two Italian missionaries to evangelize the little kingdom which he governed for the Romans. His request was graciously received, and two apostolic men, to whom the Gauls subsequently erected al-

St. Calixtus, in Rome, still represents the Blessed Virgin in this costume.

* Lamprid., in *Alex. Sev.*, ch. 29-31.

† "You have escaped us, then, if you be a Christian," said Heraclius to St. Symphorian, "for but few of them now remain."

tars,* went to preach the Gospel to the native tribes of Great Britain, then divided between Druidism—still in its prime—and the *gods of the Cæsars*. God blessed their efforts: the Britons, still in a semi-barbarous state, went forth in crowds from their bee-hive-like huts to hear them. Sometimes, in the midst of the desert and stony heath where they went to seek the sectaries of Esus, collected by the pale moonlight† for some secret sacrifice, a young priestess of the Celts having listened attentively to the divine doctrine, leaning against an aged oak, suddenly let fall the golden sickle that was to have cut the mistletoe—that sacred plant which grew out of the furrowed bark of the oak—and bowing down before the minister of Christ, her fair tresses still bound with the sacerdotal wreath, she cried out in trembling accents, “I am a Christian!” whereupon, the priest, taking water from the still worshiped spring, ad-

* ministered the regenerating sacrament of Baptism to the young and stately neophyte, who gave up her proud title of *Uhheldedu* (sublimity) for the sweet strange name of Mary.‡

During the persecution of Dioclesian, according to the best authorities, Christianity crossed the double wall which separated the Britons, politically enervated by their conquerors, from their wild and restless neighbors of the North. The island of Britain, where Roman civilization flourished like a pale and forced exotic, had cities adorned with baths, palaces of marble, temples radiant with gold, side by side with dreary wastes of sand and rock, and thick primeval woods; but Caledonia, whither the eagle of the Cæsars had not yet penetrated, was still the land of foam and flood, of rock and torrent, having no other worship than a half-effaced Druidism, mingled with German superstitions. All was hazy and indistinct, like

* Harpissfield, *Hist.*, lib. i., ch. 3.

† The Gauls and the insular Britons assembled only by night in their temples, when the moon was in her first quarter, or at her full; this traditional custom dates from the most re-

mote antiquity. (*Hist. Eccles. de Bret.*, t. iv., p. 540.)

‡ The Venerable Bede asserts in his *Ecclesiastical History*, that, at this remote period, a great number of Druids became Christians.

a landscape veiled in mist. The Druids, having had a misunderstanding with the great chiefs, had been expelled in the 4th century,* and their notions relating to the one God were gradually almost forgotten; but the people believed in the spirit of the waters, and the spirit of the mountains, and in a certain aërial dwelling where the shades of their ancestors, wandering by night on their cloudy chariots, their white drapery glittering in the moonbeams, and their transparent hands, holding by way of sword, a half-extinguished meteor.† The Christian apostles of these regions, then almost unknown, took possession of the caves which the Druids had abandoned,‡ and established themselves on the margin of streams, in the depth of forests, or on the steep hill-side. It sometimes chanced that the Highland hunter, careless of pursuing farther over the moor the red deer or the roe, came to seat himself on the gray, mossy stone which marked the grave of a warrior, in order to converse with the

old man of the cave, the Christian *Culdee*,§ who told him of Christ and his Mother. With one arm thrown over his unbent bow, and the other resting on the head of his favorite hound lying at his feet, the Scottish chief listened, with respect and attention, to the grave discourse of the solitary; then, when the sanctity of the Gospel had, at length, touched his heart; when, with clasped hands and kindling eyes, he said, "I believe!" his entire clan repeated like a faithful echo, "We also believe!"

Not content with having spread their doctrine over hill and dale, the priests of Christ would fain pursue the old idolatry even to its most ancient and remote sanctuaries. The isle of Iona, one of the islands of the Scottish archipelago, surrounded by a green and turbulent sea, was a sacred place for the lords of the isles and the mountain chiefs, who came to swear peace on an ancient block, which they called *the stone of power*. The stone quickly disappeared, and in its stead arose, amid the picturesque rocks, the most ancient and

* *Poems of Ossian. Dissertation on the Era of Ossian.*

† See Ossian.

‡ *Ibid.*

§ *Culdee*, in Gaelic, *Culdich*, a hermit, a solitary.

the most venerated abbey in Scotland: alas! its cloisters are now, and have long been, roofless, though they cover the ashes of a race of kings.

Four centuries had passed away, and Christianity had already spread from east to west. "We are but of yesterday," said Tertullian to the senate of pagan Rome, "and yet we fill your palaces, your cities, your fortresses, your armies, both by land and sea; we leave you only your temples!" It was true; but what torrents of blood had, during all that time, reddened the great standard of the Cross! The last persecution was meant to eradicate Christianity: Dioclesian either levelled or closed up all the churches, and put Christian cities to the sword,* promising the most magnificent rewards to

apostacy, which, however, was very uncommon, notwithstanding the imperial encouragement, the Christians of those times generally preferring martyrdom. Men thought that it was all over with Christianity: the idolaters clapped their hands in exultation over its approaching downfall, and hell was heard to bellow out its shouts of triumph; but the holy angels, looking on with a smile, said amongst themselves: "Christ is about to gain the victory; blessed be His name!" A young maiden of Bithynia, named Helena, whom the Emperor Constantius Chloris had married for her rare beauty and virtue, had just given birth to a son, who was named Constantine.

* Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.*—Sulpicius Severus.



Second Period of the Devotion to Mary.

FROM CONSTANTINE TO THE MIDDLE AGES.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EAST—THE ICONOCLASTS.



IN the delightful banks of the Bosphorus, in Thrace, within sight of the distant mountains of Asia Minor, whose lofty summits are at evening tinged with the richest gold and crimson, the coast of Europe is indented by a large bay of incomparable beauty, and over its sheet of bright blue waters rises a vast city, all white and all Christian;* it is Constantinople, which the son of Helena and of Constantius Chloris has just dedicated solemnly to Mary; for the master of the world, still treated as a god in idolatrous Rome, belongs himself to Jesus Christ; and the cross whereby he has conquered decorates his banners, glitters on

his coin, and surmounts the sumptuous basilica which he has placed under the invocation of St. Sophia, the Virgin, and the twelve Apostles.

Idolatry is still erect, but it is a withered palm-tree, whose lofty branches are already lifeless. Nought is seen but deserted altars, over whose steps reptiles crawl; birds begin to nestle in the arches of the temples where spiders spin their webs; the wild vine spreads its green branches over their walls of polished marble, and the traveller profanely cuts a walking-stick in those sacred groves from which it was, formerly, death to pull a single branch. The ceremonies of pagan worship have ceased in Greece; the most venerated idols serve only for ornament in the pub-

* Constantine would have it so that there was not a single idolater in Constantinople; he left

idols only in profane places, to serve as ornaments. - (*Eccles. Hist.*, vol. i., p. 523.)

lie places of Constantinople; but no one is forced to enter the church; for, though Polytheism be a religion essentially bad and supremely absurd, yet the emperor respects that liberty of conscience which the pagans so badly understood when they abused the dread right of the strongest. Lactantius, one of the brightest luminaries of Christianity, lays down as a principle, in a famous contemporary work, that *nihil est tam voluntarium quam religio*.* It is such moderation as this that gains success for a holy cause.

It was not merely by dedicating to her the new Rome that Constantine testified his respect for Mary; at his request, the Empress Helena, converted by him, set out for Palestine, and covered that holy land with sacred monuments, in which Mary had her full share. The grotto of the Nativity, sheeted with marble and lit up with golden lamps, was surrounded by a magnificent church, which bore the name of St. Mary of Bethlehem. St. Mary of Nazareth, erected on the site of the humble dwelling of the Holy Family, was long considered one of the finest churches in

Asia. The sepulchral cave in the valley of Josaphat was considerably enlarged, and adorned with a superb staircase of marble; silver lamps were suspended around the Virgin's tomb. Finally, two sumptuous churches commemorated the Visitation of Mary and her swoon near the rock from which the Nazarenes would have cast Jesus.

The successors of the first Byzantine emperor showed themselves in general very devout towards the Blessed Virgin. Theodosius the Younger, having learned that a great concourse of Christians from all parts of Europe and Asia, flocked to the tomb of the Blessed Virgin, had a stately Byzantine church erected there, which was called by the Arabs *la Giasmaniah* (the church of the body), Kosrou-Paviz (Cosroes II.) threw down this church at the instigation of the Jews, in his invasion of Syria and Palestine; but subsequently repenting of that act of violence, for which he was tearfully reproached by Sira, his Christian wife, the follower of Zoroaster built a church himself to the Blessed Virgin, in his city of Miafare-

* Lactantius, *Institut.*, v. 20.

kin.* The Empress Pulcheria, daughter of Theodosius and wife of the Emperor Marcian, had herself no less than three churches constructed, under the invocation of the *Panagia*, within the limits of Constantinople. Being unable to enrich them with relics of the Mother of God, since the body of Mary is in heaven, she tried to make up the deficiency by some of her garments, sent by the faithful of Jerusalem. The beautiful church of the Blaquernes had her robe, that of Chalcopratée, her girdle; but that of the Guides obtained the best of all. Therein was placed on an altar glittering with gold and embellished with columns of jasper, a portrait of Mary sent from Antioch, said to have been painted by St. Luke during the life-time of the Virgin, and to which she had attached graces.†

This portrait was considered as the palladium of the empire; and the emperors—amongst others John Zimisces and the Comneni—conveyed it to the army, whence it was brought back on a triumphal car drawn by magnificent white

horses. In great solemnities, this miraculous image was taken from the church of the Guides, where it was usually kept with the most reverential care. The people always hailed its presence with shouts of joy and canticles of praise. The fate of this image remains doubtful. Some hold that it was this image which, after the taking of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204, was brought to Venice by the doge, Henry Dandolo; others maintain that it was the one found by the Turks when sacking the city of Constantine, and by them contemptuously trampled under foot, after being stripped of the jewels and gold wherein it was set.

Leo the First built, in 460, a superb basilica, which he dedicated to Our Lady of the Fountain, in gratitude for that the Holy Virgin had appeared to him on the margin of a lonely spring, whither he had led a blind old man, and promised him the empire, though he was then but a young Thracian soldier. The diadem of the Cæsars no sooner encircled his brow, than he set about perpetuating by this monu-

* D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*.

† Niceph., *Hist. Eccles.*, l. xiv. and xv.

ment, the remembrance of Mary's * protection *

The Emperor Zeno, son-in-law of Leo I., was not less devoted to Mary than his father-in-law had been; he built her a church on Mount Garizim—the sacred mountain of the Samaritans—and as that restless people, then in open rebellion, had spoiled some images of Mary, he surrounded the mountain with a wall, whereon he placed a garrison of soldiers to prevent the renewal of these sacrileges.

The Emperor Justin rebuilt, with increased splendor, in Constantinople, the church of Our Lady of Chalcopratée, overthrown by an earthquake. Two churches built at Jerusalem in honor of the Blessed Virgin, St. Mary the New, and another on the Mount of Olives, with a monastery erected on a shelf of Mount Sinai, and in Africa, a sumptuous basilica, with the name

* Niceph., l. xv., ch. 25. This church, built with much magnificence, had windows of stained glass, but not representing historical subjects. At the end of the 5th century, painting on glass was still a new art.

† Leo IV., son of Constantine Copronymus, having taken from the church of St. Sophia one of the crowns of gold which the Emperor Maurice had consecrated to the Virgin, his death, *

of Our Lady of Carthage, were lasting testimonies of the devotion of the Emperor Justinian to the Mother of our Lord. Not content with building temples to her, the Cæsars of Constantinople piously venerated Mary in their private chapels; they offered her splendid crowns of gold,† and wore on their persons a little figure of her carved in the same precious metal.‡ . They brought from the monastery Hodegium, to the imperial palace of Constantinople, the celebrated image of the Virgin *Hodégétie* (conductress), during the last days of Lent, and it remained there till the second Easter-holiday. It was to the Virgin, too, that Michaël Paleologus did homage, when he had succeeded in expelling the race of Courtenay from Constantinople.§

The Greek people were not slow in following the example of their emperors; the *lares* and the Olympic

which occurred soon after, was attributed to that sacrilege. (Blond., l. xxi., decad. 2.)

‡ The Emperor Andronicus II. usually wore round his neck one of these statuettes of the Blessed Virgin; it was of gold, and so small that he put it in his mouth, in lieu of other viaticum, at the moment of death.

§ Antiquities of the chapel, &c., of the King of France.

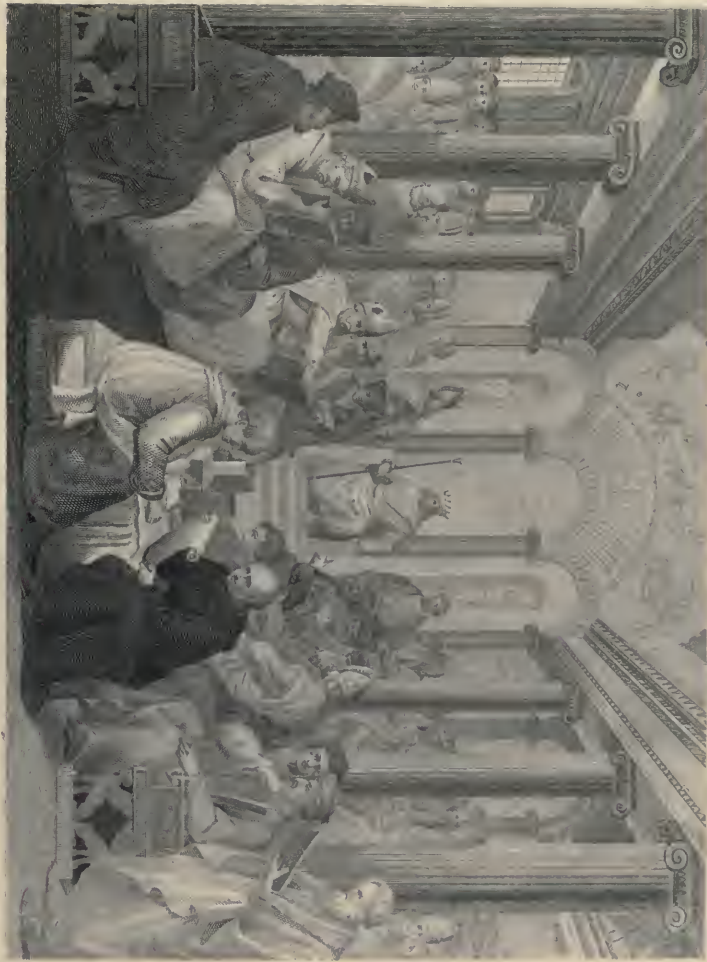
idols were almost everywhere replaced by the *Panagia*. The altars of Bacchus were overthrown with their green garlands of ivy, and Our Lady of Grapes received amid the vineyards the homage of the vintagers; Ceres herself began to be forgotten in the ruins of her mysterious shrine at Eleusis, destroyed by the Goths in the third century, together with the temples of Delphos, Corinth, and Ephesus; finally, Mount Athos, the mountain of Jupiter, had become, since the time of Constantine, a little colony of hermits and solitaires, of which Mary was proclaimed the queen. The Gospel facts of her life were reproduced in frescoes, grounded on gold, on the ceilings of an infinite number of chapels built in her honor amongst the vines and olives which clothe the sides of that lofty mountain, whose shadow extends across the sea to the distant isle of Lemnos.

Who would believe that it was amongst those very Greeks, so de-

* Leo the Isaurian was exceedingly cruel. Having failed in imparting his own hatred of images to the learned men charged with the care of the public library, he had them shut up within it, surrounded the building with wood

vout to the Blessed Virgin, that the ideas most opposed to her personal dignity and the perpetuity of her reign had their rise. It was within the walls of Constantinople that the heresy of Nestorius was first broached, disputing her right to be called the Mother of God; and also that of the Iconoclasts, who dragged her images through the mire, and burned them in the streets. Under Leo the Isaurian, who had acquired, it is said, amongst the Jews, a furious hatred for all religious painting and statuary, faithful Catholics were seen thrown in heaps into the Bosphorus, or beaten to death with rods, for having lit lamps before a domestic Madonna, prayed at the foot of a crucifix, or bent the knee in passing the statue of a saint.* Constantine Copronymus, successor of this wicked prince, even surpassed him in cruelty, and Leo, his son, walked in the ways of both; but Irene, sincerely attached to Catholicity, had the second council of Nice convoked, when the veneration

and combustible matters, and then set fire to it. Medals, numberless pictures, and more than three thousand manuscripts were consumed in that conflagration.



Council of Nice

N. Y. & A. S. P. 1870

The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science. The second part of the paper is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science. The third part of the paper is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science. The fourth part of the paper is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science. The fifth part of the paper is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science. The sixth part of the paper is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science. The seventh part of the paper is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science. The eighth part of the paper is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science. The ninth part of the paper is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science. The tenth part of the paper is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science.

of images was solemnly reestablished,* and the Empress Theodora, aided by the patriarch Methodus, consolidated the pious work of Irene.

If the insult had been great, the reparation was complete; the Greeks, thenceforward, endeavored to honor Mary by every imaginable means. They decreed her crowns of gold; they ever after represented her with the imperial purple, the tiara of pearls, and the diadem of the empresses;† they stamped her image on their coins; they struck medals in her honor, and fought under her auspices. "Romans," said Narses, when about to offer battle to the Goths at Taginas, "Romans, fight bravely, the Virgin is with us; fail not to invoke her during the combat; for she beholds our cohorts, and will deliver to us the wretches who dispute her title of *Mother of God*."‡ It was quickly rumored through the ranks that the *Panagia*, to whom Narses was very

devout, had promised him victory, and appointed the hour for the attack. Persuaded that Heaven favored their cause, the Greeks displayed an energy foreign to their character. Totilla was slain; his army fled, leaving the plain covered with dead, and Italy, delivered in the name of Our Lady of Victory, loudly blessed the Virgin and Narses.

Nicetes records a historical fact, which proves how highly Mary was honored by the princes of the Lower Empire. "John Comnenus, after gaining a battle," says that historian, "was to enter Constantinople in triumph, as he was entitled to do; all was prepared for the gorgeous ceremony; the streets were hung with silk and cloth of gold, and numerous scaffolds were erected through the streets for the accommodation of the multitudes of spectators who had come from all parts of the empire to see that glorious sight.

* Protestants have protested loudly against this council, which explains so clearly the veneration of images. In the 16th century, they had quite a horror of the Empress Irene, whom they surnamed *the furious*, affirming that she had established the *worship* of images. (*Letter*

to the Bishop of Angers on the Miracles of Our Lady of Ardilliers, in 1594.)

† It is under this costume that the Blessed Virgin is represented on the medals of Zimisces and Theophanes.

‡ *Hist. Arianism*, by Father Maimbourg, vol. ii.

"The trumpeters crowned with laurel walked in front of the procession; then appeared representations of the conquered cities, together with the vanquished princes, in painting, in sculpture, in marble, and in ivory, all of the most exquisite workmanship;* then the spoils of the enemy—arms, precious robes, vases of gold enriched with jewels, so as to dazzle the eyes of the beholders; after these came the captives, barbarian princes of majestic stature and of haughty bearing, walking in chains according to custom, their eyes cast down, and their heads, now bowed in shame, now raised in a sudden fit of fury and despair. After them came the triumphal car, drawn by four white horses; all expected to see the emperor seated on this car, clothed in a robe of purple or scarlet, richly embroidered, and his lordly brow encircled with laurel; but in his stead there was seen an image of the Blessed Virgin, to whom, and not to himself, he considered the triumph due. The emperor on horseback, followed by his brilliant court, closed this Christian procession, happier in the triumph of

Mary than if he had triumphed himself."

In order to show how far the Virgin was revered in Asia Minor, it will suffice to relate, as briefly as possible, what passed in Ephesus during the sitting of the council which condemned the heresy of Nestorius, in 431.

The day on which the council was to decide on the divine maternity of Mary, the people, anxious and disturbed, blocked up the streets and crowded around the magnificent temple which the piety of the inhabitants had built under the invocation of the Virgin. There it was that two hundred bishops were examining the propositions of Nestorius, who dared not come to defend them, so little confidence had he in the justice of his cause or the soundness of his arguments. Profound silence reigned amongst the vast multitude who thronged the vicinity of the basilica, and anxiety was painted on every countenance; the fine expressive features of the Greeks manifesting, as in a glass, every in-

* Josephus gives a magnificent description of the representations of cities which adorned the triumphs.

ward emotion of the soul. A bishop at length appears; he announces to the mute and attentive crowd that the anathema of the council is launched against the innovator, and that the Most Holy Virgin is gloriously maintained in her august prerogative. Thereupon, the most deafening shouts of joy burst forth on every side. The Ephesians and the strangers gathered together from all the cities of Asia, surrounding the Fathers of the council, kissed their hands and their garments, and

burned odoriferous perfumes in the streets through which they were to pass. The city was spontaneously and suddenly illuminated, and never was joy more universal. It is thought to have been in this council of Ephesus that St. Cyril, in concert with the holy assembly over which he presided, composed that beautiful and touching prayer to the Mother of God, which has been adopted by the Church:—"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen!"

CHAPTER V.

THE EAST—THE HOLY WARS.



THE Christians of Asia were no less active than the Greeks in manifesting their devotion to Mary. Before the time of Constantine, a church bearing the name of the Blessed Virgin arose like a light-

house on the lofty promontory of Mount Carmel. Tyre, the deposed but still mighty queen of the Levantine seas, was distinguished for her church of Our Lady, composed principally of cedar and marble, and rivaling the Byzantine basilica of the Cæsars. Damascus, the *emerald of the desert*, willingly expended two hundred thousand di-

nars of gold in building its splendid church of *Mart-Miriam* (St. Mary), which was burned by the Mohame-tans during the caliphate of Moc-tader, in the year of the Hegira, 312.* Antioch had, likewise, a superb basilica of Our Lady, and hung golden lamps before that im-age of her which was soon to be given up at the pious desire of the Empress Pulcheria; for this sacred image the good Christians of Anti-och substituted a small cedar statue of the Mother of God, miraculously found in the time-hollowed trunk of an enormous cypress which over-hung the Orontes.† Lebanon, that lovely mountain, which, "beneath a fiery sky remains faithful," says Tacitus, "to snow and shade; ‡ Lebanon, whose cedars were plant-ed by the hand of the Lord, shel-tered in its rocky caverns a crowd of solitaries who had devoted their labor to Mary. Seated on the banks of that river which took, from their vicinity, the name of *Holy*, which it still bears, and which flows between two mossy banks picturesquely shaded, those

men of toil, of contemplation, and of prayer, carved, in the majestic shade of the cedars—which let fall on them, through their rich foliage, a light like that which comes down tinged with purple, blue, and gold, through the stained windows of our cathedrals,—those little statu-ettes of the Blessed Virgin, called *black virgins*, which the western pilgrims, who visited the Holy Land during the first ages of Chris-tianity, brought back to Europe to place them either in the domestic chapels, or in churches which they have rendered famous by their miracles.

Mary had also shrines in the rocky solitudes of Mount Sinai. In the depth of a grassy ravine, so profoundly set amongst enormous rocks that the top of its loftiest cedars is never shaken by the wind, there arose, in the midst of a little grove of olives, poplars, and date-trees, a convent placed under the invocation of the Virgin. There was nothing to disturb the gloomy silence of that oasis; even the storm that shook the aged cedars

* D'Herbelot, *Biblioth. Orient.*

† Astolfi, *delle Imagini miracolose.*

‡ *Taciti Historiarum*, lib. v.

of the mountain was scarcely heard there; that peaceful tomb of the living was only animated when there arose from it songs of praise to "Him who was before the mountains," and to "Her in whom he hath done great things."

In Persia, where the ruins of numerous churches and monasteries dedicated to Mary are still seen, the Christians were early distinguished by their zeal in building those places of prayer. Eliseus Vertabed, a highly-esteemed Armenian author who flourished in the 5th century, has preserved for us, in his religious history of the Armenian wars, a discourse of the king of kings Jesgird—in the west, Isdigerdes:—"I have learned from my fathers," said that prince in a great council composed of satraps and magi, wherein the question of an approaching persecution of the Christians was discussed, "I have learned from my fathers that, in the time of King Chabouh II. (in 319), when the religion of Christ began to spread in Persia, and other Eastern countries, our principal *mobeds* (doctors) advised the king to abolish Christianity in his states; he tried to do so, but in

vain, for the more he exerted himself to arrest the progress of that religion, the more it seemed to flourish. The Christians of Persia were so bold that they built, in all the cities, churches which surpassed the royal dwellings in magnificence; they also raised oratories over the graves of their martyrs; and there was no place, whether inhabited or waste, where they did not put up convents."*

The extinction of Christianity was decided on in this council, where the Magi were all-powerful; but the king resolved to try bribery before he had recourse to violence; he tried, as the Persians have it, "to infuse deadly poison into the cup of milk." Calling around him the *nakarars* or nobles of Armenia, who governed by feudal tenure the small principalities hereditary in their families, under the authority of a *marzban* or vice-king named by Persia, he loaded them with praise, with sweet words, and alluring promises, to obtain from them the sacrifice of their religion. Those who yielded were rewarded with governments,

* *History of the Rising of Christian Armenia*, by Eliseus Vertabed, ch. iii.

honorary titles, fair and fertile lordships, or Arab horses superbly caparisoned. Never had there gone forth from the royal treasury so many bracelets of emeralds, so many girdles of beaten gold, studded with rubies and pearls; so many pieces of brocade, grounded on red and gold, and spangled with precious stones—for no cost was spared to gain the desired end. But, alas! the deserters from the true faith to the camp of the Magi were so few in number, and the “king of kings” was so urged to put an end to Christianity, that, suddenly throwing off the mask of moderation which he had at first assumed, he issued a very curious proclamation, wherein, after having praised, according to the ancient formulas of the Persian court, the holy God, “master of the moon and stars,” whose power nothing escapes,

* “Trust not your chiefs whom you call Nazarenos,” said he to the Armenians, in this royal edict mentioned by Eliseus Vertabed, “they are liars and impostors. What they teach by word, they belie by their deeds. To eat meat, say they, is no sin, and yet they eat it not! It is lawful to marry, they tell you, and yet they will not so much as look on a woman! They will tell you that it is no sin to gather riches honestly, and yet they are forever preaching up poverty.

“from the sun to the darkness of night, from the little spring to the blue sea-wave,” he went on to expose the fundamental points of his own false doctrine, and to slander that of the Christians.* This royal edict was promptly followed by another commanding the Armenians to embrace without delay the worship of fire; to contract marriage with their nearest relations, contrary to the laws of Jesus Christ, which declares such marriages criminal, and ending by ordering sacrifice to the sun, consisting of goats and white bulls.

The Apostle said, “Be ye subject to the powers that be;” but God has commanded us to prefer death to idolatry. Hence, the Armenians, instead of conforming to the impious edict of the Persian court, continued to celebrate the divine service in their horse-camps, and to listen to

They extol affliction and condemn prosperity; they despise glory of every kind; they love to clothe themselves in homely garments, like poor beggars, preferring worthless things to those that are of value; they praise death and despise life; finally, they have even gone so far as to make a virtue of chastity, so that if their advice were followed, the world would speedily come to an end!” (*Rising of Christian Armenia*, chapter ii.)

the preaching of the priests who, in imitation of the ancient Jewish Levites, accompanied the army. In vain did Isdigerdes, separating them into small bodies, station them at the most distant and dangerous points along the frontiers; in vain did he give them for winter-quarters the most unsheltered mountain passes, and the most unhealthy localities; in vain did he seek to reduce them by the extremities of hunger and thirst, whilst, on the other hand, poor Armenia, squeezed like the grape in the wine-press, gave to the Persian treasury its last drops of gold. The tree of the faith, amidst all these miseries, remained "green as a stately cypress surmounted by the full-orbed moon." The Christians of Armenia had endured all; but their patience failed when the "king of kings" madly undertook to destroy the monasteries placed under the invocation of the Saints, and to convert the churches into Temples of the Sun. They rose from one end of the kingdom to the other, and, making up in enthusiasm what they wanted in numbers, all the Persian fortresses were taken, and the temples of the sun burned to the ground.

* A great battle, in which the Persians were ten to one, was fought on the frontiers of Georgia, on the banks of a small river which flows into the Gour (*Cyrus*). The Persian army presented the most splendid and imposing sight; its war-elephants—loaded with towers from whose top the skillful archers darted their long poplar arrows—extended over the wings, and in the centre was the terrible phalanx of the *immortals*. These numerous squadrons, resplendent with gold, moved to the sound of clarions, trumpets, cymbals, and little Hindoo bells; flags of yellow, red, and violet flaunted like tulips at the end of the spears; the captains and the satraps drew their Indian swords from their golden scabbards, and pushed on their swift Arabian horses with golden bridles and brilliant housings. Clothed in dark-colored garments, and with the cross displayed on their banners—dark like their garments—the Armenians, a handful of heroes, having raised their hands and hearts to heaven, marched to meet the enemy singing a canticle from the psalms. "Judge between us and our enemies, O Lord!" sang the

insurgent Christians; "take up bow and buckler for us, for our cause is thine; spread terror through the countless hosts of the wicked. Let them fly and be dispersed before the august sign of the holy cross. We are willing to die for thy sake, and if we slay these infidels we shall be martyrs to the truth."*

Excited by this prayer, the Armenians burst with fury on the Persians, and shattered their right wing at the first shock. The conflict was terrible; the air, bristling with arrows, resembled "the vulture's wing," and blue swords flashed like heaven's lightning. Enthusiasm, exalted by faith, prevailed; the Persians were completely routed, and the bodies of nine great satraps lay on the field of battle. The waters of the Lomeki were changed into blood, and only a single horseman escaped on his dromedary to bear these disastrous tidings to the Persian court.

But this victory, great and un-hoped for as it was, could not be decisive; the Christians of Armenia had neither gold nor allies; Marcian, the Greek emperor, whom they had besought, in the name of Christ and his Blessed Mother, to assist

them, basely sent an express ambassador to the court of Persia to protest to the "king of kings" that he had nothing whatever to do with the rebellion in Armenia, and was resolved not to interfere. Isigerdes understood that Cæsar was afraid; and, trusting to his cowardice, he resolved to pursue the extermination of Christianity in Armenia; happily, he did not succeed. The Christians, overwhelmed by numbers, lost a great battle, together with the hero who commanded them, Vartan the Mamigonian, a prince of Chinese origin, who fell after performing prodigies of valor. The Armenians, reduced to the last extremity, would not declare themselves conquered; they deserted the cities for the forests and mountains; they celebrated the divine office in the caverns of the rocks. The Armenian bishops suffered martyrdom with unshaken firmness; the princes, accustomed to the fresh, bracing air of their high mountains, were taken in chains to Korassan, where the sky is fire and the wind is the dread Simoom, which kills like thunder, while the soil is

* Eliseus Vertabed, ch. iii.

a sea of flaming sand.* There they would have perished miserably had not two confessors, mutilated by the Persian sabre, undertaken to collect alms amongst the Christians of the neighboring provinces for the relief of the captive nobles: this lasted about seven years. One of these angels of charity died of fatigue in the burning deserts of Kohistan, the heat of which has been compared by a modern traveller to that of a plate of red-hot iron; the other continued alone the same work of mercy. Isdigerdes, overcome by so much constancy and devotion, at length put an end to this hard captivity; but it was only after fifty years of negotiations, treaties, and fighting, that Vahan the Mamigonian, nephew of the great Vartan, terminated this bloody war, commenced in 430.†

* The Simoom is a deadly wind which stifles travellers and all sorts of animals, unless they fall prostrate on the ground. Curious details relating to the Simoom are found in Niebuhr's description, pp. 6, 7, and 8, Copenhagen edition. This wind rises between the 15th of June and the 15th of August. It blows with great violence, appears red and inflamed, and kills every living thing that it strikes. But the death which it causes is not its most surprising effect: the bodies of those who die by it are, as it were, dissolved, without losing, however, either their

If the Christian churches of Persia deserved to be compared to the palaces of its kings, of whose magnificence the Arab poets have left such glowing descriptions,‡ those of the nations who dwelt between the Euxine and the Caspian seas were very poor in comparison. These were, at first, wooden buildings, to which the faithful were summoned, on festival days, by striking two planks, one against the other; bells were then unknown. The first stone church of the Armenians, built near the sources of the Tigris, was placed under the invocation of Mary; it possessed, like many of the shrines of Syria and Asia Minor, a miraculous image of the Virgin, which was intrusted to the care of pious women.§

The cathedral of Mtzkhetha, the

shape or color, so that it would seem as though they were asleep. If one touch these bodies, the part which is touched remains in the hand.

† Continuation of Eliseus Vertabed, by Lazarus Parbe, ch. iii.

‡ Antar's description of the palace of Cosroes resembles that of the *Thousand and One Nights*: he gives it halls of marble and of red cornelian, fountains of rose-water, basins from which arise emerald pillars surmounted by birds of burnished gold, with topaz eyes, &c.

§ *Ancient Geography of Armenia*, Venice, 1822

ancient capital of Georgia, was the first Christian church of that country; the Georgians dedicated it to the Virgin. In it was formerly kept the famous *khiton*, one of the torn garments of Jesus Christ. Often thrown down, but as often elegantly reconstructed in the highest Georgian style, it is still rich in marble and green jasper. An inscription, written on one of the pillars in letters of gold, announces that this divine and venerable temple of Mary, *Queen of the Georgians*, Mother of God, and ever Virgin, was rebuilt at the expense and by the care of a princess of Georgia, named Pebanpato.

The metropolis of the Mingrelians was likewise dedicated to the Virgin; one of her robes was venerated there, and was kept in a casket of ebony, adorned with silver flowers. This robe, composed of a precious stuff, of a buff color, ornamented with embroidery of various colors, was exhibited in Chardin when it was taken through Mingrelia on its way to Persia.

In the Caucasian regions, which abound in convents dedicated to Mary, it was always on the loftiest

* heights that the most beautiful monasteries were seen: they were often even defended by strong castles. That of Miriam-Nischin, in Georgia, was built on a rock of the Caucasian chain, in the midst of a lovely mountain lake, which rendered it inaccessible by land; it was protected by a fortress that was considered impregnable. The castle and the monastery were besieged by Melik-Schah, in the reign of Alp-Arslan, his father, second sultan of the Seljoucides line. Just as the army of the Mussulman prince was preparing to embark to commence the siege, and the garrison, decimated by hunger, regarded the approaching attack with fear and sad forebodings, a terrible earthquake took place, and the monastery of St. Mary fell shattered into the lake.* This strange catastrophe was considered miraculous. "The Virgin," said the Georgians, "would rather see her sanctuary destroyed than desecrated."

Before the principal gate of Djoulfa, an ancient and commercial city of Armenia, situated near one of the most convenient fords of the

* D'Herbelot, *Biblioth. Orient.*

NILE



SCENE

River Nile & Pyramids

Araxes, there stands a solitary peak, * on whose narrow platform there was built, in the first ages of Christianity, a monastery in honor of the Blessed Virgin. The declivities of this steep rock, still adorned with the pretty blue hyacinth and the fragrant marjoram, are covered with rich tombs and ancient tumuli; but the living—where are they? One day it came into the head of a certain Asiatic despot* to erase Djoulfa, a city of forty thousand inhabitants, from amongst the cities of the globe, and he sent Thamas-Kouli-Beg with an order for the citizens to evacuate it in three days' time: he was obeyed. The inhabitants hastily concealed their treasures in secret places, hoping—vain hope!—that Schah-Abbas, when the storm of his wrath had blown over, would permit them to return to their city. At the end of the third day, when they were forced to set out, and the last moment of respite had passed, each one, taking the keys of his house, followed the priests, who carried those of the churches. Arrived at the foot of

the rock where Mary's shrine still overlooks the ancient tombs of their fathers, their despair broke forth in heart-rending sobs. Forced to continue their journey, the unhappy exiles cast a parting glance on their poor deserted city; and, after placing their churches and dwellings under the special care of the Blessed Virgin, they threw their keys into the river.

The Egyptians, who had never bent the knee to strange gods, and who seemed inclosed, as it were, in their beastly region (as Josephus called it while still flourishing), had abandoned their *grazing divinities*, and giving back to the waters of the Nile the hideous crocodiles which had had their devotees for food,† they had come to adore the God of Calvary. The descendants of the ancient people of the Pharaohs had built, at an early period, a beautiful church in the small Egyptian village where the Holy Family had taken refuge from the fell designs of Herod, and they had given it the name of Our Lady of Matarieh; a pretty foun-

* Schah-Abbas totally depopulated the city of Djoulfa, in 1605.

† Josephus *against Appio*, b. ii.

tain, where of old the Blessed Virgin used to wash the clothes of the infant-God, had received the name of Mary's Fountain, and that fountain, together with a gigantic sycamore which had often shaded the Mother and Child, was the object of numerous pilgrimages. The metropolis of Egypt was also dedicated to Our Lady.

The church of Alexandria, which shone amongst all the churches of the Christian world like a beacon on a lofty eminence, had attached to its patriarchal see, in the fourth century, a kingdom almost unknown to the Romans, and of which Pliny related the strangest things;* this was Abyssinia, whose people, Jews, Sabeans, or fetichists, according as they pleased, were governed by kings descended from Makeda, the beautiful black queen who filled Jerusalem with jewels and perfumes, and who had a son by King Solomon. A young Tyrian merchant, a trader in jewels, having been shipwrecked on the African coasts

of the Red Sea, was first plundered and then conducted to Axoum, the ancient capital of the Queen of Saba, where he was presented as a prisoner of note to the Neguz (emperor), that prince "at whose name the lions bow down;" he succeeded so far in conciliating the Neguz that he made him his treasurer. After the death of the black prince, the education of his young son, Abreka, was confided to the Tyrian, who secretly instructed his pupil in his own belief, and conceived the magnificent hope of becoming the apostle of those half-savage regions. In order to succeed in this, he repaired to Alexandria, where St. Athanasius consecrated him bishop of Axoum. On his return, Frumentius, who was surnamed *Abba Salama* (the father of salvation), baptized Abreka, with the principal personages of his court; a great part of the nation followed the example of its chiefs. This religious revolution was effected, as all religious revolutions

* According to Pliny and some other ancient geographers, Abyssinia was peopled with men who had neither nose nor mouth to their face, and whose eyes were placed in the pit of their stomach; men were seen there without a head,

and others with asses' heads, &c. Pliny, who relates (b. vi. ch. 30, and b. v. ch. 8) these prodigious things, leaves the subject unfinished, and modestly stops, for fear, he says, of not being believed.

should be effected, without shedding a single drop of blood. Abreka and his brother Atzbeka, who reigned together in edifying harmony, preached the Gospel themselves to their subjects,* and built a great number of churches in honor of the true God, under the invocation of Mariam (*Mary*). One of these ancient churches took, from the woods by which it was surrounded, the pretty name of *Mariam-Chaouitou*, Our Lady the Green.

Christianity then spread over the opposite coast of the Red Sea, into Yemen, the inhabitants of which adored the stars and the trees; amongst them there were a good number of Jews; a prince of that nation, who had usurped the supreme power in Arabia, persecuted the Christians, and, in 520, banished St. Gregentius, an Arab by birth and Archbishop of Taphar,

metropolis of that country. St. Aritas, Governor of Nagran, the ancient capital of Yemen, would not give up his faith; he was taken and conducted out of the city, where he was put to death on the banks of a rivulet. His wife and daughter likewise perished in the midst of torments, together with three hundred and forty Christians;† and as Dunaan continued to sacrifice all those who would not apostatize, Caleb, King of Abyssinia, marched against him, in 530, and gained a complete victory over him. Some time after, the same Caleb, disgusted with the throne, sent his crown to Jerusalem,‡ abdicated in favor of his son, and shut himself up in a monastery, taking with him only a cup and a mat. The African troops whom he had sent to the assistance of the Christians of Asia, seduced by the beauty and fertility

* "Hail, Abreka and Atzbeka, who reigned together with the greatest harmony, who preached the religion of Christ to the children of the Mosaic law, and erected temples to the honor of God." (*Abyssinian Liturgy, Commemoration of the dead.*)

† The following is a prayer addressed to the martyrs of Nagran by the Abyssinian Church:—

"Saluto pulchritudinem vestram amœnam,
O sidera Nagrani! gemmæ qui illuminatis mundum,

Conciliatrix sit mihi illa pulchritudo, et pacificatrix.
Coram Deo judice si steterit peccatum meum,
Ostendite ei sanguinem quem effudistis propter pulchritudinem ejus."

(*Abyssinian Liturgy.*)

‡ "Hail, Caleb! who gave up the sign of your power when you sent your crown as an offering to the temple of Jerusalem: you did not abuse your victory when you destroyed the army of the Sabeans." (*Abyssinian Liturgy.*)

of that *happy* land, resolved to settle there. These were the black Christians, who, commanded by the Governor of Yemen, carried on, against the Arabs of Mecca, that war known as the *elephant-war*. Arabia Felix, however, did not long remain in their hands; it was wrested from them in 590, by the Persians, who were themselves conquered, and expelled by Mahomet's captains.

At the time of the conversion of Abyssinia, the doctrine of Nestorius was agitating the Church. It is generally known that the opinions of that bishop, who refused to Mary the title of Mother of God, were condemned by the Council of Ephesus. The Abyssinians, in their exaggerated enthusiasm for the Blessed Virgin, did not content themselves with rejecting the heresy of Nestorius; to the title of Mother of God, they added that of *Mundi Creatrix*, to testify their boundless veneration for Mary. Nothing, in fact, can exceed the love and respect of which she is the object all along the Blue Nile, and

even as far as the Mountains of the Moon. The errors of Dioscorus and Eutyches, which the Abyssinians have unhappily adopted, have made no change in this respect.

The old East seemed to grow young again through its devotion to Mary; it loved to do her honor, and pompously solemnized her festivals, which were, for the most part, of apostolic origin. The Feast of the Annunciation was regarded, in the time of St. Athanasius, as he himself tells us, as one of the greatest festivals of the year, and for that of the Assumption—which was celebrated with splendor from the Nile to Mount Caucasus, under the name of *Our Lady's Easter*—the people prepared themselves by a fast of fifteen days.*

All seemed to promise that the Gospel was about to spread from one end of Asia to the other, and it was already beginning to be announced to the idolatrous people of the Celestial Empire, who heard without surprise of that Holy One,

* The first day of the month of August was called in the Syrian calendar *saum Miriam*, Our Lady's Fast, because the Christians of the East fasted from that day till the fif-

teenth, which they named *fithr Miriam*, that is to say, the end of the fast, or our Lady's Pasch. (D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, t. 1er, p. 2.)

born of a Virgin, whom the earth * expected, according to the disciples of Confucius, "as drooping plants expect the dew;" but, alas! a storm more furious, more destructive, more irresistible than the burning wind of the desert, and born, like it, amid the sandy wastes of Arabia, came to trample down Christianity with a force derived, doubtless, from Satan himself.

At first, there was heard but a confused clashing of arms along the sea of reeds; Arab fought Arab with savage fury, and the idol-trees fell to the ground as well as the Christian temples; then, all was silent in that region, and myriads of horsemen wearing *abbas* striped in black and white, cast themselves

on Syria like clouds of locusts, destroying with the back of their scimitars fourteen hundred Christian churches! Thence they swept on to Persia, which gave way before them, leaving in their hands the famous banner of Kawed, on which the fate of the empire of the Magi was thought to depend;* the flames of the superb library of Alexandria lit them on their devastating course through Egypt; a little time and they leaped on the African coast, where Carthage ruled of old, and conquered all before them. Arrived at the place where the ancients had planted the pillars of Hercules, the haughty conquerors pushed on their stately coursers into the waters of the Straits of Gibraltar, crying out,

* The ancient Romans had bound up the fate of their empire with that of the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, which was burned precisely on the first appearance of Christianity; the Persians had ancient traditions which announced the fall of the Magian empire when their famous standard should fall into the hands of the enemy. The empire did, indeed, fall at the same time that its standard fell into the power of the Mussulmans, in the battle of Kadesia. This banner was at first a blacksmith's apron, which was hoisted in a war of independence against the tyrant Zohak, and accepted as an omen of success by Feridoun, one of the greatest kings of Iran (ancient Persia); it was covered with brocade and adorned with a magnificent image

of the sun, wrought with jewels; a globe of gold, representing the moon's orb, surmounted this image, and around it floated broad bands of red, yellow, and violet-color. This standard was called *Kaweiani direfsh* (the standard of Kaved). From the time of Feridoun, the kings of Persia made it a point to adorn it with precious stones, and, in order to make room for them, they had been obliged to enlarge this famous banner beyond all proportion, so that it had obtained a dimension of twenty-two feet by fifteen, when it fell into the hands of the Arabs, who tore it in pieces and divided it with the mass of the booty. (Price, *Mohamm. History*, volume i., page 116; and *Huft Kalkoum*, volume iv., page 126.)

as they proudly waved their flashing scimitars, "God of Mahomet, thou seest it is the land that fails the conquests of the *true believers!*" * Africa and Asia had to bow their

dejected heads beneath the brutal and ferocious yoke of Islamism, and the shades of ignorance soon thickened and settled down over the splendid regions of the East.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WEST—THE MADONNAS.



ONSTANTINE, after having raised within the very walls of Rome—that goddess city which Paganism placed amid the starry heavens†—the superb Lateran basilica, had closed the Pagan temples; but his hand was not strong enough to pluck up the deep roots of idolatry. It is certain that the greater number of the Roman patricians remained obstinately faithful to the ancient idols of the empire; the

senate itself was divided into two parties, the one Pagan and the other Christian, which made St. Ambrose say that there was, as it were, two senates. It was of the idolatrous senators that Prudentius said: "The successors of the Catos, sunk in shameful error, still invoke the Trojan gods, and in the privacy of their homes venerate the exiled *lares* of Phrygia; the senate—I shame to say—the senate still honors two-faced Janus, and celebrates the feasts of Saturn."

As to the great mass of the peo-

* Florian, *Précis historique sur les Maures*.

† "Hear me, O magnificent queen of the universe—O Rome, admitted into the starry skies," said Rutilius, a famous heathen poet of the last

age of Roman letters. "Thanks to thy temples, I am not far from the heavens." Rome was, in fact, a deified city, and had its priests and its temples.

ple, by far the greater number were sincerely devoted to Christ, and, despising the altars of Jupiter, thronged around the tomb of the Apostles.*

The Italian peninsula was divided, like its capital, between Jupiter and JESUS, Juno and Mary; the darkness of error struggled with all its might against the increasing light of truth. The heathen priests ascribed to the desertion of their gods the calamities which befell the empire. If the famine were unusually great in Latium, it was because Cæsar, *ill-advised* by the Christians around him, had suppressed the privileges of the Vestals; if the frontiers were ravaged with impunity by the Barbarians, or if the Goths penetrated to the very heart of the empire, it was because the altar of Victory had been destroyed. "We demand back the religious state which has so long served to maintain the republic," said Symmachus, prefect of Rome, to the Emperor Valentinian II.; "we demand peace for the gods

of our country; our religion subjugated the world, it repulsed Hannibal from our walls, and drove the Gauls from the capital. What! would Rome reform in her old days what has all along been her safety? The reform of age is tardy and degrading!"

Paganism was vanquished by St. Ambrose in this struggle, but it continued, notwithstanding, to rear itself up against the *new religion*, which it overwhelmed with sarcasm, calumny, and haughty contempt. It was with transports of joy that Rome restored, under Julian, the altar of Victory, which, nevertheless, did not prevent the Barbarians from sacking the city several times. Panic-struck to see the enemy at its gates, it became again more than half Pagan; ceremonies forbidden by the laws of Gratian and Theodosius were publicly performed; the prefect of Rome called in the aid of Tuscan diviners, and the last of the consuls revived the augurial rites by another parody on the day of his installation. "It was too

* "All this populace, inhabiting the upper stories of the houses and living on the bread of the rich, visits, at the foot of the Vatican mount,

the tomb which contains that precious pledge, the ashes of St. Peter, our father." (Prudentius *contra Symmachum*.)

much," says Bossuet; "God remembered, at last, all the bloody decrees of the senate against the faithful, and the furious shouts wherewith the Roman people, in their thirst for Christian blood, had so often filled the amphitheatre; he gave up to the Barbarians that city which was drunk with the blood of the martyrs. . . . That new Babylon, the imitator of the old; like her, inflated with her victories, glorying in her riches, defiled with idolatry, and persecuting the people of God, falls, like her, with a great fall; the glory of her conquests, which she attributed to her gods, is taken from her; she is the prey of the Barbarians, taken three, four times, pillaged, sacked, destroyed: the sword of the Barbarians spares only the Christians. Another Rome—entirely Christian—rises from the ashes of the former, and it is only after the inundation of the Barbarians that Christ finally triumphs over the Roman gods, who are not only destroyed, but wholly forgotten."

Idolatry was dead at last; its marble fanes were re-opened and purified, and the most beautiful

were dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, before whom all Italy bent the knee with a faith and a fervor which, thank God, still remains unshaken. The patricians built innumerable churches or chapels, and ornamented them with a munificence which testified their piety; the altars of Mary were incrustated with gold, silver, and precious stones;* lamps no less splendid gave them light; nothing was spared to have the splendor of religious decoration commensurate with the dignity of the Saint.

The people, having no gold at their disposal, paid her a homage more touching, more tender, and more picturesque. On the smiling sea-side hills, in the fertile fields of the Campagna, amid the gorges of the Apennines, in the glaciers of the Alps, and amongst the arid heaths of the Abruzzas, humble altars were here and there raised to the Madonna. These little primitive chapels, shaded with a network of ivy or green vine-leaves,

* The counter-tables of some of the altars of Venice were of solid gold; that of the Virgin's altar, in the Church of St. Sophia, in Constantinople, was composed of jewels and gold, cast together in the same crucible.

were sheltered by the old forest boughs, and their shade was cast over many a stream in the fervid heat of noon. This devotion, so fresh, so simple, so appropriate to the gentle heart and simple habits of Her who is its object, exists even now in all its religious poetry. Victorious over time and political commotions, the Madonna still shades her little mystic lamp beneath a canopy of foliage or of creeping jasmine. Still at evening does the shepherd of the hills, the laborer of the valley, and even the fierce brigand, devoutly light the flickering lamp, which shines like a protecting star far up on the mountains, and serves as a beacon amid the woods. The little nook wherein it stands is sacred ground: there the most ferocious bandit of Calabria would not dare to draw his dagger; and there even he goes to pray when the distant bells chime forth the AVE MARIA; it is the last link which binds him to humanity, and rarely, indeed, is that link broken.*

* The respect entertained by the Italian banditti for the Madonna is a well-known fact; one of them allowed himself to be taken without offering any resistance, because the

These little solitary chapels, lost amid the rocks or in the depth of the woods, awake in the soul of the traveller, be he ever so reckless, a thousand delightful emotions, like the long-forgotten perfume of home-flowers, suddenly greeting us in a strange land. A modern author, who is anything but partial to Catholicity, gives a charming account of the emotions which he felt on seeing one of these Madonnas, hidden in the mountains of the Tyrol. "At a turn of the path," says he, "I found a small niche hollowed in the rock, with its Madonna and the lamp, which the pious mountaineers light every evening, in the most remote solitudes; there was, at the foot of the rustic altar, a bunch of fresh garden-flowers; that lighted lamp, those blooming flowers, miles and miles in amongst the bleak mountains, were the offerings of a devotion more simple and more touching than anything I have ever seen of the kind. Not more than two paces from the Madonna was a

sbirri attacked him on a Saturday, and he had vowed before the Virgin's altar never to make use of arms on that day, even in defence of his life. (See Father de Barry.)

precipice, along the verge of which lay the only path out of the defile; the Virgin's lamp must thus be of great service to the nightly traveller."

During the revolution of 1793, and when the French had just taken possession of the kingdom of Naples, there was a report circulated that they were about to close the churches and "abolish the worship of the Blessed Virgin." On hearing this the Calabrian peasants seized their long muskets; all the bells of that wild region rang out the alarm, and the brigands themselves, bearing the image of the Madonna, suspended by a red ribbon, enrolled themselves in the regular army, and fought like lions. These Calabrian troops were the last to lay down their arms.*

From Italy the veneration of the Mother of the Saviour passed into Gaul. The Olympian gods had found their way thither in the train of Cæsar's conquering legions, and the temples of Augustus and of Jupiter arose beside the *dolmens*, the *menhirs*, and the more modern altars

* *Italy*, by Lady Morgan, vol. iii., ch. 24. *Travels in Italy*, by M. R. C.

of Belenus. The idols of the emperors, basely accepted by the Gallic-Roman population of the large cities, failed not to disappear after the conversion of Constantine; but it required ages to destroy the Druidical worship of trees, rocks, and springs.† In vain did the active virtues, the unctuous meekness, the angelic abstinence of the hermits excite the admiration of the Gallic tribes; in vain did the ingenious charity, the spotless integrity, the mild, compassionate religion of the bishops attract their souls to the crucified God; the sight of the gigantic *menhirs*, standing like dark spectres amid the arid heaths, the aspect of a mossy oak, or of a deified fountain, destroyed in some moments the tedious work of the Christian pastors.

In this state of things, so calculated to wear out the most tried patience, the clergy of Gaul showed themselves worthy of the religious and civilizing mission which they had received from their divine Master. They were by nature charitable and humble of heart; necessity

† See *Histoire Ecclesiastique de Bretagne*, Introduction.

rendered them skillful. Unable to break the superstitious habits which were closely intermingled with the deep roots of the old Celtic tree, they sanctified what they could not abolish, and turned the very practices of heathenism to the glory of God. The *menhirs* of the heath, where the children of Teutates went often to pray by the silvery light of the moon, which they called *the fair mute*,* were surmounted by a gigantic cross, which suggested a Christian thought amid the dark rites of Paganism. The oaks of eight centuries, where the Druids cut down with their golden sickles "the spirits' branch,"† received in their hollow trunks the sweet image of Mary; and it was also Mary and the saints whom the heathens found on the margin of their "fairy springs."‡

This change, which manifests, in those who made it, a profound knowledge of the human heart, took place not only in the Gauls, but also among the Belgians, the Spaniards, and the Britons: everywhere it was crowned with success. In time the

mysterious superstitions of Druidism descended from the songs of bards to popular legends; the daisies of the meadow, the lilies of the valley, the odorous stems of the honeysuckle, were no longer stripped of their leaves over the stream in honor of the deified fountain; they were laid on the rustic altar of Mary, and the little lamp of her chapel replaced the torches of resinous wood burned by the Gauls around those aged oaks, which they then called *the oaks of the Lord*.

In the invasion of the Barbarians the Christians, in order to hide from the profanation of those fierce warriors the cherished objects of their veneration, carefully concealed the little statues of the Blessed Virgin in the wildest and most inaccessible parts of their forests. There those sacred images remained, not because they were forgotten, but because the sword of the Goths, Huns, and Vandals cut down the native tribes, as the mower does the grass of the meadows, so that, in the most fertile and populous countries of the Roman world, the traveller might

* Bensozia, *Ben. bel, sos, mute or silent.* *Hist. Eccles. de Bret.*, t. iv., p. 496.

† Le gui. *Hist. Eccles. de Bret.*, t. iv., p. 564.

‡ Id. ib., t. iv., p. 561, and t. i., p. 293.

then journey on for days together without seeing the smoke of a human dwelling.*

Long after some of these Madonnas of the woods and fountains reappeared with splendor; and, according to the old chroniclers, Spanish, Belgian, and French, their discovery was accompanied by miracles. At one time, a bright light attracted by night a Spanish hunter or a Pyrenean shepherd to a bush, where the birds warbled sweetly all the day long; at another, there was an image of Mary found hidden amongst the flowers of a thorny shrub, redolent with the perfumes of the wild wood. Now it was that some shepherds, seeing their sheep bend the knee before a grassy knoll, covered with white violets, dug about the spot, and found, to their inexpressible surprise, a small statue, rudely carved in wood, but in a perfect state of preservation, representing the Blessed Virgin. Again, it was falling-stars, illuming

the night with a long train of radiance, and all concentrating their rays on the same spot, that pointed out to the Spanish troops, encamped under the walls of some Moorish city, the place where, in the time of Rodrigo, some holy monks had concealed, on a night of fear and flight, a miraculous image, in order to save it from the sacrilegious hands of the Mussulman. At another time, it was valorous knights or illustrious dames who, riding, with falcon on arm, through the green forests of France or of Lusitania, discovered, in the hollow of some old, moss-grown oak, or in the brier-hidden crevice of a rock, a little hiding Madonna.† At this sight, the proud baron or the noble lady crossed themselves devoutly, descended in haste from their palfreys, knelt on the grass before the Madonna, and vowed to build her a chapel.

Our Lady of the Blossomed Thorns was found on a bushy rock, under marvellous circumstances. The fol-

* The general depopulation that followed the invasion of the Barbarians surpasses all belief. Muratori relates, that in the eighth and ninth centuries Italy was so totally destitute of inhabitants, that it was infested by wolves. (Murat. *Italy*, vol. ii., p. 163.)

† Matilda, queen of Portugal, hunting with the falcon, found a small Madonna, which retained the name of Our Lady of the Forest. (See Vasconcellus, in *Descriptiones regni Lusit.* chap. vii., 1, 5.)

lowing is the narrative, as told by a simple legend of the past :

"Not far from the highest peak of Jura, but a little downwards on its western slope, there was still to be seen, about half a century ago, a heap of ruins which had once formed part of the monastery of Our Lady of the Blossomed Thorns, built by the widow of a knight, the last of his race, who fell fighting for the Holy Sepulchre. The noble lady, walking one winter evening in the long avenue of her ancient castle, her mind occupied in pious meditation, reached the thorny bush which subsequently marked the site of the monastery, and was no little surprised to see that one of those shrubs was already adorned with the garb of spring ; a calm, clear light, like that of the rising day, displayed the bush in full flower, and beneath its verdant screen, spangled with little white shining stars, was a statue of the Virgin, simply sculptured in rough wood, painted by no very skillful hand, but clad in robes of some value ; it was from this image that the miraculous light proceeded. The sacred image was conveyed with great

pomp to the castle chapel ; but the next day it was not to be found. The Queen of Angels preferred the modest shade of her favorite shrubs to the splendor of the baronial chapel ; she had returned to the freshness and solitude of the woods. In the evening all the inmates of the castle went thither and found her still more radiant than before. They fell on their knees in respectful silence. "Mighty Queen," said the lady, "blessed and holy Mary, this is thy chosen dwelling ; thy will shall be done." And a short time after a stately Gothic abbey arose on the spot where the miraculous Madonna had been found. The nobles of the kingdom enriched it with their gifts, and the kings endowed it with a tabernacle of pure gold.

Bretagne abounded in oaks consecrated to the honor of Mary ; the most famous of these flourished by the sea-side, on a hill which rises at some distance from Lesneven. Our Lady of the Gates was there honored, and her silver statue was, from time immemorial, an object of profound veneration for the faithful of Armorica. The shrine is now bereft

of its Madonna, which was stolen by the *incorruptible* agents of the Republic; but it is still frequented by numerous pilgrims, with long, flowing hair, and goat-skin garments, who come to ask the Mother of God for fine weather, abundant crops, or the recovery of some sick relative. To see them in this primitive costume, anterior to the Roman conquest, kneeling devoutly in the shade of the woods, in view of the green, restless ocean, and the *dolmens* of ancient heroes who marched to the conquest of the Capitol, you would fancy yourself transported to the *Gallia Comata* of Pliny, and the illusion would be complete if they chanted a hymn to the Virgin in the ancient and sonorous idiom of the Celts, their own peculiar language.

Le Berry had also its celebrated Madonna of the Oak, whom a Sire du Bouchet, seeking his hawk amid the woods, had found in the hollow of one of those old trees, sacred amongst the Gauls, on which the hunter-bird had perched, as if to attract his master thither. The oak that spread its branches over the fair statue of Mary, around which

* the ivy entwined like a Gothic frame, stood on a small islet covered with fine, thick grass, and surrounded by a small lake, which had been named—I know not why—the *Red Sea*. This oak became the terminus of so many pilgrimages, that a causeway was made to give access to it, and it was subsequently encircled by a religious edifice. The image, too richly adorned by the piety of the faithful, was stolen by the Protestants during the civil wars; but the Count de Maur had another carved from the wood of the oak which had so long sheltered the Madonna, and this new one might say, like the perfumed earth of the Persian poet: “I am not the rose, but I have lived near it.”*

In Picardy, a small Madonna was deposited in the hollow of an aged oak, on the high-road from Abbeville to Hesdin; this miraculous image, shaded by the fragrant honeysuckle, overlooked a patch of soft verdure on the side of the dusty road, which offered a pleasant shelter to the passing traveller and the high-born pilgrim, who went barefoot, like St. Louis and the Sire de

* Saadi, *Gulistan*.

Joinville, to some sacred place, in fulfillment of a vow made by himself or some one whom he loved. The bandit of the feudal times muttered an *Ave* to himself as he took off his coarse woollen hat before Our Lady of Faith; and the noble dame, after praying at the feet of the Madonna, opened her alms-purse, adorned with heraldic devices, and dropped her alms into the trunk of the old oak, where the Christian modesty of the faithful of those days secretly deposited, for the poor, the funds which the latter took without the shame of asking, and which no other ever touched.* The traveller, his devotions ended, sat down, with his feet stretched out in the soft, cool grass, which refreshed him after his long journey; he inhaled the perfume of the flowers, listened to the murmur of the neighboring spring, and enjoyed the exquisite sense of repose, so precious when contrasted with his late fatigue. But, alas! he was at length forced to depart, and how reluctantly he turned away! The shade was so

* refreshing, the grass so soft, the gurgling of the fountain so sweetly soothing! Crossing himself, he murmured a parting prayer to the Virgin, slipped an alms into the hand of the poor invalid who knelt hard by, and whose blessing followed him on his way: "Worthy traveller, may Our Lady save you from hurt or harm!" At the bend of the road he turned his head to take a last look at Our Lady's Oak.

Anjou, where the pilgrimages in honor of Mary are of so old a date, had, near the village of Sablé, its oak, contemporary with the Plantagenets, furnished with a Madonna no less ancient. At the foot of the Vosges, on the borders of Lorraine, a huge old Gallic oak, which the peasants still call, through custom, *the fairy tree*, had, in its mossy bosom, a white and mysterious image of the Virgin, before which Joan of Arc, that pious maiden, went to pray with all her heart against the English, who were so soon after to fly before her victorious banner. Hainault had also its old oaks and

* These trees, wherein travellers deposited the alms which the poor came at dusk to take away unseen, were so venerable, says M. de

Marchangy, that none, save those who really required it, would dare to take a farthing.

miraculous images; Spain and Portugal were not without theirs; and England, so late as the reign of Charles the First, saw her Catholic children still kneeling to invoke the absent Madonna. Evelyn tells us that these trees were known by the name of *procession-oaks*.*

But of all the monuments of the vegetable kingdom ever consecrated to Mary, there is none to be compared to the oak of Allouville, in the District of Caux. The circumference of this ancient tree is thirty-four feet at its base, and twenty-six at a man's height from the ground. It has the broad, open top of the cedar, and its vast branches, which spring from the trunk, about eight feet from its base, extend horizontally, so as to cover an immense space. The interior of the tree is hollow throughout; the central part being destroyed many years ago, it is only by its bark and the inner coats of sap that it still subsists; and yet it is every year covered with acorns and adorned with an abundant foliage. In the hollow of

* this oak, which is, at least, nine hundred years old, and has seen the fall of the Druid-groves, pious hands have constructed a charming little chapel, lined with marble, and decorated with an image of Mary. A grating closes the front of the shrine, without concealing the sacred image from the eyes of the pilgrim or the traveller. Over the chapel is a cell, a fitting habitation for some new *stylite*; it is reached by a spiral ladder which winds around the trunk. This aërial dwelling, covered with a pointed roof, forms a steeple surmounted by an iron cross, which rises in a picturesque manner above the branches of the oak.†

On certain festivals of the year, and especially on the patronal feast, the chapel serves for the religious ceremonies of the day, and the people of the neighboring villages repair in crowds to the feet of the Gallic Virgin, who seems to wrap them with maternal tenderness in her fresh, green mantle. These good people love their Madonna, and

* So late as the reign of Charles the Second, there were found in many counties of England, certain old oaks which were commonly called

procession-oaks. (Evelyn's Memoir.)

† See Ducatel's *Norman Antiquities* (*Antiquités Normandes*.)

have proved it well. In those disastrous days when all that belonged to religion was proscribed, when the slightest manifestation of Catholicism was punished with death, a band of revolutionary bravos from Rouen marched towards Allouville, with the avowed purpose of burning the venerable oak, with the Madonna whom it sheltered. The peasants of Normandy, though much less susceptible of enthusiasm than the Bretons, assembled in arms around the oak, and defended it so valiantly that the republicans were completely foiled in their design, and had to retire in disgrace. When the Reign of Terror was at its height, and the sound of hymn or psalm was no longer to be heard in France; when a misguided people, worshipping Marat on the altar of Christ,* vociferated, "*There are no longer Saints, nor God, nor immortal soul!*" the iron cross of the hermitage was still seen tapering above the branches of the oak of Allouville, and on the front of its little chapel was still read the calm

and touching inscription: "TO OUR LADY OF PEACE."

Under the successors of Constantine the Great, Gaul, where Paganism daily lost ground, became almost entirely Christian. In the time of Theodosius, it contained seventeen archbishop's sees, nearly all dedicated to Mary, and one hundred and fifteen bishoprics governed by men of great learning, of rare piety, of boundless charity, and of illustrious birth, which added much to their influence. Christianity was then seeking to restore the primitive gravity of manner and austerity of morals amongst those Gallic tribes so wholly given up to the sports of the circus, their chariot-races, and the seductive pleasures of the theatre—enervating and pernicious amusements which heathen Rome, in her corruption, had cast, like flowery chains, over the primitive nations whom she could hardly subdue—undermining, by these means, their martial courage. The bishops, who have been too rashly accused of tampering with Paganism, be-

* "It was during the festivals of Reason," says Laharpe, "that the bust of Marat was placed on the altar, when all who were suspected of fanati-

cism—that is to say, of believing in God—were forced to bend the knee before Marat." (See *Du Fanaticisme dans la langue revolutionnaire*, p. 51.)

cause they were unable to eradicate these noxious Pagan practices, used every endeavor, on the contrary, to extirpate them, and flattered themselves that they were succeeding, when, all at once, amid profound peace, and whilst Gaul lived from day to day, careless of the morrow, secure in the legions who occupied her great cities, and the sixty fortresses which protected her frontiers against the barbarians, behold! the sound of trumpets is heard beyond the river which divides it from Germany. . . . Hostile battalions suddenly precipitate themselves on the plains whose echoes are still murmuring the Gallic songs; fire and sword devastate the country; rivers tinged with blood, cities given up to pillage, the marble temples of the old imperial gods laid prostrate on the ground, Christian churches desecrated, announce the dread approach of those ferocious warriors of the North, whose gods bear the ominous titles of depopulators and fathers of carnage; they

* burst on Gaul like a mighty avalanche; the warrior has no time to seize his arms, fear deprives him even of the power of thinking; wealth and poverty share the same fate. . . . A thick, gloomy cloud overcasts the fair Roman province, and nought is to be seen save the flow of blood and the flash of steel; from the Rhine to the Pyrenees, from the Mediterranean to the ocean, Gaul, lately so flourishing, is but one vast scene of carnage and desolation. This disastrous period, which witnessed the final overthrow of the Roman colossus, and changed the form of Western Europe, was the gulf which swallowed up the ancient civilization; and Robertson, the great English historian, hesitates not to say that, were he asked to point out the most deplorable period of the world's history, he would name that which elapsed between the death of Theodosius the Great and the establishment of the Lombards in Italy.



Third Period of the Devotion to Mary.

THE MIDDLE AGES.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BARBAROUS TIMES.



THE invasion of the Barbarians was, for religion, as for the nations who lived enervated and civilized under the shadow of the Roman eagles, a period of mourning, of terror, and of tears—a night of blood, illumined by the distant glare of conflagrations, resounding with the clash of arms, and crossed by warlike chiefs who took to themselves the fearful title of *Scourges of God*. When the sound of this great passage of men had ceased, and it became possible to distinguish objects through the smoke of conflagrations and the dust of battle-fields, it was found that Europe had changed its face. The Saxons occupied fertile England, the Franks had taken possession of Gaul, the

* Goths of Spain, and the Lombards of Italy. There remained not a single vestige of the sciences, the arts, or institutions of the mighty people of Romulus; barbarism had invaded all and swept away all before it. New forms of government, new laws, new customs were everywhere observed; one thing only had resisted the general transformation—Christianity, which was to console the conquered and humanize the conquerors.

The devotion to Mary, impeded for a while by Arianism, which was fatally predominant for some time after the invasion of the Goths and Vandals, flourished again under the victorious banners of the Franks. Clovis, the only Catholic king of his time, conceived the design of building, at the eastern extremity of the city, under the invocation of Our Lady, a metropolitan church, of

which he himself laid the first stone, and which was completed by his son Childebert.* This church, built on the site of an ancient Druid temple, was adorned with marble columns, frescoes on a golden ground, and a mosaic pavement. The poet-bishop Fortunatus gives special praise to its windows, which filled the interior with a flood of light; these windows were a luxury imported from Greece and Italy, and were then first introduced into the Gauls.†

Clovis the First also founded Our Lady of Argenteuil, where the Princess Theodrade, daughter of the Emperor Charlemagne, took the veil after having accompanied her father to Italy; this abbey, which was then in the midst of the woods, was destroyed by the Normans, and magnificently rebuilt by the pious Queen Adelaide, wife of Hugh Capet, who delighted to adorn its altars with the finest works of her hands.

* Felibien, *Hist. de Paris*, t. i.

† The most ancient author who speaks of stained glass windows is St. Jerome, in his Commentary on Ezechiel, quoted by Ducange, *verbo vitæ*. After St. Jerome it is Gregory of Tours, then Fortunatus. Paul the Silent, a contempo-

The other Merovingian princes, not even excepting Chilperic, the sanguinary spouse of Fredegonde, dedicated many chapels and abbeys to the Virgin. Radegonde, daughter of Berthaire, king of Thuringia, the holy and deserted wife of King Clotaire, requested with tears, in her last moments, that they would bury her in the unfinished Abbey of St. Mary, which she was then building at Poitiers. This same pious princess, who refused to accept the regal crown offered to her by her fierce and inconstant husband, founded in Neustria, near a Druid spring which the Gauls of that time still obstinately persevered in secretly worshipping, the church of Our Lady of Cailliouville, which was adorned with so many sacred images that it was often compared to Paradise. Of the Merovingian church nothing now remains, but the fountain still pours forth its limpid stream, and people come from afar to seek health in its

rary of Fortunatus, to whom we are indebted for a minute description of the church of St. Sophia, such as it then was, has also described the beautiful windows of colored glass which ornamented the dome of the Byzantine basilica. (See *l'Hist. de Byzance* by Ducange.)

waters. When the water is calm and undisturbed, the image of St. Radegonde may still be seen on the flag at the bottom, with the legend, "Pray for us!"

Another wife of Clotaire the First, Queen Waltrade, with the Princess Engeltrude, a daughter of that king, founded at Tours, about the year 600, a noble abbey, with the title of Our Lady of the Casket, probably because those princesses employed their jewels in forwarding the work.* Several ladies of high birth shut themselves up with them in this monastery, which was destroyed by the Normans.

Gregory of Tours mentions that there was then in the capital of Touraine a church of Our Lady which was held in profound veneration. On solemn occasions, oaths were taken by placing the hand on the Virgin's altar, and those who perjured themselves were supposed to die within the year.†

The royal spouse of Clovis II., Bathilda, that fair and holy princess, who was the pearl of those barbarous times, founded the superb abbey of Chelles, whither she

retired when her glorious regency was at an end. This abbey was placed under the invocation of the Blessed Virgin, and was situated in the midst of the dense forest where Chilperic had met his death. A great lady of the Merovingian court, Lutruda, wife of Ebroin, that famous mayor of the palace who was surnamed the Marius of the Franks, founded, after the death of her dreaded spouse, the splendid abbey of Our Lady of Soissons, which was inaugurated by St. Dronsin. Six Carlovingian princesses governed this abbey in succession, for a period of an hundred and forty-five years. During all that time Our Lady of Soissons was regarded as the flower of Frankish monasteries, and the daughters of the highest houses took the veil there. Its affluence became so great that it was, at length, necessary to place it within bounds; on the prayer of the Abbess Inma, Charles the Bald fixed the number of nuns at 216. That prince also prescribed the establishment of an hostelry for travellers and an alms-house in front of the abbey gate. All was redolent

* *Gallia Christiana*, t. iv.

† Gregory of Tours, *de Gl. M.*, c. 19.

of piety in this opulent house; the divine office was uninterruptedly kept up, and the nuns watched by turns, night and day, before the Blessed Sacrament. When the king was with the army, or his life exposed to any danger, a large number of the holy sisters passed the night in prayer. According to the custom of the feudal times, this monastery was bound to send to the army its quota of men-at-arms. Its importance declined with that of the Frankish empire; but numerous pilgrims were attracted thither from all countries during the Middle Ages by two relics of the Blessed Virgin. Now, there is nothing to be seen of this Merovingian cloister but a few broken arches.

An Austrasian princess, Plectruda, wife of Pepin of Heristal, likewise built, under the first dynasty, the church of Our Lady of Colcogne, which still exists.

But of all the pious foundations in honor of the Blessed Virgin, which date from these remote times, there is none more worthy of note than that of Our Lady of Trèves, in the ancient country of Tongres, the

* fatherland of the Franks, which then made part of the duchy of Austrasia. Who does not remember the popular legend of Genevieve of Brabant? That moving tale, sung by so many troubadours and minstrels in the baronial halls of the feudal times, and told by the cottage hearth for a thousand years and more—this story of the Barbarous Ages, attested by a monument, commemorates a most tragical event—a true drama from which Shakspeare perhaps drew (for he loved to draw from ancient chronicles) the two most powerful characters that his fancy ever produced—Iago, the traitor and calumniator, and Othello, the hero with the credulous mind and jealous heart. Sigfred, palatine of Trèves, reluctantly tears himself from the arms of a beloved wife to go fight the Moors under the glorious banner of Charles Martel. Golo, the master of the prince's household, to whom he had confided the care of his young wife, a model of virtue and a pearl of beauty, conceived a shameful passion for the princess, and was not slow in declaring it. Repulsed with the contempt which his treason

merited, the unworthy favorite, who had deliberately planned his lord's disgrace, hesitated not to calumniate the woman whom he could not seduce: for all vices are sisters. Sigfred believed him; he was far away from home, he loved his wife madly, and was jealous; in the first burst of what he considered his just indignation, he condemned Genevieve to die, together with her child; but the servants charged to execute this fatal sentence, in the depth of a dark forest, had not the heart to do it, and the Belgian princess was left, with her new-born infant, in that gloomy forest, peopled only with wild beasts; the child was suckled by a wild doe. For six long years did the innocent and injured wife live on roots and wild fruits, constantly begging of God that her innocence might be recognized. The compassionate Virgin, touched by so many tears and so much misery, came to her one day, as she sat by a spring, and promised her that her wishes should be accomplished. Soon after, Sigfred, who still loved his wife, and was inconsolable for her loss, being on a hunting-party, found Gene-

* vieve in a cave, covered with rags, her long hair hanging over her shoulders like a veil. Golo confessed his crime, and was torn asunder by four wild bulls from the Black Forest. This act of stern justice being done, Genevieve had a church built in honor of Mary amid the woods where she had so long wandered, and on the very spot where the Mother of God had appeared to her. Hydolphus, archbishop of Trèves, consecrated this church in the year 746.*

Notwithstanding these marks of respect bestowed on the Blessed Virgin, it would be falsifying history to represent the devotion to her as having attained its highest pitch under the first French dynasty; the truth is, that it was then only in its dawn. Local devotions absorbed both the nobles and the people: St. Martin of Tours, St. Denis, St. Germain, and St. Hilary, were each the object of such exclusive veneration that, excepting only Our Lord himself, all else was in the shade. It was the altars of those saints that were plated with gold; it was their tombs that were

* *Add. ad Molan de Belgic.*

covered with beaten silver; it was under the arches of their *Roman* churches that robes of golden tissue, embroidered with pearls, were hung, *ex voto*.^{*} The fair image of Mary, the grand figures of the Apostles, the army of martyrs, all fade away before the first Gallic bishops. Thus, an impostor of the name of Didier, who would fain found a sect in the sixth century, announced himself, with cool effrontery, *greater* than the Apostles, and *almost* as great as St. Martin.[†] This distorted vision, which causes us some surprise, proceeded from the gradual extinction of light; legends began to take precedence of the Gospel, and ignorance, ever more productive of evil, did not always stop at the threshold of the Christian temple; the successors of the Basils, of the Ambroses, the Chrysostoms, unhappily deserved what Alfred the Great said of them, with sadness of heart: "From the Thames to the Humber, they no longer understand the *Pater*, and in other parts of the island it is still worse."[‡]

Gaul was not entirely converted

^{*} See *Life of Dagobert*, by the Monk of St. Denis.

[†] Gregory of Tours.

to the Gospel under the Merovingian kings; the Franks had completely abjured their fierce German deities, but there were still some vestiges of polytheism amongst the Romans of the cities, who continued to draw omens from the flight and singing of birds, to feast on Thursday in honor of Jupiter, to swear by Neptune, Pluto, Diana, or the genii; in fine, who dared to light lamps and hang up offerings in the deserted temples of the idols, for which St. Eloi reproaches them in his Homilies. These frail shoots of Greek and Roman idolatry soon withered of themselves on an adverse soil; but the religion of the Celts, as we have already said in a preceding chapter, stoutly resisted the sacerdotal axe, and it was ages before it died away. So late as the fourth century the image of the goddess Berecynthia, representing cultivated ground, was borne through the fields. In the fifth, it is decreed by a canon of the Second Council of Arles, that if a baron permits lamps to be lit before trees, rocks, or fountains, he shall be cut off

[‡] Robertson's *History of the Emperor Charles V.*, vol. i., p. 186.

from the communion of the faithful, after being first admonished and solemnly warned. At the end of the sixth century, the Council of Auxerre forbids vows being made to bushes, trees, or fountains.* In a Council of Nantes, the date of which is fixed by Flodoard at the year 658, the bishops are advised to uproot the trees which the Bretons still persist in worshipping, and from which they would not, on any account, cut a single branch. The priest Paulinus represents these same Gauls as having relapsed into their former idolatry, placing meats on the sacred stones at the foot of these trees, and beseeching a venerable oak (which was probably the sepulchre of some old chief Druid), with the humble funeral offering of a handful of beech-nuts,† to protect their wives, their children, their servants, and their houses.‡ The bishops of Charlemagne's time likewise pronounced severe penalties against

these superstitions which had outlived the Merovingian dynasty,§ and they must have been still of some account when the church passed laws against them, so late as the opening years of the ninth century. It was especially in the two Armoricas, east and west, where the Gospel was late sown and of slow growth, that the native worship, favored by forests as old as the world itself, long held its ground despite of councils and bishops, who, nevertheless, strained every nerve to root it out. The desert of Scygy, in the Cotentine peninsula, was peopled, even in the seventh century, by Pagan Gauls, who lived there, as we learn from the canons of some of the councils of those times, positively *like wild beasts*. But if idolatry was obstinately sustained by the scalds and bards, and some Druids wandering in the woods, the zealous Christian had the ardor which secures victory,

* This canon is conceived in these terms: "Non licet inter sentes, aut ad arbores sarcivos, vel ad fontes vota exolvere."

† They first raised the bark and then made a square hollow in the trunk, wherein they placed the body of the Druid; the aperture was closed with a block of green wood, and then the bark

was restored to its place. The sepulchral tree still lived on. In some of these trees bones have been found almost reduced to ashes, and with them some beech-nuts, in good preservation.

‡ Paulinus, lib. i. *Paschalis Operis*, ch. 2.

§ *Capitul. Caroli Magni*, lib. i., tit. 64.

and proved it well. In the depth of those remote solitudes, said to be the haunts of demons, where strange things were indeed revealed,—when the torches of the Gauls, who repaired by night to some forbidden rite, flashed on the foliage of the mighty oaks, or formed a fiery circle around some dark *dolmen* planted on the moonlit heath,*—hermits, often of high birth, took up their dwelling in clay huts, covered with brambles, some hidden by a coat of mingled moss and ivy. Their beds were of dry leaves, sometimes the bark of trees; their food consisted of fruits, berries, and wild roots; their garment, a toga or gown of white, coarse wool.† Making their way through the tall, tangled ferns of those primeval forests, whose secret ways they knew not, these

good shepherds sought out in every direction the stray sheep of Christ. When the good odor of the sanctity of one of these solitaries spread abroad through the old Neustrian woods, other hermits hastened to place themselves under his guidance. Then they set about clearing the hard, dry earth, choked up for ages with briars and brambles; then the yellow crops began to wave on the fair hill-side; then, at the calm evening hour, when the birds sat warbling on the trees, the hymns of Sedulius, in honor of the Virgin Mary, arose in grave, sweet tones, from the very places where the victim doomed to die under the stone-knife of the sacrifices, to appease the Gallic gods, had of old chanted his death-song.‡

Woman—ever ready, notwith-

* The most solemn assemblies of the Druids were those of the new and full moon; that of the new moon commenced when that planet gave sufficient light to illumine the country on the sixth day; the moonlight did not prevent the worshippers from bearing torches. (See *Hist. Eccles. de Bretagne*, Introd., p. 184.)

† Even in the sixth century the clergy still wore the white toga of the Roman people. In 428 Pope Celestine blamed the ecclesiastics of Vienne and Narbonne, who, instead of the toga, began to wear a cloak and girdle. He shows them that it is only the love of chastity which

is recommended when the Gospel tells us to gird our loins; that the discipline sanctioned by so many holy bishops must not be corrupted by superstition; that the clergy are not to be distinguished from the faithful by their garments, but by their knowledge and the purity of their lives. (Fleury, *Mœurs des Chrétiens*, ch. 41. *Ibid.*, t. ii., p. 185.)

‡ M. Pitre-Chevalier has inserted in his interesting and patriotic work on Brittany, a very curious bardic song attributed to the victim on the dolmen.—“Hail, thou whose wings pierce the air, thou whose son was the protector of

standing her natural timidity, to brave all dangers, when occasion requires—woman would fain contribute her share to the overthrow of Paganism, and bravely advance to attack it, even in its ancient strongholds, under the protection of Mary. St. Fremond, a nobleman who had grown disgusted with the world, and who was forced to receive the episcopal crown in his humble cell, founded a monastery of nuns in his beloved solitude, and this convent is one of the first in Neustrian Armorica of which there is any record; the holy bishop added to it a handsome church which he dedicated to the Mother of God. This monastery, built about the year 674, was destroyed by the idolatrous Romans, but was rebuilt with increased splendor by their Christian descendants.

The proximity of the British Isle, which the Anglo-Saxons, the conquerors of the native Britons, had

great privileges, the bardic herald, the minister, O father of the abyss!—My tongue shall sing my death-song within the rocky circle which incloses the world.—Trust of Brittany, He whose brow beams forth light, support me! There is joy around the two lakes; a lake surrounds me and the circle; the circle is sur-

* plunged back again into idolatry, was fatal to the Neustrian pastors; for the idolators of Great Britain, making common cause with the Gauls, strengthened them in their resistance. The Gospel, favored by a Merovingian princess, once more penetrated into the island of Britain about the end of the sixth century, and obtained a permanent footing there, thanks to the wise measures of Gregory the Great; but this disputed triumph was only partial; Edwin, one of the most powerful princes of the Saxon heptarchy, had the glory of making it secure. Having, like Clovis, made a vow to embrace Christianity if he obtained a victory over the perfidious kings of Wessex, who had tried to assassinate him, and, having gained it, he convoked the *Wittenagemote*, or great council of the sages, lords, and warriors of his little kingdom, and, having explained to them his reasons for abjuring

rounded by another marked by strong planks. A fair asylum is before; high rocks hang over it; the serpent approaches on the outside, creeping towards the sacrificer's vases with the golden horns. These golden horns in his hand, his hand on the knife, the knife on my head."

his ancient gods, he demanded their opinion.

It was a strangely-imposing sight to see that Anglo-Saxon senate deliberating on the proposed change of religion. The king, young, handsome, and of noble presence, presided over the assembly, his crown on his head, a naked sword in his hand, according to the custom of those times, and clothed in a long cloak fastened at the shoulder; ranged on either side were the sages of the nation, old men without arms, wearing long robes and cloaks, with Phrygian caps on their heads; then the warriors, in short, tight-fitting garments, their round helmets, without visors, adorned with a drooping plume; on their arms shone heavy golden bracelets; from a narrow belt, which passed over their shoulder, hung their sword and battle-axe; in one hand they held a lance, and in the other a round shield studded with golden nails; in the background were the Christian priests and the high-priest of the idols.

The result of this national conference exceeded the hopes of the bishops. The Pagan pontiff was

the first to declare that his gods were utterly impotent. A warrior noble, a thane, compared the life of man to the wing of a little bird as it flies across a room (perhaps he saw one at the moment). "We see the door by which it enters," said the Saxon chief, "the window by which it goes out; but whence did it come, and whither does it go? This is the emblem of our existence. If the new faith removes this uncertainty, let us hasten to adopt it."*

Thereupon, the king declared himself a Christian; the entire assembly solemnly renounced the worship of idols, and the people soon followed the example of the senate and the king. This religious revolution took place in the year 620.

The German gods were overthrown in Great Britain, but not so Druidism; it lived in the old insular forests where the Britons still tattooed themselves, like the savages of America, even in the middle of the eighth century, although it had been decreed by councils that this strange custom, which gave to the Scots or North Britons the name of Picts or painted

* *Hist. d'Anglest.*, by M. de Roujoux, t. 1er.

warriors, was of diabolical invention.* King Edgar prohibited, by an ordinance dated 967, the superstitious assemblies called *frithgear*, held around the Druid stones which were still adored in Northumberland, Cumberland, Yorkshire, Devonshire, Somersetshire, and especially on Salisbury Plain,† where stood the famous stone-henge (the *chœrea giganteum* of the ancients). This prohibition was not strictly adhered to, it would seem, since Canute, or Cnut the Great, a celebrated seaking, was obliged, so late as the eleventh century, to forbid the worship of trees, rocks, and fountains. As to the Anglo-Saxons, they were absolutely converted, so that not a trace of their ancient worship remained, and no sooner had they exchanged the white horse of Hengist on their banners for the Cross of Christ, than there arose simultaneously, all over the country, con-

vents, cathedrals, churches, hermitages, and chapels in honor of the Blessed Mary, sometimes alone, sometimes associated with one of the Apostles or the Saxon saints, when they came to have any. Nothing could be more simple than the greater part of these first Anglo-Saxon chapels. Their walls were formed of huge trunks of trees, taken from the neighboring forests and cemented with moss or green sods mixed with clay; the interior of the walls was rough-cast with a slaty earth which took a kind of polish, and on this were traced colored figures, in barbarous designs.‡ At the farther end of the little building, where wind, rain and light were all admitted through the osier lattice which served for glass,§ there stood over a tomb-shaped altar, covered with a red cloth with a deep fringe,|| an image of the Blessed Virgin in the costume of

* This tattooing was condemned in 787 by a Northumbrian Council, as a Pagan superstition and a diabolical rite. (See *Concil. Labbe*, t. vi.)

† See Camden's *Britannia*.

‡ *Hist. d'Anglet.*, by M. de Roujoux, t. 1er.

§ Sir James Hall, in his *Essay on Gothic Architecture*, traces up the stone mullions, so light and so elegant, of the great pointed windows,

to the imitation of these osier lattices. (See *Edinburgh Phil. Trans.*)

|| It must be remembered that the ancient altars of Christianity were the tombs of martyrs; the stuffs, often very rich, which covered the altars, were red, in imitation of the color of blood; covers were sometimes brought from the tomb of SS. Peter and Paul in Rome. (*Hist. Eccles. de Bretagne.*)

a Saxon lady. The straw roof of the chapel was surmounted by a little bell. In front of this primitive monument, there was seen a cross formed of two trees fastened together by branches of willow, and crowned with a wreath of box or ivy; this was the sign of the change of worship, and the trophy of CHRIST's victory over Zernebock and Hertha. A little later, the Anglo-Saxon bishops brought from Rome painters, glaziers and builders;* but the cathedrals and abbeys, which they built under the invocation of Mary and the Saints, were all in the heavy, cumbrous style which prevailed at that time.

When William of Normandy made the conquest of England, the Anglo-Norman churches, with their bold steeples, their splendid belfries, and their lofty towers, suddenly started up, in the pride of their fairy architecture, by the side of the heavy churches and rude chapels of the Saxons. But the latter, notwithstanding their want of elegance, still retained a charm which exer-

cised a powerful influence over the conquered nation: it was there that the vanquished came to weep and pray. The Virgin, whom they had venerated in happier days—the Virgin who, according to the custom of those times, wore their national costume—seemed to them more attentive, more indulgent, more disposed to help them, in those places where she reigned over the graves of their fathers and the sculptured saints of Old England.

Christianity, which, according to old Spanish tradition, was brought into Spain by St. James, four years after the death of Our Lord, made rapid progress in that country, and flourished there, mixed up, it is true, with the tares of Arianism, from the invasion of the Goths and Vandals; the veneration of Mary was already common, though somewhat eclipsed by that of St. Vincent, the great martyr of Cæsar-Augusta, now Saragossa, whom Prudentius has celebrated in his hymns. Our Lady of the Pillar, which was at first, it seems, but a poor chapel, built of

* "Misit legatarios in Galliam, qui vitri factores, artifices videlicet Britannii ea tenuis incognitos, ad cancellandos ecclesiæ porticus

et cœnacularum ejus fenestras, abducerent." (Ven. Bede, *Lib. de Wiremuthensi monasterio*, c. 5.)

clay and round stones, was already * a Roman church, frequented by numerous pilgrims, where the statue of the Blessed Virgin seemed to smile on the kneeling Spaniards from the height of her rich marble column. Our Lady of Toledo, the metropolitan church of Spain, the foundation of which is referred by some Spanish historians to the first ages of Christianity, was authentically consecrated in the year 630, under the Gothic king Recaredo, the first king of Spain who merited the title of Catholic, since he expelled the Arians from his kingdom, after having their errors condemned by a council held in Toledo. But the shrine of Mary most frequented by the Spanish people, in those remote ages to which we now refer, was that of Our Lady of Covadonga, in the Asturias. The reason was, that, under the natural arches of this Asturian cave, consecrated to Mary by the ancient hermits when they were waging war against Druidism* in the depth of the Spanish forests,

* The twelfth and sixteenth Council of Toledo, of which one was held in the year 681, and the other in the year 693, teach, by their eleventh

where it long maintained itself, the flag of independence—the sacred banner of the Cross—had taken refuge, as a last resource, after the battle of Xeres, which delivered Spain to the Caliphs. Abandoning forest after forest, mountain after mountain, and retiring with heroic slowness to Mount Autiba, which commands a view of the Cantabrian Sea, the last boundary of Spain, Pelago, a young man of the royal blood, the only hope of his country, found shelter for a short time, with a handful of brave followers, in this inaccessible cavern, which the piety of the Asturian mountaineers had consecrated to the Blessed Virgin, whose sweet image was placed on a rock that served for an altar. On entering this rude temple, the Spanish hero conceived all sorts of hopes, and, kneeling with his companions before the sacred image, he solemnly placed himself and the shattered fortunes of Spain under the protection of Our Lady of Covadonga, took the Virgin's name for his war-cry, and fortified himself on her

and twelfth canons, that those who pay religious worship to stones or trees, or other inanimate objects, sacrifice to Satan.

mountain. The Mother of God graciously heard the Gothic prince, and was pleased to manifest her protection by giving the Spaniards a great victory over the Moors commanded by the Mussulman governor, Alcama.*

Attributing this unhopèd-for victory to the Blessed Virgin, Pelago, to show his gratitude, founded near the natural grotto, which was in the side of a steep rock, at whose base flowed the Auseba, a fair church with the title of Our Lady of Covadonga (*of the cave*), where all Spain went to pray.†

The descendants of Clovis *the Handsome—le chevelu*, as he is styled in the introduction to the Salic law—had sadly degenerated from the valor and prudence of that prince. The lamp of the Merovingians, almost consumed, was wasting away without emitting a single flash of light; the sluggish kings, who were no more than empty shows, were scarcely seen by the people more

* than once a year, and then they appeared seated on a chariot bedecked with flowers and green branches, drawn by four oxen, who moved with a slow and heavy gait towards the Champ de Mai, there to exhibit to the public gaze those phantoms of princes whom the breath of Charles Martel could destroy if it deigned to do so. Yet they were pious, and built monasteries; but piety alone will not suffice to sustain a sceptre; that of France is heavy, and requires a strong arm, a fearless heart, a clear head, and a prudent mind. The mayors of the palace had all that, happily for Christian Europe, which was soon to be confronted with Islamism.‡

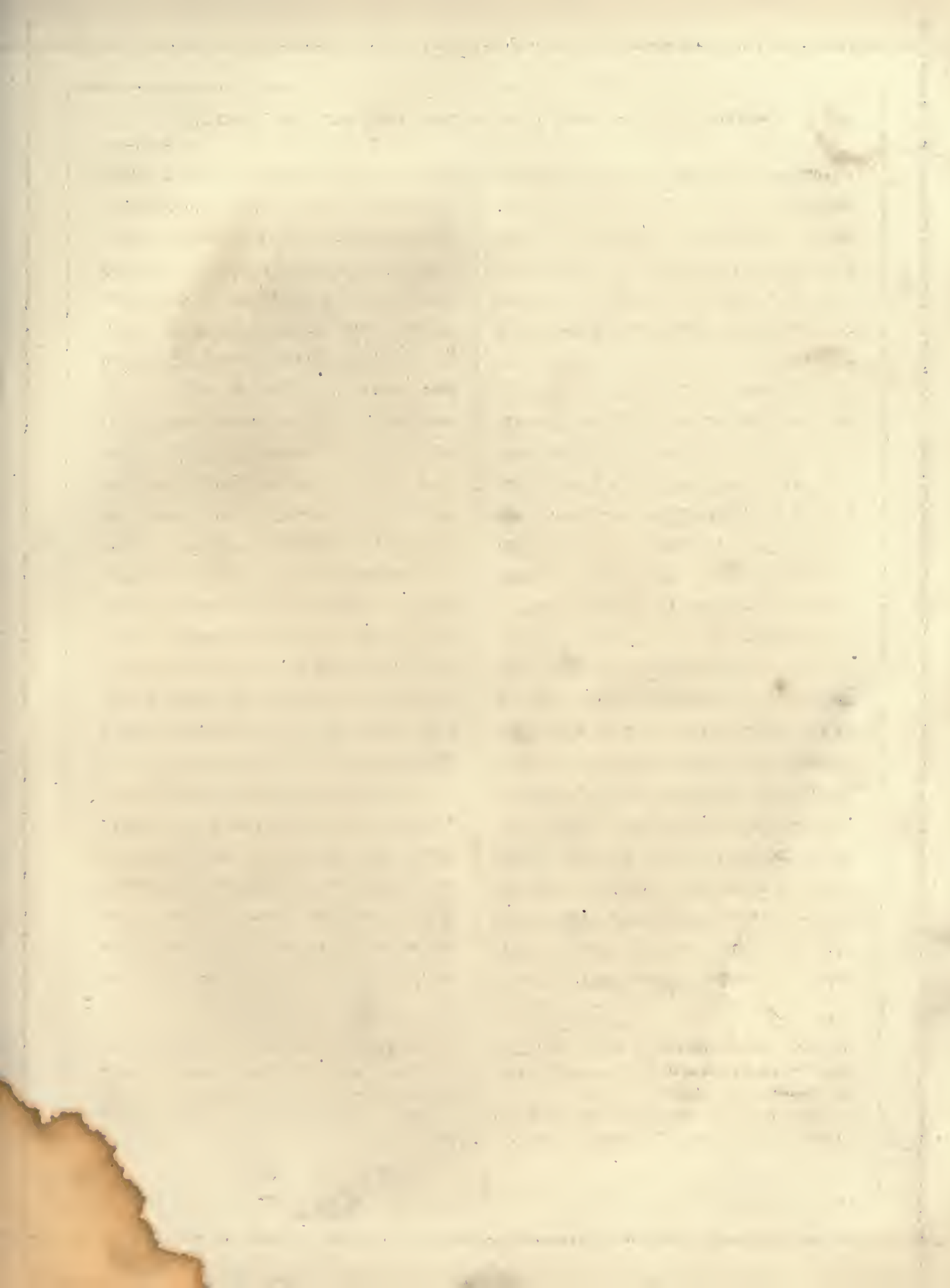
The Moors, being masters of Spain, had looked with a longing eye from the top of the Pyrenees over the land of France, the fairest kingdom of the West; it seemed to them good to introduce Islamism there, and to change its churches

* According to Father Mariana, this army consisted of sixty thousand men. Sebastian, bishop of Salamanca, and Ambrosio de Morales, represent it as still larger.

† The church of Our Lady of Covadonga was preserved till the year 1775, when it was con-

sumed by fire; the pious Charles III. wished to rebuild it with great splendor, and had the work actually commenced, though it is not yet finished. This shrine is situate in the province of Oviedo.

‡ The word *Islamism* signifies consecration to God.





1794

into mosques. The project was no sooner conceived than executed. The rich plains of the South were quickly covered with a numerous army, which pillaged the shrines as it passed along, and dashed from their ancient pedestals the statues of the Virgin and the Saints, contemptuously treating them as idols. All France quaked with fear, from the Pyrenees to the Rhine; the churches could scarcely contain the multitudes who came to implore the assistance of God and the Blessed Virgin; the bishops took up arms; the mitred abbots marched to battle under the flag of their abbey; the abbot of St. Denis hoisted the *oriflamme*, which was then peculiar to his own convent; Aquitaine displayed the image of St. Martial, and Charles Martel the cloak of St. Martin of Tours, which was then the royal standard of France. It was truly a holy war; and we consequently see that those who fell in this contest were numbered amongst the martyrs.

The battle wherein the Moorish scimitar and the Frankish battle-axe were to decide the destinies of the world, and secure the triumph

either of the Koran or the Gospel, was fought on the plain of Poitiers. The two armies viewed each other at first with equal surprise. The French could not help admiring the brilliant Eastern cavalry, proud of so many victories, and laden with the spoils of Africa and Asia. The ground shook beneath the fiery tread of their Arab coursers as they impatiently pawed and pranced, seeming as though they would cry "Forward!" like their type immortalized in the sublime description of Job; the eye was dazzled by the gorgeous flowing robes of the Saracens, the splendor of their jewelled turbans, and the meteor glare of their breastplates and scimitars.

The army of the Franks, ranged in angular form for the battle, presented to the sons of Ishmael a sight no less strange or imposing. Those agile warriors, clothed in short garments, and exceeding the swiftest horses in the celerity of their movements,—that formidable infantry, which united in its manœuvres the ancient tactics of the Roman legions and the wild ferocity of the Germanic races,—that brist-

ling triangle of spears and axes, * advancing eagerly but steadily to pierce the Moorish squadrons, struck the Arabs with surprise, and soon convinced them, say the ancient chronicles, that they had no longer to deal with the degenerate Goths, and that Charles was a different person from Rodriguez.

The battle of Xerès, which delivered Spain to the Moors, had lasted eight whole days; the battle of Tours, which delivered France from them, lasted but a single day. The Arabs charged the Christian army several times, pouring in one battalion after another, like the overwhelming billows of the ocean; but their insatiate fury broke in vain against the solid phalanx of the Franks, whom a Portuguese bishop, Isidore, their contemporary, com-

pares to a wall of ice, against which the Arab host dashed itself to pieces. At length the ferocious Abderama, lieutenant of the Caliph of Bagdad, whose authority extended even to Spain, fell under the crushing axe of Charles. The shades of night separated the combatants, and next day, when the Christian troops rushed on the African camp, in order to complete the ruin of their enemies, they found it empty—the Moors had fled! Then, each of the victorious battalions, as they marched into the grateful city, was greeted with the merry sound of bells and the music of joyful anthems; and the whole city resounded with the cry of “Praises be to Christ, who loves the Franks, protects their armies, and watches over their kingdom!”



CHAPTER VIII.

THE NORTHMEN.



HE last of the Merovingians had exchanged the white and blue dalmatic, the tiara of gold adorned with jewels, and the golden wand bent in the form of a crozier, which formed the sceptre of those princes, for the brown habit of a monk; it was a phantom the less. For many a long year the mayors of the palace had been the real kings, and the disappearance of the last descendant of Clovis made so little noise in the world, that the chronicles of the time merely state, so very concisely that contempt appears through indifference, that the Franks assembled at Soissons deposed Childeric, and transferred the crown to Pepin. This Austrasian prince, who so boldly assumed the crown of France, violating, by the consent of the nobles, all the laws of monarchy, had a sword able to

defend it, and a head strong enough to wear it. His valor was undoubted, his prudence proverbial, and he showed himself more pious than his father, Charles Martel, of glorious memory, who pillaged the church after having saved it. Pepin, who was remarkable for his devotion to the Blessed Virgin, was consecrated by Boniface, archbishop of Mayence, in the famous abbey-church of Our Lady of Soissons, where Gisèle, one of his daughters, the beloved sister of Charlemagne, afterwards took the veil. It was this prince who granted to the Merovingian monastery of Our Lady of Argenteuil a part of the immense forest which lay near it. Pepin the Short also founded, in the old German forest, since so famous and so dreaded as the Black Forest, a charming rustic chapel in honor of Mary. This he did on the following occasion: One day, as he was hunting with his lords in those immense woods, he heedlessly de-

tached himself from his suite, and lost his way. Not knowing what to do, he stood hesitating which path to follow, when the soft sound of a hermitage-bell was wafted to his ear on the autumn breeze. Turning his horse's head in the direction of the sound, the prince soon reached a sequestered spot, where a poor Scottish monk had built himself a cell and a small oratory by the side of a limpid brook. This lowly edifice, constructed without the aid of art or the mason's trowel, was yet not without its own magnificence: the brier had interlaced its rich brown branches through the narrow openings, adorned with dark green leaves, whilst the gold and purple foliage of the wild vine seemed to fix on the ruined wall the rich tints of the setting sun.

The kings of that time, though arrogant by nature, everywhere divested themselves of pride in presence of a Christian emblem. On seeing the black cross of the hermitage, the Frankish prince bent his head as humbly as the poorest shepherd would have done; then,

* tying his horse to a tree, he entered the humble sanctuary. The utter nakedness of the holy place, through whose broken roof were seen the waving pine and the passing clouds, cooled in no degree the simple piety of the valiant prince. Having prayed for a little time before a Madonna, so rudely sculptured that it would now frighten a child and make an artist shudder, the king, wholly unprovided, yet unwilling to leave the little chapel without some token of his visit, laid before the altar his jewelled cap. Returned to his palace of Heristal, Pepin did not forget, amid the cares and pleasures of royalty, the little hermitage of Mary, which he rebuilt with splendor, and richly endowed.*

Charlemagne, or *Karl the Great*, as he is styled in the old Frankish chronicles, rejected not the religious inheritance of his father's piety. There is on record one of his pious visits to Our Lady of Marillais, in Anjou—a pilgrimage which dates, it is said, from the fourth century, and which was then one of the most popular of the Christian world.† During his stay in Italy, his rich

* Astolfi, *Delle Imagini miracolose*.

† Grandet, *Hist. Eccles. d'Anjou*.

gifts to St. Mary Major dazzled the Roman people, accustomed as they were to splendor and magnificence; Germany was enriched by him with three churches bearing Our Lady's name; nor was this all.

Having exhumed the mineral city of Granus, the remains of which he accidentally found beneath the moss and weeds of the fair valley which skirts the Rhine and the Meuse, Charles, having chosen it for the seat of the Frankish empire, erected there, by the side of his vast palace, under the invocation of the Virgin, a chapel or oratory of octagonal form, ornamented with Italian marble, lighted by windows incrust-ed with gold, and secured by brazen doors. This chapel, which equalled the basilica in extent, and subsequently afforded a magnificent asylum to the mortal remains of the great emperor, soon became so famous, that the German city, whose glory it was, esteemed it a high honor to bear its name. From the Emperor Louis the First, till the year 1556, thirty-six kings and ten queens were crowned in this sanctuary of Our Lady. This shrine was so much frequented, that in

* 1496 there were reckoned, in one day, an hundred and forty-two thousand pilgrims.

The court of Charlemagne imitated him in his tender and profound devotion to the Blessed Virgin. When he declared war against the Mussulman king of Cordova, and summoned the lords of southern France to fight under the victorious banners whereon was emblazoned the figure of the Archangel Michael, the great patron of the French of that time, the famous paladin Roland, his nephew, before crossing the Pyrenees, which were to be so fatal to him, made a pilgrimage, in company with many high and mighty lords, to Our Lady of Roc-Amadour. The Carlovingian prince, after having piously invoked Mary, offered her the weight of his *brac-mar* (sword) of silver, and consecrated to her that sword which had already acquired so much renown. As he was returning to France, covered with glory, the vanguard of the French army, commanded by him, was surrounded and attacked on all sides in the valley of Roncevaux. In vain did the French brave the danger with unflinching

courage; they were cut to pieces; * not one would surrender; all perished, both chiefs and soldiers. To perpetuate the memory of this disastrous event, there was erected on the spot, over the collected bones of those chivalrous warriors, a chapel dedicated to Mary, in which was placed an inscription bearing the names of Thierry of Ardennes, Riales du Mas, Guy of Bourgogne, Ogier the Dane, Olivier, and Roland. This chapel, situated near the abbey of Roncevaux, was adorned with frescoes representing a combat, and for six centuries none but Frenchmen were buried there. The last thought of the paladin Roland, ere he expired on the field of battle, was an act of respect towards the Blessed Virgin; he desired that his sword might be borne to Our Lady of Roc-Amadour, and it was done as he had commanded.

Louis the Pious, or the Good, son of Charlemagne, always wore the image of Mary about his person whether in the chase or on a journey. When, straying a little from his court, he found himself alone in the woods, he hastily unfastened his gauntlets studded with golden nails, *

and, drawing from his bosom the venerated image, he placed it at the foot of an oak and knelt to offer up a prayer. He afterwards deposited it in the superb abbey of Hildesheim, which he founded in honor of the Blessed Virgin,* and where he planted a rose-bush with his own hand, which lasted nearly as long as his noble monastery.

Under Charles the Fat, a craven and deceitful monarch, whose disturbed and unhappy reign prepared the fall of the race of Charlemagne, the Normans, conducted by Sigefroy, came to lay siege to Paris. That ancient capital of the *Parisii* was no larger then than it had been in the time of Cæsar: the cathedral of Notre-Dame, built by king Childbert, to the east; two large towers to the north and south; and to the west, the king's palace, formed the four points of its circumference. The Seine encircled it with its blue waves. The river-side, towards the north, was covered with wood, and the octagonal tower which stood at the corner of the Cemetery of the Innocents served as a watch-tower to keep off the incursions of the

* *Triple Cr.*, No. 75.

robbers from the forest. In the present *quartier des Halles*, in the neighborhood of St. Opportune, was a hermitage called the Hermitage of Our Lady of the Woods, because it stood at the entrance of the forest. The mountain of St. Genevieve, was thickly covered with vines, and the *faubourg St. Germain*, noted for its beautiful meadows, was a small abbatial village.

Sigefroy at first demanded permission for the troops whom he was leading to Burgundy to enter Paris as they passed; the Parisians refused to open their gates to him, and the Norman swore that his sword should break them open.

Eudes, son of Robert the Strong, shut himself up in Paris, and resolved to defend it against these barbarians, who, not content with pillaging the houses and churches, robbed even the venerated bodies of the Saints.* The siege was long and bloody. Seven hundred Norman barks blockaded the Seine; battering-rams, balistas, and catapults were employed on both sides, and either party darted against the other fiery arrows and burning

* brands. The Norman towers were placed over against the towers of the besieged ramparts, and the enemy approached the walls under covered galleries, which the Parisians often succeeded in burning, or crushing beneath the weight of beams and stones.

From the very beginning of this desperate and heroic conflict, Paris had placed itself under the special protection of the Blessed Virgin. It was her statue that the clergy bore in procession around the ramparts during the siege, and many a Norman arrow was aimed at it in vain; it was Mary whom the archers invoked aloud as they hurled stones and other missiles from the height of the towers; it was in her honor that, as often as they repulsed the Northern pirates, the city was splendidly illuminated with white wax tapers. "It is she who saves us," said Abbon; "it is she who deigns to support us; it is by her help that we still enjoy life. Amiable Mother of our Saviour, bright Queen of Heaven, it is thou who hast vouchsafed to shield us from the threatening sword of the Danes!"

* See *Antiq. de Rouen*, p. 102.

Some years after, the Blessed Virgin assisted by a miracle in recovering the city of Nantes from the Normans, and expelling them from Bretagne, which they had invaded. Alain, afterwards surnamed *Barbe-Torte* (Twisted Beard), who had taken refuge in England with the flower of the young Breton nobility, then undertook to regain his country; he was but twenty years old, an exile, and had little else than his sword and the protection of Mary; but a sword is something in the hands of a brave man, and Mary's protection is worth whole squadrons. He landed with some Bretons at Cancale, and, from stage to stage, tracking his way with Norman corpses, the Breton hero at length arrived under the walls of Nantes, where the plundering Northmen had taken refuge, as a last resource. Repulsed with loss by the Normans, who had collected numerous bands around the city, Alain, driven to the extremity of the mountain with his troops, stretched himself on the ground, "grievously tired," says an old Breton chronicle, "and tormented with thirst. He, thereupon, began to moan pite-

* ously, and, with humble supplication, to implore the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Our Lord, beseeching her to open a fountain of water, so that he and his exhausted knights might quench their grievous thirst. Which prayers being heard by the Virgin Mary, she did graciously open a fountain, which is still called St. Mary's Fountain, from which he and his did drink, and being sufficiently strengthened and refreshed, did marvellously recover their vigor, and returned as valiant as ever to the battle. Falling again on the Normans, they slew them and cut them to pieces, excepting only those who fled with their booty to their ships."

Alain found the city of Nantes sacked and burned. All covered with dust and blood, the young liberator had long looked in vain amid the piles of smouldering ruins for the stately church of St. Felix, the roof of which, covered with fine tin, was so clear, says a contemporary work, that, when shone upon by the sun or moon, it resembled burnished silver. Alas! that roof had disappeared, and the sky was the only covering of the ancient

church, whose altars were broken and its tombs laid waste. In order to reach the place where the high altar had been, Alain was obliged to clear away the briars with his sword. Yet the *Te Deum* of victory and the canticles of praise to the Virgin were chanted with no less fervor amid the ruins of that temple; and, before he arose from his knees, the young Breton duke, recognizing the tutelary support of the Blessed Virgin, promised to dedicate to her that cathedral which now bears the name of Our Lady of Nantes.

It was in the reign of Charles the Simple that a whole army of the bold Northern pirates who had so long ravaged the western coast of Europe was converted to the faith, though at the expense of the fairest jewel in the Frankish crown. Neustria, a rich and fertile province,

* "For seventy-four years," says Rouault, "the Cotentine had the misfortune to be profaned by the pagan ceremonies of the Northmen and the idolatrous sacrifices offered to their idols even in the city of Coutances." (*Abridg. Lives of the Bishops of Coutances*, p. 151.)

† A Danish army, which had landed on the coast of Brittany to pillage the rich and famous abbey of Rhédon, was so terrified by a storm which burst on the camp, that, instead of sack-

which they had overrun for nearly a century, and had even forced to conform to the savage worship of their gods,* was made over to them with the sovereignty of Bretagne, on condition that Rollo, their chief, whose progress through France had been marked by fire and blood, should become a Christian. The condition was accepted: the Norman pirate married a Carlovingian princess (who lived but a short time), and was thoroughly converted. Strangely enough, the religious element had been always strong amongst these fierce Northmen, who several times sent presents and tapers to the very abbeys which they had come to pillage, when a storm rising at sea, in sight of the holy place, induced them to believe that the Christian sanctuary was guarded by some celestial power.† The first question put

ing and burning the abbey, the pirates, considering that it was forbidden by a God worthy of their respect, gave rich presents to the abbey, illuminated it with tapers, and placed sentinels around it to prevent pillage. Sixteen soldiers having infringed on the commands of Godefroy, their chief, and taken something from the abbey, were punished with death the same day. (Mabillonius, in *Actis S. S. Ord. S. Bened.*, sect. iv., 2d part.)

by the new Duke of Normandy to Franco, archbishop of Rouen, who was instructing him in the mysteries of Christianity, was to ascertain who were the most renowned saints of France and Neustria. The prelate immediately named Our Lady, and enlarged upon her great power. "Well," said the Norman prince, after a moment's pause, "as she is so powerful, we must do something for her." And he thereupon made a large concession of lands to Our Lady of Bayeux. The city of Rouen had dedicated to Mary its metropolitan church, burned by the Normans of Hastings, and repaired as well as possible some time after; the Duke was baptized therein with most of his Danish captains, and set on foot to enlarge and beautify it—works which his successors magnificently continued.* Our Lady of Evreux, one of the most ancient churches of Normandy—if we believe the

annals which relate that St. Taurin, first bishop of Evreux, founded it about the year 250, and consecrated it to the worship of the true God, under the invocation of the Blessed Virgin—likewise received rich gifts from Rollo, who gave, even to his last moments, the most signal marks of sincere devotion towards *Madame Sainte Marie*, as she was respectfully called by the princes and nobles of that period.

These Norman dukes, by nature gay, generous, and brave, were in general very devout to the Virgin; it was before her altar that they were invested with the regalia of that fair duchy which they proudly styled *their kingdom of Normandy*. There it was, too, that they slept their last sleep, under the gray flags of her chapel, hung with tapestry of silk and gold, representing the principal events in the life of the Mother of God, and wrought by the duchesses of Normandy.† Robert

* This prince was interred in the cathedral of Notre Dame, which he had then rebuilt. "He ended his days at Rouen, as a good Catholic," says Taillepie, "and was inhumed with great pomp and funeral state in the great church of Notre Dame, towards the south side." (*Antiquités de la ville de Rouen*, p. 107.)

† "The Duchess Gonnor, second wife of Richard Sans-Peur, duke of Normandy, gave great wealth to the churches," says Taillepie, "and especially to Our Lady of Rouen, to which she gave many splendid ornaments made by skillful artists and embroiderers; she likewise made tapestries of embroidered silk, representing

the Magnificent had, himself, no less than three churches built in honor of Mary, and bearing her name: Our Lady of Deliverance, to accomplish a vow made during a storm whilst his bark was tossed about in the dangerous waters of the Norman Archipelago; Our Lady of Grace, near Honfleur; and finally, Our Lady of Pity, under the ducal castle which defended Honfleur.

This prince, so devoted to Mary, resolved on going to Jerusalem to visit her tomb and the Holy Sepulchre; he set out on horseback, accompanied by the richest and noblest lords of his court, all radiant with gold, sparkling with jewels, and surrounded by a crowd of varlets, squires and pages, as though they were going to some great tournament. As they passed along, the people came forth in crowds to see them, and their entry into Rome was something remarkable. The Romans regarded with admiration those Northern barbarians who had made even Italy itself tremble, and

whose tall stature and noble mien reminded them of their ancient heroes. Seeing their lordly bearing, their brilliant armor, their long gold-hilted swords, and their pointed helmets, whence their fair tresses escaped, they asked each other who were these princes from the North who came thus as humble pilgrims to visit the tombs of the Apostles? The Pope gave them a distinguished reception, bestowed on them his pastoral blessing, and with his own hands placed the pilgrim's staff on the shoulder of their princely chief. Thence they continued their route to Constantinople, the city of Mary, which they dazzled with their magnificence. They scattered gold and pearls through the streets as they passed along; Robert's mule was shod with gold, and when a nail fell out, not a Norman deigned to stoop in search of it; it was for the Greeks to gather from the dust the golden nails lost by the Norman's horse.*

On approaching the holy places, the Christian spirit made itself felt; those same travellers who had crossed or braved, without acknowledging any right of toll, so many

sacred histories, with pictures of the Virgin and the Saints, to decorate the church of Our Lady of Rouen." (*Antiq. de Rouen*, p. 112.)

* See *La Normandie*, by M. Jules Janin, ch. 2.

well defended rivers, and so many embattled walls, those bold companions who always took care to let the point of their swords be seen underneath the pilgrim's robe, they who were so lately proud even to insolence, could now be scarcely recognized, so humble, so modest, so collected were they made by the mere proximity of that Holy Land whose arid, rocky soil they trod barefoot. Robert, so justly styled the Magnificent, visited, with the most edifying devotion, the holy sepulchres of Jesus and Mary. Christians and Mussulmans alike received from him such munificent alms that the Emir of Jerusalem, excited to emulation, refused to accept the tribute due to him by these splendid pilgrims. Robert left a liberal donation at the Holy Sepulchre; Richard II., duke of Normandy, had already made an offering there of an hundred pounds of gold.

The pilgrimage accomplished, the Duke set out by land on his return to his fair duchy, which he was

* never more to see! He died at Nice, in Bithynia, jesting on the aspect of death, like the sea-kings his fathers,* and commending himself to *Madame Sainte Marie*, as his Christian predecessors had done.

The Norman nobles, who began to dream of kingdoms under the radiant sun of Italy, were no less devoted to the Virgin than their princes. The famous Tancred and Robert Guiscard were lords of the small maritime village of Hauteville, where not a stone remains of their castles, but where the old church in which these Norman lions received baptism is still seen, without a spire, all covered with moss and weeds;—they sent from the depth of Puglia, where, with five hundred Norman lances, they drove back sixty thousand Saracens, the half of a treasure which they had found, to Geoffrey de Monbray, bishop of Coutances, to build, under the invocation of *Holy Mary*, the beautiful fairy fabric which forced even from Vauban himself that cry of wonder

* A Norman pilgrim, having met the Duke, whom some Arabs were carrying in a litter, sadly approached the dying prince, and said, "What tidings shall I bring home of your lord-

ship?" "Say," replied Robert with a smile, as he pointed to his bearers, "that you saw me taken to heaven by four devils."

and admiration, "What sublime madman was it that reared this noble building to the clouds?"

Precisely at the same period, a brother of Robert Guiscard, Count Roger de Hauteville, founded in conquered Sicily the famous cathedral of Messina, which he failed not to dedicate to the Virgin, according to the custom of his house. This sumptuous building, which was consecrated in the year 1097, partook a little of all the styles of architecture then known; the Byzantine mosaic was there joined with the arabesque of the Saracens, and the graceful gothic spires adorned with

* statues of saints and angels wonderfully well gilt. In the sumptuous treasury of this cathedral is preserved a letter of the Blessed Virgin, in which the devout inhabitants of Messina take no small pride,* and on which several Sicilian bishops have written volumes, in order to prove its authenticity, which is somewhat doubtful. In the same cathedral is celebrated every year the feast of the *Varra*, destined to perpetuate the memory of the Saracen defeat by the Norman heroes. The Virgin, represented by a young maiden, figures in this festival, seated on a magnifi-

* This letter, which was first translated from the Greek by Lascari, who was suspected of having invented it, was subsequently found also in Syriac in the old manuscripts of the bishop of Mardin, in Syria, and was translated into Latin by D. Joseph Allemani, a noble Maronite, interpreter of Oriental languages for the Vatican library. We do not pretend to examine the value of this document, which is placed amongst the apocryphal writings, notwithstanding many protests; we give it here as a curious and ancient document.

"Maria virgo, Joachim et Annæ filia, humilis ancilla Domini, Mater Jesu Christi, qui est ex tribu Juda, et de stirpe David, Messanensibus omnibus salutem, et a Deo Patre omnipotente benedictionem.

"Per publicum documentum constat vos misisse ad nos nuncios, fide magna; vos scilicet credere Filium nostrum a nobis genitum esse *

Deum et hominem, et post resurrectionem suam ad cælum ascendisse; vosque, mediante Paulo, apostolo electo, viam veritatis agnovisse. Propterea vos vestramque civitatem benedicimus et protegimus, et defendimus eam in sæcula sæculorum.

"Data fuit hæc epistola die quinto, in urbe Hierusalem, a Maria virgine, cujus nomen supra, anno xlii. a Filio ejus, sæculo primo, die 3 junii, luna xxvii.

"La chiesa metropolitana de Messina fu dedicata alla beatissima V. M. della Sacra Lettera e vi si celebra tutti gli anni una grande festa.

"L'antica e pia tradizione della sacra lettera della gran Madre di Dio sempre Vergine Maria, scritta alla nobili ad exemplare città di Messina, illustrata con nuovi documenti, ragioni e verisimili congetture, dal P. Maestro D. Pietro Menniti, abbate generale di S. Basilio Magno."

cent triumphal car, whilst the Muslims vanquished by Count Roger are represented by hideous colossal figures.

From Normandy came the religious light which dispelled the heathen darkness of the North, and it was Mary who received in her fair cathedral of Rouen the first-fruits of that sacred harvest. Harold II., king of Denmark, who came with an hundred galleys to the succor of Richard Sans-Peur, abjured Paganism there; and Olaf, king of Norway, who had joined his forces with those of Normandy in a war which Duke Richard II. maintained against Eudes, king of Blois, was converted by Robert, archbishop of Rouen, to Christianity, which he soon afterwards introduced into his states. This holy king had the courage to throw down with his own hands the statue of Thor, tutelary divinity of Norway, in the ancient temple of Drontheim; this statue had been

* The Scandinavians sacrificed prisoners to Odin in time of war, and criminals in time of peace; but they did not always confine themselves to these classes, and in great calamities even kings were sacrificed to appease the gods. It was thus that the first king of Vermeland was burned in honor of Odin in the time

* encircled by the Norwegian pirates with a golden chain, and hence they were wont to swear by the armlets of that warrior-god whose club was so dreaded by the *giants of the frost*. Olaf sent into Sweden Christian missionaries, who were well received, and the gilded walls of the temple of Upsal, disencumbered of their idols, cleansed from their human sacrifices,* were adorned with the blessed images of Christ and his Mother.

It was not the fault of the princes of Christendom that the sun of the Gospel rose so late on the horizon of the Northern kingdoms; in the middle of the seventh century, the Saxon Willibrod had labored in vain to convert Jutland; renewed efforts were made with as little success, in the course of the eighth century, by missionaries sent by Witikind, the convert of Charlemagne; the ninth, opened under more favorable auspices. Driven from his states, Harold

of a great famine; and we learn from the history of Norway, that kings spared not even their own children. Haquin, king of Norway, offered his in sacrifice to obtain a victory; and a king of Sweden sacrificed his sons to Odin in order that that god might prolong his life. (See Wormius, *Monument. Danic. et Sar. Grammat.*, l. x.)

Klack, king of a part of Jutland, came to take refuge at the court of Louis the Good, where he embraced Christianity. A contemporary annalist, Ermold the Black, abbot of a Frankish monastery, gives a picturesque description of the sea-king and his Danish fleet. "What do I see," says he, "shining in the morning ray, and covering the waves afar? What ships ascend the proud Rhine in warlike pomp? How those white sails glance in the sunlight over the mirror of the waters and the dancing waves!" This conversion of the Jutland prince was almost alone, notwithstanding the exertions of Anschar, the apostle of the North; and those glittering ships, so admired by the brave and simple Franks, remembered but too well the way to Western Europe.

The conversion of King Harold did more for the Christian religion than that of the Jutland prince. On his return to his own country, he forbade sacrifices, shut up the temples of the false gods, built Christian churches, and did all in his power to promote the propagation of the Gospel.

His son, Sueno, a cruel and fero-

* cious prince, declaring himself the champion of idolatry, treacherously killed his father, re-opened the temples of Odin and Thor, and destroyed the Christian churches. After his death, which happened in 1014, Christianity again raised its head and resumed its onward career. Still the transition from one worship to the other was not sudden, as amongst the young and impetuous conquerors of England and Gaul; the Christian churches of Denmark arose for a century side by side with the stone of sacrifice. If CHRIST and his Mother were venerated, the gods of Walhalla were not forgotten; Thor still kept his place on the altar, with his club in his mailed hand, and if a hymn were sung to Mary in her chapel, the hymn of Odin was still chanted in the battle, and to Odin were thanks returned for victory, by a sacrifice of birds of prey. It seemed hard for the warriors of the North to abandon all at once those warlike deities whose tombs they possessed, and who had made their fathers so mighty in battle. They admitted that CHRIST was God, and were willing to adore him as such; but how could they

dethrone the ancient gods of their country, to make place for the God of the stranger? Could not all reign together? The Walhalla was full of virtuous women, it might receive the Virgin Mary. Under favor of this last exception, Paganism was more formidable than ever, and the first Christian neophytes made a monstrous mixture of both worships by way of reconciliation.* This state of things continued till the reign of Canute the Great, who established the supremacy of the Christian religion.

The devotion to the Blessed Virgin contributed much to the establishment of the Gospel amongst the Scandinavians. From time immemorial they had deified virginity in the person of Falla, whose fair tresses were bound with a golden band, and Gesione, who, after their death, admitted virgins into her

heavenly train. Three virgins, seated under the sacred oak, disposed of the fate of men, and those *white ladies* were also virgins who glided over the lakes like a pillar of mist, sat at midnight in the freezing shadow of the pines, and sang with a soft, low voice the Runic hymns which the Scalds had engraved with the point of their swords on the rocks that overhung the sepulchral mound of the heroes whom the ravens of the air mourned.† It was hard to set aside those charming Northern fairies, who introduced themselves invisibly into the peasant's cot and the *jarl's* (earl's) fortress, and whose coming was sure to bring good fortune: These superstitions, equally cherished by the high and the low,‡ could never, perhaps, be totally eradicated without the Blessed Virgin, who became the protectress of cabin and pal-

Muntev. Muntev., *Hist. Denmark*.—Mallet, *Hist. Denmark*.

† "When Rogwald was killed," says the famous Northern Scald, Regnier Lodbrog, in his *Epicedium* or *Dirge*, "all the crows of the air mourned for him." Apparently because he gave them many sumptuous feasts of dead bodies.

‡ The religion of the Scandinavians was wholly corrupt; it no longer insisted on the worship

of one Supreme God; the intelligences who had emanated from him seemed no longer to depend on him, and, as a consequence of that almost invincible inclination which has ever prompted men to multiply the objects of their adoration, they had acquired an equal right to the government of this world. The belief in fairies and genii, omens and divinations, had gradually become an essential part of the Northern religion. (Mallet, *Hist. de Danemark*.)

ace. The influence of the Queen of Heaven on the conversion of the Scandinavians, is proved by a fact which none can dispute: it is, that Christianity owed its success among those nations to the mothers of families who afterwards gained over the warriors.*

The first Christian kings of Denmark were faithful servants of Mary. St. Canute, duke of Sleswick, dedicated to her three superb churches. Waldemar II. placed her image on his shield, and having learned that the Russians, leagued with the Esthonians, threatened the rising church of Riga, he solemnly pledged himself to pass the following year in Esthonia, as well for the honor of the Blessed Virgin as for the remission of his sins.† It was in this war, commenced under the patronage of Mary, that the Danes, surprised in their camp, lost their national banner. As they began to give way before the Pagans, the Blessed Virgin, whom they had piously invoked before leaving Es-

* thonia, gave them, it is said, a sensible mark of her powerful protection; a red flag with a white cross fell from heaven, according to ancient chronicles, and with that flag victory returned.‡ The devotion to Mary flourished long in the three kingdoms of the North, as is proved by the great number of cathedrals, hermitages, and monasteries which they dedicated to her. When the scorching wind of the Reformation had blighted that fair flower of Catholicity, this devotion was still secretly maintained; and fifty years after Luther, Mary was still venerated in the subterraneous chapel of the cathedral of Upsal.§ This consoling devotion ended in those far northern regions as it began in Rome, amongst the tombs.

It was under the influence of Mary that Prussia, with all the coast of the Baltic Sea, received the light of the Gospel. The Knights Hospitallers of the Blessed Virgin, better known as the Teutonic Knights, civilized those barbarous

* Mallet, *Hist. de Danemark*.

† *Livonian Chronicle*, p. 122.

‡ Mallet, who disputes this legend, acknowledges, nevertheless, that no Danish historian

he has consulted explains in a satisfactory manner the origin of this banner, apart from the prodigy.

§ M. Marmier, *Lettre à M. Salvandy*.

countries whose principal deities were Hell (*Pókhús*) and the thunder-god (*Perkonas*).

Amongst the nations of Slavonic origin, who substituted Christianity for their bloody rites, and polished their manners under its civilizing influence, no people were so devout to the Virgin as the Hungarians.

Towards the beginning of the eleventh century, St. Stephen, first Christian king of the Huns or Hungarians, founded Our Lady of Albe-Royale, in thanksgiving for a victory obtained over the prince of Transylvania. This fair Slavonic basilica vied in magnificence with the most sumptuous churches of the East. Its walls adorned with superb sculptures, its marble pavements, its altars overlaid with gold and incrustated with fine jewels, its vases of silver, gold, and onyx, were marvellous to behold. Over the Virgin's altar were perfuming-pans of silver, in which two old men, whose cradles had been rocked to the exploits of Attila, had the rarest perfumes of Asia burned. Processions came several times in the day to honor the Mother of God in her sanctuary.

All this splendor was not sufficient for the piety of the Hungarian prince; descended though he was from the *Scourge of God*, it was his pleasure to hold his crown in subjection to the Virgin, whom he declared sovereign of his states. Thus, as often as the name of Mary was pronounced throughout the extent of that vast kingdom, there was not a Hungarian noble, no matter how high his lineage, who did not bend the knee and bow down, as a vassal, before his liege lady.* Within the fortified walls of every castle, there was a small chapel lit by several brass or silver lamps, which burned night and day before Mary's image. The prince-palatines even carried that same image to battle, and raised an altar for it in their tents.

The devotion to Mary was kept up with no less fervor on the banks of the Vistula. Dating from the day when Dumbrowka, the fair Bohemian princess, converted King Micislas, and made him break the idols which his fathers had raised to Pagoda (*calm air*), to Poëhwist (*the cloudy sky*), and to the gloomy

* Bonifacius, *Hist. Virg.*, b. ii., ch. ii.

deities of the abyss, the Poles became essentially Catholic, and built numberless chapels of larch-wood in honor of the Mother of God. Pagan banners, taken on twenty battle-fields, were the only ornament of these primitive churches, nestling amongst the ever-green pines of the Slavonic forests; but when, during the celebration of mass, the minister of Jesus Christ read the Gospel to those Northern heroes, kneeling before an altar as poor as the crib of Bethlehem, every sword was seen half drawn from the scabbard, in token of protection and defence.* Nor was this

* This custom is traced to the time of Micislas, the first king of Poland. (*Hist. de Pologne*, par M. L. S., t. 1er, p. 43.)

† The Virgin Mary was Queen of Poland; hence, whenever the Poles marched against the Tartars, her image adorned the national banner. (*La Pologne Historique et Littéraire*, t. 1er, p. 396.)

an idle show: Poland was long the bulwark of Christianity; were it not for John Sobieski, the Crescent would, perchance, have crowned the battlements of the cities beyond the Rhine.

Poland was early consecrated to the Blessed Virgin; Mary was solemnly invoked under the title of *Queen of Poland* long before John Casimir renewed that consecration. As often as the Polish army moved against the Tartars, it was Mary's banner that led its stately cohorts; † the name of Jesus twice repeated was their battle-cry, and a hymn to the Virgin their war-song.‡

‡ In the tenth century we see St. Adalbert, bishop of Guezne, composing sacred songs for the Polish troops, who were fighting the pagan Prussians and Pomeranians. A hymn of St. Adalbert, *Boga-Rodzica* (Mother of God), was long the war-song of the Poles. (Alb. Sowinski, *A Historical Survey of Religious and Popular Music in Poland*.)



CHAPTER IX.

CHIVALRY.



THE gigantic empire of Charlemagne had vanished like a brilliant phantom; the last of the Carolingians had been stripped of his kingdom, already reduced to nothing by the thoughtless extravagance of his fathers, and the dukes of France, who were also pretending to the throne, as descendants of Charlemagne, having twice tried on the royal mantle, had at length taken possession of it. Before they appended the impoverished crown to the great fief wherewith they enriched it, the counts of Paris had given striking proofs of their devotion to the Blessed Virgin. When that mysterious and dreadful malady called *feu des ardents*, after ravaging the southern parts of the kingdom, reached the Isle of France, Hugh the Great supported at his own expense the poor sick

* pilgrims who sought (and never failed to obtain) their cure from Our Lady of Paris.* Hugh Capet, founder of the third dynasty, had a sincere devotion for the Blessed Virgin; and Queen Adelaide of Aquitaine, his pious spouse, enriched with her gifts the fair Abbey of Our Lady of Argenteuil, which thenceforward possessed the sacred relic which is still exposed there to the veneration of the faithful. Robert, who proclaimed Mary *the Star* of his kingdom, built monasteries in her honor at Poissy, Melun, Étampes, and Orleans, as we learn from Helgaud. The church of Orleans was called Our Lady of Good Tidings, and was built on the spot where Robert, when heir-presumptive to the throne, was informed that his father, Hugh Capet, had escaped death. Worthy son of a king!

In the reign of Philippe the First, grandson of Robert, a prince who showed himself more disposed to

* Felibien, *Hist. de Paris*, t. 1er.

pillage the church than to enrich it, a great event took place, which gave the kings of France those of England for vassals. William the Bastard, son of that Robert the Magnificent who died returning from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, conquered England in a single battle, and established the Norman rule in that country. William, like his father Robert, held Mary in the utmost reverence; that conqueror, so brave, so politic, at whose frown all England quaked, was no sooner attacked by fever than he humbly clasped his hands and recommended himself to the Blessed Virgin. Having fallen sick at the Castle of Cherbourg, a small town then defended by moats and towers, he made a vow to build a fair chapel to the Virgin, if by her powerful intercession he quickly recovered his health. He was cured, and religiously kept his vow. He reconstructed at his own expense the superb Abbey of Jumièges, where the student found learning and the

* poor bread, on condition that its church, dedicated by Queen Bathilda to St. Peter, should be placed under the invocation of the Mother of God. He assisted in person, with the Duchess Matilda and all his great Norman barons, on the 1st of July, A. D. 1068, at the dedication of this church, and some years after he crossed the sea to be present at that of Our Lady of Bayeux, with his sons William and Robert, Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury, and Thomas, archbishop of York, on the invitation of Bishop Philippe d'Harcourt, who had rebuilt it. It was doubtless on that occasion that the Duchess Matilda made an offering to Our Lady of Bayeux of that famous historical tapestry on which her patient needle had wrought the great epic of the conquest of England.* "This tapestry, embroidered with images and Scriptural scenes," was hung throughout the whole extent "of the nave on the day of the exposition of relics and during their

* This precious tapestry, contemporary with the conquest of England, remained in some degree unknown for six centuries. Exposed only on certain days in the nave of the cathedral, tradition had given it the name of Duke

William's Toilet. It was Montfaucon who found out that it was at Bayeux, and enriched his *Monumens de la Monarchie Française* with designs from this tapestry, till then so little known.

octaves," says an inventory of the treasures of Our Lady of Bayeux, drawn up in 1476. But this monumental tapestry was not the only mark of her devotion to the Blessed Virgin left by this fair and pious princess, whose memory was so revered that the Saxon wife of her son, Henry the First of England, changed her pretty name of Edith for that of Matilda, "in order to please the Norman chivalry."

She was walking, towards the end of October, in one of those beautiful Norman meadows, the grass of which resembles an immense carpet of green velvet, painted with flowers. She was accompanied by her two young sons—two future heroes, the eldest of whom was to immortalize himself by his chivalrous exploits in the taking of Jerusalem—and some ladies of her court, when a courier from Duke William, riding with all speed towards Rouen, drew up on perceiving her, and bounded into the meadow. "What news from my lord and the Norman army?" cried Matilda, pale with

emotion. . . . "The battle?" . . . "—Is gained, noble lady," replied the courier, as, bending his knee, he placed in the trembling hand of the young duchess the letter with its pendant seal, which confirmed the truth of his words—"The perfidious Harold is defeated; his body, which ought to have no other tomb than the sand of the sea-shore, now rests in the choir of the Saxon abbey of Waltham; England is the vassal of Normandy." The Norman princess joyfully blessed herself, and made a vow to raise on the spot where she had heard these good news, a commemorative church, under the name of Our Lady of the Meadow, since changed into that of Our Lady of Good Tidings. She commenced it some years after, and her son, Henry the First, having had it finished, endowed it munificently.*

In his last war with France, William the Conqueror delivered Mantes to the flames; but that fire which destroyed the church of Our Lady shed such a lurid and terrific

* In the time of the Archbishop Godefroy, King Henry (first of the name) of England built the Priory of the Meadow, called Our Lady of

Good Tidings, near Rouen, which his deceased mother, Matilda, had commenced with the bridge of Rouen. (*Antiq. de Rouen*, p. 136.)

light, that the king of England's horse took fright, began to rear and prance, and threw his rider, who was mortally wounded. Attributing the fatal accident to the burning of the Virgin's beautiful church, he bequeathed a considerable sum for the purpose of rebuilding it. Being conveyed to an abbey near Rouen, the conqueror of England was roused at the dawn of day, on the 7th of September, 1087, by the sound of a matin-bell. "What is that?" he asked, raising his head with difficulty, his face pale and emaciated, though still retaining a portion of that proud, masculine beauty which even the Saxon chroniclers ascribe to him. Being told that it was the bells of St. Mary's church ringing *Prime*, "Blessed Lady Mary!" said the Norman hero, raising his hands, "to thee I commend my soul; mayst thou reconcile me to thy Son, my Lord Jesus!" and with these words he expired.

Henry the First, his son, who usurped the crown from Robert, his elder brother, whose eyes he caused to be put out, was devout only in theory. Although he affected much piety, and made many splendid

* foundations in England, where he introduced the Norman architecture, yet he burned several churches in Normandy. For instance, he burned, in 1120 (the date is memorable), the cathedral of Lisieux, with the city itself. This ancient cathedral, which dated from the first ages of Christianity, was dedicated to the Virgin, like most of the Norman cathedrals. The punishment of this sacrilegious offence quickly followed; at the end of the same year, the vessel which carried Henry's only son, Prince William of England, with two of the king's illegitimate children, foundered at sea, during a calm moonlight night, not far from Barfleur. From that time forward, Henry was never seen to smile.

The Empress Matilda, daughter of this prince, had a signal proof of the Virgin's protection, and her power over the elements. Whilst at war with Stephen of Blois, she was forced to embark for Normandy in unsettled weather, which very soon became stormy, and was overtaken in the very shoals where her brother William had perished, by one of those frightful tempests which are

only seen on the angry ocean. The horizon was sheeted with a vast black cloud, which reached from sea to sky like a funeral pall; the mountain billows reared themselves up with ominous slowness, to dash with terrific crash against the sides of the royal bark, which they raised high in the air at one moment, to hurl it, the next, into the yawning abyss. The sailors shook their heads despondingly, whilst the English lords, crossing themselves devoutly, recommended themselves to God and the Blessed Virgin, and to St. George, the patron of chivalry. Matilda was standing on the deck, and her composed countenance, though pale, belied not the race of heroes from whom she sprung. "Be of good cheer, my lords," said she, turning to her faithful nobles, "Our Lady is kind and powerful; she will save us. I will sing her a hymn of thanksgiving as soon as we descry the coast; and I pledge myself to build her an abbey wherever we shall land." Scarcely had the Anglo-Norman princess spoken these words, when the waves were seen to grow smooth, the winds were suddenly hushed, and the ves-

* sel flew swiftly over a calm sea. A dark speck was soon discerned on the blue sky, as the clouds cleared away; it grew larger and larger still; it was a lofty hill, whose bare summit was crowned with a hermitage, and a vast forest was seen stretching far and away in the background of the picture. Then was heard the hoarse cry, so impatiently expected from the man at the mast-head, "Cante, Reyne! vechi terre!" (Sing, O Queen! here is the land!) and Matilda instantly began to sing her hymn to the Virgin, which was joyfully repeated by the English barons, with clasped hands and bare heads.

The bark, miraculously preserved from shipwreck, soon cast anchor in the little bay of Équeurdreville, in Lower Normandy. Matilda's first care on landing was to point out the site of her monastery, which she named the Abbey of the Vow, and before quitting the neighborhood, she herself laid the first stone.

Matilda did not live to see the Church and Abbey of the Vow finished; it was her son, Henry II. of England, who accomplished the work. We read in the necrology

of this abbey: "On the fourth day of the ides of September died the Empress Matilda, foundress of this monastery; a *Libera* is to be said for her, *as for a canon*."

Let not our age, so cold in all that relates to God and the Saints, scoff at those vows made to Our Lady during a storm; the most incredulous believe in *something* when in danger of perishing at sea, as is proved in the case of Volney. He was out on a pleasure-party with some friends in Baltimore, when the wind suddenly arose, and the small American craft, freighted with the flower of the unbelievers of both hemispheres, seemed twenty times on the point of being lost. Every one on board was already praying, Volney as well as the rest, when the storm began to subside. Some one who had seen Volney during the danger lay hold of a rosary and recite his *Ave-Marias* with edifying fervor, approached him when the calm had returned. "My dear Sir," said he, with an arch smile, "to whom were you praying, just now?"—"Oh!" replied Volney, somewhat embarrassed by the question, "one

may be a philosopher in his study, but not during a storm."

The Empress Matilda desired that her mortal remains should be interred in the most famous of the Norman abbeys, Ste. Marie du Bec; her son Henry, who was as yet only duke of Anjou and Normandy, had a tomb raised to her memory, which he covered with plates of silver. When he became king of England, he continued to protect and to honor, in reverence to the Virgin and his mother, that abbey which was partly erected by his royal munificence. In 1178, it was consecrated anew by Rotrou, bishop of Rouen; Henry the Second assisted at that pious ceremony, with his son Henry.

Richard the Lion-hearted, son and successor of Henry II., built before his departure for the Crusades, Our Lady of Good-Haven, in the diocese of Evreux, and assisted with his brilliant chivalry at the dedication of that monastery, which took place in 1190.* When his eventful life was drawing to a close, being mortally wounded by an arrow at the inglorious siege of a fortress, he dictated his last will, and decreed that

* *Gallia Christiana*, t. iv.

his heart should be borne to Our Lady of Rouen, on account of the great devotion which he had for said place, and that heart, the bravest, perhaps, that ever beat under knightly cuirass, was decently placed in the side of the choir, towards the revestuary, in a silver case, which was afterwards taken for the ransom of St. Louis, king of France, who was taken prisoner by the Saracens, and in place thereof was made one of stone.*

This mighty champion of the Cross, whose name is never pronounced by the Saracens without a pious anathema, was, by his own orders, interred beside his father, in the abbey-church of Fontevault. By his side reposes his wife, Berangeria of Navarre; their statues, painted and gilt, were laid on their tombs, and amongst the ornaments of Queen Berangeria is a large square medal, whereon is seen the Blessed Virgin, surrounded by many tapers. The famous Eleanor of Aquitaine, mother of King Richard, retired to this abbey some years after, and her tomb is one of those

royal monuments which adorn the fair abbey-church of Our Lady.

John Lackland, who died of indigestion in a Saxon abbey†—(what an English death!)—was buried, by his own request, with great pomp, in the beautiful Anglo-Norman cathedral of Our Lady of Worcester; but if we may believe the ancient chronicles, the body of that base and cruel prince, who had steeped his hands in the innocent blood of his lawful king, Arthur of Bretagne, and who had had a mind to turn Turk in order to conciliate the Moors of Spain, did not long pollute the sacred dwelling of Mary. They relate that strange noises were heard by night in that dishonored tomb—blasphemies, fearful shouts of laughter, revelry, and all manner of terrifying sounds—which caused the monks of Worcester secretly to exhume the body of the reprobate prince, and transfer it to some less holy place.

The Plantagenets distinguished themselves by their devotion to the Virgin, and covered England with those fair gothic churches of Mary

* *Antiquités de la Ville de Rouen*, p. 137.

† According to the Saxon annalists, King John

died of indigestion, after a feast of peaches and ale, in a Bernardine priory at Swineshead.

which still exist in every county, and constitute its chief archæological treasure: Our Lady of York, compared to a vessel under full sail, because of the stately beauty and lightness of its aërial architecture; Our Lady of Salisbury, another architectural gem, fashioned in the noblest style, which was covered with Flemish tapestry, and filled with light and flowers on the solemn festivals of Mary; Our Lady of Westminster, "where there was an image of Mary," says Froissart, "in which the English kings had great faith, and by which many miracles were wrought;" the superb gothic abbey of Our Lady of Walsingham, the favorite pilgrimage of Edward I. and his chivalrous court; the fair cathedral of Wells, the Lady-chapel of which is, according to connoisseurs, the pearl of the gothic monuments of Great Britain: these are all there to prove the devotion of those princes towards the holy Mother of Our Lord.

The Anglo-Saxons, who formed

* the poorer classes, with the merchants and burghers of England, were no less devout to the Virgin Mary than the continental princes, who ruled them by right of conquest. Differing from their conquerors on almost every point, they were in perfect harmony on that of religion, and both races went like brethren, staff in hand, on their pilgrimage to Our Lady of Radcliff, a fine old abbey, full of Saxon monuments, and to Our Lady of Worcester, where Lady Warwick, wife of the *king-maker*, offered sumptuous robes for the use of the Blessed Virgin, after praying at one time for the Red Rose, at another for the White, according to the party with which her valiant spouse was connected at the time.*

The fast of Saturday, in honor of the Blessed Virgin, was observed by the English people from the time of William Rufus. There was in those days a certain famous robber—a Saxon, without doubt, since St. Anselm, the Norman prelate who

* The custom of dressing the statues of the Blessed Virgin, which still exists in France, Spain, and Italy, was likewise practised in England in former times. The countess of War-

wick frequently presented her richest veils and robes to Our Lady of Worcester, and we see, in Leland's *History of Ireland*, that those statues wore rings of great price.

relates the anecdote, calls him a robber without any circumlocution—and he, one morning, entered the cottage of a poor widow with intent to rob her. Finding nothing to his taste, he coolly seated himself on the only spare stool in the little dark room, with its earthen floor, where the widow was sitting at her wheel, and addressed her with a winning smile: “Well, Gossip, have you had your breakfast?”—“Is it I, good Sir,” replied the poor woman, pausing a moment in her work; “God forbid! Is it not Saturday? I fast every Saturday throughout the year.”—“Every Saturday!” repeated the astonished robber; “and why?”—“Why, in honor of the Blessed Virgin, to be sure. Do you not know that that is the reason why she prevents you, and others like you, from dying unshriven?”—“If that be so,” said the robber, “I am very glad to know it, and from henceforward I make a vow to fast myself.” He kept his word; and the Blessed Virgin, on her side, did not fail him at the hour of his death. Being mortally wounded on a perilous expedition, she miraculously prolonged his life until he

* had time to make his peace with God.

St. Anselm also informs us that the bold and haughty Norman knights piously honored Mary, whilst oppressing, with all their might, the conquered Saxons. One of them, a great lord, had for varlets and pages a troop of vagabonds always ready for mischief, and for steward an incarnate devil, who constantly persuaded the poor baron now to outrage one, now to plunder another, and again to kill that other, so that not a day passed without some detestable crime. In the midst of all this wickedness, he kept praying devoutly to the Virgin night and morning, saluting her with seven Aves and as many profound genuflections, for which reason his infernal steward could not strangle him as he intended, and he finally obtained the grace of a sincere conversion.*

The Saxon outlaws who took refuge in the depth of the forests (where they became the most skillful archers in England), in order to escape the capital punishment

* St. Anselm, in his book of *The Miracles of Our Lady*.

decreed by the Norman law for crimes appertaining to the chase, regretted but one thing in their wild retreats, their being unable to pray at Mary's altar, when the bell of an old Saxon abbey rang through the woods "where the lark gaily sang and the king's deer ran." Those ancient English ballads in black letter, "which are now worth their weight in gold," says an English antiquary, represent Robin Hood, "the forest-king," risking his head, after recommending himself to the Virgin, in order to perform his devotions in the monastery, whose distant bells seemed to summon him thither.*

In summer when the shaws be sheyne,
And leaves be large and long,
It is full merry in fayre foriste
To here the fouly's song.

To see the dere draw to the dale,
And leave the hilles hee,
And shadow hem in the leves so grene
Under the green wood tree.

It befel on Whitsuntide,
All on a May morning,
The sun up fayre did shine,
And the birddis merry did sing.

* See *Robin Hood*: Ballads and Songs relating to that celebrated Outlaw, with Anecdotes of his Life. From Kitson and others.

This is a merry morning, sayd Little John,
'Fore Him that died on the tree.
A more merry man than I am one
Lives not in Christienté.

Pluck up thi hert, my dere mayster,
Little John did say,
And thynk it is a full fayre time,
In a morning of May.

Now, one thyng grieves me, sayd Robyne,
And does my hert myche wo,
That I may not so solemne day
To mass nor matins go.

It is a fourtnet and more, sayd hee,
Syn I my Saviour see;
To-day I'll go to Notyngham,
With the might of myld Mary.

* * * * *

Then Robyne goes to Notyngham,
Himself mounyng alone;
And Little John to merry Scherewode,
The paths he knowe alkone.

Whan Robyne came to Notyngham,
Sertenly withouten layne,
He pray'd to God and myld Mary
To bryng him out safe agayne.

He goes into Seynt Mary's Chirche,
And kneyled down before the Rood,
All that ever were the chirche within
Beheld wel Robyne Hood.

Spain, no less devout to Mary than the Island of Britain, had raised numerous shrines to her, and fought under her standard. In 1212, Alphonso IX. having obtained, under the banner of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, his great vic-

tory of Las Navas, where the Moors * experienced one of their most signal defeats, built Our Lady of Victory in Toledo, to deposit therein that sacred banner of Mary. St. Ferdinand, that holy prince who could not endure to increase the taxes of his people, and who was more afraid, he said, of the curses of one poor woman than of all the Moorish host, attributed to the protection of the Blessed Virgin his conquests of Cordova, Jaën, and Murcia. Finally, Alphonso the Wise composed canticles to the Mother of God, and founded an order of knighthood in her honor.*

Portugal walked in the same way, with an ardor no less great. In 1142, after having defeated, through the protection of Mary (to whom he had recommended himself before the battle), five Moorish princes, whose five standards he captured on the plains of Alentejo, Alphonso I. founded, in honor of the Blessed Virgin, the superb monastery of Al-

cobaga; deeming that insufficient, he did homage for his kingdom to Our Lady of Clairvaux, and ordained that every year, at the Feast of the Annunciation, a rent of fifty *maravedis* of gold should be paid, in token of vassalage, to the Suzeraine, in the person of the abbots of Clairvaux.† One of the successors of this prince, Don Juan I., after a victory, offered to Our Lady of the Olive the weight of himself (armed cap-à-piè) of silver, and hung from the roof of Mary's chapel, as *ex voto*, his lance and his brilliant suit of armor.‡

About the same time, the kings of Denmark undertook crusades against the Pagans of the North, in honor of the Blessed Virgin; and the Poles fought those of Prussia and Pomerania, singing the famous Boga Rodziça (Mother of God), a battle-hymn addressed to Mary, composed in the tenth century by St. Adalbert, bishop of Guezne.§

The kings of France had no mind

* El rey don Alonso el Sabio dedico varios libros de poesias à la Madre de Dios; y con respecto à algunas ordinò en su testamento que se cantasen en sus Estados. (See *Poetica Española*, p. 162.)

† Angelus Manrique, *Annal. Cisterc.*, ch. 5, ad ann. 1142.

‡ Père Paul de Barry, *Paradis Ouvert*, etc.

* § See last note of chap. viii.

to give way to other princes in devotion to the Queen of Angels. Louis the Young and Philip Augustus, of glorious memory, contributed liberally to the rebuilding of Our Lady of Paris, which Maurice de Sully, a very great bishop of plebeian extraction, was reconstructing on the site of King Childebert's old Merovingian cathedral.

Attributing to the Blessed Virgin his splendid victory of Bouvines, Philip Augustus founded on the skirt of the forest of Chantilly, and on the banks of the deep Oise, a magnificent royal abbey. Guerin, bishop of Senlis, minister of the king, and his companion in arms, who had ably filled the office of adjutant-general during the battle; Mathieu de Montmorency, who immortalized himself by taking full sixteen of the enemy's banners; Enguerrand de Coucy and Guillaume de Barres, who had formed a rampart around the king that day which the whole Anglo-German army could not force, would all have their share in this commemorative foundation, made in reverence to the Sacred Virgin Mary, as she is called in the Cartularies.

Blanche of Castile, the celebrated regent of France, founded two fair abbeys in honor of the Blessed Virgin: the abbey of Maubuisson, which she called Notre Dame la Royale (Our Lady the Royal), and Notre Dame du Lys (Our Lady of the Lily). These two royal monasteries have each a share of her mortal remains, according to her last behest.

King Louis the Ninth, the holiest and most righteous prince that ever wore the crown of France, the best of kings and the model of knights, distinguished himself by his tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin. He contributed to the completion of Our Lady of Paris, and, after having that exquisite gem of art—the Holy Chapel—built by Pierre de Montereau, the most famous architect of his time, as a shrine for the sacred crown of thorns, he solemnly dedicated the lower part of it to Our Lady, whose statue, placed under the porch, wrought a charming miracle, one day, in behalf of a little girl who was *very wise*, if we may believe the tradition. As the pious child, mounted on a stone bench, destined for the use of the

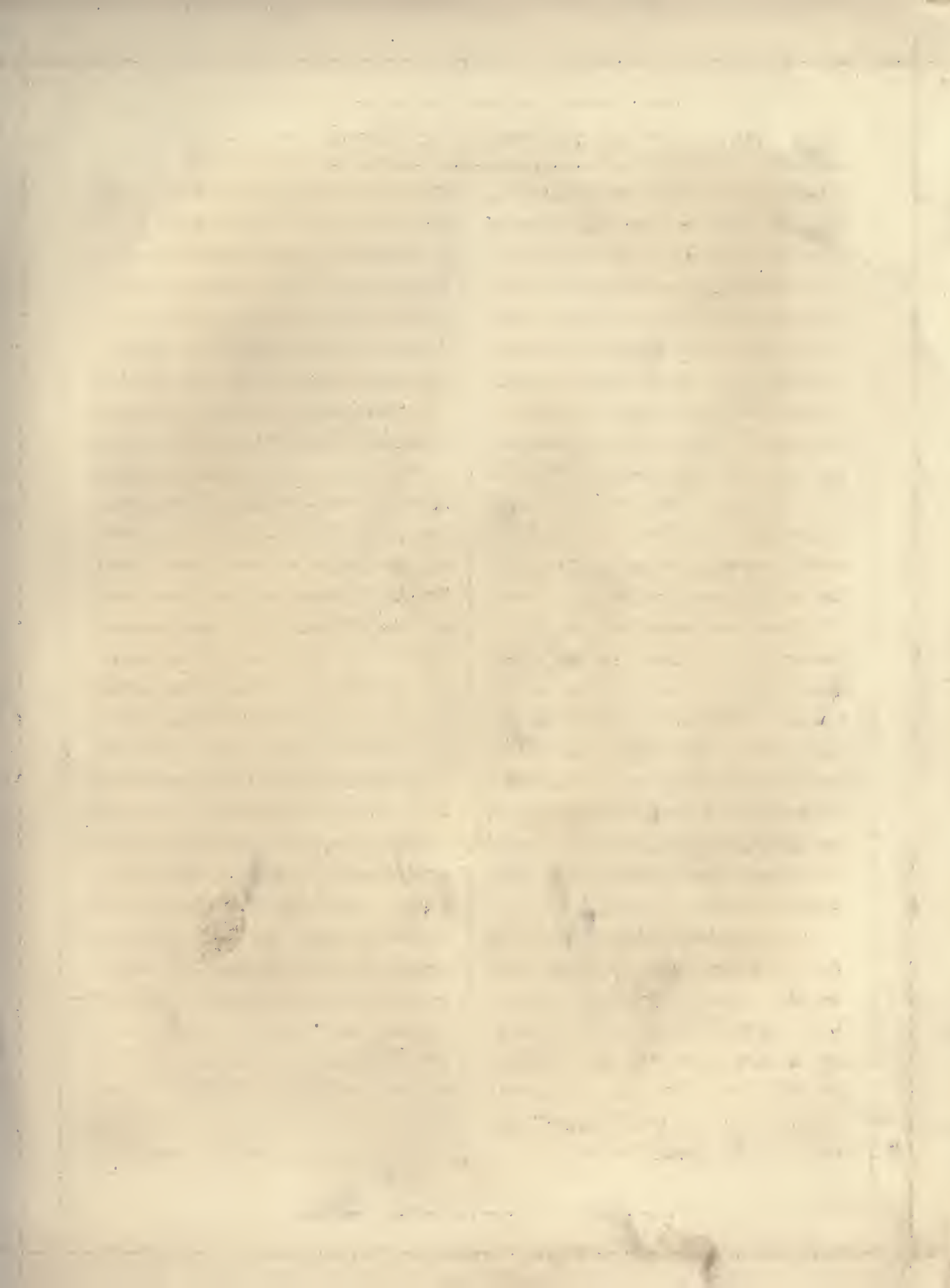
poor, stretched herself up on her little feet and reached her arms as high as she could, to place a wreath of white roses on the head of the Madonna, the kind Virgin graciously bent her fair marble brow towards the little earth-angel; "wherefore it is," says a monk of the time of Louis XIII., "that she has still her head bent forward."

St. Louis recited every day with his chaplain the Office of the Blessed Virgin, even in his travels, and forbade any one to interrupt him; he fasted on bread and water on the eve of Our Lady's festivals, and gave great alms on Saturday in her honor. "When he thought of undertaking his crusade, he came to Our Lady of Paris," says an ancient chronicle, "accompanied by his barons, all barefoot, with scrip and staff, and there heard mass with great devotion."

On his arrival in Egypt, the king found a Mussulman army drawn up on the shore to oppose his landing. The air was darkened with the clouds of arrows aimed at the French barks by the Saracens, whose lances gleamed through the clouds of dust raised by their horses,

like fire behind a dark curtain. Their chief bore "arms of fine gold, so dazzling," says Joinville, in his simple style, "that it seemed, when the sun struck thereon, as though it were actually that star himself." Their standards were surmounted by that ancient golden crescent which had been the emblem of the Turkish kings long before the days of Cyrus,* and their war-music "was terrible to hear, and very strange unto French ears." But Louis IX. and his warriors were not easily frightened. Having come within a short distance of the shore, the holy king, after commending himself to God and the Blessed Virgin, throws himself first into the sea; the foaming wave covers him even to the shoulders; a shower of arrows falls around him; neither wave nor dart arrests his course; buckler on arm, casque on head, sword in hand, he makes for the Saracens with fiery haste; the whole army hastens after him, and the Africans are quickly routed to the thrilling cries of "Mont-Joie, St. Denis!" When the Egyptians had disappeared on the wings of fear,

* See Firdousi, *Mœurs des Rois*.





Painted by T. S. S.

SHE SHALL CRUSH THY HEAD AND THOU
SHALT LIE IN WAIT FOR HER HEEL.

Gen. III. 15

W & J SALLIER & CO.

the gates of Damietta, the key of the Delta, had to open to the crusaders, whose first care was to chant the *Te Deum* of victory in the Musulman mosque, which was consecrated by the Roman legate under the title of Our Lady of Damietta.

The rumor of this glorious event soon reached Syria, where the honor was attributed to the protection of Our Lady of Tortosa, a famous Syrian Madonna, which the Mohammedans themselves came to invoke; she was said to have left her shrine in order to protect the descent of the French crusaders.*

The disastrous end of the Egyptian crusade—so brilliantly commenced—is but too well known. After paying an enormous ransom, St. Louis turned the prow of his vessels towards Syria. The Christians, who had taken possession of Palestine in 1099, had at that time only a few strong places there;

amongst which was Nazareth, the birth-place of Mary, which they had transformed into a feudal fortress, its first French lord being the hero of heroes, Tancred, immortalized in the deathless lay of Tasso. St. Louis rebuilt the walls of the Galilean fortress, and, happening to be there on the Feast of the Assumption, he had the offices of the day sung with an instrumental accompaniment in the church of St. Mary, where he solemnly communicated.

As King Louis IX. was leaving the Holy Land with Queen Margaret, the vessel which bore them was driven by a sudden squall under a lofty promontory which cast its shadow far out on the sea. The tempest having subsided, they cast anchor before that Syrian mountain, which was crowned by a monastery, and in the silence of the night, scarce broken by the murmur of the hushed waves, the sound of a dis-

* Sire de Joinville, who repaired, while in Asia, to Our Lady of Tortosa, relates that, in his time, that famous Syrian Madonna wrought a miracle in favor of a poor man who was possessed of an evil spirit. This man was brought, one day, before the altar of Our Lady of Tortosa; "and so," proceeds the Sire de Joinville, "whilst they were petitioning Our Lady for his

cure, the devil answered from within his body, 'Our Lady is not here; she is in Egypt, assisting the king of France and the Christians, who are now entering the Holy Land on foot, against the infidels, who are mounted on horses.'" The Seneschal adds that, on the very day when the devil pronounced these words, the French army landed in Egypt.

tant bell came over the waters with the sweet perfume of marjoram and thyme from the woods. "What is that?" demanded the king, quickly. He was told by some Phœnician sailors, who were on board, that it was the convent of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The holy king went ashore at the first dawn of day to hear mass in Mary's monastery, the monks of which, clothed in Arab costume, lived on fruits and vegetables, fasted half the year, kept a rigorous silence, and lived by manual labor; the fervent and cenobitic spirit of the ancient solitaries still reigned there. Penetrated with respect for their austere piety, St. Louis brought with him six of these monks, who were named the Brothers of the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and established them in Paris, on the banks of the Seine. They subsequently removed to the Place Maubert, and their new church, consecrated under the title of Our Lady of Carmelites, was chiefly built by the munificent donations of Joan of Evreux, third wife and widow of Charles II., surnamed the Fair. This princess pre-

* sented to the Virgin of Mount Carmel her crown of jewels, together with her zone, embroidered with pearls, and the bouquet of golden lilies studded with precious stones, which the king had given her on the day of her coronation. Fifteen hundred gold florins accompanied this royal gift.*

The kings of France, no way sparing of their person in the battle, placed themselves habitually under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, when danger became imminent. Philip the Fair having "invoked Mary at a moment of extreme peril, during the bloody battle of Mons-en-Puelle (where he displayed the valor of a paladin), made splendid offerings to Our Lady of Paris, after his brilliant victory, and granted to Our Lady of Chartres, in perpetuity, the territory and lordship of Barres,† with the rent of an hundred livres.

After the taking of Cassel, Philip of Valois, say the Great Chronicles of St. Denis, came to this abbey to return the *oriflamme* which he had taken thence to march against the Flemings, and then proceeded to

* Felibien, *Hist. de Paris*.

† Sébastien Rouillard, c. 6.

Our Lady of Paris; arriving there, he resumed the arms which he had worn at the battle of Cassel, mounted his charger, and thus entered the church of Notre-dame, thanked the Blessed Virgin most devoutly, and presented to her the charger on which he sat, with all his own equipments.* The king redeemed his horse and armor, from the chapter of Notre-Dame, for the sum of one thousand livres, and had an equestrian statue of himself erected in front of Mary's altar. It is worthy of remark that these two great victories of Cassel and Mons-en-Puelle were gained between the Feast of the Assumption and its octave. After having fought the Flemings at Rosbecq, Charles VI., who was then but fourteen years old, and was called *the little king*, likewise sent to Our Lady of Chartres his richly-ornamented armor and his royal sword.† The queens of France, on their side, on their

first entrance into the capital of the kingdom, transferred to Our Lady the magnificent crown which they received from the city of Paris. That offered by Isabella of Bavaria was of gold and jewels.‡

It was under Philip of Valois that the English wars commenced. King Edward III. of England declared himself the rightful heir to the throne, in right of his mother Isabel, sister of Philip the Fair, as the latter died without heirs, and he was his nephew, whereas Philip of Valois was only his cousin-german. The French peers and barons declared for Philip of Valois rather than the princess Isabel, not because of the Salic law, which speaks not of the exclusion of women, but by the authority of existing customs, which had acquired the force of law. Edward, in reply, advanced a most singular argument, which is found in a letter written by him to the Pope. "If the son," said he,

* We read in the old Paris breviaries (*lectio quinta*): "Quod intelligens gloriosæ memoriæ rex Philippus Valesius, cum opitulante Deo per merita Beatæ Virginis Matris, insignem victoriam de rebellibus Flandris obtinisset, quæ contigit anno 1328, acturus Deo et sanctæ Virgini gratias, triumphans et equitans ecclesiam

Beatæ Mariæ Parisiis, ingressus est, non vana ostentatione elatus, sed Deo, per quem de ancipit bello evaserat, profunda humilitate subjectus." (*Brev. Ecclesiæ Paris., festa Augusti, anno 1584.*)

† *Essais Hist. sur Paris*, par M. de Sainte Foix, t. iv., p. 162.

‡ Froissart, t. ii.

"be debarred from ascending the throne because his mother could not, Jesus Christ had no right to the inheritance of David, seeing that he was only descended from that king by *Madam St. Mary, his mother.*"

This unhappy notion of reigning over France, which in an evil hour crossed the minds of the English monarchs, and which deluged the kingdom of the lily with blood, was first aroused by a chivalrous appeal, made in the name of the *sweet Virgin Mary*, who showed herself, in the sequel, no way disposed to favor it. A "false traitor," Robert of Artois, whom the king of France had "disobliged" (says an English historian), revenged himself by re-kindling the all but extinguished flame of resentment in the mind of the young English king, who then thought of little else than feasts and tournaments. He presents himself one day with a heron in the hall where Edward was entertaining the great barons and noble dames of his court. Walking to the upper end of the hall, where sat the king under a white canopy fringed with silver, "I bring," said he, "the most

* cowardly of all birds, and I will give him to the greatest poltroon amongst you. In my mind it is thou, Edward, who permittest thyself to be wronged of the noble kingdom of France, to which thou art lawfully entitled." The king's eyes sparkled with anger. The idea of any one suspecting his courage was worse than death: he blushed with shame, and swore a tremendous oath, that before six months he would declare war against that count's son who wrongfully assumed the title of King of France. When the king had thus pledged himself, the Count d'Artois presented the heron to the English lords, who, each in his turn, swore to make war on the French, calling on the "honored Virgin, who bore a God in her chaste womb," to bear witness to their rash oath.

The first exploit of the English was the naval battle of Ecluse. Sea-fights then had little or no resemblance to what they are now; the combatants were hand to hand; the crews of the hostile ships endeavored to shatter the enemy's sails with arrows and long sickles, whilst divers pierced the hulls under

water in order to make them sink. The *ne plus ultra* of skillful manœuvre consisted in driving the enemy on shore, or dashing him against the rocks. Edward, who commanded his fleet in person, was wounded by an arrow at the beginning of the action, and yet continued to fight, prefacing every thrust of his lance with one of his favorite ejaculations, "Ah, St. Edward!—Ah, St. George! Ah, St. Mary!" and around his blood-red banner, whereon was emblazoned a golden dragon,* the English nobles shouted their piercing war-cries, *Our Lady of Arundel!*—*Our Lady of Arleton!*—*St. George!* for at that chivalrous period every warrior of note had a patron saint, whom he invoked aloud during the contest. Edward disgraced his victory by hanging from the yard-arm one of the French admirals who had bravely defended himself; the other, who died arms in hand, found a grave beneath the waters. In the midst of that scene of blood and tumult, some fair ladies from England, who came in the royal bark in search of pleasurable excitement, were heard applauding their

* knights;—not one asked mercy for the vanquished! and twenty thousand French corpses reddened the blue waves of the German Sea. The king of England, who did not forget to invoke Mary during the combat, had no sooner landed in Flanders than he went *on foot* to thank her (says Froissart), with the flower of his chivalry, in her shrine of Ardenburg. This, then, was the opening of that famous war which lasted for a century, during which time the English carried their victorious banner from the Garonne to the Rhine, and from the Ocean to the Mediterranean.

During this long struggle, interrupted only by some truces when the combatants paused for breath—their hand on the dirk, and their feet in blood—the Blessed Virgin, whose abbeyes were often unscrupulously plundered by the English, was still the object of their profound veneration. After having destroyed an entire city, and retired loaded with booty, they sometimes left one of her statues perfectly safe on its pedestal; and when the inhabitants, finding them gone, ventured to return in search of their

* *Stowe's Chronicle.*

ruined dwellings, they crossed themselves devoutly, and cried, "A miracle!"* It was indeed a miracle to see such an act of respect amid a scene of frightful devastation.

The shrines wherein it had pleased the Queen of Heaven to manifest her power, were held as neutral and sacred ground; each of them was, as it were, an oasis of peace, towards which journeyed knights and soldiers, from every country, who were nothing more than pious pilgrims from the moment they fastened a little image of the Madonna to their steel helmet or serge hood. We read in the manuscript chronicles of Quercy, that certain English soldiers, having been arrested by those of Cahors, were restored to liberty, with kind and encouraging words, as soon as they were found to be pilgrims of Our Lady.

The feasts of the Blessed Virgin were scrupulously observed by the English troops, who even stopped

* on their march to celebrate them. In 1380, Buckingham, who made his way through the heart of France, sweeping all before him, halted with his army in the Forest of Marchenoir to celebrate the September Feast of Our Lady. The English knights heard mass devoutly in an abbey which they found in the woods; and their long Bordeaux blades were innocent of French blood that day.†

An English captain, named Norwick, whom Prince John, duke of Normandy and heir-presumptive to the throne, had suddenly besieged in Angoulême, where provisions failed him, skillfully availed himself of that devotion to the Virgin, which was common to both nations, in order to escape the necessity of surrendering at discretion. On the eve of the Purification (one of the great festivals of Our Lady, kept in France from the time of Pepin the Short), he goes forth from the walls and demands speech of the prince. The latter, coming forward, asks, "Do you come to capitulate?"—"No!" replies the Englishman; "you and I are both devoted to the Blessed Virgin; I crave, then,

* Our Lady of Vassivière was thus respected amid the ruins of that strong city which the English had pillaged and destroyed. (See Du Chesne, ch. 9, § 10, nomb. 6.)

† See Froissart, vol. ii., p. 112.

of your courtesy, a suspension of hostilities, and that, during the twenty-four hours consecrated to this festival, the soldiers on both sides be forbidden to use their arms on any pretence whatsoever."—"Be it so," said the prince; "I am well content."

Next morning, by the earliest dawn, Norwick marches out with the garrison and all its stores; the French sentries, stopping him, ask what he means by this sally. "I mean to profit by the truce," he replies, "to let my soldiers take a walk."

When Prince John was informed of the fact, he said, "I vow to God, the stratagem was a good one! Let them go and welcome, since we have the city."*

Notwithstanding all the testimonies of respect which she received from the invaders, the Blessed Virgin turned from them to protect the invaded. As an oppressed country, France had found favor before her, as was proved by more than one miracle. In Poitiers, the mayor's servant, who had sold the city to the English, and promised to admit

them on a dark, moonless night, could nowhere find the keys, which he was astonished to see next day in the hands of an ancient statue of the Virgin, in her own cathedral of Notre-Dame. At Rennes, which the duke of Lancaster had long besieged in vain, the English, despairing of taking the brave city by storm, made a mine in order to blow it up. The Breton city sleeps calmly over a volcano, unconscious of its danger; but Our Lady watches. When the mine has reached the cathedral of St. Mary, and the enemy is about to set fire to it, the tapers in the chapel of Our Lady of St. Saviour are seen to light of themselves in the midst of a dark night; the bells, put in motion by invisible hands, suddenly peal out; and when the inhabitants, awoke from sleep and hastily clothed, come flocking to the strangely-lighted church, asking, "What is the matter?" the Virgin slowly extends her stony arm from the side of the gothic nave, and points to the place where the mine is about to explode. The city, warned in time, was saved. Many other examples might be given,

* See Froissart, vol. ii., p. 112.

showing how Mary protected France during that disastrous period. We shall content ourselves with giving, on the authority of contemporary writers worthy of credit, the most striking of these numerous prodigies.

It was after those two lamentable days which France will never cease to mourn—Crecy, where the flower of the French chivalry fell, and Poitiers, where King John was made prisoner, with eight hundred of his barons, by the Black Prince. The nobles were ruined; the young Regent without troops; the most fertile fields were overrun with briars; the cities, threatened with the horrors of a siege by the stranger, who camped at their gates, were internally rent asunder by factions. When man has nothing more to expect on earth, he kneels and raises his suppliant hands to heaven. This is what was done by all good people in town and country, in the cities and the villages. They boldly demanded a miracle from God, through the intercession of Mary, so that these calamities might have an end. Their faith was great, and their woes inexpressible.

their prayer was therefore heard. Abusing his power, and taking advantage of the utter prostration of France, Edward III., when in treaty with the young Regent, afterwards Charles the Wise, proposed conditions so hard, so disgraceful, so intolerable, that France, exhausted as she was, raised her head with generous indignation, and said "No!" At this unexpected refusal, Edward crosses the sea and lays siege to Chartres.

The English army pitched their tents a short distance from the walls, and in front of that splendid cathedral so magnificently rebuilt by Fulbert with the gifts of the faithful, high and low. Placed on a height which commands the city, the fair gothic church—with its lofty spires, which may be seen at a distance of ten leagues—looked like a sacred citadel, with the city reposing in its shade. In that sanctuary, so universally revered, there was a reliquary of precious wood, overlaid with thick plates of gold, and incrustated with diamonds, rubies, and pearls; in it was kept one of Mary's precious garments—her wedding-robe of Babylonian

stuff, flowered with blue, violet, white, and gold. One day, the Normans were besieging Chartres, and the inhabitants, well disposed to defend their temple, took this sacred relic for their standard. The Normans, beholding it, instantly fled. It was then customary to touch with this reliquary the doublet of fine Breton linen worn by the nobles on the day of their receiving knighthood. Richard Cœur de Lion, to whom it was brought all the way to England, offered in return to Our Lady of Chartres a rich jewel of gold and precious stones, containing relics of St. Edward. The Madonna of Chartres was, therefore, held in high veneration by the English knights, and, doubtless, there were many of them who secretly blamed the king for exposing to sacrilege and pillage the holy things of Mary's cathedral.

The city, summoned by the English king to surrender, simply replied that it would not; and Edward's messengers saw nothing but the massive gate, strongly plated and studded with iron, above which, in a charming gothic niche, decorated with carved foliage, was a

* white Madonna, with this inscription engraved on stone—"TUTELA CARNUTUM!"

The siege of the ancient capital of the Carnuti was of long duration, and the fertile fields of France were bristling with English swords instead of ears of grain. The Dauphin tried, by negotiation, to save the favorite city of Mary; but Edward was deaf to his offers and representations. The French envoys, rudely repulsed, had no longer the shadow of a hope, and the city seemed all but lost, "when there took place," says Froissart, "a miracle which much humbled and broke down the courage of the English king. A thunderbolt, a storm so great and so horrible, descended from heaven on the king of England's army, that it seemed as though the end of the world had indeed come; for there fell from the sky stones so large that they killed both men and horses, and even the boldest were struck with fear."

"If thou sowest in the garden of life the seed of wrath," said the ancient sages of Iran,* "thy star

* *Iran* was the name of Persia before the time of Cyrus.

shall have to mourn." The king of England must have had some such thoughts, when the sun arose like a golden lamp to show him the disasters of the previous evening. His whole camp was devastated; the canvass of the tents hung in tatters, and, all over that immense plain where the green grain had been trodden down by the English cavalry, seven thousand horses lay dead beside their masters. There is no historical fact better attested than this extraordinary event. Edward was so awed by it, that he was long before he recovered the shock, as he himself confessed to the continuator of Nangis.

Some time after, conformably to the promise which he had made, in his fright, to the powerful patroness of Chartres, he signed the peace concluded at Bretigny, a small town of the Chartresian district; and his haughty nobles, laying aside their arrogance for the time, came as peaceful and humble pilgrims to kneel before the Virgin's shrine.

But Mary's intervention in the desperate affairs of France did not stop here; she raised up one of

* those strong men whose iron arm is alone sufficient to sustain a falling kingdom; she inspired with a hatred of the British, a young Breton, who made his first achievements in arms under her auspices, and took her name for his war-cry. The troops that followed the red flag of Albion were scattered like straw before the wind at the cry of "Our Lady of Guesclin!"

When the insanity of the unfortunate Charles VII.—that prince so brave, so beloved by the people, and so devoted to Mary—had revived the failing hopes of the English kings, and Henry of Monmouth, yielding to the temptation of uniting the diadem of France to his own ill-acquired crown, crossed the sea to do a hundred times worse than ever Edward had done, the Virgin opposed to him only a pure-hearted young maiden, who dropped the shepherd's crook to assume the sword of battle. It was while lighting mystic tapers before the venerated image of Our Lady of Bermont, and dressing with flowers the hermitage of St. Mary,* that Joan of

* Deposition of the witnesses in the investigation of Vaucouleurs on the habits of Joan of Arc.

Arc, hearkening to the interior voice that prompted her, conceived the bold project of ridding France of the "English people," and of having the young Dauphin, Charles, consecrated at Rheims. Thus did the Virgin decree, and the inspired shepherdess announce. St. Mary of Rheims, whither the kings of France of that time went to make the *vigil of arms* with the young lords of their court,* before they received the knightly spurs, joyfully opened its ponderous gates to admit the true king of France—he who

* could alone be anointed as the chosen of the Lord. A flight of birds was sent† to tell the angels these happy tidings; and near the kneeling prince, at the altar where Clovis bent his haughty head beneath the baptismal water, "the daughter of God, the high-hearted maiden," the chaste heroine sent by the Virgin, unfurled, with a countenance at once modest and joyful, her banner of white mohair, whereon were emblazoned, in letters of gold, the two sweet names—the saving names—"JESUS! MARY!"

CHAPTER X.

THE ORDERS.



HE star of chivalry, which shone from the time of the Crusades over the zenith of Europe, began at length to descend towards the horizon; but,

* majestic even in its decline, it continued to shed a brilliant light, religious as well as martial. Those were, indeed, better and happier days than ours, when religion was respected, and its holy laws obeyed, from the palace to the cottage, and the veneration of Mary was at its

* Froissart.

† At the consecration of our kings, from time immemorial, two or three hundred dozens of

birds were set at liberty. (*Essais Historiques sur Paris*, par M. de Sainte-Foix tome v., page 26.)

height—when all was done through her and for her. “It is very natural for all to invoke her,” said the warlike troubadours of Germany, “since her bidding is done in heaven.” And so she was universally invoked; and although each paladin took for his patron either St. James, St. George, St. Michael, or St. Martin (whom, in their simple respect for the inhabitants of the heavenly kingdom, the feudal lords distinguished by honorary titles), yet the honored Virgin, who contained within herself all the beauty, the sweetness, and the angelic purity which became a sovereign lady, was the object of a homage far superior to that paid the baron St. James, or the good knight St. George. Tournaments were proclaimed and feasts performed in honor of Madam St. Mary; kings and knights made the *vigil of arms* in her chapels; her name, translated into every European language, was the war-cry of the Norman, the Danish, and the English barons, as well as of Du Guesclin. In the battle of Trente (the site of which is still pointed out amid the heath of Lower Bretagne by a mutilated pillar), Beau-

manois recommends himself to God, Our Lady, and St. Yves. Seeing that his companions redden the grass with their blood, and that the English have the advantage, he knights a squire of noble birth, named Jean de la Hoche, in Our Lady’s name, and fortune, quickly changing sides, declared for the Bretons.*

Having commended themselves to Mary, they fought one to ten with that confidence in the support of heaven which trebles the strength of man; a good cause, a clean conscience, and the Virgin’s aid, sufficed to effect a *marvellous feat*, and to obtain the most signal victories. In 1388, an army from Brabant entered the duchy of Gueldre, and destroyed all with fire and sword. The duke had neither men nor money to repulse the invaders. His counsellors were of opinion that he should shut himself up in one of his fortresses; but he rejected their advice with indignant contempt. “Neither in town nor castle will I enclose myself,” he exclaimed, “and leave my country to be burned; I would rather die manfully on the

* Froissart, vol. xiii

open field." Having made this chivalrous answer, the young duke armed himself for the fight; but before he left Nimègue, he went and prayed devoutly before the image of Our Lady, in whom he had great trust, and consecrated himself and his knights to her. This done, he mounted his horse, and set out, at the head of four hundred lancers, to fight an army of forty thousand men. At sight of the enemy, the advisers of the Flemish prince, frightened by the fearful odds, sought again to dissuade him from coming to an engagement; but the duke, laying his hand on his heart, replied, "Something tells me that the day is mine. On, then; unfurl my banner quickly, and let all who are true knights advance! I will do it in honor of God and Madam St. Mary, of whom I took leave on my departure; to her care I commit all my affairs. Forward! forward!"

And the brave young duke charged the enemy at full gallop, crying, "Our Lady of Gueldre!" The army of Brabant was completely routed, and lost seventeen banners, "which may be found," says Froissart, "before the image of Our Lady of Nim-

* ègue, to the end that the victory may be kept in perpetual remembrance." After the battle, the Flemish knights held a council on the field. Some proposed to enter a neighboring city, to place their prisoners in safety, and to dress the wounded. "Not so," said the duke; "I gave and pledged myself to the department of Nimègue, and to-day I consecrated myself, at the beginning of the battle, to Our Lady of Nimègue; I will and ordain, therefore, that we go back thither to see and to thank the Royal Lady who has helped us to obtain the victory." So saying, he galloped back with his knights to return thanks to Our Lady, and to hang up his spoiled and broken arms, as *ex voto*, in her chapel.*

In 1363, King Louis I. of Hungary, finding himself, with only twenty thousand men, in presence of eighty thousand infidels, consecrated himself with all his army to the Queen of Angels, whose image he always wore. In order to thank Our Lady for the brilliant victory which he gained, he built around the chapel of Affleuz, in Carinthia,

* Froissart, vol. i., p. 112.

a very beautiful church, wherein he deposited the sacred image to which he attributed his victory, and the sword wherewith he had fought.*

In the fourteenth century, Louis, duke of Bourbon, surnamed the Great, resolved on quitting France for a time (it was then in a most disturbed state, owing to the minority of Charles VI.), in order to put down the audacious piracy of the Saracens of Africa, which totally impeded the commerce of Europe. Genoa and the French ports demanded an expedition against these robbers. Louis of Bourbon heard the appeal, and resolved to make a crusade on that side, in honor of the Blessed Virgin, whom he held in supreme veneration. He summoned his chivalry, and was soon joined by the Dauphin of Auvergne, John of Beaufort, son of the duke of Lancaster, the Count d'Harcourt, Walter of Châtillon, William of Hainault, Philip of Artois, Count d'Eu, the Sire de la Tremouille, and Philip

de Bar. All these warriors, before they set sail, solemnly pledged themselves to the Blessed Virgin, and took for their flag the duke of Bourbon's banner, "which was then emblazoned with the *fleur de lys* of France, a white image of Our Lady, the mother of Jesus Christ, represented as sitting in the midst; underneath the feet of said image was the escutcheon of Bourbon."†

The duke of Bourbon put to sea with a fleet of eighty vessels "under the keeping of God, Our Lady, and St. George." They arrived about midsummer, in front of a city to which Froissart and others give the name of Africa, and which is thought to be Tunis. The crusaders of the Blessed Virgin laid siege to this place, which they tried four times to take by assault, but could not succeed, the Turks making a vigorous resistance. The arrival of the Christians had been the signal of a holy war for the Mussulmans of Africa; the kings of Tripoli, Morocco, and others, sent their troops

* This Carinthian church, now known by the name of Maria-Zell, is still one of the most famous pilgrimages of Catholic Germany. The Emperor Mathias went thither to return thanks for a victory obtained over the Turks in 1601.

Ferdinand III. had the church finished, such as we now see it; and Maria Theresa, we are credibly informed, made her first communion there, A. D. 1728.

† Froissart, vol. xi. p. 266.

to succor the besieged city, and the Christians had to guard against the ambuscades and nocturnal assaults of the barbarians. But their stratagems were all defeated without the aid of sentinels or lights, in a manner which excited the gratitude of the crusaders for their divine protectors. A large dog, which had no known master, kept watch every night around the Christian camp, so that it was impossible for the Turks to elude his vigilance. The soldiers, seeing something extraordinary in the unfailing instinct of this animal, called him *Our Lady's dog*.

This African expedition, commenced under the auspices of the Blessed Virgin, was accompanied by prodigies, according to Froissart. He relates that "the Saracens, thinking to surprise the French by a nocturnal attack, stealthily approached the Christian camp, when they perceived before them a company of ladies, robed in white, and, especially, one at the head who was fairer than all the others, and carried in her hand a snow-white flag with a red cross. The Saracens were so amazed and confounded at the sight, that they had, for the

* time, neither the power nor the courage to advance."*

Whether it was that Mary wished to protect the chivalry of France, trusting in her protection, by placing herself and her heavenly train between the Christians and the Mussulmans, or that a hallucination caused by the doubtful light of the stars and the waving banners of the knights was the sole cause of the prodigy, the camp was none the less saved from a night attack.

Owing to the excessive warmth of the climate, an epidemic broke out amongst the Christians, which decimated their army, and forced them to raise the siege of Tunis, after nine weeks of unavailing efforts; but, before they retired, they twice gave battle to the Saracens, and defeated them, notwithstanding their numbers. The banner of Mary was gloriously borne by the chivalry of France; and the Christians achieved under that flag such prodigies of valor, that the king of Tunis, thoroughly frightened, was but too happy to conclude a treaty, whereby he engaged to give up the Christian slaves, to leave the navigation

* Froissart, t. xi., p. 266.

of the Mediterranean undisturbed, and, finally, to pay ten thousand gold pieces to defray the expenses of the war.

The good cities of the kingdom, in times of calamity, placed themselves under the special protection of the Blessed Virgin, as well as the sovereigns. In 1357, after that fatal battle of Poitiers, which mowed down the flower of the French nobility, and in which the king was taken by the English, the merchant-provost then made a vow, in the name of the city of Paris, to offer every year to the Mother of God, in the cathedral church, a taper whose length should equal the circumference of the city walls. This offering was actually made down to the time of the League, when it was interrupted for twenty-five or thirty years. In 1605, the city substituted for this immense taper a silver lamp with a large wax taper, which burned continually before the altar of Our Lady till the year 1789.*

* Sauval, *Mem. MS.* There is found in the accounts of receipts and expenses for the corporation of Paris, A. D. 1488, an item concerning this taper: "To the Widow Gerbelot, the sum of 27 livres, 19 sols, 8 deniers; to her likewise due by said city, for 117½ lbs. of wax, made into a large

Rouen, where the image of Mary formerly adorned every street and square, the fountains and the public monuments, placed itself by solemn vow under her protection in 1348, on the appearance of that famous *black plague* which ravaged the whole earth, and which struck its victims so fiercely that they died, say the chronicles of the time, while looking at each other. When the intercession of the Virgin had put an end to this frightful pestilence, there was founded in the Norman cathedral one of the most magnificent chapels in the world, under the title of Our Lady of the Vow. The statue of Mary, in white marble, crowned with white roses, surmounted the altar erected to her by public gratitude, and over this sacred image the magistrates of Rouen suspended a massive golden lamp, which was kept lit, night and day, till the sixteenth century, when it was extinguished by the Protestants.†

taper, and placed on a wooden tower by said widow, duly delivered on the 12th February, at the price of 4 sols, 8 deniers per lb.; amount for Our Lady's candle, 53 livres, 11 sols, 8 deniers."

† Amiot, *Hist. de la Ville de Rouen*, t. ii.

The cities of France were not then alone in consecrating themselves to the Blessed Virgin. Genoa the Proud had inscribed on each of her gates, "Città di Maria" (the City of Mary); and Venice the Beautiful had adorned her grand Council Hall, in 1385, with a magnificent work of Guariotto, a disciple of Giotto, representing Christ crowning his mother Queen of Venice. Underneath this painting, which has perished in the lapse of ages, were written these four lines from Dante:

L' amor che mosse già l'eterno Padre
Per figlia aver di sua Deità trina,
Costei che fa del Figlio suo poi Madre
Dell' universo qui la fa regina.

The doges of Venice were obliged to leave in the ducal palace a picture in which they were painted kneeling before the Blessed Virgin; so as to make them remember that she was their sovereign, and that of the republic.*

This devotion of Genoa and Venice to the Mother of God was, however, eclipsed by the fervent homage rendered to her by the small republic of Parma, which was also

consecrated to Mary. There was no day more solemn amongst the citizens of Parma than the 15th of August, the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin, patroness of their cathedral, and sovereign of their republic. This festival stood on a par amongst them with that of Easter, and was so respected that the Holy See, when placing Parma under an interdict, always exempted the day of the Assumption from the excommunication. On that day the heads of families, with all the members of their household, repaired to the splendid cathedral of Mary (the roof of which was subsequently painted by Corregio), with banners flying and the singing of hymns, and laid flowers and rich offerings on her altar. "An inhabitant of Parma, who failed to appear in the cathedral, would have been disgraced," says Turchi, "and held up to public scorn." At this solemn festival, in which all ranks were mingled, there were neither grades nor distinctions; it seemed as though the members of one family had joyously met to do honor to their mother.

Truly it is a fervent and sincere

* *Délices de l'Italie*, t. 1, p. 60.

devotion that can stifle party feuds! * Such was that of the Parmesans for the Mother of God. In the year 1323, on the day of the Assumption, the Guelphs, exiled from Parma, laying aside their old animosity, presented themselves under the walls of the city, and, with clasped hands, begged to be admitted, for the Holy Virgin's sake. The people within the city, hearing Mary's name thus humbly invoked on the day of her solemn festival, were moved with compassion, and, by a spontaneous movement, each ran to open the gates. Guelphs and Ghibelines embraced each other with tears of joy, and the exiles were conducted, amid the *vivas* of the citizens, to the famous cathedral of Our Lady, where peace was sworn at the Virgin's altar. That peace lasted fifty years.*

To appease these fiery factions of the Guelphs and Ghibelines, which divided each of the Italian cities into two camps, and made their streets and public places fields of battle, it was thought best to create

* an order of knighthood of a purely pacific nature—the Frati Gaudenti, or Knights of the Virgin, who, without renouncing the world, applied themselves to restore peace and concord in the Italian peninsula, in the name and for the sake of the Mother of God.

This devotion to Mary, which restored the peace of cities and inspired warriors with courage, was the soul of the military orders—those great, all-conquering, Mediæval armies, which were generally founded on faith in the Mother of God, and achieved their heroic deeds in her name. In that austere and religious section of chivalry, the love and honor of absent ladies was represented by a particular devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Thus, the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem invoked Mary when receiving their sword—an invocation which is still practised by the Knights of Malta, the last phase of that celebrated order. The Teutonic knights took the name of Knights of the Virgin.† The territories which they

* *Chronic. Parm. in med. ann. 1323.*—*Chronic. Parm. apud Muratori, 10, Rer.*

† In 1191 the Pope approved of the institu- *

tion of these knights, under the title of Brothers Hospitallers of the Blessed Virgin, and placed them under the rule of St. Augustine.

wrested from the Pagans of Northern Europe they called "Mary's lands." The Virgin was their heavenly Lady, as she was, in fact, "the Lady of the world," according to the simple legends of the Middle Ages.

These orders—subject to a mighty organization, which participated in the discipline of a camp and the severity of a rule—conquered, in Mary's name, provinces which they collected into kingdoms. The order of Teutonic Knights became, as every one knows, the Prussian monarchy; and under the name of the Knights of Rhodes, the Hospitallers governed one of the fairest islands of the Levant. To these religious and chivalrous orders, who extended the devotion to Mary by prodigies of valor, were added the Royal Orders, which were like them, in general, under the patronage of Mary. It was in her honor that King John founded the knightly order of Our Lady of the Noble House, better known as the Knights of the Star. Those knights fasted every Saturday when they could, and, when they could not, they were to give fifteen pence to the poor, in mem-

ory of the *fifteen joys* of Our Lady. They were allowed to carry a banner, spangled with stars, with an image of the Blessed Virgin, whether in making war on the enemies of the faith or in the service of their liege lord. They were sworn to die rather than surrender, and not to retreat more than four acres, when forced by superior numbers to retire.

Charles VI., that poor prince whose precocious valor gained, when he was but fourteen, the famous victory of Rosbecq, likewise instituted, in the first years of his reign, an order of knighthood in honor of the Blessed Virgin, in consequence of a vow made by him in Languedoc. During his stay at Toulouse, he frequently went hunting with Olivier de Clisson, Pierre de Navarre, and a number of other lords, in the ancient forest of Bouconne. Having one day separated from his suite while too ardently chasing a wild deer, night surprised him alone in the wildest recesses of the old Druid forest; to increase the dangers of his situation, the shades gathered deeper and deeper around him, so that not a single

star was visible. Terrified by the dread loneliness of the place, and not knowing whither to turn, the prince made a solemn vow to Our Lady of Hope, and humbly put himself under her protection. Immediately a light wind dispersed the clouds, and a brilliant star shed its trembling light on a beaten track, which conducted the young monarch out of the woods. Next day, Charles, followed by his lords in complete armor, except their head, went to accomplish his vow in Mary's chapel. To perpetuate the memory of his perilous adventure, he founded, shortly after, the order of Our Lady of Hope, and ordained that its emblem should be a star.*

In the year 1370, Louis II., duke of Bourbon, instituted the order of the Knights of Our Lady's Thistle. This order consisted of twenty-six

knights, who wore a girdle of sky-blue velvet, embroidered with gold, and having the word *Hope* emblazoned thereon; the buckle was of fine gold, enamelled with green, and represented the head of a thistle. On the day of Our Lady's Conception, which was the grand festival of the order, the Knights of the Thistle wore a sumptuous robe of flesh-color damask, and a sky-blue cloak embroidered with gold, whereon they wore the grand collar of the order, composed of golden lozenges and *fleurs de lys*, with the word *hope* on every lozenge. From the end of the collar hung an oval medallion bearing the image of Mary, under which was seen a thistle's head, enamelled with green and *etched with white*.†

Devout and chivalrous Spain had also, in the Middle Ages, royal orders founded in honor of Mary. Al-

* The institution of Our Lady of Good Hope is proved by an ancient painting which is seen on the walls of the Carmelite cloister in Toulouse, near the chapel of Our Lady of Hope, where the king of France is represented on horseback, tending before an image of the Virgin. Some lords are also painted there, all armed, except the head. Their names, written below, are almost effaced; but those of the duke of Touraine, the duke of Bourbon, Pierre de

Navarre, Henri de Bar, and Olivier de Clisson, may still be distinguished. All these figures are of full length. The background of this painting is filled with bears, wolves, boars, etc. At the top, on a sort of frieze, angels bear streamers, whereon is thrice written the word "*Hope*." (Dom. Vaissette, *Hist. de Languedoc*, t. iv., p. 396.)

† Favon, *Hist. de Navarre*, l. viii.

phonso, or rather Don Alonzo the Wise, founded an order of chivalry, which he placed under the patronage of the Virgin; and Don James II., king of Arragon—to reward the valor of the inhabitants of Montesa, whose castle, built on the top of a high mountain, had several times repulsed the Moors—founded, in 1319, an order of knighthood, under the title of Santa Maria de Montesa, to which he generously gave, with the Pope's consent, the property which the suppressed order of the Templars had possessed in the kingdom of Valencia.

A little later, about the middle of the fifteenth century, Christian the First, king of Denmark, founded, in honor of the Holy Trinity and the Blessed Virgin, the royal order of the Elephant, the members of which entered into divers pious engagements; for instance, that of defending the Catholic faith at the peril of their life; the elephant was symbolical of the virtues of the order.

But it was not only the royal and military orders that took Mary for their patroness; the religious militia, which gains its battles by prayer under the shield of Faith, would

also move forward under the Virgin's banner, and distinguished itself by another kind of heroism. In the West, the first religious order founded especially in honor of Mary, was that of Citeaux, the founder of which was St. Robert, a young Norman gentleman who had been destined by his family for the profession of arms, but who chose rather to gain the kingdom of heaven than any of this world's gifts or honors. In the year 1098 he founded, in a desert place, given him by the duke of Burgundy, the famous abbey of Citeaux, and caused the twenty monks who accompanied him thither to assume the white habit, in honor of the Blessed Virgin, and, according to the annalists of Citeaux, on a special revelation from her. In order to merit the protection of Mary, Robert and his monks condemned themselves to a life the most detached, the most laborious, the poorest, and the most austere that it is possible to imagine; they banished from their cloisters all that had the least appearance of luxury. Their abbatial church had but one wooden cross; the censers and candlesticks were of iron, and the chal-

ices of gilt copper; the ornaments were of coarse stuff; the abbot's crozier was merely the wooden crutch then used by old men. In order to avoid all that might disturb retreat and recollection, it was agreed that no prince or noble should henceforward keep his court in their church or in their monastery, as had been hitherto the case on high festivals. These rules were made by degrees; most of them were enacted by Abbot Stephen, who succeeded Alberic, the successor of Robert, in 1109. There was so great scarcity of provisions in the abbey during the following year, that the abbot was obliged to mount an ass and go out to beg with one of the brothers. The rigorous austerity practised in the abbey caused Citeaux to be deserted; no one presented himself to replace the monks who died, and the abbot began seriously to fear that this new institute must perish in its cradle; but Mary, its patroness, would not permit it to fall to the ground, and made it a magnificent present in the person of St. Bernard, who retired thither, with several of his kinsmen, in 1113. He

* was then scarcely seventeen; at nineteen he was sent to Clairvaux, in the capacity of abbot, and applied himself to clear that place, then overgrown with brushwood.

Whilst St. Bernard was laying the foundations of Clairvaux, La Ferté, Pontigny, and Morimond—the three other daughters of Citeaux—were being peopled under favor of the Blessed Virgin. The wild, dreary spot whereon arose the abbey of Morimond, the most austere of all the Cistercian abbeys, was a pious donation from Olderic de Grammont, and Adeline, his wife.* These four abbeys were the first and the mothers of several others, which we need not mention in detail, all equally austere and regular, all worthy of their heavenly patroness. The monks went to work in the woods and fields, sowed and reaped grain, mowed hay, felled trees and carried them on their back. On returning to the convent, they thankfully received what was given them to eat—that is to say, a pound of coarse black bread, with a potage of beech-leaves. Their

* *Annales Cisterciennes*, à R. P. Manrique, ann. 1115, ch. 1.

bed was of straw, their bolster a bag of oats, and, after having slept some hours, they rose in the middle of the night to sing the praises of the Lord.

Such was the life of these monks of the Virgin, whom their conduct honored according to the expression of God himself in the sacred books; hence she was pleased to give them the most striking proofs of her approbation. The annals of Cîteaux relate that, when these good monks, whose life was so austere, whose heart so pure, and whose hands so occupied, were toiling and sweating in the heat of a harvest day, without daring to quench their thirst in the neighboring stream, or to refresh their exhausted frame by a few moments' rest in the cool shade of the woods hard by, the Virgin wiped away with her white veil the sweat that bathed the pale and furrowed brow of the brothers.*

Men of high birth thronged to Cîteaux: Prince Henry, brother of Louis the Young, became a monk of Clairvaux in 1149. St. Malachy,

* who was descended from the kings of Ireland, and was himself primate of that island, exchanged his pontifical robes for the serge and fustian of these austere monks. One of the first lords of the Scottish court, and much beloved by the king, who was his relative, abandoned the world and its glories to shut himself up in a Cistercian monastery. The king had often noticed that the young nobleman withdrew from the exciting pleasures of the chase to read and pray amongst the tall ferns or the blooming hawthorn bushes. "We must make him a bishop," said the pious monarch, one day, with a thoughtful air. The young man anticipated him, and became a monk at Wardon.

In 1129, Everard, count du Mans, gave up his princely coronet for the Cistercian cowl. He presented himself in disguise at one of the houses of the order, and was entrusted with the care of one of the flocks. He might have remained unknown had not some lords of his acquaintance met him while minding his sheep on the border of a wild heath. Another young nobleman, of very high birth, having

* *Annales Cisterciennes*, A. D. 1199, ch. 5, and 1228, ch. 6; ann. 1121, ch. 6.

taken the Cistercian habit,* was charged to conduct a flock of swine every day to feed in a neighboring forest, where they fared sumptuously on the acorns and beech-nuts. One evening, when the novice neglected to pray as usual, he heard the voice of Satan, the father of Pride, whispering in his ear that his was certainly a strange trade for the son of a powerful baron. The young lord, hitherto so pious, bit his lip, and all his fervor fled like a dream. Night came; he regained his monastery, and retired to the chapel. Any one who saw him kneeling before Our Lady's altar, buried in profound meditation, would have said, "There is a saint whose thoughts are in heaven." Yet his thoughts did not take so lofty a flight; for he was thinking of his father's castle, and began to entertain the idea of flight. "The night is dark," thought the novice, as he looked through the open door of the chapel; "the wind is high; it is just the time to make my escape. . . . Herding swine, indeed! and I the son of one of the first lords of the court! Why, it is

a shame!" He arose, and crossed the nave with a firm step. He was about to pass the threshold, when, lo! a woman stood before him! At first he thought it was but a dream. But no; there she was! a woman of majestic mien, and beautiful as an angel. With a graceful motion of her hand, and a sweet smile of compassion, she made a sign for him to follow, and was mechanically obeyed. The unknown directed her steps towards the cemetery, as it lay ghastly and cold in the light of the half-veiled moon; the huge yew-trees, agitated by the wind, seemed to mourn for the dead, and the night-birds mingled their doleful cries with the tumultuous voice of the tempest. A cold shudder began to creep over the young monk. His fair and calm conductress extended her hand, and, behold! the turf coverings of the graves began slowly to open, and the dead arose, cold and pale, in their shrouds. The novice was sinking to the ground with terror; but the unknown, regarding him with an eye of tender compassion, said, in a sweet and penetrating voice, "Yet a little while, and thou

* *Annales Cisterciennes*, A. D. 1207, ch. 4.

shalt be dead like these! Whither, then, wouldst thou go, and of what art thou thinking? This is the end of all earthly glory!" Saying these words, the Virgin—for she it was—vanished from his sight; the graves closed again, and the young novice, who thought no more of quitting the convent, became a model of humility and virtue.

The order of Citeaux, which extended itself into every country of Christendom, was suppressed in France at the beginning of the Revolution.

The order of Fontevrault, founded in 1100 by Robert d'Arbricelle to honor the holy obedience of Jesus Christ to the orders of his mother, and the filiation of John with regard to Mary, could only have its origin in the chivalrous Middle Ages. In that order—whose nuns were high and noble ladies, and its abbesses princesses of the blood royal—the women governed the men, and the abbots dared not treat the abbess as a sister, but were bound, in all humility, to call her mother,* she being absolute

sovereign of the order. The foundation of this order raised some storms at the outset. Marbode, bishop of Rennes, and Godefroi, bishop of Vendome, alarmed by the strangeness of this reversed obedience, declared against Fontevrault; but the order, nevertheless, existed till the time of the Revolution. It was in this abbey that the princesses of the royal family were brought up.

Seven merchants of Florence also founded, in the second period of the Middle Ages, the order of Servantes, or Serfs of Mary, which gave to the church St. Philip Benizzi, author of the touching devotion of the Seven Dolors of the Virgin. Finally, the sweet name of Mary was given to the order of Our Lady of Mercy, destined to redeem Christian captives from the hands of the infidels. This order, founded on the 10th of August, 1218, is one of those holy works which do honor to humanity; its rules were extremely severe, and it formed the most perfect link between the military orders and those that were purely monastic.

* The monks of the abbey of Fontevrault were commanded by an act of Parliament to

call the abbess their mother, and not their sister. (See the *Annals of Fontevrault*.)

If the other religious orders of chivalrous times were placed less directly than those of which we have spoken, under the immediate patronage of the Blessed Virgin, all united in honoring her, and were founded under her influence. The ancient Carthusians dedicated to Mary their first chapel, which still exists amongst the rocks where it was first built, and it retains the commemorative name of Our Lady of Cottages.*

The cradle of the Franciscan or-

Sacellum beatæ Mariæ de Casalibus. This chapel, which the Carthusians have preserved with all respect as the cradle of their order, is *

der was a small chapel, very old, and in bad repair, built originally by four hermits of Palestine, who gave it the name of St. Mary of Josaphat, because they had in it some relics from the tomb of the Blessed Virgin.

The Dominican order had its origin in Our Lady of Prouille.

St. Norbert reformed the Premonstratensians by order of the Mother of God, and he obliged his monks to recite the office of the Virgin every day, under pain of mortal sin.

still in existence. Tastefully ornamented, and hidden in the depth of the woods, it has a very pleasing effect.



Fourth Period of the Devotion to Mary.

FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO OUR OWN TIMES.

CHAPTER XI.

THE REVIVAL.



AT the opening of the 15th century, Catholic Europe was still kneeling before Mary, whose cathedrals, already secularized, were being finished with admirable constancy. At that time "Poor Companions," made their *tour of France*, offering their hammers and trowels wherever the piety of the faithful was raising churches; most of them asked no payment; they got bread and roots to eat, and slept on the bare ground. One hundred thousand men were seen working in this way for two centuries, at the cathedral of Strasburg, which Bishop Werner had dedicated to Mary.

Some of these workmen were wholly devoted to the construction of chapels in honor of the Blessed

* Virgin; they wrought for *the love of God*, and refused all other employment. Amongst these were some who imposed on themselves the daily fabrication of a certain number of oak leaves, trefoil or arabesques; this pious task was called the *stone-cutter's beads*. The enthusiasm reached even the weaker sex; women were seen taking up the chisel to carve Madonnas; the statue of the Blessed Virgin, which may be observed over the portal of the cathedral of Strasburg, with a crown on the head and a chalice in the right hand, is the work of Sabina, daughter of Ervin, herself a famous architect, like her father and brother, whose great work she continued when they had worn away their lives.

Those artists who wrestled like giants with the idea of the infinite to translate it into stone, acquired

no wealth by their colossal undertakings; they would have deemed it a disgrace. Their labor was more suitably rewarded; after their death, the stately basilica which they had built, raising its flags of black marble, took them respectfully to its bosom, and one might fancy that its tall, tapering steeples, piercing the clouds like the just man's prayer, went up to plead their cause before the Eternal.

The carvers of wood likewise consecrated their work to the Virgin; the choir-stalls of the ancient churches were adorned, for the most part, with those sculptures where the artist delighted to concentrate, in a narrow space, some graceful scene from the life of the Blessed Virgin. The cathedrals of Auch and Evreux, both dedicated to Mary, are so fortunate as to have preserved many of these carvings, whose loss would be irreparable.

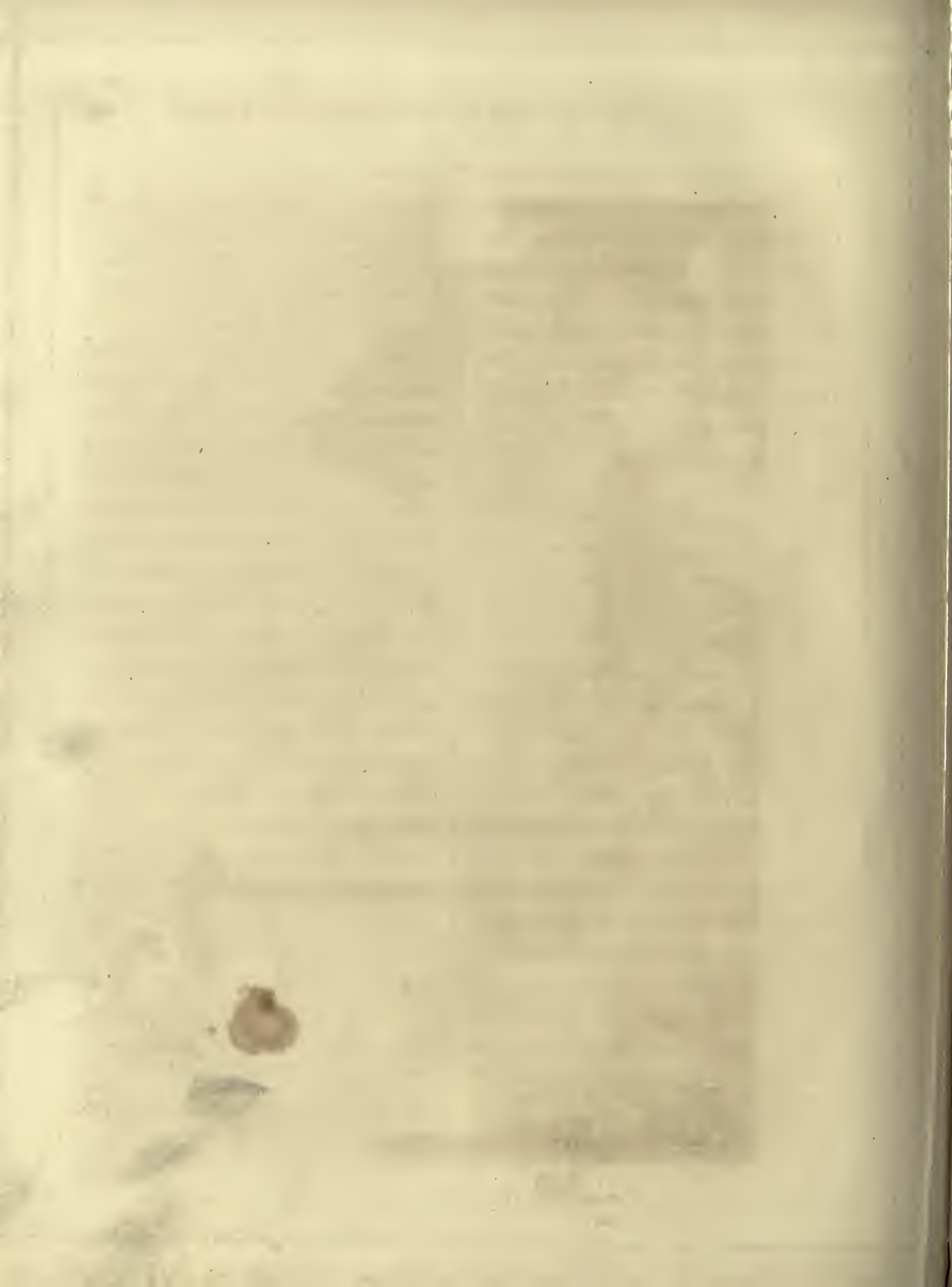
Under the vaulted roof of the cathedral of Paris, that dread periodical press which does so much good and so much evil, according to the passions which set it in motion, was then springing into life like a timid dove that fears to venture

from the parent nest. A great iron branch, with tubes running hither and thither, as far up as the eye could reach, was fastened to one of the walls of Notre Dame, close by one of those side-doors which are master-pieces of the locksmith's craft. On a level with these tubes, garnished with tapers of yellow wax, was hung by a flexible fastening, a hollow tablet, coated with wax. There, every morning, on the advice and responsibility of the directors or chief editors of the period, the bishop, the mayor, or the sheriff, the printer in wax inscribed with his pen the official announcement of whatever was most interesting to the people of the good old times, the arrival of a bull, the gaining of a battle, etc. Every lettered individual was then free to come, by the light of the tapers (which the stained glass windows rendered necessary, even in daylight), and read to the assembled crowds that daily gazette—daily in the fullest sense of the word, since the news of the morrow effaced that of the day before.

Confraternities in honor of the Virgin were then founded all over



to Schaeffer. The first



Europe—still Catholic from one end to the other. The princes of Germany gloried in wearing her scapular, and the English kings of the Lancastrian line were consecrated with a miraculous oil “more radiant than fine gold, which the Blessed Virgin had given expressly for them—the Lancastrians—to St. Thomas à Becket during his exile.”*

In France, the students of the great colleges (where so many gratuitous burses were given in Our Lady's name) arose at the dawn of day to say the office of the Virgin in common. Princes recited it also, at regular hours, with some other offices of the Church. A small space, something like the domestic chapels of the Romans, was reserved in their apartments for these morning devotions. The duke of Orleans, uncle of Charles VI., though his life was far from being

edifying, had nevertheless, in the Hotel St. Paul, an oratory, adorned with gothic sculptures in Irish oak, on the door of which was read, “Retreat where Monsieur Louis of France says his offices.”†

The beads‡ were the favorite ornaments of great and small, the magistrate and the warrior. Kings of France substituted them for the knightly collar, the fashion of which had been brought by the crusaders from Eastern lands, famous for their gorgeous costumes. A costly rosary was put in every wedding casket; and the great ladies of the period of the Revival, as well as those of the Middle Ages, were often represented on their stone monuments with a rosary in their hand. This prayer, originally invented for the poor, had become the prayer of all classes. Burgesses and gentlemen said their rosary going out to the country or returning to the city,

* Boucher, *Annales de l'Aquitaine*, t. iv., p. 3.

† Felibien, t. 1er, p. 654.—Sauval, *Mem. MS.*

‡ The rosary was instituted in 1208, by St. Dominick, but he was not precisely the inventor of it. In the year 1094, Peter the Hermit devised wooden beads, whereon the soldiers of the Crusade, for the most part unable

to read, might recite a certain number of Paters and Aves, according to the solemnity of the feasts. Even before his time, some ancient historians relate that devout persons said a series of Paters and Aves on knotted cords, *per cordulam nodis distinctam*. (*Regles de la Confr. du Rosaire*. Astolfi.—Gabriel Pennotus, in *Hist. Tripart.*)

clients in court while awaiting their lawyers, and Christians of every grade when going to churches at a distance to gain indulgences. Kings themselves set the example. Blanche of Castile said her rosary every day. Edward III., king of England, gave his beads, enriched with pearls, to Eustace de Ribeaumont, a French knight, who had twice defeated him. In the inventory taken after the death of Charles V., there were, as La Sage tells us, ten gold rosaries. The Swiss, at Grandson, found in the ducal tent of Charles of Burgundy his Pater (beads), whereon the Apostles were represented in solid gold.* It is well known that the famous constable, Anne de Montmorenci, was accustomed to say his beads while riding at the head of his men-at-arms. "Sometimes, leaving a Pater unfinished, he commanded some military expedition, or gave the signal for attack; then "he carefully resumed his Pater or Ave," says a

contemporary historian, "so devout was he."

The chaplet, which takes its name from the crowns of flowers called in the Middle Ages *chapels* or *chapeaux*, was the spiritual crown of Mary. People said then—and it was a graceful and poetical idea—that there was beside every person who recited it devoutly, an angel, sometimes visible, who strung on a golden thread a rose for every Ave, and a golden lily for every Pater, and that after laying this garland on the brow of the devout servant of Mary, the angel disappeared, leaving behind him the sweet perfume of roses.†

The kings of Scotland and their great vassals wore chaplets of golden beads "to preserve themselves from all evil." The bold troopers of the borders provided themselves with others, simpler and less costly, consisting of filberts browned by the autumn sun; "and never did they recite them with

* *History of Louis XI.*, by M. Liscen, p. 91.

† The chaplet owes its origin to a young monk of the order of St. Francis. Before taking the habit of the Friars Minors, this young man made it a practice to crown an image of Our Lady every lay with a wreath of flowers. Be-

ing unable to continue this pious practice in the convent, he was on the point of giving up the habit; but Our Lady appeared to him, and ordered him to substitute the spiritual crown of the chaplet for the wreath of flowers. (P. Alex. Salo, *Meth. ad. pour hon. la V. M.*, p. 672.)

more fervor," says Leslie, "than in their expeditions against the English." The golden chaplets disappeared with poor Queen Mary, the last of the Catholic sovereigns; but those which the borderers gathered in the woods long withstood the shock of the Reformation. It was the last Catholic practice kept up in Caledonia; with it fell the ancient religion of Bruce, of Wallace, and of David I.—the religion to which England and Scotland both owe, according to Cobbett, all that they have of greatness both in men and things.

The Georgians and the nations of Italy fabricated beads for themselves with as little expense as the Scotch: they made them of the nuts of the *azedarah*, still known among the Italians as *l'albero dei paternostri* (the paternoster tree).

The tender and sincere piety of our ancestors for the Blessed Virgin then manifested itself in forms the sweetest and most touching. Berries from the shrubs and fruit from the bushes sufficed to form a religious garland; flowers, heath, the plants of Europe and of Asia, were honored with her name, and kept

her memory alive amid the woods and fields. The narcissus, with its purple-tinted bell, received the name of *Mary's lily*; the rose of Jericho, the seal of Solomon, became her rose and her seal; the lung-wort, spotted with white, was *Our Lady's milk*; the Scotch took for their emblem her blessed thistle; the Christian Arab gave the name of *St. Mary's smoke* to a sort of wormwood, with a white flower, which grows on his sandy wastes; the mountain shepherd designated as *St. Mary's grass* the Alpine mint, the rosemary, and the persicaria; the Mussulmans of the East call the fragrant cyclamen *bokour Miriam* (Mary's perfume), and the same plant bears in Persia the name of *tchenk Miriam* (Mary's hand); a vernal plant of Europe received the name of *Our Lady's cloak*; the plant that bears the blue sweet wortleberry was her signet, the sherbets of the Alps her pears; and the bed of wild thyme, whereon the wearied bee reposes, had likewise her name.

In some northern countries, on the other hand, they scrupulously avoided giving the Virgin's name,

not only to things but to persons, * fearing lest that name might eventually be treated with irreverence, or unworthily borne. Amongst the Poles, no woman was called Mary, and this prohibition extended so far, that Ladislaus IV., when marrying Marie Louise of Nevers, would have a clause inserted in the marriage contract to the effect that the new queen should give up her name of Marie, which was displeasing to the Poles, because of their respect for the Mother of God, and that she should retain only the simple name of Louise.*

In the first years of the fourteenth century, Pope Innocent XXII., justly alarmed by the conquests of the Mussulmans, instituted a prayer to the Blessed Virgin, under the name of *Hail, Mary!* This prayer, for which the sweetest and most mysterious hour of the day had been chosen, that is, the close of day,† was said in France and England at the first toll of the curfew-bell. All Catholics then said three *Hail*

Marys for the success of the Christian arms, and besought the Blessed Virgin that peace, union, and prosperity might prevail in every Christian kingdom. Louis XI., in 1475, instituted the *Angelus*, as it now is, in honor of the mystery of the Incarnation, and desired that, to the evening prayer offered up for the general peace of Christendom, one might be added at noon for the particular peace of his kingdom. His decree is thus conceived: "It is hereby ordained, that all Frenchmen, knights, men-at-arms, and clowns, do kneel *on their two knees* at the stroke of noon, cross themselves devoutly, and offer a prayer to Our Lady for the maintenance of peace."

The decree was executed with an exactness which proves how popular was the devotion to Mary. During the fifteenth century, at the first stroke of the *Angelus*, there was not a single Frenchman in the houses, in the streets, in the fields, or on the highways, who did not

* Dovendo Ladislao IV. prendere per moglie la figliuola del duca di Nevers, chiamata Maria Aloisa, messe questa special condizione che la reina, per riverenza della Vergine, si chiamasse nell' avvenire solamente Aloisa. (*Il P. Pao.Seg.t.vii. p. 571.*) ✧

† Polidorus Virgil attributes the institution of the evening *Ave Maria* to Pope John XXII., and that of the morning to Theodoric, archbishop of Cologne.

prostrate himself to invoke the Blessed Virgin. That duty discharged, the wayfarer and traveller arose and went on his way.*

In those immense processions, the head of which was at St. Denis when the end was still on the steps of Notre Dame,† the Virgin's banner of mohair, embroidered with gold, was borne high over all the other sacred ensigns, and was carried immediately after the Cross. Kings, queens, bishops, and burgesses of high degree, were all members of Our Lady's confraternity,‡ and in pious assemblies the gold embroidered hoods of princes were seen side by side with the blue and red hoods of the Parisian citizens.

At every corner of the streets, a little statue of Mary, rudely carved in oak, blackened by time, and covered with a veil of antique lace, raised its guardian head above a pile of flowers, which the good peo-

ple renewed every morning when the trumpets announced the dawn from the towers of the Châtelet.§ Sometimes these flowers, placed there secretly before daybreak, were taken for the gifts of angels, who came, it was said, to teach Christians to honor their Queen. During the night lamps burned continually in these little grayish niches, which on Saturday were illuminated all day long.|| This was the first lighting of streets; and though it was less brilliant than that now in use, it had, at least, one great advantage—it was connected with a pious thought, calculated to excite reflection amongst a believing people. The mystic lamps of the Madonnas, shining here and there like a light chain of stars, through the perfumed stems of flowers, seemed to say to the nightly wanderer, intent on crime, "There is on this slumbering city an eye which never closes, but watches for ever over those

* Alex. Monteil, *Vie privée des Français*, t. 1.

† Capef., *Hist. de la Ref.*

‡ This confraternity, the most ancient belonging to Our Lady in Paris, was established in 1168. It was named the *Grand Confraternity of Our Lady of the Lords, Priests, and Citizens of Paris*. The king, the queen, and the bishop

of Paris, were members, and none but the most exemplary persons were received into any of the three orders of the confraternity. (Le Maire, t. ii., p. 79.—*Trait. de la Police*, t. i., p. 372.)

§ Alex. Monteil, t. i.

|| *Hist. de Notre Dame de la Pair*, par le P. Medard, Capucin.

silent and deserted streets—the eye of God!”*

These little corner-Madonnas, though not so richly adorned as those which figured in massive silver over altars of marble and gold, were none the less dear to the people. Young men and women came there from all sides—in procession, barefoot, and crowned with flowers—singing the Litanies of the Blessed Virgin; every one followed them, let the time be what it might, and the crowd was sometimes so dense that the street was completely blocked up. A little cedar statue, about a foot high, which had belonged to the house of Joyeuse, and which stood between two pointed turrets over the gate of the reverend Capuchin fathers in the Rue St. Honoré, came near being the cause of a civil war, on a small scale, between two of the wards of Paris. Some persons of more zeal than prudence would fain carry off the miracle-working Madonna, to enrich

their own parish. The people of the neighborhood came to hear of their intention, and forthwith took up arms, mounted guard day and night before the tutelary Virgin, and made up their minds to chain the street across. Tranquillity was only restored by the formal translation of the sacred image to the very church of the convent.†

The Queen of Heaven, who inspired the armies of the Middle Ages with the confidence of victory, reigned over the fleets and merchant vessels of that fifteenth century, which was justly styled the age of discoveries. Christopher Columbus undertook the discovery of the New World, under the auspices of the Virgin, whose office he read on board his ship, from a precious manuscript given him at his departure by Pope Alexander VI., and which he bequeathed at his death to the republic of Genoa, his native country. Don Henry of Portugal, who presided over and pro-

* It is still the only lighting of several towns in Italy. The following are the words of an author who wrote in 1803: “Il popolo è divoto alle Madonne, per cui ve ne sono in ogni angolo delle strade con fanali accessi di notte.”

Essi tengono illuminate le strade, e così la divozione supplisce alla polizia.” (*Descrizione di Napoli*, p. 269.)

* See *Hist. de Notre Dame de la Paix*.

moted the discovery of the East Indies, raised a church at Belem in honor of Our Lady, accompanied by an hospital for Portuguese sailors. John Gonsalvo Zares, his first and ablest navigator, had a church built to Our Lady in Madeira. When the Portuguese, under the direction of Vasco de Gama, landed for the first time on the coast of Coromandel, where they expected, on the faith of some old tradition, to find some of St. Thomas' Christians, they were conducted by the natives to the temple of an Indian goddess, whom they had the simplicity, notwithstanding her four arms and her long golden ears, to take for the Blessed Virgin, and prayed to her accordingly. One of them, however, began to have some doubts, and cried out, as he looked at the hideous features of the idol, resembling nothing less than the fair, sweet Virgin of the Christians, "If the devil be worshipped here, which is very possible, it is well understood that we are only addressing our prayers to the Mother of God!"

After establishing themselves in the Indies, the Portuguese, faithful in their devotion to Mary, dedicated

to her in Goa, a superb church, wholly gilt in the inside, styled Our Lady of Asara, or Mercy. Several other churches, such as Our Lady of Cranganor and of Meliapour, arose, by their means, in several parts of India, even to the mouth of the Ganges, the sacred river of Hindostan. There was then among them a pious practice of offering to Mary the tenth part of the booty obtained from the heathen, and that custom caused the construction of many private chapels in her honor. Even in our days their vessels never pass in sight of the Virgin's chapels, situated along the coast of their superb Macao, without saluting them with discharges of all their guns.* The Spaniards, no less devout than the Portuguese to the divine Mother of the Saviour, bore on their gold-laden galloons her statue in massive silver, before which the brave Castilian mariners of Isabella the Catholic said their morning and evening prayers. At a somewhat more recent period, the buccaneers of the Island of Tortua, having taken one of these images in a naval engagement, the Span-

* *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith.*

iards, robbed of all they possessed, * thought only of recovering their revered Madonna. The governor-general opened a negotiation with the pirates, solely to save the *Santa Senora* from the profanations to which she was exposed amongst those lawless men, who gloried in living without any religion, but they refused to give it up.

Italy—then conspicuous amongst all Catholic kingdoms by the revival of the arts—consecrated the pallet of her painters, the chisel of her sculptors, and the pen of her poets, to celebrate the greatness of Mary.

From Cimabuë, who founded the Italian school about the year 1240, to Carlo Maratti and Salvator Rosa (who are considered its last masters)—that is to say, for a period of five centuries—religious painting produced a series of master-pieces to which the history of the Blessed Virgin contributed the largest share. Raphael, then fine, poetical, and pious as an angel, was the first to divine, in his admirable *sposalizio*, the noble yet simple bearing, the

fair and serious countenance, the celestial attitude of the Mother of divine Love and of holy Mercy. One would say, that on a day of fervent prayer Mary appeared to him seated on the clouds, with her angelic train, and that he painted her in her glory, such as he saw her. How many men of genius followed in the footsteps of that great master! Michael Angelo, Corregio, Titian, the Carrachi, Spagnoletto, Dominichini, that austere Carlo Dolci who consecrated his pencil to the Blessed Virgin, and the fierce Salvator who made pilgrimages to Our Lady of Loretto. What richness of imagination! What superhuman conceptions! What a profound sentiment of the holiness of their art amongst those great Italian masters! Those wondrous men, who disinherited the future and effaced the past, feared not to show themselves faithful servants of the Blessed Virgin; they lit tapers before her images, took off their *beretta* as they passed before them, said their beads like every one else,* and their greatest ambition

* There are still to be seen in the domestic chapel of Michael Angelo, in Florence, large

rosaries which belonged to him, and which he took with him on his travels.

was to adorn a Christian church with some sacred painting, for which they prepared themselves as a holy work. "Sound the trumpets, ring the bells," wrote Salvator Rosa to Dr. Ricciardi; "after thirty years' residence in Rome, after six whole lustres of blighted hopes and a life of continual tribulation both from man and heaven, I am at last called on, for once, to paint a picture for a high-altar!"* This, we see, is downright ecstasy. But, on the other hand, how Catholicity loved, encouraged, and protected the art which enriched its temples with so many master-pieces!—how the Holy See honored and exalted the man of genius!—how it levelled heights and effaced social distinctions, to honor illustrious talents and to raise their possessors to a level with the rich and nobly born! Giotto, the peasant who left his flock in a romantic valley of Tuscany, to work in the school of Cimabué, was the *protegé* of Pope Clement V.; and it was the successor of St. Peter who first sought out the artist. Michael Angelo, in-

* tended by his father for a weaver of wool, was honored with something more than the favor, he possessed the confidence and the friendship of Julius II. To Raphael, the son of a poor and obscure painter, there was offered on the one hand a cardinal's hat, and on the other, the hand of a cardinal's niece. Lanfranco, that *Parmegiano* so popular in the eighteenth century, was the intimate friend of cardinals, a knight of the Holy Roman Empire, and the special *protegé* of the Pope. Caravaggio, the son of a mason, received the cross of the order of Malta, a superb gold chain, which the grand-master himself hung around his neck, and two slaves to wait upon him. Claude Lorraine, who was first a cook and then a grinder of colors, was the friend of the elegant Cardinal Bentivoglio, and the distinguished favorite of Urban VIII. The Roman cardinals expended part of their fortune on master-pieces of art which are still the ornament of the churches or of their splendid galleries, and, following their example, the Catholic princes all encouraged the arts, and adorned the altars with religious paintings.

* *Lettere di Salvator Rosa al dott. Giov. Batista Ricciardi*, Lettera 20.

Behold what Catholicity has done for painting! Protestants acted in a very different manner. Calvin, who despised poetry, and even set down church-organs as *foolish vanities*,* protested with no less bitterness and vehemence against *idolatrous painting*; hence, religious pictures were unmercifully lacerated by his ferocious followers, and this aversion for that most noble art lasted so long that, in the acts passed by the British Parliament in 1636, it is ordained that all the pictures in the Royal Gallery which represent the Virgin, or the *second person of the Trinity*, shall be publicly burned.† What more could the Caliph Omar have done?

It is worthy of remark, that the two chiefs of the Protestant sects, whilst exclaiming against Catholic pictures, were quite willing to sit for their own portraits, as often as their partisans desired to have them. "Luther," says an English writer,

* The Scotch Covenanters despised poetry, which they deemed a profane and useless art. This rough fanaticism lasted so long in some parts of Scotland, that Wilson, author of a poem called *The Clyde*, being appointed, some thirty years ago, to teach a school in Greenock, was obliged to give a written promise that he would

* "was always well pleased to multiply his portrait and that of his homely rib.‡ His statue, erected at Wittenberg, is exposed to the veneration of the Lutherans of Germany, and M. Lerminier himself compares this veneration to that which Catholics bear to Our Lady of Loretto. Calvin, possessed by the same strange mania, drew on the Huguenots of France that judicious question of Saconay: "Why are ye so much opposed to paintings and images? Does not your own Calvin take pleasure in having his likeness multiplied, carved in Geneva with so much skill that his hollow eyes and countenance are vividly represented, and he is shown to the life, ungainly as he is."§

Statuary also arose, grand and majestic, under the inspiration of Mary. Greece had seated, erected, and reclined her statues; but she had not devised the suppliant posture of Our Lady of Dolors; she

renounce poetry. The Scotch Puritans gave organs the contemptuous name of whistling chests. (Sir Walter Scott, *Border Minstrelsy*.)

† *Journal of the House of Commons*.

‡ *Memoirs of Salvator Rosa*. By Lady Morgan.

§ *Archives Curieuses*.

had not placed innocence and purity kneeling before God; she confided to Bacchantes, or to old Silenus, her fair marble children. Mary, bearing the infant Jesus in her arms, came to reveal both to art and to society the religion of maternity, and opened to sculpture the unexplored career of moral things. Sculpture revived, like her sister, in the classic land of art—fair, sunny Italy; like her sister, she was protected there by the princes of the Roman Church, who had preserved the noble productions of the great masters of ancient Greece. A bull had been issued by the Vicar of Jesus Christ, forbidding the mutilation of ancient statues; and if the modern sculptor can yet study those master-pieces, he owes it to Martin V.

Benvenuto Cellini, one of the greatest artists of the time of Leo X., and one of the most dangerous bravos of Italy, had, nevertheless, a profound faith in the Virgin; vindictive as he was—and there was no one more so—he would not dare to draw his richly-chased stiletto from his silken sleeve in presence of a Madonna. One day, when he had been cast into prison for his

* misdeeds, he thought he saw the Virgin, in the midst of the sun's disc, holding her divine Son on her knee, and looking down on him with the sweetest smile. "I saw her," says he, in a letter which is still extant—"I saw her clearly and distinctly, and I glorified God aloud."

Amongst the great Italian poets of the Revival, the most illustrious were distinguished by their devotion to Mary. Dante sang her praise in the magnificent verse of his *Paradiso*. "O woman!" he exclaims, "thou art so great, thou hast so much power, that he who solicits a favor without having recourse to thee, sends up his aspirations without wings."* In the romantic solitudes of Vaücluse, Lintenzo, and Arqua, where Petrarch shut himself up to await the poetic inspiration which is repelled by the tumult of cities, we still behold the spire of his little domestic chapels adorned with a superb Madonna of Perugino's. It was at the feet of this fair Madonna that he composed his Invocation to Mary, his last *canzona*, so humble, so tender, so

* Dante, *Il Paradiso*, c. 33.

Christian, wherein "he prostrates his heart" before the "sweet and pious Virgin," to the end that she may guide him back to the way from which he had wandered, and recommend him to her divine Son at his last moment.* Tasso, being on his way from Mantua to Rome, turned aside to acquit himself of a vow to Our Lady of Loretto; he arrived, overpowered with fatigue, and without money to finish his journey; but happily one of the Gonzagua princes, who was much attached to him, happened to be there at the same time, and amply provided for all his wants. Recovered from his fatigue, he fulfilled with the most fervent devotion all the duties of his pilgrimage, and composed the finest canticle ever written in honor of Our Lady of Loretto.†

Stretched on his bed of death, in the convent of St. Onuphre, Tasso asked of the young Rubens—who had taken him from the dungeons of the duke of Ferrara—a small silver Madonna, which he had himself given long before to the father of that great painter. "Thou wilt

take it back," said he, "when I am dead." Rubens instantly obeyed, and the author of *Jerusalem Delivered*, after having burned some poetical sketches written during the delirious hours of his cruel and unjust captivity, began to say his prayers in a low voice, clasping in his convulsed hands the sacred image which encouraged him to hope till the last. When the body of the great poet, so cruelly neglected during his life, was borne triumphantly to its last resting-place, Rubens could not bring himself to join the funeral procession; he hastened to take shelter in the most obscure corner of St. Peter's, in Rome, where, prostrate before the Virgin's altar, he prayed with great fervor, holding in his hands the little silver Madonna which he had taken from the icy hands of Tasso.

Music, purified by the tender and inspiring breath of the Blessed Virgin, was then beginning to revive under her auspices. In the fifth century, Sedulius, whose verses were considered very pleasing to her, had sung her praise in his *Carmen Paschale*. In the twelfth, a monk of

* *Le Rime del Petrarca* (Firenze), t. iii., c. 8.

† Such is the opinion of Ginguené.

St. Victor composed the Litanies, which accorded so well with the lofty arches of the cathedrals, the majestic tones of the organ, the white veils and scarfs of gold-brocade, and the roses scattered by the hands of innocent children. These Litanies were sung, during the Middle Ages and those which immediately followed, by the pilgrims as they journeyed to some shrine built on the sandy beach, or far amid the granite and basalt of the mountains. That long series of divine titles and graceful appellations, broken only by the simple and most touching words, "pray for us," went floating on the wind to awake the slumbering echoes of the valleys, or to die away on the distant wave in many a plaintive cadence. One would have thought that the angels of God, who, when Mary lived on earth, kissed her shadow as they passed her by, as the Spaniard, Zorilla, poetically says, "sowed her praises in the fields of air."

The Christmas carols—those joyous hymns so full of the memory of the Virgin of Bethlehem—sung by torch-light through the snowy

fields, or by the antique cribs adorned with verdure and winter-flowers, were then the favorite song of all the French provinces. Our church-hymns have impressed on the music a noble and severe character, which fills the soul to overflowing, and plunges it into the infinite. The Christmas carols, more simple in their effect, gave it a tinge quite Arcadian. It is a bird-like song, which goes up gaily to God to celebrate a joyous mystery; it is a woodland perfume, which embalms the altar of the Saviour's youthful mother. The fresh and simple lays connected with these charming airs, all breathe the coolness of the woods, the smell of the white-thorn, the perfume of the hive, and the bleating of lambs. It is the song of the people, the song of the shepherds, the song of Nature itself.

In the carols, Mary is always represented as a youthful Virgin, fair and pure, wrapping up in her linen veil the King of Angels, and too much absorbed in her joy to heed the bareness of the stable or the straw in the crib. The people, inured to privations of every kind,

dwell not on the poverty, but on the happiness of the Mother of CHRIST; it is like one of Claude Lorraine's paintings—all light. In the *Stabat**—that hymn of the thirteenth century which the Italians have so poetically styled *Il pianto di Maria* (Mary's wail)—there is no longer aught of the joys of the Nativity, but all the terrors of the Golgotha. It is a strain burdened with the deepest sorrow, and breaking forth at times into heart-rending cries of anguish; it is the piercing recital of the sufferings of a mother, who sees an adored son expiring before her eyes. To understand the inconceivable sadness of that hymn, and the mournful mysteries which it reveals, it must be heard, as we have heard it, in one of those vast Italian churches where people pray with faith and sing with soul; one would say that the majestic voice of the organ is choked with sobs, and that the angels are weeping for their Queen. No religion, since the world began, ever

furnished such a theme for poetry and music as the *Stabat*. The sorrows of Mary at the foot of the Cross call forth all the power of harmony and all the inspiration of poetry. That theme, although most effective as it now stands, is still far from perfection; to give it as it *ought* to be, or *might* be, would be the last and most sublime reach of art.

At the period of the Revival, those competitions in poetry founded in honor of the Blessed Virgin during the ages of chivalry, were still kept up with great pomp and splendor, in Rouen, Dieppe, and Caen, under the name of *puy*s or *palinods*. The meeting was held in one of Mary's churches, and the successful competitor received from the *prince of the puy* a golden palm.† This was the germ of the French Academy. A little later, that of the Floral Games, which awarded a silver lily to the best piece of poetry on the Virgin, was established in Toulouse, where it still exists.

* It is thought that the *Stabat Mater Dolorosa* was composed by Innocent III., one of the greatest Popes that ever ruled the Church, and the founder of two great orders, the Dominicans

and the Franciscans; others attribute it to Jacopone de Todi, St. Gregory, and some to St. Bernard.

† *Antiquités de la Ville de Rouen*.

In the fifth century, it was said of Mary that she was *bonorum poetarum magistram*; in the fifteenth, she was still the queen of all the poets of the Christian world. The Britons, who had substituted the dialogue-ballad for the dread and mystic songs of the Druids, almost invariably introduced an invocation to Mary. The *cantadours* of Guienne, the bards of Provence, never passed a shrine of hers without going in to sing there (accompanying themselves with the lute or hand-organ) some pretty hymn composed in her honor, and it was said by those wandering sons of song that the Madonna sometimes rewarded their simple strain by a smile or a graceful inclination of the head, which made them happier than the golden cups given them as guerçons by princes whose victories they sang. The descendants of the English bards—who sang, like the birds of the air, now in the shadow of the cloister, anon in the shade of the woods, to the sound of the Saxon harp—had no song sweeter or more admired than the ballads wherein they related some miracle of the Blessed Virgin. Italian song,

so highly extolled, began with the *madriale*, the hymn to Mary which the gondolier of Venice sang on his lagoons, the Neapolitan *contadino* in the shade of his vine, and the Sicilian fisherman in his light bark. Spanish poetry had, even in the Middle Ages, signalized its awakening by songs consecrated to Mary. In the thirteenth century, Gonzalo de Berceo, the first Spanish poet on record, styled himself the Blessed Virgin's poet; and Louis of Leon soon after created Spanish lyric poetry, the better to celebrate her name. In Germany, the Tudescan poets early softened their rude idiom for Mary, whom they sang, even in the sixteenth century, with admirable faith and charming simplicity. "Thou canst not choose but hear us," sang the most popular poet of Germany, Walter de Wolgelweide; "we delight so much in honoring thee!" Conrad de Wurzburg was no less devout to Mary. In the northern kingdoms, the Virgin's hymns superseded the fierce and warlike songs of the Scalds, of which none now remain except the funeral hymn of Regnier Lodbrog, that wild sea-king, who wrote, on

the dark walls of his dungeon, the sanguinary exploits which he had committed on the gloomy shores of the Baltic and the stormy German Sea, whose waves he had made "red as the fresh wound of a warrior." In Lithuania, with difficulty converted to Christianity, the hymn to Mary replaced the canticles of Milda, the goddess of beauty, spring and roses; and the *bartinikas*, those roving minstrels of White Russia, who were regarded as inspired, and who presided at the musical choruses of the feast of crops and the still more joyous feast of flowers, abandoned, in the fifteenth century, the god Sotwaros, their eastern Apollo, to seek their poetic inspiration from Mary, who was proclaimed Grand Duchess of the Lithuanians.*

The Virgin, who vivified the arts, watched ever and always over the preservation of empires, and the sweet Queen of Heaven had still for her vassals the kings of Catholic Europe in general, and those of France in particular. In 1478,

* *Sketch of the Pagan Religion and the Popular Traditions of the Lithuanians*, by Felix Wrotnowski.

King Louis XI. detached the earldom of Boulogne from Artois, and transferred it to the Virgin Mary, whom he declared Countess of Boulogne. In payment of his feudal debt, he laid on her altar a golden heart of the weight of thirteen marks, and engaged that his successors on the throne should be bound to renew the homage and the offering to the Virgin *suzeraine*. It is well known that this cruel, but politic prince, disdaining pomp even so as to fall into the opposite extreme, wore no other ornament in his public audiences than a small leaden Madonna in his royal hat. He was accustomed to say that he thought more of that little bit of lead than of all the gold in his kingdom.

He was buried, according to his orders, in the church of Our Lady of Clery. So particular was he about the execution of this command, that Pope Sixtus IV., at his request, forbade any one, under pain of excommunication, to remove the body of Louis to any other place.

Anne of Brittany, who was twice queen of France, built chapels to

the Blessed Virgin, and wished that her scapular might be placed in the golden box wherein her heart was to be sent to the Bretons. The tomb of Francis II., last duke of Bretagne, having been opened in the year 1727, there was found in the vaults, between the coffin of that prince and that of Marguerite de Foix, a small leaden chest containing a golden box shaped like a heart, surmounted by a royal crown, and encircled by the cord of the Franciscan Order, all of exquisite workmanship. This box, which had inclosed the heart of Queen Anne, then contained only a little water, and the remains of the scapular which the pious princess had worn in honor of Mary.

Francis I., having learned that a certain Huguenot had had the audacity to strike off, in the very heart of Paris, the head of an image of Our Lady, made a solemn act of

reparation to the Mother of God, walking barefoot and bareheaded, with a taper in his hand. The lords of the court and the members of Parliament walked in procession after the monarch, who replaced with his own hands, on the altar where the mutilation had taken place, a magnificent statue of the Virgin.*

In Spain, the work commenced by Prince Pelagius, under the auspices of Mary, to deliver the peninsula from the Moors, was consummated by the taking of Grenada. The first war-cry of Spanish independence was "Mary!" in the cave of Covadonga. This victory was gained under her banner, by Ferdinand the Catholic, who had engraved in gold, on his good Toledo blade, the guardian image of Our Lady; and on his banners was inscribed, "Ave Maria."

* P. de Barry, *Paradis*, etc.



CHAPTER XII.

THE LATER HERESIES.



HERE is, in the Caramanidesert, towards the Persian Gulf, a shrub which the Persians call *gul bâd samoun* (the flower that poisons the wind). Heresy sprang up in cold Germany, like the poisonous plant that impregnates the warm breeze of the Persian summer with a quality so deadly that it kills those who inhale it; the only difference is, that the fatal breath which went forth from the Germanic countries commenced by killing souls, which it did by thousands! Then it was that the cheering rays of the fair star which reflected the uncreated Sun so benignly on the zenith of the Christian world were lost amid the thick fogs

* Those who follow the Confession of Augsburg honor the saints by hymns, images, and festivals; but they do not think themselves bound to invoke them. Stuyter, minister of Eibergen, wrote a very beautiful poem on the vir-

of error which obscured the Northern sky, while its light was sensibly diminished even in the faithful countries which it continued to illumine.

The sectaries of the sixteenth century were outrageous against the images of Mary and the Saints; the patrician sect of Luther, it must be confessed, showed somewhat more moderation in this respect;* but the fury of the Calvinists exceeded all belief.

Opposed to arts and letters as much as to Catholicity, concealing a destructive radicalism under the mask of religion, assailing by inflammatory pamphlets, now the pope, now the prince, that small minority, laboring with all its might to impose its doctrine and belief on the vast majority of the people, by whom it was held in abhorrence,

tues and prerogatives of the Mother of God. It is not so with the other sectaries, who despise the Blessed Virgin, or look upon her as no more than any other woman. (*Du Culte des Saints et de la St. Vierge*, par l'évêque de Castorie, pp. 2 and 3)

covered France with ruin and mourning. "These *good* reformers," says a Count of Lyons, an eye-witness of their atrocities, "began by reforming public peace and tranquillity." In Tours, in Blois, in Poitiers, in Bourges, in Rouen, they completely sacked the churches, mutilated the statues of the Saints, and dragged the images of Christ and his Blessed Mother through the mire, singing the Litanies in derision.* In Gascony they buried Catholics alive, cut infants in two, ripped priests open and tore out their bowels. The dead themselves were not respected in their dusty sepulchres; the Huguenots tore Louis XI. from his tomb, burned what decay had spared, and audaciously flung to the winds the ashes of a king of France whose race still occupied the throne. The ancestors of the kings of Navarre and the princes of Condé were no better treated than Louis XI.; the tombs of the house of Angoulême (the reigning house) shared the same fate. The lords of Longueville were taken but half decayed

from their coffins, and thrown to the dogs.†

The Count-Canon Saconay, who lived near the time of the Huguenots, of whom little good was then to be told, has left us the relation of their doings in the churches of Lyons. "Ruffi, one of their principal preachers," says he, "with a two-handled sword, which he wore while preaching, like a painted St. Paul, entered with his satellites into the great church of St. John, where he beat down and demolished a crucifix of great height, which was in the middle of said church, partly of solid silver, and the rest overlaid with the same precious metal. Having thrown it down, Ruffi fell on it with great fury, setting his feet on its head; and seeing some of his soldiers and ministers drawing nearer than he wished, fearing lest they might *secure the silver*, he drew his huge sword, and brandished it five or six times. 'What!' said he, 'am I not to be respected? shall any other have the honor of smiting this great idol before me?' So saying, he struck off the head of said

* *Archives Curieuses de l'Histoire de France.*—Capefigue.—Astolfi.

† *Archives Curieuses, etc.*—Capefigue, *Hist. de la Ref.*

likeness of Jesus crucified, and held it up, saying, 'Behold the head of the idol.' But what was not of solid silver, he left to the others.

"The lesser thieves must needs have their share of the plunder: they scraped the gold or silver images so as to get a mouthful for themselves before they handed them over to the greater thieves. From an angel they took a wing, from a saint an arm, from a virgin the head, etc. They melted down a massive silver crucifix which was in the church of St. Stephen, saying in derision that the poor crucifix had been a long time cold, being naked, but that they would give it such a warming that it should never be cold again. They likewise melted the copes, and other ornaments of the altars, which were of knapped cloth of gold, and could not but make great profit of the same, which were of the value of ten thousand crowns. Truly theirs was a hot and a fiery gospel. . . ."

* *Archives Curieuses.*

† The chapel of Our Lady of Beth-Aram, which had been destroyed by the Huguenots, was rebuilt in 1615, by John de Salette, bishop of Lescar; but the miraculous image is wanting.

The hermitages, whose little round spires invited the belated traveller to turn aside, promising him, in the Virgin's name, a lodging for the night, a frugal meal, and a kindly welcome; these were demolished by the Calvinists, who had the cruelty to shoe, as they did their horses, the pious old men who inhabited those calm retreats.*

The priests fled with the relics, the crucifixes and the statues of Our Lady, as in the time of the Norman invasion; one of them went all the way to Gallicia (where it still remains) to hide the image of Our Lady of Beth-Aram, which shepherds of the olden time had miraculously found in the woods.†

In Paris, under the very eyes of the court which then protected them, they massacred in St. Medard, during the sermon, a crowd of unarmed Catholics. The parishes, frightened by the insolence of these sectaries, who went to their conventicles dagger in hand and harquebuss on shoulder,‡ petitioned to haveartil-

‡ The Calvinists went to meeting armed to the teeth; they were met journeying thus in hostile array, twelve cavaliers, accompanied by twenty footmen.—(*Archives Curieuses.*) These evangelical people, who came forth from their con-

lery placed at the entrance of the churches as a means of defence, and the day was seen when the ceremonies of Catholic worship could no longer be celebrated, in the most Christian kingdom, without the protection of a row of cannon.* "It was then that they commenced in Paris," says M. Capefigue, "a war of popular pamphlets destined to annihilate all the old belief; they posted placards against the Eucharist, and especially against the Mass, even in the palace of the Louvre. The walls of the churches and posts in the squares, displayed every morning that thirst for proselytism which distinguished the Reformers.†

After having gone to the most unheard-of excesses, so as to exasperate the Catholic population to the last degree, the Huguenots published a number of hypocritical apologies, wherein they set themselves forth as martyrs. "Protest-

venticles with fierce looks and threatening gestures, according to the testimony of Erasmus, were always ready to take up arms, and as ready to fight as to dispute.

* *Arch. Cur.*, etc.

† Capefigue.

‡ M. de Chateaubriand, *Ess. sur la Litt. Ang.* t. i.

antism," says M. de Chateaubriand, "cried out against the intolerance of Rome whilst slaughtering Catholics in England and France, throwing to the winds the ashes of the dead, kindling funeral-piles in Geneva, perpetrating all manner of atrocities in Munster (Germany), and dictating the vile penal laws which oppressed the Irish, and do, in great measure, oppress them still, after three centuries of persecution!"‡

Kings were not more quiet than the people, and the throne was no less menaced than the altar. "These people are disturbers of the public peace," said Henry VIII., sending them to the stake with the English Catholics. "I see anarchy through their banner," said Francis I. In fact, Luther established the principle that it is lawful to make war on sovereigns for the propagation of Protestantism;§ and the Calvinist preacher, Des Rosiers, laid down in

§ This was also the opinion of Calvin, who added: "The powers of the earth give in their resignation when they oppose the progress of our doctrine. . . . It is better to spit in their face than obey them." The Huguenots understood their apostles so well, that Catherine de Medici found, in her very chamber, a notice

his pamphlets this maxim, which he subsequently applied to Catherine de Medici: "It is lawful to kill a king or queen who opposes the reformation of the Church."*

This insolence and these subversive theories, duly carried out, drew down on the authors of our civil discord, the heaviest and most severe reprisals; the policy of a prince exasperated to the last degree by an

that she should be stabbed if she did not dismiss all Catholics from about her person.—(Capefigue, *Hist. de la Ref.*)

* *Ibid.*

† It must be acknowledged that if Charles, our king, was cruel to the Huguenots, it was not without just cause. The affair of Meaux, in particular, gave him great offence: the others might all be excused by some covering of religion; but that one might be truly called an attempt on the person of the king, his brother and the queen, whom they would gladly have put to death, if they could. Hence, the king often said that he could never forgive them for that, and well for him, he said, that he made a good show of defence amongst his Swiss, to whom he often said that he would rather die a king than live a captive and a slave. The transactions of Shrove-Tuesday likewise touched him to the heart, and excited him still more against the Huguenots for having corrupted Monsieur his brother, and the King of Navarre, and inducing them to make war on him while he lay dangerously ill. "They might at least," said he, "have waited for my death; this was the worst of all."—(*Vie de Charles IX.*, par Br., p. 16.) It is to be remarked that the author was a cotemporary of Charles IX., that he lived at his court, that he boldly

attempt of the Protestants on his person,† threw the court into an extreme party; it believed, what was really true, that the question was whether the kingdom was *to be or not to be*, and hence it was that a bloody page was added to our history. St. Bartholomew's day saved the house of Valois from the fate of the Stuarts,‡ and Catholicity from imminent danger. Still, it

called the affair of St. Bartholomew a *base slaughter*, and that he nowhere assigned religion as its motive.

‡ Hear how Swift, a great politician and a distinguished member of the English Church, judged the Calvinists in 1732: "The Puritans, who had, almost from the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign, been a perpetual thorn in the Church's side, joining with the Scotch enthusiasts in the time of King Charles I., were the principal cause of the Irish rebellion and massacre, by distressing that prince, and making it impossible for him to send over timely succors. And after that prince had satisfied his parliament in every single point to be complained of, the same sectaries, by poisoning the minds and affections of the people, with the most false and wicked representations of their king, were able, in the compass of a few years, to embroil the three nations in a bloody rebellion, at the expense of many thousand lives; to turn the kingly power into anarchy; to murder their prince in the face of the world; and (in their own style) to destroy the Church, root and branch."—(*Swift's Works, Queries relating to the Sacramental Test.*) At the battle of Philliphaugh, in Scotland, when Leslie, the chief of the Covenanters, defeated the Marquis of Montrose,

was an inhuman step, which the religion of Christ must ever condemn, and the guilt of which she indignantly denies. Catherine and Charles dealt themselves with heresy; they annihilated the conspiring faction. The Catholic bishops protested against that act of intimidation and violence by sheltering the Calvinists in their palaces.* *This is the only fact omitted by these sectaries, who took good care to*

the Presbyterians massacred many of their prisoners in cold blood; others, as Wishart relates, "were cast from a bridge into the Tweed," whilst a Presbyterian minister, who presided at the execution, rubbed his hands and cried: "Bravely done!"—(*Border Minstrelsy*.) Under Cromwell the Church of England was declared *malignant*, and the Puritans, who had so loudly demanded freedom of conscience for themselves, shut up all the Anglican churches when they came into power. It is related by Evelyn that they went on Christmas Day, armed with muskets, into the English cathedrals, and insulted the Anglicans who were preparing to take the Supper. Hence Swift said of them: "There is one small doubt I would be willingly satisfied in before I agree to the repealing of the Test; that is, whether these same Protestants, when they have by their dexterity made themselves the national religion, and disposed of the Church revenues among their pastors or themselves, will be so kind as to allow us dissenters, I do not say a share in employments, but a bare toleration by law? The reason of my doubt is, because I have been so very idle as to read above fifty pamphlets, written by as many Presbyterian divines, loudly disclaiming this idol tolera-

* magnify and exaggerate their losses in every possible way.

Ferdinand the Catholic, unwilling that the pernicious weed of heresy should make its way into the fair land of Spain, or dry up that truly Christian soil, debarred its entrance from the very outset by raising up the Inquisition, which arrested its audacious march at the foot of the Pyrenees.

Italy, then torn asunder by civil

tion: some of them calling it (I know not how properly) a rag of Popery, and all agreeing it was to establish iniquity by law. Now, I would be glad to know when and where their successors have renounced this doctrine, and before what witnesses." Under the first Hanoverian princes, they began once more to cry out against Anglican persecution, and were answered with cutting sarcasm: "If the dissenters will be satisfied with such a toleration by law as has been granted them in England, I believe the majority of both houses will fall readily in with it; further, it will be hard to persuade this House of Commons, and perhaps much harder the next. For, to say the truth, we make a mighty difference here between suffering thistles to grow among us, and wearing them for posies."—(*Ibid.*)

* The bishop of Lizieux, Jean Hennuyer, boldly prevented the execution of the king's order, by opening the doors of his palace to those Calvinists who insulted and outraged the Norman bishops. Several other prelates, and especially those of Bayonne, Valence, Vienne, Oleron, and Uzes, incurred the displeasure of the court by extending their protection to the Calvinists.

wars, was not so fortunate as Spain, and Protestantism there manifested all its horrors in the sack of Rome. The Constable de Bourbon had pointed out to his heretic soldiers the capital of the Christian world as a rich and defenceless prey, which they might plunder almost without a blow. From the spirit which animated the leaders of these disorderly hordes, we may form an idea of that of the soldiers: the Lutheran Colonel Frunsberg, who accompanied the constable to the siege of Rome, had a chain made of solid gold, taken from the churches, "for the express purpose," he said, "of strangling the Pope with his own hand."*

Rome, without a single ally, and attacked unawares, still defended itself bravely, and, at the first assault, the Constable de Bourbon was mortally wounded by an arquebusade. He had scarcely time to order that his body should be covered with a cloak in order to conceal his death from his troops. But the precaution was useless. The ominous news quickly spread; "and the heretic soldiers," says a co-

* temporary historian, who gathered his materials on the very spot—"the heretic soldiers thenceforward fought only in the diabolical spirit of revenge, to the furious cries of "Sangre! sangre! Bourbon! Bourbon!" Nothing could resist these imperial bands, mad with rage and thirsting for blood; the ramparts were scaled; the Romans gave way, and the fatal victory of impiety went on from street to street with so great fury, that it seemed as though *hell were unchained* and fought under the banners of the Prince of Orange, who had the melancholy glory of accomplishing this criminal enterprise. "The arquebusades," says Brantome, in his Life of Constable de Bourbon, "the shouts of the combatants, the cries of the wounded, the clashing of arms, the shrill sound of the trumpets, the incessant roll of the drum urging the soldiers to the fight, kept up such a noise that the very thunder itself could not have been heard." So hotly did the victors pursue the vanquished that the latter had barely time to lower the gates of the castle of San Angelo, the stronghold of modern Rome,

* Brantome, *Capitaines étrangers*, t. ii.

where the pope had hastily taken refuge with some of the cardinals. Even that could not have been done but for the chivalrous devotion of three young Roman nobles, descendants of one of those rare patrician families which authentically date from the time of Augustus. When all Rome lay at the mercy of the ruthless marauders, and the princes of the Church rode for life or death towards the citadel, pursued by the lansquenets, three of the Orsini, Juannino, Antonio, and Valerio, 'brave and valiant lords,' says Brantome, and Jerome Mathei, rallied with "two hundred chosen men" at the head of the Sixtine Bridge, to keep back the Imperials and leave the passage free. The Prince of Orange, at the head of his heretic battalions, set upon them, "and the contest was right valiantly sustained on both sides. But, at length, the prince made such a furious charge that the Romans were forced to abandon the bridge which they had defended so bravely," yet not before they had seen the iron gate of the citadel close behind the illustrious fugitives. "Rome being thus vanquished," pursues the same

historian, "the lansquenets, who were recently imbued with the new religion, began to rob and massacre, not sparing even the sacred relics in the temples, the convents, or the ornaments of the Madonnas; their cruelty extended itself even to marbles and ancient statues. According to the usual practice of the Huguenots of those days, they mingled sacrilegious buffoonery with those scenes of blood and pillage. Robed as cardinals, they made sham processions through the city, reciting the Litany of the Blessed Virgin in derision. After having polluted themselves with crimes shameful either to tell, or to hear, these miscreants," observes Brantome, "went, nearly all to die at the siege of Naples a short time after, having previously lost, in one way or another, the gold sacrilegiously taken from temples and altars; which made the Spaniards say that *el diablo los avia dado, y el diablo los avia llevado*—that is to say, *the devil gave and the devil took*."

In Great Britain, where the veneration of Mary, once so popular, was abolished by Henry VIII. and the fratricide Somerset, the people

long regretted the Mother of Mercy, and often went back to pray, by the glimmering light of the stars, amid the desolate ruins of her plundered shrines. The Welsh peasants—the Armoricans of England—who had embraced Christianity before the invasion of the Saxons, could by no means reconcile themselves to the absence of the saints with whom they had adorned their ancient oaks, their Druid stones* and fountains. Watched and harassed as they were by the last Tudors, and afterwards by Cromwell, they could not profess Catholicity, and gradually returned to a state bordering on paganism. Not many years have passed since the Anglicans talked of going to convert *these gross idolaters* who, for want of sympathy with arid and multi-form Protestantism, had fallen back on the worship of trees and brooks, as practised by the ancient Britons in the time of Cæsar.†

* In Brecknockshire, there is still to be seen a *menhir* of gigantic size which bears the name of *Mayen y Marynnion*, or the Virgin Mary's stone.—(Camden's *Britannia*.)

† Gorlon's *Modern Geography*, p. 217.

‡ The beautiful lake of St. Mary (situated at the rise of the river Yarrow, on the Scottish

The people who dwelt along the Scottish frontier were just as unwilling as the Welsh to embrace the new doctrines. The *border* was, more than any other part of the kingdom, under the immediate protection of Mary, whose name was given to the clearest lake,‡ the most sparkling fountains, and the most picturesque sites. There stood Jedburgh and Melrose, two stately abbeys dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, and raised by the faith that worketh miracles, in a poor country continually torn by foreign and internal warfare. Who, of all the border troopers, had not asked and freely obtained hospitality at Jedburgh, in the Virgin's name? Was there a highland chief who did not doff his blue bonnet with its eagle's feather before the Virgin of Melrose, the most famous and the most frequented of the four great shrines of Scotland? The flags of its vast chapel covered all that the land

border), which is often covered with numerous flocks of wild swans, took its name from a pretty chapel of Our Lady, which was formerly a favorite pilgrimage of the Scottish nobles of the border. The chapel has been destroyed, but the lake has still its sweet name and its snow-white birds.

had ever owned of brave and noble; * heroes whose effigies reposed on their tombs, with their hands devoutly joined as though still invoking Jesus and Mary, two names which Catholics always unite. The Blessed Virgin reigned there over the living and the dead. By day, the place resounded with sacred songs, and by night, when the tempest roared and the flickering light of the moon illumined at intervals the richly-stained glass, set, as it were, in the light stone tracery of the windows, it seemed as though all the petrified wreaths and all the knightly banners which adorned the church quivered in the blast, and that the old Scottish lords, rising armed from their tombs,

* Who knows not Sir Walter Scott's charming description of the ruins of Melrose Abbey—a description marked by the exquisite taste of a painter and the research of an antiquarian:—

If thou would'st view fair Melrose aright,
Go visit it by the pale moonlight;
For the gay beams of lightsome day
Gild but to flout the ruins gray.
When the broken arches are black in night,
And each shafted oriel glimmers white;
When the cold light's uncertain shower
Streams on the ruin'd central tower;
When buttress and buttress, alternately,
Seem framed of ebon and ivory;
When silver edges the imagery,
And the scrolls that teach thee to live and die;
When distant Tweed is heard to rave,
And the owlet to hoot o'er the dead man's grave;
Then go—but go alone the while—

saluted the Blessed Mother of the Redeemer.*

Before the revered altar of Our Lady of Melrose, the English and Scotch, laying aside their hereditary hatred, were nothing more than humble and peaceable pilgrims. Chiefs of *clans* came there to pray for the souls of those who had fallen beneath their dirk or claymore in the course of a mountain-war or foray.† Sinners there bewailed their crimes before the *Comfort of the Afflicted*; and, rising full of confidence in her merciful intercession, went thence to found expiatory monuments whose name perpetuated the memory of their remorse.‡

The Calvinist preachers, enemies of the arts as they were of the

To view St. David's ruin'd pile;
And home returning, soothly swear,
Was never scene so sad and fair!

(*Lay of the Last Minstrel*, Canto II.)

† There is still extant a treaty of peace between two hostile clans, whereby the chiefs of both bind themselves to make the four pilgrimages of Scotland, for the repose of the souls of those who had fallen on either side. These four pilgrimages were Scone, Dundee, Paisley, and Melrose.—(Introduction to *Border Minstrelsy*.)

‡ These monumental penances were frequent along the borders; some of the buildings still remain, for instance, the *Tower of Repentance* in Dumfriesshire, and, according to vulgar tradition, the church of Linton, in Roxburghshire.—

(*Border Minstrelsy*, Introd.)

saints, destroyed Melrose and Jedburgh, with a considerable number of shrines of lesser note. Of all the splendor that once surrounded the Virgin of Melrose, there was left but one shattered fragment of an altar, which was soon overgrown by the rank grass and the wild shrub, springing up amid the ruins. For some time after the destruction of the abbey, a dark shadow might be seen by night gliding beneath the broken arches of the chapel, and a murmur of human voices was heard to mingle with the voice of waters from the neighboring Tweed. It was a monk stealing back to celebrate the divine mysteries for the few who were yet faithful to the old religion. These visits became at length so hazardous that the clergy were forced to give them up; but

* See Dr. Johnson's *Tour in the Hebrides*. The Highlanders of Scotland even now bury their dead in the old Catholic cemeteries. One of the most picturesque islands in Loch Lomond, called *Nun's Island*, is the burial-place of several clans; the tombs of the MacGregor chiefs, and some other noble families, who claimed kindred with the ancient kings of Scotland, are still to be seen around the ruins of the abbey-church, destroyed by the ferocious followers of Calvin and Knox.

† This policy was not only put in practice, but openly avowed by the Anglicans themselves.

* nothing could prevent the people from burying their dead in the lonely cemeteries of the old abbeys, and through a sense of propriety highly honorable to the Scotch, none but women were interred, for a long course of time, within the precincts of those grounds where the virgins of the Lord reposed.*

The first attempt of the Calvinists on the Scottish Highlanders was so discouraging in its result that they resolved on leaving the clans to their fate, hoping that the want of instruction, the privation of the Sacraments, and the total absence of all religious ceremonies, would eventually throw them into the net of Protestantism; which really came to pass in the course of time.†

Even in the reign of James VI.,

Swift recommends it as the best course to pursue, in his celebrated pamphlets on Ireland: "Their lands," he says, "are almost entirely taken from them, and they are rendered incapable of purchasing any more; and for the little that remains, provision is made by the late act against Popery, that it will daily crumble away: to prevent which, some of the most considerable among them are already turned Protestants. Then the Popish priests are all registered, and without permission they can have no successors; so that the Protestant clergy will, perhaps, find it no difficult matter to bring great numbers

the Highlanders were so cool towards the doctrine of Geneva, that it was on their warlike clans the king chiefly relied in his numerous disputes with his democratic Church.* A hundred years after, they still prayed at times near the fountains that gushed out before the ruined chapels of Mary and the Saints, and the water from those springs was carried far and near to restore health to the sick.†

The associations connected with the veneration of Mary still live in the valleys and glens of the Highlands, and are found in the histori-

over to the Church."—(*Swift's Works, Letter concerning the Sacramental Test.*) The Scottish borders were likewise subjected to this negative system, and if the people came not forth victorious like the Irish, they, at least, did not yield without a struggle; and if Protestantism finally prevailed, it was only after having destroyed the churches, and extinguishing, one by one, the lights of the ancient faith.

* "Never," says a Scotch writer, "could the Calvinist clergy forget that they owed their elevation to the fall, or at least to the depression of royalty. In Scotland, the Reformed Church was, for nearly two centuries, either the declared enemy or the ambitious rival of its prince. The disciples of Calvin could hardly divest themselves of a tendency to democracy, and the republican forms of their ecclesiastical administration were often held up as a model for the state to follow. The theocracy, haughtily proclaimed, was rigorously exercised; the offences commit-

* cal ballads sung by the peasantry. At one time it is a knight treacherously slain on some lonely moor, whose wounds are washed at Our Lady's fountain, and his corpse *waked* in Our Lady's chapel; again it is a noble baron who is buried at the foot of St. Mary's Cross, and at whose tomb Christians shall come to pray, *whilst Scotland invokes Our Lady's name*. The bard who thus sang, doubtless meant *forever!* At another time, knights are described as leaving their golden rosaries as a pledge of their faith, etc. In every danger, God and Our Lady

ted in the king's household fell under the insolent jurisdiction of the ministers. The prince was formally reprimanded for having neglected to say grace before or after meals, and for tolerating the amusements of the queen. A solemn malediction was pronounced against man, horse, or lance, that should assist the king in his quarrel with the Earl of Gowrie, a conspirator. The monarch's courtiers, present at the sermon, were compared to Aman, the queen to Herodias, and the prince himself to Achab, Herod, and Jeroboam. This excessive zeal was far from being agreeable to James VI.—(Sir W. Scott, *Hist. of Scot., and Border Minstrelsy.*) Charles II. often said to his courtiers in confidence that Calvinism was not the religion of a gentleman.

† A Calvinist physician of the seventeenth century bitterly censured the people along the borders for having recourse, even in his time, to several consecrated fountains, to procure water for the sick.—(*Account of the Presbytery of Pentfent.*)

are invoked : never one without the other.*

The scattered remains of Catholicity took refuge in the north of Scotland, and there, protected by interminable heaths and ramparts of wild barren mountains, they maintained themselves in some solitary castles along the shores of the North Sea. There they prayed for many a long year for the restoration of the Stuarts, invoking that Virgin whom the Stuarts honored. Cardinal York, the last branch of that unfortunate family, had followed his brother to the tomb, and yet they prayed on, nay, there is little doubt but some of the simple mountaineers are praying still, unable to believe in the total extinction of that ancient race.*

Ireland, thoroughly Catholic, remained faithful in its devotion to the Blessed Virgin amid persecution the longest and most oppressive that the world ever saw. Under pain of losing house and home and the means of subsistence, the

poor Irish were forced to pay the ministers of a religion which they did not profess, while every means were tried to induce or compel them to embrace its doctrines. Yet still they remained heart and soul attached to the faith of their fathers. Disinherited of their churches, they went stealthily to assist at the divine office in the secret vaults of their old castles, amongst the ruins of the monasteries, or in the gloomy caverns where the Druids had, of old, celebrated their bloody rites. They planted sentinels on the heights to protect the proscribed prayers and the priced head of the priest ; for Protestant bloodhounds, who were known by the name of *priest-hunters*, attracted by the bait of the twenty pounds sterling given for the head of any ecclesiastic belonging to the communion of the Church of Rome, tracked the *papists* through the woods and mountains as though they had been wild beasts. Happily those fearful times are past, and the faithful Irish peo-

* It is related by a famous Scotch writer, that, long after the death of Cardinal York, the restoration of the Stuarts was prayed for in the Catholic castles of Scotland. Many of the Scottish Highlanders cannot yet persuade them-

selves that the race of their ancient kings is extinct. "It is not that the Stuarts are dead," said one of them to a French traveller, "but that loyalty is dead."

ple now freely invoke Our Blessed Lady in that Green Isle of the ocean, so well deserving of its glorious title: *The Island of Saints*.

It was not in Britain alone that the devotion to Mary, swept away by the tempest of Protestantism, left numerous traces of its existence. The mournful and picturesque ruins of monasteries dedicated to Mary still occupy the fairest sites of Germany; many cities of the North still bear her name; so too with some of the gulfs of Denmark; and Styria, Austria, Illyria, Switzerland, the Tyrol and the Grand Duchy of Baden still possess shrines whither the Catholic people from beyond the Rhine come to invoke Our Lady. By these ruins—still so majestic—of a devotion once so general, we may judge the extent of its former influence, even as we estimate the greatness of the shipwreck by the number of broken masts and tattered sails that float on the water.

The devotion to Mary regained in the New World what it had lost in the Old. Spanish and French missionaries, embarking with an image of Our Lady, whom they invoked

* during their perilous voyage, undertook, with the assistance of Mary—who rendered them strong, they said, *as an army in battle array*—to civilize and convert the two Americas. Landing on the unexplored coasts of the Western continent, they placed their *Madonna* beneath some arching canopy of palm-branches.

Warriors, when undertaking the conquest of foreign countries, take with them all that is necessary for the work of blood and destruction: arms, soldiers, parks of artillery; devastation precedes, and mourning follows them on their way. The Catholic missionaries marched to the conquest of the New World with an image of Mary, a rosary, and a cross. Thanks to their almost superhuman labors, whole tribes came forth from the caves of the mountains and the shade of the great woods, and formed little colonies wherein Christianity was once more seen to flourish pure and fresh as in the first ages of the Church.

These religious, who enriched botany, history and geography with numberless valuable discoveries, became artists, and even mechan-

ics, in order to instruct their neophytes, and led them on in the way of art and science as well as in that of salvation. Savages, who but a short time before feasted on human flesh, might then be seen taking hold of the architect's compass, the sculptor's chisel, the painter's pallet, and raising with their own hands temples to God and chapels to Mary. The saying of the rosary was the most suitable practice of piety for a hunting people; thus, at evening, when the shade of the tulip-tree and the magnolia lengthened over the glade or along the savannah, you heard the Angelical Salutation, repeated in every savage tongue, throughout the American wilds. Mary was the mother of the Indian as well as of the European, and she was not more piously invoked in the temples, glittering with gold which the first Spanish conquerors built in her honor in Mexico and Peru, than in the rustic chapels, dedicated to her by the pious missionaries under the title of Our Lady of Loretto and Our Lady of Sorrows, on the banks of the great Amazon river and the river of the Hurons.

* But the conquests of these faithful servants of God and of Mary did not end here: they explored the burning regions of Africa and converted the black princes of Guinea and Monomotapa. At the same time they penetrated to Ceylon, the Indian peninsula, Japan, and China; and wherever they went, Our Lady's image was treated with respect and veneration. The Mongolese ladies, bowing down before the Mother of Jesus, called her the holy, the glorious Mary; the Prince of Cashmere sent her tapers and other gifts, and the Grand Lama had a temple raised to her under the title of the Annunciation. The ladies of China offered her flowers and perfumes, and the Japanese, who, alas! paid dearly for their energetic devotion to the true faith, said the rosary on their long crystal beads, while walking through the streets of the idolatrous cities full of bonzes and pagans.*

These triumphs gained in far-off lands were not, however, the only consolations of Mary's faithful servants for the outrages of Protestant-

* *Lettres Edifiantes.—Annales de la Propagation de la Foi.*

ism. Scarcely had Calvin gone down to the grave when the naval battle of Lepanto was gained by the Spaniards, under the banner of the Blessed Virgin.* John Sobieski likewise did homage to the Mother of God for his famous victory over the Turks at the siege of Vienna, and his first care, on entering the delivered city, was to throw himself, "prostrate on the ground," before the altar of Our Lady, where he chanted aloud a *Te Deum* of thanksgiving. The magnificent standard of the Mahometans was sent to Our Lady of Loretto,† and the Polish hero reserved to himself a trophy which he said touched him more than all the others: it was an old picture — apparently very old — which had been found in the ruins of the village of Wishau. It represented Our Lady with two angels supporting her crown, and in their hands were scrolls bearing the Latin inscriptions: "*In hoc imagine*

Marice, vinces, Johannes.—*In hoc imagine Marice, victor ero, Johannes.* By this image of Mary, thou, John, shalt conquer.—By this image of Mary, I, John, shall be the victor."

This image was regarded as miraculous; John Sobieski intended it for his royal chapel at Zolkiew, and in the mean time it followed him through all his campaigns.

In the year 1647, the Emperor Ferdinand III. solemnly consecrated himself, his family, and his empire, to the Queen of Heaven. A lofty column was erected in the grand square of Vienna in honor of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and her statue was placed on the top, with the moon under her feet, and her heel on the serpent's head.

Calvinism still agitated France, and its freezing influence, penetrating the masses, slowly but fatally cooled the religious sentiment; profane speech and impious scoffing

* The pope sent this blessed banner to Don Juan, who had it hoisted on his own ship.

† The length of this banner was twelve feet by eight in width. The border was green and the centre red. It was of cloth, the ornaments being embroidered in silver, and the Arabic inscription in letters of gold. In the middle of this Mussul-

man flag, laid by the Polish hero at the Virgin's feet, was seen these words, strikingly contradicted by the Christian banners whereon the Crescent fell before the Cross: "There is no God but one, and Mahomet is his prophet." —(See *History of Poland*, by Leonard Chadzko.)

have at all times a bad effect on the people, who cannot reason on their faith, and therefore lose or recover it according to the arguments which captivate their attention. The bare altars and devastated churches had no longer that holy prestige imparted by splendor and long traditions of homage. The Madonnas, stript and cast down from their pedestals, arose so poor and naked, that the heart and the feet turned away from their shrine. The clergy, calumniated, ruined, diparaged, had fallen into disrepute amongst the people, who, at heart impressed with a reverence for high birth, never respect their own equals. Finally, the abbeys having passed into the hands of military owners, they took care to give them superiors who would merely act in the capacity of stewards over a community whose savings were no longer applied to the use of the poor, but to that of the officer or courtier who was the legal proprietor. This vile system, which would, of itself, have been sufficient, without the aid of revolutions, to ruin all the monasteries of France, continued even through the reign of Henri IV.,* notwithstanding the just

* complaints of the clergy, and was only abolished under Louis XIII. From the reign of Louis XI. to that time, the historian must glean one by one the facts which attest the devotion of the kings towards the Blessed Virgin. Louis XII., nevertheless, made a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Loretto, and Henri III sent the Duke de Joyeuse there in 1585, with a magnificent equipage, to offer gifts and pay homage to the holy Madonna. The same prince, having founded the order of the Holy Ghost, made it one of the statutes that *every knight should recite daily a decade of the beads.*

The beads were then the distinctive mark of Catholics. One of the conditions imposed by the Holy See on Henri IV., after his abjuration, was to say the rosary every Saturday, and the beads every Sunday.

Even in the end of the sixteenth century, people fasted, all over Catholic Europe, on the eve of the feasts of the Blessed Virgin, and no one failed to observe that pious practice. The profligate generals of Charles IX. and Henri III. took great pains to excuse themselves

* See the *Memoirs of James Sobieski.*

for having broken the abstinence * on the vigil of the Assumption; some having done it, by mistake, going through Italy. One of the boldest and least scrupulous historians of the time deems it necessary to suppress their names, *in order to save their credit*, and protests that those gentlemen were wholly *forgetful* of the feast of the morrow.

The devotion to Mary—for some time on the decline—revived in all its splendor under Louis XIII. That prince, in order to thank the Blessed Virgin for the advantages he had gained over the Protestants, and hoping to obtain, through her intercession, an honorable peace with the European powers who then made war upon him, declares, in an edict dated from St. Germain-en-Laye (February 10th, 1633), that “taking the most holy and glorious Virgin for the special protectress of his kingdom, he consecrates to her his person, his States, his crown, and his subjects, beseeching her to defend France against the power of her enemies, whether in war or peace.” And, as a memento of this consecration, Louis promised to have the high altar of the cathedral

of Paris reconstructed, and to place thereon an image of the Virgin, holding in her arms *her precious Son taken down from the Cross*, having himself represented kneeling at the feet of the Mother and Son, offering to them his crown and sceptre.

He also decreed, that every year, on the day of the Assumption, there should be a commemoration of his edict, at high mass, in all the churches of France; and, after vespers, a solemn procession, in which the magistrates and other functionaries of the different cities were to join.

Louis XIV. inherited his father's devotion to the Blessed Virgin. It was he who engaged Custou in 1723 to execute the group known as *the Vow of Louis XIII.*, together with the two figures in marble placed on either side, representing Louis XIII. and Louis XIV. offering their crown to the Virgin. That prince presented to the Church of Boulogne a sum of 12,000 livres, in place of the *ex voto* of gold which the kings of France, from Louis XI., offered as a tribute to the Blessed Virgin. He did his utmost to propagate the doctrine of the Immac-

ulate Conception, and obtained, in 1657, from Pope Alexander VII., a bull, which was confirmed by Clement XI., in 1668, ordaining the celebration of that festival throughout the realm of France. It was also at his solicitation that, in 1670, the Pope granted indulgences for the recital of the *Angelus*.

It was his wish to receive confirmation on the feast of the Immaculate Conception. This fact is attested by that inscription in the chapel of the Louvre:—

HAC SACRA DIE IMMACULATÆ CON-
CEPTIONIS, LUDOVICUS XIV., REX,
SUSCEPIT HIC SANCTISS.
CONFIRMATIONIS SACRAMENTUM.

Beneath is the following:—

IMMACULATA DOMINA, SALVUM FAC
REGEM.

Louis XIV. inherited from his mother, Anne of Austria, a great veneration for Our Lady of Liesse; he went there in 1652 and 1673, and twice with the queen in 1680. The pious Spanish princess, Maria Theresa, who never gave her royal husband *other grief than that of her death*, went thither also in 1677 and 1678. After the death of Anne of

Austria, her son vowed fifty thousand masses for the repose of her soul in the principal places of devotion specially dedicated to the Blessed Virgin.

After the treaty of the Pyrenees, he sent his thanksgivings, together with rich gifts, to Our Lady of Chartres, Our Lady of Loretto, and Our Lady of Grace.

Louis the Great belonged, like his father, Louis XIII., to the confraternity of the Scapular, and habitually said his beads. Father de la Rue being one day admitted to a private audience, found the king piously engaged saying his rosary on large beads. The good father was surprised, and could not help expressing his admiration: "Be not surprised, father," said the monarch, "I glory in telling my beads; I inherit the practice from the queen, my mother, and sorry would I be to let one day pass without fulfilling that duty."

The Spanish ambassador presented himself at the brilliant court of the great monarch, his beads in his hand, and no one found fault with him for so doing.

It was then, too, and had long

been, customary to put beads and a superb copy of the Offices of the Virgin in the marriage-casket. This custom was continued till the time of Louis XV.

Louis XIII. had taken Rochelle, the last bulwark of Calvinism in France; Louis XIV., annihilated that turbulent heresy by his revocation of the Edict of Nantes. That measure, which secured the tranquillity of the kingdom. has been

most severely censured, but those who do so must lose sight of the fact, that the Calvinists were then incorrigible insurgents, who were not ashamed to call in the English.

Louis XIV., the greatest monarch of his age, expired murmuring with his dying lips, the *Hail Mary*, which he had repeated several times, in a firm voice, whilst the prayers for the dying were said near him.

CHAPTER XIII.

MODERN TIMES.



FROM the bosom of the Mediterranean, whose blue waters are perfumed ten leagues from land with the sweet odor of the orange-tree, there rises a rocky island, whose snow-crowned mountains, woods of pine, and groves of enormous chestnut-trees, would remind us of Switzerland, were it not

that clumps of myrtle, of orange, and of citron-trees, forests of gigantic olives, pomegranate-trees, with their pretty red blossoms, and the ruins of Roman towers, all proclaim an Italian land. This island is the birth-place of the great patriot, Paoli, and of Napoleon, the great emperor: it is Corsica, an Italian isle, which now forms one of the departments of France.

This island, at once fertile and

uncultivated, is inhabited by a primitive race, poor, warlike, and hospitable, like the Highlanders of Scotland, and the mountaineers of Caucasus. Attached to Catholicity, and at all times free from heresy, they are yet extremely jealous in regard to honor; and, forgetting the divine precept which prescribes the forgiveness of injuries, they take justice into their own hands, and keep up for ages the memory of an offence till it is fully and fearfully revenged.

Civilized though the country be, it yet retains a certain air of wildness, and one sees at a glance that its people are essentially devout towards the Blessed Virgin. Her image stands at the entrance of every village, in the squares and public places, on the margin of fountains, on the highest point of the promontories, and amid the orange-woods that clothe the hillsides. The environs of Bastia are covered with charming little Italian chapels, dedicated to the Annunciation, or Our Lady of Good Counsel. On the day of these festivals, which happens in spring or summer, people desert the city to go visit these

Madonnas, which are reached by flowery and odorous pathways. After saying their prayers to the Virgin, each family sits down to a rural collation in the cool shade of the trees, and give themselves up for a time to innocent amusement and social enjoyment.

In former times, Corsica had several cathedrals; most of them were built under the title of the Assumption; now, the most solemn feast of Mary is that of the Immaculate Conception. It is preceded by a novena, and is ushered in by the ringing of bells; the vessels hoist their flags, and the streets are strewn with myrtle. A solemn procession is formed, wherein the Brothers of the Conception, in penitential garments, and with lighted torches in their hands, precede the statue of the Virgin, adorned with a crown of silver, necklaces, and bracelets of jewels. The procession makes the circuit of the city to the sound of martial music, while Mary's altars, profusely adorned with flowers, illumine the holy place with the light of their thousand tapers. It is a true Italian festival, radiant with light and joy, and full of religious enthusiasm.

In the country, the priest, or, perhaps, some venerable old man, recites the rosary every evening, just as the village bell "tolls the knell of parting day." * Sometimes there is seen in the haze of distance, on the point of a steep rock, a dark figure, leaning on his carabine; it is an outlaw, who risks his life to join in the common prayer: for the Madonna is the last hope of these fierce yet believing men, who wear her image round their necks, and ask the shepherds in her name for a little milk and some black bread to sustain their miserable existence. Very recently, a young Corsican, a companion of the famous brigand, Santa Lucia, defending himself, though wounded and alone, against a whole regiment of the line and a posse of police, invoked the Virgin during that desperate struggle, whilst his friends, kneeling at the foot of the rock which was his last refuge, recited for him the prayers for the dying. "There is every reason to believe," says the record of this af-

* fecting scene, "that the last thoughts of this unhappy young man were raised to God, for there was found on his body a small medal of the Blessed Virgin, which he held in his hands while his parents and friends prayed for him."

On the 30th of January, 1735, the nation assembled in general council at Corte to form a national government, after having thrown off the yoke of the republic of Genoa, elected the Blessed Virgin as queen of Corsica, and bore her banner during the last struggles of their expiring liberty. The two Paoli, Pascal and Clement, made this banner respected, being both devoted servants of Mary.† Clement, of whose history little is said, except by local tradition, made his soldiers recite the rosary *on their knees* before every engagement. Some Englishmen, amazed at this custom, reminded him on several occasions, that the enemy was before them, and that his kneeling soldiers could not defend themselves. "Let them

* Squilla di Contano

Che paila 'l giorno pianger, che si muore.

(Dante, *Purgat.*, l. viii.)

Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard."

† Pascal Paoli heard mass every day when in Corsica, and subsequently in England, in a chapel built by him in honor of the Holy Virgin.

pray, gentlemen," responded Paoli in his deep, martial voice. The prayer being ended, the Corsicans rose like lions, and not one moved an inch from his post, for soldiers who pray know not how to fly. The Vendéans taught the French republic that lesson.

Pascal Paoli had two chapels built in honor of the Blessed Virgin: one at Pastoreccia, near Ponte-Nuovo, the theatre of that bloody battle which destroyed the nationality of Corsica, and where many of his friends lost their lives; the other at Morosaglia, near his own family mansion. During his exile, he built a third in England.

In the time of King Theodore, the national council had the words *Monstra te esse Matrem* stamped on their issue of gold and copper coins.

Napoleon took pleasure in saying that the Holy Virgin was queen of his native country. Whilst he was yet but a simple officer, he testified much devotion for a French Madonna in the chapel of the Ursuline Convent at Auxonne, and went often to pray before it. This statue was since removed to the parish church, where it is still seen.

The saturnalia of the Regency, and the corrupt reign of Louis XV. bring us to the last years of the eighteenth century, when religion was blighted by the pestiferous breath of false philosophy. The revolution of 1793 drove the Virgin from her altars and God from his temples. The order was given to close the churches and demolish every thing that resembled a Christian shrine. Alas! it was mournful to see the Calvaries thrown down, and the poor little Madonnas shattered to pieces where they modestly took shelter beneath the green foliage of the woods. It was especially in Lower Brittany that devastation reached its height. "We may say, without exaggeration," says M. Emile Souvestre in his interesting work on the Bretons, "that, in certain places, our highways are paved with saints—regularly *macadamized* with heads, bodies, and limbs of Christian statues." Those unhappy days saw grievous profanations, but they likewise witnessed instances of self-devotion that would have done honor to ancient times. Bretagne, in particular, offered a resistance, passive indeed, yet firm and perse-

vering, so as to tire out persecution itself. It gave way neither to fear nor anger. The Breton peasant, as he passed the empty niches where the Madonnas were wont to stand, took off his broad felt hat piously and reverently, and went his way sadly, murmuring a *Hail Mary*. On Sunday, he sat down with his family at the door of their dwelling, and remained in profound silence, with his eyes fixed on the village church* where he had so often invoked Jesus and Mary. "I will pull down your steeples," said Jean-Bon St. André to the mayor of a village, "so that you may have nothing to remind you of your former superstitions." "You must leave us the stars, though," rejoined the peasant, "and they are seen farther off than our steeple." Their devotion, surviving their altars, acquired something lofty and melancholy, connected by sympathy with the religious ruins which covered the land. The Virgin, who had disappeared from their country churches, took refuge under their cottage roofs; and be-

* neath the little earthenware statues, an hundred times more respected than the *lares* of the ancients, was seen the inscription—"Holy Mother of God, vouchsafe to protect this dwelling." And I know not whether a *blue* would have dared to break that image thus sheltered in the household sanctuary; for there was often an old carabine under the green serge curtains of the Breton farmer; and if Bretagne is the land of religious sentiments, it is also that of strong and lasting hatred. The sterling virtues of these people are still somewhat tarnished by the Celtic rust: for instance, the Bretons are the only people in Christendom who have conceived the idea of associating the name of the merciful Virgin with the thought of vengeance, and of raising chapels to her under the strange and rather Druidical title of *Our Lady of Hatred*.†

The pilgrimages to the Blessed Virgin were not discontinued in Bretagne during the reign of terror—they merely assumed old Gaulic

* *Voyage dans le Finistère.*

† "A chapel, dedicated to Our Lady of Hatred, still exists near Tréguier, and the people

still continue to believe in the efficacy of the prayers there offered up." (*Les Derniers Bretons*, by M. Souvestre, t. ii.)

forms. They took place by night, through dreary wastes, where the menhirs and dolmens of the *nameless* God rose gray and mossy and spectral-looking. Every pilgrim held in the right hand a rosary—in the left, a torch; and all these pale figures, half seen through their long hair, or the hanging lappets of their white caps, passed slowly along through the mists of night, singing a hymn to the Virgin. Sometimes it happened that a party of republicans, concealed in the skirt of a wood, or behind a hedge, would fire upon the little rustic procession. Yet this did not deter the Breton peasant from renewing his perilous devotions some days after. In a neighboring province, the villagers who went by night to pray to God and Our Lady in the depth of some lonely ravine, passed through the hamlets occupied by the revolutionary soldiers singing hymns to the Virgin set to republican airs.

During all this time, the churches in the cities were everywhere pillaged. Gold, silver, iron, marble, gratings, and wood-work, were all carried off. The works of art were torn from the walls, the pictures

destroyed, and workmen were paid high wages to deface the sculptures from the walls and arches. Even the clocks were pulled down and converted into coin, and this *patriotic* work cost the State (by its own admission) full twenty millions.*

"Fools!" said La Harpe, addressing the perpetrators of these sacrilegious crimes; "Fools! is faith engraved on walls? is religion painted on canvas? No, it is in the heart, which you cannot reach; in the conscience, which condemns you; in the sight of the whole world, speaking to all men; in heaven, where it shall be your judge. Poor imbecile destroyers, you have cried 'victory!'—where is now your victory? Day by day you are convulsed with rage, seeing the multitudes who throng our temples: they are no longer rich, but they are still sacred; they are bare and naked, but they are full. Pomp has disappeared, but worship remains; men tread there no longer on marble, and costly carpets, but they kneel on the cold pavement and weep over the ruins."†

* La Harpe, *du Fanaticisme dans la langue révolutionn.*, p. 49.

† *Ibid.*, p. 41.

That beautiful hymn to Mary, beginning with

"Je mets ma confiance, Vierge, en votre secours," *

was the lay of the scaffold. In 1793, two carts full of poor Royalist women, for whom the guillotine was preparing, passed through a civic banquet served up in the street by the elect of the Revolution. Madame de Montmorency-Laval, venerable from her virtue, and respectable because of her illustrious name, was in one of these carts, her hands tied behind her back, and with her sixteen of her nuns—for she was abbess of the Carmelites of Montmartre, a religious order founded in the East under the patronage of Mary, as we have elsewhere mentioned. These holy daughters of the Virgin, whom the revolutionary tempest had cast on the stormy sea of the world, to perish there, were singing the prayer of the Vendéans, the hymn of their patroness, as calmly as though they were still hidden beneath their snowy veils in the choir of their beautiful church. Could they not be permitted to sing it in peace—and they about to die? The hide-

ous fury of the wretches who disgraced the republic is aroused by the hearing of that pious chant; an hundred ruffians in red caps rush towards the carts, brandishing their sticks, and crying, "Silence the nuns! Let them sing the *Marseillaise*! Let them obey the people! Come! the *Marseillaise*, instantly!" The daughters of Mary continued their sweet canticle as though they heard not these fierce vociferations. Exasperated by this passive resistance, which they did not at all expect, these ferocious bandits stopped the horses, with the most fearful oaths and imprecations, and would have struck down these poor defenceless females who were so soon to die; but there is still so much honor and chivalry in the French people, even when going astray, that others of the republicans pressed forward, crying, "No murder! Would you kill women?" Then a terrible struggle took place around the carts. A young patriot in a Phrygian bonnet snatched a sabre from one of the archers, and planting himself close to the cart wherein the terrified

* "Virgin! in thee I place my trust!"

Carmelites pressed around their venerable abbess, he succeeded in parrying the blows destined for them, defending himself and them with as much courage as coolness. Yet, notwithstanding all his efforts, one of the nuns received a sabre-wound in the breast. Her life was ebbing fast away, the blood flowed profusely over her black robe, and the paleness of death soon overspread her mild, sweet features. "Bless me, oh holy saint, who will soon be in heaven!" cried a woman from the crowd, throwing herself on her knees before the expiring nun. "May you be blessed!" replied the daughter of Carmel in a failing voice. "And you, who have defended us on our way to death," she continued, presenting her valuable rosary to the softened republican, "accept this token of gratitude."

The carts moved forward once more, and the pious chant was resumed; when it ceased, the hearts of the martyrs had ceased to beat, and Mary had taken her faithful servants to her bosom.

The revolutionary vortex swallowed up the religious orders conse-

crated to Mary, as the stormy wind sweeps away many useful plants. But that of the Carmelites left behind something like the perfume of the withered rose, a fragrant and balsamic water which bears its name.

Of seventeen hundred thousand sacred buildings which covered the soil of France, each of which had an altar to the Blessed Virgin, there remained barely two thousand churches worthy the attention of the artist or the antiquary; the others—sold, bought, pillaged, destroyed, cast into the oven to make quick-lime—left only some mournful ruins, sad subjects for contemplation! "Behold, then," exclaims M. Jules Janin, with generous indignation, "behold, then, the result of so much money, so much patience, so much genius, heaps of mouldering ruins! They have disgraced the cities. Deprived of these master-pieces of art, what does a community of men resemble? it is no longer a city—it is an ant-hill. They have disfigured the landscape which was so adorned by those turrets, and spires, and lofty walls. What they could not de-

stroy, they have marred and defaced. * Of the noblest Gothic towers they have made shops, and stables of the purest ogival churches. That fabulous period was so perverse, and so infinite in its genius of universal destruction, that one can hardly realize it."*

The devotion to Mary, which had slumbered for a while in France, soon began to awake, and insensibly resumed its soothing influence on the souls of men. Napoleon, faithful to his early impressions, chose the day of the Assumption for his own patronal feast, and made it the greatest festival of the empire. The processions, the crosses, the white banners, and the sacred songs, soon reappeared in those fair Gothic churches whose bare walls and poor altars recalled the days of the primitive Church; whilst their dazzling lights and slender pillars and cloud-piercing spires spoke of the chivalrous period of the ages of faith. All who had suffered, all who had groaned or trembled, under the fearful Reign of Terror, came to kneel at Mary's feet: the religious reaction was en-

ergetic, immense, and was felt alike in the city and the hamlet. The Virgin had again her rustic altars in the depth of the woods. Her shrines, where for long years nought had been heard save the singing of birds or the humming of bees, again resounded with the pilgrim's hymn. The Restoration, by reëstablishing the processions of the Vow of Louis XIII., placed France once more under the dominion of Mary. A gigantic stride was made in the devotion to the Immaculate Conception, and all France consecrated to the Virgin the month of flowers, now piously and poetically named the Month of Mary. The higher classes gave the example of devotion to the Virgin; the descendants of the valorous knights and stately nobles, who of old built so many chapels and monasteries for her, delight to honor her now as she was honored in the good old times. First in this pious work is the virtuous queen, Marie-Amelie.

In France, the devotion to Mary is tender but respectful; the French always behold the Virgin as she is in heaven, and honor her accordingly. In Italy, the devotion to the

* M. Jules Janin, *la Normandie*.

Madonna has something more ardent, and at the same time more familiar. From his cradle, the Italian has before his eyes those graceful images which remind him only of Mary's goodness and mercy; she is the protectress of childhood, the dream of youth, the last refuge of the sinner; the thought of her is uppermost in all the religious festivals, like aquatic flowers over the deep waters; the ardent Italian sees her everywhere, blesses her for every good, and when his prayer is not granted, far from blaming Mary, he says, striking his breast, "It is my fault! The Madonna will not hear me because I am so great a sinner!" What admirable faith is that! what truly Christian faith! for in such a case the heathens would drag their gods through the mire.

The devotion to the Virgin is still as fervent in modern Italy as when it brought forth the *Duomo* of Pisa, that beautiful cathedral of Mary, the bronze gates of which, executed on the design of John of Bologna, represent the principal scenes of the life of Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin; Our Lady of Flowers the

sumptuous metropolitan church of Florence, resembling a mountain of marble of various colors, cut in the form of a Latin cross; and many other master-pieces of Christian art—a period the most illustrious in Italian history!

Landing at Genoa, so justly called the Superb, "seeming," says Madame de Staël, "as though it were built for a congress of kings," the first thing that strikes the eye is the devotion of the Genoese to the Holy Virgin. At every angle of those "streets of palaces," filled with men in their picturesque costume, and women in long white veils, there stands a graceful Madonna painted or sculptured, protecting all the neighborhood. All day it is perfumed with the sweet scent of myrtle or jessamine; in the evening it is illumined by a lamp, and numerous groups kneel before it reciting the Litany. It is still as in the days when Andrea Doria said his *Office* on board his galleys, and on the gates of the stately city may still be read, *Città di Maria*. There are even now no less than fifty chapels in Genoa consecrated to the Blessed Virgin.

Venice, the now crownless queen of the Adriatic, never sent a bark out to sea without decorating it with the sacred image of Mary. During the cholera she took refuge in the merciful bosom of Our Lady of Safety, whom she invokes, in great calamities, even in preference to her patron St. Mark, and offered to her, on that occasion, a superb silver lamp weighing one hundred and sixteen pounds, richly chased and ornamented. The beautiful church of Mary, where this offering was hung up, owes its origin to a favor of a similar kind. It was erected in 1531, on the site of a house wherein the plague had first broken out, the city being then delivered from that terrible scourge by the all-powerful intercession of Mary. In the centre of the cupola was the noble inscription—noble in its simplicity: *Unde origo, inde salus.*

The Tuscans have a most tender veneration for the Madonna. On the roads and bridges, in the streets and in the houses, her sweet image is everywhere found smiling on the passer-by as he bows his head before her, and seeming to participate

in every joyful domestic event. The *contadini* around the charming city of Florence come down from the woody heights which surround it in a semi-circle, on every feast of the Virgin, leading a mule elegantly harnessed, and carrying a basket full of the finest grapes, some small sheaves of wheat, and some branches of the orange-tree and pomegranate laden with fruit or flowers. Dressed in their holiday garb, they traverse the city in procession, and come to deposit their fruits and flowers at the foot of the Virgin's altar.

When the Grand Duke of Tuscany, a model sovereign, returned to his states, on the fall of Napoleon, his first care was to repair to the church *Santa Maria della Nunziata*, where numbers of people go every day to visit an image of the Virgin, said to have been finished by an angel. In gratitude for his unhopèd-for restoration, the excellent prince suspended a lamp of the rarest workmanship in Mary's chapel.

Rome is no less devout to the Madonna than Florence. Pass when you will through the city, you will find groups of Romans kneeling

before the Madonna, praying with a fervor and an earnestness truly remarkable. In the streets, in the squares, and in the houses, her image is seen with a lamp of the purest oil burning before it; the poor, as well as the rich, go to this expense, and would deprive themselves of bread to provide the oil. It is both edifying and picturesque to see a street in Rome lit up by thousands of luminous points like the *lucioli* of Italy, and resounding with the simple music of the Calabrian or Abruzzian *pifferari*. These mountain-minstrels attract a great concourse of the faithful around the Madonnas at all times, but especially in Advent; for it seems as though they wished to introduce, by their pastoral strains, the feast of the shepherds, the holy night of Christmas.

It is especially on the day of the Assumption that the ardent devotion of the Romans for Mary is manifested. On that day all the churches are deserted for that of St. Mary Major, the royal church, with walls of Parian marble. The villa of the noble is abandoned, with its healthful air and refreshing

shades; *l'aria cattiva* prevails in Rome, and with it fever; but what of that? They would go even though the plague were there. Is not the Madonna more powerful to save than either fever or plague is to destroy? What pious confidence, and how truly wonderful is such faith in these days of ours! The Roman people are assembled *en masse* on the streets and squares around the superb church, which is adorned with all possible splendor for this festival. The men are clothed in their picturesque costume of blue velvet; the women are bedecked with their coral necklaces, and their jet black hair is fastened up with a gold or silver pin under a graceful white drapery. Every one carries a large bunch of the most beautiful flowers as an offering to the Madonna. That immense crowd of believers kneels in the hot dust, parched by the fervid sun of Italy, or stand in the shade of the adjacent houses. The Italians, naturally noisy, and given to gesticulation, forget on those occasions their wonted habits: one thought engrosses their mind, and that is prayer; and how well they

do understand prayer! They pray with look, gesture, heart, and do indeed pour out their soul at Mary's feet.

When the Pope has finished the holy sacrifice, and solemnly blessed the kneeling multitude, the immense doors of the church are thrown open to admit the crowd, who fill it with sweet music and fragrant flowers. When evening comes, the whole city is illuminated, and all Rome prays in the street. All the people crowd, without distinction, without privilege, with a fraternity worthy of the golden age, around their own Madonna—the Madonna of the district. For this purpose, the prince leaves his marble palace, the artisan his workshop, and the maiden her father's roof, all to join in prayer with touching fervor. The women say the rosary, the men chant the litany; sometimes one of those fine Italian voices, of heavenly sweetness, sings a hymn to Mary, and all are silent to hear; but that silence is itself a mental prayer to the Virgin.

"I shall remember all my life," says a modern traveller, "the beautiful festival of the Nativity of the

* Virgin, and the evening of the 8th of September on the Place de Navona, where from ten to twenty thousand persons were congregated. The image of the Madonna, splendidly illuminated, presided over the popular festivities, as was manifest from the decency, the reserve, and the half-seriousness everywhere seen; the dwelling of a numerous family, submissive all to the paternal control, can alone give the idea of such serenity amid the excitement of public rejoicing; this was apparent even at the moment when the crowd dispersed after the fire-works. I thought it afforded a fair proof of the wisdom and mildness of the pontifical government."

In Naples, the devotion to the Virgin blooms ever with the freshness and the beauty of a full-blown lily. The feasts of the Madonna are popular festivals, full of joyful enthusiasm; her churches, of which there are no less than fourteen in the city of Naples alone, unite within themselves all that is grandest and most luxurious in painting, sculpture, and architecture; the chapels of Mary, all rich and beautiful, are adorned with lapis-lazuli,

topazes, jasper, and other precious stones. In the church of *Santa Maria Nuova*, the miraculous image of the *Madonna delle Grazie* is placed under a canopy of silver all covered with jewels. On Mount Pausilippo the church of *Santa Maria Fortunata* replaces an ancient temple of Fortune, where the heathens were wont to hang their offerings. Mount Rulignano is crowned by one of the most beautiful of Mary's churches. Five of the suburbs of Naples bear the name of the Blessed Virgin. To her the Neapolitans have also consecrated Vesuvius, whose base resembles the gardens of Armida, and its summit one of hell's gates, opening on a dreary chaos. When the crater vomits forth its torrents of burning lava, and the whole bay is illuminated in the middle of a dark night, as though the last fire foretold by the sibyls were about to destroy our little planet, the terrified Neapolitan prays to Mary and forgets his alarm, and the inhabitants of the neighboring hamlets run to meet the fiery stream of lava with images of the Madonna, which they hold out to bar its progress.

Sicily is still, as well as Sardinia, a land essentially Catholic. The devotion to Mary is particularly popular in Palermo and Messina, in the latter city, the noble cathedral dedicated to the Virgin by the Norman kings, is still in existence; only that the *campanile* and the spire of the principal tower were destroyed by the great earthquake of 1753, and the Sicilians have never set about rebuilding them.

In Piedmont and Savoy, Our Lady is still religiously honored. In 1669 King Charles Emmanuel declared the Mother of God principal patroness of his house and of his states, and this declaration has been frequently renewed by the pious successors of that prince.

Even at the close of the eighteenth century, the veneration of Mary was universal in Spain. In the cathedral of Toledo, placed under the invocation of the Blessed Virgin, the chapel of Our Lady of the Sanctuary (*del Sagrario*) was of wonderful richness and beauty. It was of octagonal form; its pillars and pavements were of marble; in the niches were seen golden vases enriched with diamonds, and other

gems of great value. The statue of the Blessed Virgin was of solid silver, and she was seated on a throne of the same metal, with an Infant Jesus in her arms twelve inches high, formed of massive gold, incrustated with diamonds. The cathedral of Seville had its famous chapel, Our Lady of Kings, built by St. Ferdinand, the splendor of which was so great that it was reckoned the most magnificent chapel in the world. The chapel of the Presentation, in Burgos, was almost as celebrated. In Madrid, the church of Our Lady of Almameda is one of the most splendid in the city; to this Madonna is ascribed the discovery of a quantity of corn found by a providential chance in the vaults of a tower, just as the city, besieged by the Moors, was about to surrender for want of provisions. The miraculous fact is still painted in fresco on the walls of Our Lady's chapel, but we doubt whether the altar, and the balustrade of solid silver, are still there.

About a quarter of a league from Madrid, in a vast Dominican convent (now doubtless deserted, like many others), was the miraculous *

image of Our Lady of the Bush (*d'Atocha*), a black Madonna, usually dressed in weeds; this is a custom peculiar to the place, as far as we know, but on solemn feasts the statue was arrayed in queenly garments, studded with large jewels. Her chapel, gloomy in its structure, was lit by an hundred lamps of massive gold and silver. The Catholic kings had their gallery in this chapel, with a screen in front. It was there, too, that the *Te Deum* of victory was sung.

Charles III., king of Spain, founded an order of knighthood in honor of the Blessed Virgin, whom he declared *universal patrona de España é Indias* (universal patroness of Spain and the Indies).

At present, the fair moon of Christianity is somewhat obscured in Spain, but the cloud will pass away, and the Blessed Virgin shall speedily recover her rights of supremacy over that most Catholic and most chivalrous nation. We hope, with the Spanish doctor who has done us the honor of translating this work, that posterity will add many a luminous page to the Spanish portion of this history.

In Portugal, where Mary has reigned as queen from the time of Alphonso the First, the devotion to her is still national and flourishing; she is the first godmother of all female children, and her images are venerated in rich and beautiful chapels.

England, that land of hydra-headed heresy, begins at last to turn her head towards Rome; numerous Catholic churches are being erected in every county, under the title of chapels. In Ireland, bonfires have been recently kindled on every hill to celebrate, in the ancient manner, a miracle obtained after a novena to the Virgin—the marvellous liberation of O'Connell.

The Belgians are still, as they have ever been, preëminently devout to Mary; they make pilgrimages to her shrines, and consecrate to her the most beautiful chapels of their noble Gothic cathedrals.

The Tyrolese adorn the walls of their houses with scenes taken from the life of the Blessed Virgin.

Bohemia, rich and tranquil, multiplies images of the Mother of God on its highways and in its towns. Here and there through the coun-

try, a modest chapel, dedicated to Mary (and serving at once as a house of prayer and a place of rest), rears its pointed roof, surmounted by a cross, as if to notify the traveller that he will there find shelter from sun or rain, and the call is always religiously heard.

Austria, with its pure and simple morals, its religious and poetical tendencies, remains ever faithful to Mary, and nowhere have the sacred ceremonies of her devotion a more serious or touching character.

Poland is still and always the kingdom of the Blessed Virgin, whom the Poles, since 1655, invoke in their litanies as *Regina Cœli et Poloniæ*. Her image is hung around the necks of their children, and Polish warriors formerly wore it as a precious preservative against danger. Ladies of rank have, in their apartments an oratory adorned with the portrait of the Virgin, and the proud Polish nobles, the proudest in all Europe, fail not at Christmas times, to hang in a conspicuous part of the sumptuous banquet-hall a sheaf of straw, in memory of the utter destitution of Jesus and Mary in the stable of Bethlehem.

The Lithuanians are the youngest nation of Mary's children in Europe, according to the order of time, as they were only converted in the fifteenth century; but they, too, have remained faithful to her, notwithstanding all the efforts of Protestantism, which fell to the ground amongst them as soon as it spoke of suppressing the popular devotion to Mary. Faithful to the ancient customs of their country, the Lithuanian women still celebrate the return of spring and the close of autumn under the auspices of Mary; it is on her altars that they deposit the violets which they go far and near to gather the first morning of spring, before sunrise; and it is also her whom they invoke, seated around the last sheaf, while their dextrous fingers weave floral hieroglyphics, giving, as in the East, a thought to every leaf and a symbol to every plant. These simple Lithuanians are passionately fond of their woods and fields, and especially of the fair flowers which the poorest of them cultivate, but they love the Blessed Virgin better than all these.

The Russians, who follow the

* rites of the Greek Church, profess the greatest veneration for the Virgin; as far off as they can see her image they prostrate themselves several times, crossing themselves with extreme rapidity. In Moscow, one of the gates of the Kremlin is decorated with a statue of the Virgin, to which miracles are ascribed; it is guarded by two sentinels night and day, and the people never fail to uncover their heads in passing this sacred image.

The Czars were formerly crowned in the splendid Muscovite cathedral of the Assumption, where the bodies of the Russian patriarchs are laid. The wall around the sanctuary was sheeted with gold and silver. The sacred vessels and the episcopal vestments of this cathedral are still wonderfully rich; the image of the Blessed Virgin, placed in a heavy gilt frame at the end of this church, figures in the processions, mounted on a superb coach all covered with mirrors, like the carriages formerly seen in France at the consecration of the kings. This modern car of triumph is drawn slowly along by four horses richly caparisoned.

The Greeks, although schismatic,

have still the same respect for the *Panagia*; in the Morea there are several convents dedicated to Mary; the most famous is that of the Assumption, on Mount Cylene, a few hours' journey from the famous cascade of the Styx, now called Mavronero. This convent has a miraculous image of Mary, which was given it in the eighth century by an imperial princess of Constantinople, named Euphrosyne; it is nearly all built within a large cavern one hundred and twenty feet high, and as many wide. The entrance is reached by a steep and narrow path winding along the side of the mountain, and, like a fortress of the Middle Ages, it is defended by a gate and an iron portcullis, together with a lateral wall pierced with numerous loop-holes and furnished with four pieces of cannon. This narrow path, in which the winter torrents make large breaches every year, is yet the only way of reaching the convent; hence this sacred asylum, where the *Panagia* has been invoked for ages by the Hellenes, is considered impregnable. In the last war of independence, the famous Ibrahim tried to take it, but

* in vain. The three hundred monks who dwell in it, becoming soldiers from necessity, were well able to defend the altar of their patroness.

The life of these *caloyers*, as they are called by the Mussulmans, is simple and pure as in the time of their ancient foundation. They enjoy a complete independence; they are laborious and robust, and, as worthy servants of the compassionate Virgin, they have ever extended a helping hand to the suffering or the oppressed. In the fourteenth century the monks of Thessalia and Phocida found an asylum in the convent of the Assumption, when, pursued by the Turks, they fled from their beloved country without a hope of seeing it again. Again, in the seventeenth century, the poor monks who escaped the massacre of Constantinople, took refuge in this convent. Finally, in the eighteenth century, when the ruinous war which followed the insurrection of the Morea had destroyed all around them, it was the Christian conduct of these religious towards the Turks of Calavrita, their prayers and the sacrifice which they made of a portion of their

wealth, that enabled them to save * from apostacy or death a great number of the Greeks of Achaïa.

The Klephts, those bold mountaineers who have so long kept the Turks at bay, are no less devout to the *Panagia* than the people of the Morea. For ages long they have had no other places of prayer than some ruined chapels which they believe haunted by vampires, or some rock-hewn oratory under the patronage of the Virgin. They are sometimes seen, at the dawn of day, climbing the loftiest crest of their steep mountains, with their crooked poignard in their belt, and their long gun slung over their shoulder, going to hear mass, or perhaps simply to pray in some lonely chapel overhanging frightful precipices, the very sight of which would make a Turkish soldier shudder. There it was that they went to hang the offerings promised to the *Panagia* in the hour of danger, and always faithfully given. These gifts were often articles of value wrested from the Turk with sword and steel, and were regarded with the most religious reverence; public devotion was their safeguard, and no matter

how great might be his distress, no Klepht would ever think of purloining the least of these things, which became sacred in his eyes. M. de Pouqueville, in his *Travels in Greece*, relates an incident of a brigand chief who, having taken some of these *ex voto* from a chapel dedicated to the Virgin, near Vonitza, was given up by his own band to Ali Pacha, by whose order he was hung. The practice of making distant pilgrimages, difficult as it was for men placed in the position of the Klephts, was still far from being unknown to them. The famous partisan, Blachavas, at the age of seventy-six, set out on foot for Jerusalem, his musket on his shoulder, followed by his lieutenant, and died, as he seems to have wished, in the Holy Land.*

Mount Athos, named by the modern Greeks *Hagion Oros* (the holy mountain), still belongs to Mary, as it did in the time of the first Cæsars of Byzantium.

The islands of the Bosphorus and the Archipelago contain numerous, though poor, convents of Mary; the bells of these Greek monasteries

* Fauriel, *Popular Songs of Greece*.

are suspended from the trunk of some huge cypress, which stands in spectral gloom near a church or cemetery. In Scio, the fairest of those islands, nearly all the inhabitants were Catholic. Being mildly governed, thanks to the powerful protection of the Sultana Valida, that charming island kept its religion, its gaiety, and its refreshing shades. The stranger was welcomed there with branches laden with fruits, and when he departed they offered him flowers in remembrance of hospitality. Nothing could equal the pomp of its festivals: it had its Catholic archons, like Athens of old; its maidens were pure and fair as the smile of Mary, their beloved *Panagia*. . . . The revolution broke out . . . all this peace, all this joy, ended in a massacre . . . three hundred young girls, the fairest in the island, were mercilessly slaughtered on the seashore by the fierce Osman soldiers. They fell, one after the other, their hands joined and their eyes raised to heaven, invoking that Virgin-mother who failed not to avenge them. Ali Pacha, the tiger who ordered this brutal massacre,

* was burned soon after by the intrepid Canaris, he and his vessels, and died soon after on that very strand which he had crimsoned with blood, while the conqueror did public homage to the Virgin for his victory.

In Anatolia and the adjacent isles, in Cyprus and in Tenedos, the Greek race have maintained in all its fervor their devotion to the Virgin. Mahomet prevailed in the cities; but high on the mountaintops, in the region of clouds, the sacred banner of the Panagia waves over many a convent. Some of the Hellenes have forgotten the language of Demosthenes and Isocrates, but not the Gospel, nor their devotion to Mary, and they repeat in the Turkish language the Apostles' Creed and the Angelical Salutation.* There the illuminations of the Courban-Bairam are opposed by the bonfires known by the name of St. John's, and the feast of Mahomet by that of Our Lady of Mount Olympus.

The Georgians, who bear on their standard the image of St. George, won for themselves in the Middle

* *Occident et Orient*, par M. Barrault.

Ages the privilege of entering Jerusalem with banners flying, to perform their devotions, without paying the tribute imposed on other Christians;* they are still the faithful subjects of the Holy Virgin, the heavenly Queen of their mountain-land. The highest peaks of their mountains are everywhere crowned with a church or chapel dedicated to Mary, placed so high that they cannot reach it themselves, and are forced to content themselves, says Chardin, with profoundly saluting it from the depth of their valleys, which they never fail to do.

The Mingrelian, who sleeps with his head on his carbine and his cimetar by his side, venerates in his churches certain relics of the Blessed Virgin,† kept therein with profound respect since the first ages of Christianity.

Armenia, shut in amongst Mussulman nations, has no more yielded to the Koran than to Zend-Avesta, and remains nearly as it was in the fifth century, after the Holy Wars, were it not that it is divided into

* two camps, one professing Christianity with Rome, and the other with Nestorius. The Virgin is devoutly honored by both. Every Armenian fasts fifteen days before the Feast of the Assumption, which was introduced very early into the Caucasian regions, and as that people has kept from the Jews the immolation of animals, there is no good Armenian family that does not sacrifice a lamb in honor of Mary.

Lebanon, that beautiful mountain an hundred leagues in circumference, is entirely peopled with Catholics. On one of its highest tablelands is the village of Eden, full of limpid streams and cool shades, it is topped by an archiepiscopal church, in which there is an altar to Mary, and at the right of that altar rises (in a truly marvellous manner) the *Nakar-Rossena* (chief river), which descends from an immense rock clothed with cypress. The *Nakar-Kadisha* (holy river), the offspring of eternal snows, on whose banks so many solitaries were once engaged in carving images of Mary,

* De Belleforest, l. ii., ch. 5, of his *Hist. Univers.*—Chalcondyle, *Hist. des Turcs.*

† By relics of the Blessed Virgin, we, of

course, understand certain articles which were used by her during her mortal life.—TRANSLATOR.

still retains the name which it owed, in the first ages of the Church, to the piety of the hermits who dwelt amid its rocks. An hour's journey from the spot where the Holy River collects its rapid and noisy waters, Tyre, the ancient ruler of the seas, displays the mournful wreck of greatness past; her famous cathedral of Our Lady, destroyed in the last crusades, a short time after its reconstruction, is now but a magnificent ruin, whose stately vaults and arches are still traced on the blue sky of Syria, but there is another church, less conspicuous, wherein the four or five hundred Catholic families who people Tyre still fervently invoke Mary. The pretty town of Nazareth, approached by an avenue of olive-trees, is inhabited solely by Catholics; its church, built on the site of St. Helena's, has three naves, and is always full of pilgrims, and others of the faithful, in prayer. The sweet name of Mary is everywhere read on the walls, and everywhere one sees her image, profusely adorned with the fairest flowers by the piety of the Eastern Christians.

Modern Jerusalem, whose popula-

* tion seems formed of the wreck of nations, presents within its bosom the strange sight of the Jewish synagogue side by side with the Mussulman mosque and the Christian church, yet, thank Heaven! it is not without its altars to Mary. The descendant of the kings of Juda is still prayerfully invoked in the capital of the holy King David, and all religious differences disappear at her tomb, where the Armenian, the Georgian, the Arab, the Tyrian, and the Western Christian meet together, and where even Turkish women are seen kneeling in prayer, wrapped up in their veils. A Greek *caloyer* sprinkles some drops of otto of roses on the head of each one who comes to honor Mary.

In the Levant, the veneration of the Virgin has reached even the infidels. The Turks and Persians, who speak of her with all reverence, consider her as the purest and most perfect of women. Hence, they are often known to hang votive lamps before her images, to conduct their sick children to her churches, to pray devoutly at her tomb, and what is still more extraordinary amongst the worship-

ers of Allah, to build temples in her honor.*

In Abyssinia, the devotion to the Virgin is still as popular as it ever was: churches bearing her Eastern name of *Mariam* are met in great numbers in the cities, on the mountains, and on the banks of the rivers; they are covered with straw, surrounded by an exterior gallery, and surmounted by an iron cross, whose numerous branches are terminated with ostrich-eggs; they stand in the midst of a cemetery, which is an inviolable sanctuary, and are magnificently shaded by dark sables and gigantic olive-trees. Within, the walls are adorned with garish frescoes representing the Virgin, St. Michael, or St. George, who is very popular amongst the Eastern nations; the floor is sometimes covered with Persian carpet, which the Mussulmans bring from Massauah and sell at an exorbitant price to the Christians. A gallery runs all around these churches, and in

* A pacha of Mossoul, besieged by the famous Thamas-Kouli-Khan, made a vow to build two churches to the Blessed Virgin, in case he preserved his city. Thamas raised the siege, and the Pacha, faithful to his promise, caused two churches to be erected; their magnificence, un-

* the centre there is a square sanctuary which none but the priests may enter; there is kept the sacred ark containing the bread and wine intended for communion. The Abyssinians hold the Virgin in so great veneration that, according to them, the world was created for her and by her; they precede the feast of the Assumption by a fast of fifteen days, like the Copts and Syrians; their kings style themselves *sons of Mariam's hand*, and many of them assume her name. Finally, we learn from travellers who visited Abyssinia in 1837, that, when the Abyssinians ask a favor or give an invitation, it is always in the name of Mary; they swear only by Mary (*bé Mariam*), and her name is ever in their mouth.†

This ardent devotion of the Abyssinians to the Mother of God has sometimes broken out into real acts of fanaticism. In 1714, when German missionaries of the order of St. Francis, sent by Pope Clement

exampled in those regions, bespeaks at once the peril, the alarm, and the gratitude of the Musulman.—(See the Bishop of Babylon's letter in the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith*.)

† *Voyage en Abyssinie*, par MM. Combes et Tamisier, 1835–37.

XI., tried to bring them back to the unity of faith, the schismatic monks defeated their efforts by circulating the report that these European monks were avowedly hostile to the Blessed Virgin. This falsehood of theirs had frightful consequences; the people revolted; the emperor, who protected the missionaries, was poisoned, and Fathers Liberat, Veis, Pié de Zerbe, and Samuel Bienno were stoned to death by an infuriate mob. An Ethiopian monk cast the first stone, exclaiming: "Accursed and excommunicated by the Virgin be he who will not cast five stones at her enemies!"* Alas! these poor Franciscans were the most faithful and devoted servants of Mary!

The devotion to the Virgin is now spreading gradually over all the Indies. The chaplet is recited among the Hindoos of the Malabar coast, among the Chinese, the Siamese, the Thibetians, the tribes of Tonquin and of Cochin-China; it is the only prayer-book possessed by the Catholics of those remote countries, and it is the first thing they ask on seeing a priest from Europe.† The

churches of India often bear the name of Mary; that of the Nativity of the Virgin, at Pondicherry, is one of the most remarkable. A novena has been founded in this Malabar church which procures a number of conversions, though conversions are there so difficult; it opens with a procession which takes place by night, and is conducted with much pomp. The sacred image of Mary is borne on a triumphal car, and is placed, from time to time, on altars which the pious Christians of that country adorn with flowers and gold muslin; these altars are lit up by overhanging globes of fire. The procession moves slowly, to the sound of crashing music, between two lines of torches. At each resting-place, the noise ceases while a childish voice sings the praises of the holy mother of Our Lord; after which the image of the Virgin is solemnly brought back to the church, and replaced over her altar, magnificently illuminated.‡

South America is ever remarkable for its devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Brazil has built many churches in her honor in modern

* *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith.*

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Ibid.*

times, and adorned them to the utmost of her power. Peru dedicated to her, from the first, its splendid cathedral of Lima, under the title of the Assumption, and paved it with silver instead of marble. Cusco, the city of the Incas, consecrated to Mary its Temple of the Sun, the walls of which were coated with thick plates of gold. The Dominicans, to whom this church now belongs, raised a chapel in it for Our Lady, and adorned it with true Peruvian splendor: flags of silver, an altar of the same metal, a statue radiant with gold and pearl, golden lamps, and magnificent *ex voto*, nothing was wanting to complete its grandeur. Mary has altars no less rich in the ancient temple of Zuilla (*the moon*), also a very splendid building, in that of Yllaper (*the thunder*), and of Chasca (*the evening-star*). In Mexico, the cathedrals and altars dedicated to the Virgin are of rare magnificence. The cathedral of the Assumption, in the city of Mexico, commenced in the sixteenth century and finished in the seventeenth, has two statues of Mary which exceed all European ideas of splendor; the

* first is an Assumption of massive gold incrustated with precious stones of considerable weight; the second, a Conception in solid silver. The cathedral of Pueblo d'Angeles, bearing the title of the Conception, has a high altar dedicated to Mary which is itself worth a whole basilica; the altar is of massive silver, and the balustrading around it has plinths and capitals of burnished gold.

In San Domingo, in the time of the French domination, the procession of the Vow of Louis XIII. was every year made with all possible pomp. Since Hayti declared itself a republic, this custom is discontinued, but not the devotion to Mary, whom the blacks of that island still invoke with boundless confidence. The Haytians have two pilgrimages to the Blessed Virgin, one in the part that formerly belonged to Spain, and the other in the old French district. They often make these pilgrimages by proxy: a black pilgrim who sets out on this pious journey, visits all his acquaintances and collects the offerings which they wish to send to the Virgin. The negresses of distinction imported from Africa a

heathen custom which they made a Christian one in the Antilles. When they wish to ascertain whether they possess the affection of their husbands, they take to the seashore a thin plank of native wood pierced with holes, wherein they place lighted tapers of white wax; after invoking Mary, they carefully and timidly commit their little illuminated raft to the waves of their sunny gulf, and if it floats a little time on the water without sinking, they bless the Virgin, persuaded that they may rest content.

Numismatics, which has preserved to us the effigy of sovereigns lost to history, has also helped to perpetuate the remembrance of the devotion to Mary. Nearly all Christian nations have struck medals in honor of the Virgin, and stamped her image on coins.

The Empress Theophania, who married Romanus the Younger in 959, is the first whose coin bears the image of Mary. She is placed on the reverse; her head, surrounded by the aureola, is covered with a veil, and her two hands are raised to the height of the chest: around, is the Greek inscription signifying

* MOTHER OF GOD. The second husband of that princess, John Zimisces, who ascended the imperial throne in 969, also had a medal struck, bearing on one side the figure of Christ EMMANYHA (*Emmanuel*), and on the other, the Virgin seated on a throne with the Infant Jesus on her knee. Before her are the three magi offering their gifts; above her head is a star, and beneath her two doves. The first emperor who placed the effigy of Mary on the front side of his coins, was Romanus IV., styled Diogenes, who ascended the imperial throne A. D. 1068. On his medals is seen the Blessed Virgin with the head of the divine Infant reclining on her bosom, according to the decree of the Council of Ephesus. The Virgin is there attired as an empress. Several strings of pearls are seen around her head and twined amid her hair, and her brow is encircled by the imperial diadem. She also retains the glory or aureola, but has no veil. On the reverse of the medal is the Greek inscription meaning, "May the Mother of God be propitious to the Emperor Romanus Diogenes." Many of the

succeeding emperors also stamped the image of the Virgin on their coins; but from the time of John Zimisces till the taking of Constantinople, the letter M is no longer found on the coins of the Lower Empire.

The Greeks were not the only nation who gave Mary this mark of respect; many modern states still bear on their coins the effigy of the holy Virgin.

In the States of the Church, the new silver crown has on it the Virgin borne on clouds, holding the keys in one hand, and in the other an ark, with this inscription, "Supra firmam petram." The city of Genoa also presents, on some of its gold coins, the Virgin borne on clouds, and holding the Infant Jesus on one arm. The inscription is, "Et rege eos." Austria has gold ducats

whereon is seen the Virgin, in like manner, borne on clouds, holding the Infant Jesus on one arm, with the globe in his hand. The inscription is, "Maria Mater Dei." The same state has also gold maximilians, on the reverse of which is seen the Virgin and Child, the latter holding the globe in his hand. The legend is, "Salus in te sperantibus." The three-florin gold pieces of the same empire have also on the reverse the Virgin and Child, with the same legend as the maximilians. Bavaria, too, strikes gold maximilians and caroluses with the same effigy and inscription. Portugal stamps on her gold cruzades the name of Mary: *Maria*, surmounted by a crown, and encircled by two branches of laurel; on the other side is seen a cross with this inscription, "In hoc signo vinces."



CHAPTER XIV.

ADDED BY THE TRANSLATOR.

[We have, in the preceding chapters, a most interesting chronicle of the rise and progress of the devotion to the Blessed Virgin. The learned author has collected much valuable information on this subject. He has glanced over many lands, giving a brief space to each, and, as far as he has gone, his work leaves nothing unnoticed that could throw light on the fair picture of filial love and reverence. But we could wish that he had devoted more space to this New World, where he had assuredly an ample field before him—where the devotion to Mary is, and has been, for ages, steadily on the increase, till, like the grain of mustard-seed mentioned in the Gospel, it has become a stately tree, overshadowing with its branches all the land. It is with some hesitation that I attempt to “take up the wondrous tale,” but, as I have endeavored to give it an English form, and make it accessible to those who know not the French language, I should be sorry to present it to them without adding a few pages on the history of the devotion to Mary in these countries.]



THE countries of the New World were nearly all settled by Catholics, and by Catholics who loved and honored Mary, as we see by the names of many of the older settlements. Columbus was a faithful servant of Mary, and Jacques Cartier, the discoverer of Canada, or New France, was equally devoted to her service. The latter brought with him from old Catholic France that zeal for religion which then characterized

* all the navigators of that great country. The beads and crucifix were his most trusty weapons, and when he succeeded in effecting a landing, or making a treaty with the Indians, it was to God and the Virgin that he returned thanks. The first tree felled by Europeans was hailed as a triumph for religion—as the first step towards the foundation of a new empire for Jesus and Mary.* Those sacred names were the watchword of all the French and Spanish Christians who led the van in civilizing America, and strong in the strength of those

* “THE SALVATION OF A SOUL IS WORTH MORE THAN THE CONQUEST OF AN EMPIRE.” Such was the golden maxim of Champlain, the founder of New

France (Canada); a maxim which was adopted and acted on by all the Catholic pioneers of the New World.—(Life of Bishop Flaget, p. 179.)

mighty names they triumphed over every obstacle which the powers of earth and hell raised up to bar their progress. These northern regions of America were especially placed under the protection of Mary from their first settlement by Europeans. Jacques Cartier's grim old followers, with hand of iron and heart of faith, had passed away; several voyages had been made by successive companies from France, but none of them succeeded in effecting a permanent settlement; all designs that were of a purely worldly nature failed, and it was only the faithful sons of Loyola who braved and at length surmounted every difficulty. They it was who explored the interminable woods of Canada, seeking, through incredible toils and hardships, to gather in the harvest, already ripe for the sickle; martyrdom itself had no terrors for these valiant soldiers of Christ, and, armed only with the cross and beads, they boldly advanced, regardless of the tomahawk and scalping-knife, intent on conquering the land for Him who sent them, and making his name known to the heathen. Well and aptly

* have they been called the pioneers of civilization, for where the foot of European never trod, never dared to tread, they planted the standard of the Cross. God and the Virgin were with them wherever they went. It may well be said that Mary presided over the opening of American civilization, since they who laid its earliest foundations were her own faithful servants, her devoted clients. Thus, in the cruel torments inflicted on them by their savage captors, we find them consoled by the thought of Mary's maternal care and protection. "It was my consolation," wrote one of these fervent missionaries, addressing the Superior-General of his order: "It was my consolation to know that I was doing the will of God, since I undertook this journey only through obedience. I was full of confidence in the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, and in the assistance of the many souls who were praying for me."* And again, describing another of his grievous trials: "I desired and expected death, but was not without a certain dread of the

* Bressani's *Relation de la Nouvelle-France*, abridged by the Rev. Père Martin, S. J., p. 118.

fire. I, nevertheless, prepared for it as well as I could, commending myself to the *Mother of Mercy*, who is truly the *Amiable Mother*, the *Admirable Mother*, the *Powerful and Clement Virgin*, the *Comfort of the Afflicted*. She was, after God, the only refuge of a poor sinner, forsaken by all creatures on a foreign soil, in that place of horror and of waste wilderness,* without a tongue to make himself understood, or friends to console, or sacraments to strengthen him, or any human remedy to alleviate his sufferings.”†

Father de Nouë, one of the first missionaries, was frozen to death while wandering alone in the trackless forest, and was found in a kneeling posture, his head uncovered, his eyes wide open and raised to heaven, and his arms crossed on his bosom. He was quite dead. “Father de Nouë died, it is thought, on the day of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, for whom he had a great devotion. Every Saturday he fasted in her honor, and, every day, he recited the office of the Immac-

ulate Conception. When he spoke of her, every word was from his heart.”‡

Father Jogues, the illustrious champion of the faith, who lived through torments that would have killed an hundred ordinary men, giving an account of his capture by the Iroquois, says: “At length we reached the first Iroquois village; it was on the eve of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, and I thanked Our Lord Jesus Christ for that he was pleased to call us to share his cross and sufferings, on the day whereon the Christian world celebrates the triumph of his divine mother ascending to heaven.”§ On another occasion, when he and his companion had retired from this Iroquois village, during a tumult, to pray on a little neighboring hill: “Returning to the village, we were reciting the chaplet of the Blessed Virgin, and had already said four decades, when we met two young men who ordered us to return to the village. ‘Brother,’ said I to René, ‘we know not what these men in-

* Deut. xxxii. 10.

† Bressani's *Relation de la Nouvelle-France*, abridged by the Rev. Père Martin, S. J., p. 126.

‡ *Relation Abregée*, pp. 178, 179.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

tend to do with us, now that they are all so much excited. Let us recommend ourselves with the greater fervor to God and the Blessed Virgin, our good mother.”*

Of Father Charles Garnier, another of the martyrs of Canada, it is related that from his childhood he had a great inclination for virtue, and especially a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, whom he always called his mother. He had bound himself by a solemn vow, to defend, till death, the doctrine of her Immaculate Conception, and he loved to honor her under that title. His death took place on the eve of that festival, which he went to celebrate with greater solemnity in heaven.†

Such were the first missionaries—the first civilizers of the Canadian savages,—and such their devotion to the Blessed Mother of God, a devotion which must necessarily have communicated to their neophytes at least a portion of its fervor, and made the name of Mary a household word amongst the simple denizens of the forest. But whilst the Jesuit fathers were toil-

ing and bleeding, preaching and baptizing, amongst the savage tribes of Canada, far away in the sunny realm of France the Almighty was carrying out his merciful designs for the permanent settlement of these remote countries, and the foundation of a new empire for the Queen of heaven: his omniscient wisdom was preparing an asylum for the Catholic Church of North America, and raising up a barrier against heresy in the noble provinces of New France.‡

The Island of Montreal was still covered with primeval woods: its existence scarcely known to Europeans, when God made known, by a special revelation, to some pious persons in France, that such a place was to be colonized, and that they were the instruments chosen to carry out the design. Neither of these individuals was either rich or powerful, yet never doubting—never pausing to inquire “how this could be done,” they at once set about forming a society for the purpose, assured that God was with them. Their object was to build a city in Canada in honor of Mary,

* *Relation Abregée*, p. 212.

† *Ibid.*, p. 266.

‡ *Life of Sister Bourgeoys*, Introduction.

and under her especial patronage, to serve as the stronghold and nucleus of religion in those (then) remote regions. The city was to be called *Villemarie* (the City of Mary). The principal movers in this project were the inspired persons above mentioned: M. de Maisonneuve, a virtuous and pious layman, M. Olier, afterwards founder of the illustrious Order of St. Sulpice, and sister Marguerite Bourgeoys, an humble maiden of Troyes. Each of these, but especially the two latter, were favored, all through, with the most singular graces, and guided by light and knowledge from above, clearly showing that they were chosen instruments of the divine will. When all things were prepared for the voyage, the good sister Bourgeoys began to shrink from the prospect of embarking alone on such an undertaking, as she was to have no female companion. She had taken all possible pains to ascertain whether she was really called to this perilous enterprise; she had consulted the most pious and the most enlightened ecclesiastics of the time, and was, through them, assured of her voca-

tion, yet still she feared to go alone to Canada. Her historian tells us "that the project of such a voyage for a woman of thirty-three, the prospect of being unaccompanied by any of her own sex, amidst a company of soldiers; the idea of having no female to assist her at *Villemarie* in the education of children, and of being constantly exposed to the danger of being taken and burned by the Iroquois; all these considerations were very fit to inspire her with fear, and prudence seemed to render it necessary that she should have some more convincing proof of the divine will. Even this was granted to her, though she asked it not. The Blessed Virgin, for whose honor and glory she was resolved to sacrifice her life, by going to Canada to procure faithful servants for her, vouchsafed to assure her with her own lips, that the design was well-pleasing to her, and that she would herself protect her amidst so many dangers. The good nun being in her own chamber, thinking at the moment of anything but her voyage: 'I saw before me,' says she, 'a tall lady, clad in a robe, as it

were of white serge, who said to me: *Go; I will not desert thee.* And I knew it was the Blessed Virgin, though I saw not her face. This reassured me, and gave me courage to undertake the voyage.' After this vision, Sister Margaret no longer hesitated to set out. Yet still her great prudence made her fear that it might be an illusion; knowing that God conducts his children by the common rules of faith, and not by extraordinary means. 'After this apparition,' says she, 'being fearful of illusions, I considered that if this one were from God, I had nothing to provide for my voyage. I said to myself, If it be the will of God that I should go to Villemarie, I have no need of anything; whereupon I set out without a penny or a box of any kind, having with me only a small bundle which I could carry under my arm.'

"We cannot sufficiently admire the heroism of such perfect confidence in God, unexampled, perhaps, except by that of the holy Apostles whose spirit was still manifested in this admirable woman. Instead of laying in money and

clothes, so necessary in a new country which as yet produced nothing of itself for the sustenance of life, but had to import all from Europe, she strips herself, on the contrary, of all she has, and distributes amongst the poor even the little money she possesses, placing her trust in God alone."*

While journeying to and fro, preparing for her embarkation, Sister Bourgeoys took her passage in a boat from Orleans to Nantes. There were twelve or thirteen passengers on board besides the crew, and amongst these there was only one woman; yet Sister Bourgeoys contrived to make all those men sanctify the voyage by many pious practices. Every day they said the beads, recited the office of the Blessed Virgin, and read a portion of some pious book.†

All this time M. de Maisonneuve was hurrying on his preparations under the direction of M. Olier: they had secured the assistance of another pious lady, Mademoiselle Manse, who was to take charge of the sick in the new colony. It was the intention of M. Olier to conse-

* *Life of Sister Bourgeoys*, pp. 41-43.

† *Vie de la Sœur Bourgeoys*, tome i., p. 52.

crate the island of Montreal to the Holy Family, and for that purpose he proposed to establish three different institutes: that of his own order of St. Sulpice, for the forming and maintenance of the priesthood, in honor of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; that of the Congregation of Our Lady, for the education of females, in honor of Our Blessed Lady; and that of the Hospital Nuns, for the care of the sick and diseased, in honor of her illustrious spouse, St. Joseph. Come we now to the actual foundation of the city, which I will give in the simple, graphic words of M. Olier's biographer.

"In the month of February, 1642, he assembled in the church of Notre Dame all the members of the company of Montreal, celebrated the Holy Mass at the Virgin's altar, where he gave communion to those who were not priests, whilst the latter celebrated at the neighboring altars; and all consecrated the island to the Holy Family, under the special protection of the Blessed Virgin, and consecrated themselves to that pious intention. On leaving the church, they repaired to the

* Hotel de Loson, to concert the means of consolidating the good work. It was resolved that they should freight at least three vessels, to convey to Montreal as many decent families of different states as they could find willing to emigrate; that they should take possession of the island in the name of the Blessed Virgin, who was always to be regarded as its first and true mistress, and that, with the king's permission, they would build a city on it, to be called *Villemarie*.

"On the 17th of May following, the little troop (having passed the winter in Quebec) at length arrived at Montreal. Immediately on landing, they prostrated themselves on the shore, and, in the transports of their holy enthusiasm, they sang several psalms, to testify their gratitude to God. In the place destined for the new city, they erected tents for their own accommodation, and then proceeded to raise an altar, where, next day, Father Vimont, after the *Veni Creator*, first celebrated the holy sacrifice, and exposed the Blessed Sacrament, to obtain from heaven an auspicious commencement to that pious work.

It was in a *chapel* constructed of bark that the Blessed Sacrament was first placed, and it has ever since been preserved in Ville-Marie. As the country furnished neither oil nor wax, they placed before the tabernacle which they brought from France, instead of a lamp, a glass vial containing a number of fireflies, insects which, when there are several of them put together, produce a light like that of numerous wax tapers.*

"Such was the beginning of Ville-Marie," adds the biographer, and it will at once be seen from his description, that the foundation of the city of Montreal was essentially a religious one, resembling that of a monastery rather than a city. We are inclined to think that no other city was ever founded under circumstances so interesting or so edifying. The motives of its founders were of a purely religious nature; they had no thoughts of aggrandizing themselves or even their nation; they desired not to enrich themselves by drawing forth the natural resources of the country; its wealth of woods, and waters, and minerals,

* *Vie de M. Olier, abrégée.*

gave them no concern; their sole ambition was to promote the glory of God and the salvation of men, and to do honor to their sovereign lady and mistress, the Blessed Mother of God. Assured of her protection, they calmly prosecuted their work of building habitations for themselves, fearing neither the savage Iroquois of the surrounding woods, nor the severity of the climate, nor the privations of every kind yet to be endured. They were doing the will of God, and working for Mary, their beloved queen, and all considerations of a purely personal or selfish nature were forgotten.

During the first days of the colony's existence, the river St. Lawrence rose in fury one Christmas eve, threatening to sweep away the little inclosure of stakes which then contained the whole of Montreal. M. de Maisonneuve, the pious governor of the island, made a vow that if the fort were preserved, he would plant a wooden cross on the summit of the mountain which overhung the infant city. The waters retired after some time, without doing any injury, and the grateful gov-

ernor planted the cross as he had promised. This cross was destroyed soon after by the Iroquois, but when Sister Bourgeoys arrived in the colony, she prevailed upon M. de Maisonneuve to have it put up again, and it continued to be a place of pilgrimage for several years, notwithstanding that the woods around it were infested by the ferocious Iroquois, who took every opportunity of attacking those who went to pray there. Yet many did go for some time after the replanting of the cross, to perform novenas and other devotions for the conversion of the savages. In the lapse of time there was a mission established on the mountain, and the savages began to gather to the place: hitherto they could never be induced to settle on the island. A school-house and a small chapel were built; the latter dedicated to Our Lady of Snow—*Notre Dame des Neiges*, around which a pretty village has since sprung up.

The good Sister Bourgeoys succeeded, after some years, in forming her admirable institute under the title of the Congregation of Our Lady, but not without having her

* full share of the sufferings and privations of the infant colony. At first, she went from house to house teaching, but her strength soon began to fail under this excessive fatigue; she was then presented by the governor (in the name of the company) with a stone building which had been used as a stable;* here she commenced her school, herself and her four assistants sleeping in a sort of loft to which they ascended by a ladder. This humble building, cleaned and ornamented by the pious sister as well as her poverty would permit, was converted into a school-house, and formed the foundation of the stately convent now known as the Congregation Nunnery. After considerable delay and many disappointments, Sister Bourgeoys was so happy as to see a chapel erected near her school-house, in honor of Our Lady of Good Aid—*Notre Dame de Bon Secours*.

"Nothing could be more touching," says the reverend biographer of Sister Bourgeoys, "than the disinterested and courageous charity of these fervent colonists for each

* *Vie de la Sœur Bourgeoys*, t. i., p. 93.

other. M. de Maisonneuve had formed amongst them a company of soldiers styled the Blessed Virgin's Company, who were to be ready at any time to sacrifice their lives to preserve those of the other colonists, and kept guard night and day around the houses and fields, where the savages were accustomed to conceal themselves in order to surprise the colony. 'M. de Maisonneuve,' says Sister Bourgeoys, 'had enrolled sixty-three of these soldiers, in honor of the number of years which the Blessed Virgin is thought to have passed on earth. Every Sunday he appointed certain of their number to receive daily during the ensuing week, and gave them a pious exhortation. When these soldiers mounted guard, it was always with prayer; and when they had any religious duty to fulfill, they were taken to the church, where they said their prayers and performed their other devotions in common, with every appearance of satisfaction.' " *

Meanwhile, Mademoiselle Manse had her hospital already in operation, under the title of the *Hotel*

* *Vie de la Sœur Bourgeoys*, t. i., p. 77, 78.

Dieu. M. Olier being unable to come himself to Montreal as he had desired, the governor prevailed upon him to send four of his ecclesiastics to establish a seminary there for the education of priests and to minister to the spiritual wants of the rising colony, the Jesuit Fathers having no permanent settlement there, and being desirous of devoting themselves in a particular manner to their missions amongst the Indians. From this time the colony progressed rapidly under the pastoral and paternal care of the pious Sulpicians, who, in the course of some years, became seigneurs or proprietors of the island of Montreal, which was transferred to them by the company.

During the whole period of her long life, Sister Bourgeoys continued to labor, under the patronage of Mary, for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the colony. Not content with training up her pupils in the way of godliness and virtue, she instituted an External Congregation, consisting of those young women who had been brought up in her schools. This excellent confraternity is still kept up in Mont-

real under the title of the Confraternity of Our Lady of Victory.

About the same time was formed the pious confraternity of the Holy Family, which grew out of the three religious communities already in existence. The object of this association was to place before Christian families the example of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph; the men to form their conduct on that of St. Joseph, the women on that of the Blessed Virgin, and the children on that of the child Jesus.* This confraternity is also in existence at the present time.

In 1673, the wooden chapel of Our Lady of Good Aid was replaced by one of stone on the following occasion. Amongst the members of the company of Montreal, before it made over the island to the Sulpicians, there were two brothers named Le Pretre, lords of Fleury, in France. They were both very pious, and having a peculiar devotion to the Blessed Virgin, they were exceedingly anxious to promote the prosperity of her new city. For this purpose they made a sacrifice highly honorable to them-

* selves, and well calculated to prove their generous devotion. They had, in the chapel of their castle, a small statue of the Blessed Virgin, which had been an object of particular veneration for more than a century. The desire of promoting the devotion to Mary in a colony specially consecrated to her, induced them to send this precious treasure to Montreal, with a request that it might be placed in a chapel dedicated to the Mother of God. Sister Bourgeoys happened just then to be in France on some important business for the colony, and to her care the statue was confided. It was but six or eight inches in height, skillfully carved in brown wood. The niche wherein it stood was of gilt wood, adorned with sculpture and with precious stones. This statue was at first deposited in the little wooden chapel, but the piety of the colonists did not permit it to remain long in that humble abode. They resolved to erect a stone building; and on the 30th of January, 1673, the first stone was solemnly blessed by the Superior of the seminary, amidst a general assembly of all the inhabitants of the island.

* *Vie de la Sœur Bourgeoys*, t. i., p. 170.

This church was consecrated on the 25th of August, 1675, and was the first stone church erected on the island of Montreal.* Every day a priest went there to say mass; and when Mary's festivals came round, they were celebrated with so much pomp and solemnity, that the people gathered from all parts, and the place became a famous pilgrimage. It became the term of public processions, and in times of danger or calamity, the faithful hastened thither to offer up their supplications.

In 1754, the church of Bon Secours was burned in a conflagration which destroyed a considerable portion of the city; but "great was the astonishment of all the world, and great the consolation of virtuous souls, when, on searching amongst the ruins, the venerated image of Our Lady of Good Aid was found in a state of perfect preservation." †

War and famine visited the land, so as to keep the public mind in an unsettled and anxious state, and it

* *Manuel du Pelerin de Notre Dame de Bon Secours à Montreal*, pp. 14, 15.

† *Ibid.*, p. 21.

was many years before the project of rebuilding the church could be carried into execution. On the 30th of June, 1771, the first stone of the new building was laid. This stone bore the inscription:

A. O. M.

ET

BEATÆ MARIÆ AUXILIATRICI
SUB TITULO ASSUMPTIONIS.

High up in the wall of the church, overlooking the St. Lawrence, there was a figure of the Blessed Virgin placed in a niche, inviting all those who sailed up or down the river to invoke the *Star of the Sea*. Time, and the action of the elements, have long since destroyed this venerable image.

There was in Montreal another interesting monument of past times, also dedicated to Our Lady; a church which formerly belonged to the Récollet Fathers, and from them popularly named the Church of the Récollets. It subsequently belonged to a congregation of men piously associated together under the patronage of Our Blessed Lady. It bore on its front the date, 1725. This venerable structure is now no longer in existence.

But we have yet to speak of the noblest monument of piety ever erected in these northern regions—the parish church of Montreal, dedicated to Almighty God, under the invocation of Our Lady. This magnificent structure is built in that stately style of architecture which characterized the old French and Flemish cathedrals of the Middle Ages, and though, perhaps, not quite so florid as most of them, its exterior is of rare beauty. Two lofty towers rise on either side of the portal;* in one of these there is a bell which weighs 29,400 lbs., and in the other a very good chime of bells; the *bourdon*, or great bell, is only rung on solemn occasions, and when it is, its deep, booming sound, is heard reverberating for miles along the river. The interior is divided by two rows of lofty pillars into a nave, and two lateral aisles, with a spacious choir, surrounded by the stalls of the reverend Sulpicians to whom the church belongs. The roof is groined and arched. There are two ranges of

galleries running around three sides of the walls, and opposite the choir, just over the principal entrance, is the organ-loft. Over the high altar is a niche containing a statue of Our Lady, nearly of life-size. In the side aisles there are several chapels, with altars and balustrading of dark wood, handsomely ornamented. One of these is dedicated to the Infant Jesus, another to St. Amable. These two are on either side of the high altar. There is also one bearing the name of St. Joseph, and another that of St. Anne. Each of these has a handsome altar-piece. The nave is lit by chandeliers of the most costly kind, and the aisles by oil-lamps. Before each of the altars where the Blessed Sacrament is kept, there hangs a heavy silver lamp of antique style and workmanship. Take it for all in all, it is a superb memento of Catholic piety and devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

Quebec is scarcely behind Montreal in devotion to the Mother of God. One of the first churches

* The height of the principal towers is 220 feet, and of the others 115 feet each; the great window behind the high altar is 64 feet in height,

by 32 in width. The total number of pews is 1,244, capable of seating between six and seven thousand persons. (*Guide to the Cities of Canada.*)

founded in the city was that of Our Lady of Victory, where the faithful still go to invoke the aid of her who is truly the Help of Christians. The Sisters of the Congregation have an establishment in Quebec, as they have in various parts of the country, and wherever they have charge of the rising generation of women, Mary is sure to be loved and honored.

Space will not permit me to particularize all the churches and chapels dedicated to Our Blessed Lady in Canada; suffice it to say, that many of the parish churches bear her name, and that, in all the cities and towns, there is one altar dedicated to her wherever there is a second one in the church. Throughout the rural districts Mary reigns supreme: her festivals are celebrated with all possible solemnity, and her altars adorned as richly as the means of the people will allow. There is scarcely a family all the country over without a Mary, and it is no unfrequent thing, amongst the French Canadians, to find several

* daughters of the same family bearing the name of Mary in addition to their distinctive appellations. *La Sainte Vierge* is still the chosen patroness of all Lower Canada, and it may with truth be said that the wives and mothers of that province are entirely devoted to that great Queen, and live, for the most part, as becomes her servants. Lower Canada is essentially Catholic—a fact which stares the traveller in the face as he journeys along the peaceful highways. At every few miles he will perceive a pretty parish church raising its cross-crowned steeple, and over its portal, perhaps, a small statue of the Blessed Virgin set in a niche. The exterior of these churches is simple enough, but within they are, in general, well finished and tastefully decorated.*

And the sweet Mother of Christians is not insensible to all this homage: many and many a time has she manifested her gratitude and her protecting care on behalf of these good Canadians. Passing

* There are also wooden crosses erected, at short intervals, to remind the people of Christ's passion and death; they are generally accom-

panied by some of the instruments of Our Saviour's torture—the ladder, the spear, the crown of thorns, etc., and inclosed by a wooden railing.

over the numerous instances on record, we will only mention two which occurred within the last few years in view of the whole province.

In 1847, when the terrible typhus fever raged in Montreal and in all the ports of the St. Lawrence, many of the priests had already fallen victims to the dreadful pestilence; the devoted daughters of St. Vincent de Paul, the heroic Sisters of Charity, had suffered severely, no less than thirteen of their number having died within a few weeks; the worthy bishop of Montreal was at length attacked by the fever and the whole city was thrown into consternation. Then it was, when all human succor was vain, that the faithful had recourse to the Mother of Mercy. A novena was made in the church of Bon Secours for the recovery of the bishop; the good prelate himself made a vow that if the Blessed Virgin would be pleased to arrest the progress of the pestilence by her powerful intercession, and relieve his suffering people, he would have the event recorded on canvas. The prayers were heard; the vow was accepted; the fever stopped its ravages almost immedi-

ately; the bishop recovered, contrary to all expectation, and a handsome painting was executed by his orders, representing the Emigrant Sheds, the chief scene of the pestilence, the Sisters of Charity, and some ecclesiastics in attendance on the sick, with the Blessed Virgin seated on a cloud, looking down on the sufferings and the charitable labors of her faithful servants. The picture was placed over one of the side altars in the church of Bon Secours.

The other instance referred to occurred during the visitation of the cholera to Montreal in 1849. The disease was making fearful ravages amongst the people, and was daily on the increase, when the same pious prelate* had again recourse to the maternal heart of Mary. The statue of the Blessed Virgin was borne in triumph around the city, followed by a vast concourse of people, amounting, it was thought, to twenty thousand, walking in procession with banners flying; some of the pious confraternities reciting the rosary and litany, and others

* The Right Rev. Ignatius Bourget, titular bishop of Montreal.

singing hymns. After visiting some others of the churches, the procession returned to that of Our Lady of Secour, and the scene at that moment was one which the mind cannot easily forget. It was a lovely evening, and a lovely sight, when the gray, soft, summer twilight faded into night, and the vast multitude knelt in front of the quaint old church, lighted up and wreathed with flowers as for a joyous festival. Above was the cloudless sky, where Mary sits enthroned beside her divine Son, and below, at the end of a long vista of glittering lights and over-arching boughs, was seen the statue of that amiable Virgin, reminding the thousand, thousand supplicants, of her many claims on their confidence and affection. During the solemn Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, the multitude without and within the church joined in fervent prayer. Our Lady of Bon Secours again extended her protecting arm over her own city, and in a few days the cholera disappeared from Montreal.

In gratitude for this last favor, the good bishop replaced the statue of Our Lady by one larger and more

* richly adorned, which was borne in solemn procession to the favorite shrine, and there placed over the high altar in regal state. A crowned queen, with her maternal arms extended to embrace her humble clients, Our Lady stands, as we see her in the pictures of the Immaculate Conception.

In the cities of Lower Canada, the devotion to Mary is carried on with pious fervor. The different confraternities belonging to her are all in a flourishing condition. That of the Holy Scapular is diffused all over the country, and the society of the Living Rosary is daily gaining ground. The arch-confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Mary for the Conversion of Sinners was established several years ago in Montreal, and it has borne good fruit in the numerous souls reclaimed from a life of sin through the prayers of its members and the compassionate goodness of the ever-Blessed Virgin.

Upper, or Western Canada, is still far behind the sister province in religion, owing to the comparatively small number of Catholics settled there. Indeed, the interior of the

country is even yet but thinly peopled, but its population is rapidly on the increase, and the zealous missionaries of the Cross are located here and there at regular intervals, like sentinels at their post. The Church of Upper Canada is growing fast under the watchful care of the bishops. These eminent prelates are all fervently devoted to Mary, and are using their best endeavors, in concert with their respective clergy, to promote her honor and glory; to enrol the faithful in her confraternities, and to place churches under her invocation. Convents are already established in each of the cities, and both Kingston and Toronto have magnificent cathedrals; Ottawa, too, has a large and handsome cathedral, erected within the last few years.

In the lower provinces of British America religion begins to raise her head. Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and the island of Newfoundland, have now their titular bishops, suffragans of the archiepiscopal see of Halifax. A good bishop of St. John's, N. F.,* undertook to prosecute the building

of a spacious cathedral, commenced many years before by his predecessor,† and nothing could equal the enthusiasm with which the honest fishermen of Newfoundland seconded his pious undertaking. The people not only furnished great part of the building materials, but drew them to the spot, and the church being placed on a steep hill, it was no easy matter to draw heavy loads to the top. But this was no obstacle, or at least it was one which the piety of the people easily overcame; it was no uncommon thing to see several fishermen drawing a cart up the hill loaded with wood or stone, and all seemed vying with each other who should do most to forward the work. Every one gave what he could: those who had nothing else, freely gave their manual labor. It has been justly observed that never, in modern times, was the faith of Catholics, and its all-powerful efficacy, so strikingly displayed as in the building of a superb cathedral by the poor fishermen of Newfoundland.

* The late lamented Bishop Mullock, an Irish Franciscan.

† Right Rev. Dr. Fleming.

In August, 1852, there was a provincial synod held in Quebec, on which occasion nearly all the prelates of British America were present either in person or by proxy. The bishops of Upper Canada were met in Montreal by some of the prelates of the lower provinces, and, after vespers on a Sunday evening, a procession was formed consisting of the greater part of the Catholic population of the city, to visit Our Blessed Lady in her shrine of Bon Secours, and to implore her blessing on the council about to open during the following week; at the head of the procession walked six bishops with the reverend Superior of the seminary, followed by the countless multitude of the faithful. A solemn benediction was given at the altar of *Bon Secours*, and one of the prelates* addressed the people from the steps of the church, announcing the object of the approaching assembly in Quebec, and soliciting the prayers of the people on behalf of their pas-

tors during the sitting of the council, that the Holy Ghost might preside over their deliberations, and that Mary might be with them as she was of old with the Apostles when they met together. This scene is one of the proudest and most cherished reminiscences in the annals of Montreal, and will, we doubt not, be related with pride and pleasure by generations yet unborn.

It may be well to mention here that the Indian tribes of Canada are for the most part firmly attached to the Catholic faith. They have a large settlement near Quebec, named Loretto;† one near the southern shore of the St. Lawrence, named Caughnawaga, some miles above Montreal, and another on the Lake of the Two Mountains, an expansion of the river Ottawa. These people are extremely simple and well-disposed, and are remarkable for their piety and reverence for religion.

When Bishop Flaget visited Canada, a few years before his death,

* The Right Rev. Armand de Charbonnel, then bishop of Toronto.

† The Chapel of Loretto was founded by the

Jesuit Father Chaumonot, in fulfillment of a vow made by him in France; it was opened for service in 1674, and is an exact counterpart of the famous *Santa Casa*.

he was taken by the Sulpicians of Montreal to visit the Indian village on the Lake of the Two Mountains, where an old schoolmate of his was their pastor. Here a large band of Algonquins came to visit him and to receive his blessing. They bore before them a crimson banner, inscribed with the *Ave Maria* of the Sulpicians; and falling upon their knees, appeared full of humility and faith. They conducted him to their village, and on his arrival, he was saluted with firing of cannon, while all the inhabitants were on their knees to receive his benediction. At this mass the Indians chanted canticles in two responding choirs, and the bishop was moved even to *

tears. He next visited their superb Calvary carved in wood.* This representation of Calvary is a work of great ingenuity: it is situated on a sand-hill behind the village, and is used by the Indians as a sort of pilgrimage. What a beautiful proof is here of the maternal tenderness of the Catholic Church, and her wonderful power as a conservator of the human race. Had not these Algonquins and Ottawas been converted to Catholicity, and remained faithful to its precepts, they would in all probability have disappeared long ago from the face of the earth, like many of their kindred tribes.

* *Life of Bishop Flaget*, p. 191.



CHAPTER XV.

DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN IN THE UNITED STATES.



IF Canada and the other British provinces were discovered and settled under the auspices of Mary, the same may be truly said of the Great West. Father Marquette, the illustrious Jesuit missionary, who, in pursuit of "the lost sheep" through the pathless forests of the West, discovered the great river since known as the Mississippi, tells us himself that he had "always invoked Mary since he had been in the Ottawa country, to obtain of God the grace to be able to visit the nations on the river Mississippi."* His biographer tells us that "from his pious mother the youthful Marquette imbibed that warm, generous, and unwavering devotion to the Mother of God, which makes him so conspicuous among her servants."† Marquette was, in relation to the Mis-

issippi, what Jacques Cartier was to the St. Lawrence: each disclosed to the civilized world a vast region before unknown, and both were servants of Mary. No other discoverer, in ancient or modern times, occupies so grand a position in history as the Jesuit Marquette. Others labored and explored at the bidding of earthly princes, for the advancement of human science, or, perhaps, even for self-aggrandizement, but Marquette did all, undertook all, *for the greater glory of God*, according to the well-known motto of his order: no earthly prince or princess gave him his commission—Jesus Christ was *his* sovereign, and Mary "the patroness of his mission." Thus we find him having recourse to her in all his doubts and dangers. "Despairing now of being able to reach his destined goal without the interposition of Heaven, the missionary turned to the patroness of his mission, the Blessed Virgin Immaculate,

* *Life of Father Marquette*, by J. G. Shea,

† *Narrative of Father Marquette*, p. 6.

and with his two companions began a novena in her honor. Nor was his trust betrayed," adds the biographer; "God heard his prayer, and his illness ceased. During this painful wintering, which, for all his expressions of comfort, was one of great hardship and suffering, his hours were chiefly spent in prayer. Convinced that the term of his existence was drawing rapidly to a close, he consecrated this period of quiet to the exercises of a spiritual retreat, in which his soul overflowed

* with heavenly consolation, as rising above its frail and now tottering tenement, it soared towards that glorious home it was so soon to enter."* When opening a new mission amongst the savages, we find him adorning the rustic altar which he had raised with pictures of the Blessed Virgin, under whose invocation he had placed his new mission;† and when he felt his end approaching, the names of Jesus and Mary were ever on his lips.‡ He died as he had lived, devoted to

* *Life of Father Marquette*, p. 69.

† *Ibid.*

‡ The account of the death of this famous missionary is so very beautiful that we cannot forbear giving it here. "Calmly and cheerfully he saw the approach of death, for which he prepared by assiduous prayer; his office he regularly recited to the last day of his life; a meditation on death, which he had long since prepared for this hour, he now made the subject of his thoughts; and as his kind but simple companions seemed overwhelmed at the prospect of their approaching loss, he blessed some water with the usual ceremonies, gave his companions directions how to act in his last moments, how to arrange his body when dead, and to commit it to the earth with the ceremonies he prescribed. He now seemed but to seek a grave. At last perceiving the mouth of a river which still bears his name, he pointed to an eminence as the place of his burial. . . . His companions then erected a little bark cabin, and stretched the dying missionary beneath it as comfortably as their want permitted them. Still a priest,

rather than a man, he thought of his ministry, and, for the last time, heard the confessions of his companions, and encouraged them to rely with confidence on the protection of God, then sent them to take the repose they so much needed. When he felt his agony approaching, he called them, and taking his crucifix from around his neck, he placed it in their hands, and thanked the Almighty for the favor of permitting him to die a Jesuit, a missionary, and alone. Then he relapsed into silence, interrupted only by his pious aspirations, till at last, with the names of Jesus and Mary on his lips, with his eyes raised as if in ecstasy above his crucifix, with his face all radiant with joy, he passed from the scene of his labors to the God who was to be his reward. Obedient to his directions, his companions, when the first outbursts of grief were over, laid out the body for burial, and to the sound of his little chapel-bell, bore it slowly to the spot which he had pointed out. Here they committed his body to the earth, and raising a cross above it, returned to their now desolate cabin. Such was the edify-

the Mother of God, who had ever been the especial object of his love and veneration. "The privilege," says his biographer, "which the Church honors under the title of the Immaculate Conception, was the constant object of his thoughts; from his earliest youth, he daily recited the little office of the Immaculate Conception, and fasted every Saturday in Our Lady's honor. As a missionary, a variety of devotions directed to the same end, still show his love for her, and to her he turned in all his trials. When he discovered the great river, when he founded his new mission, he gave it the name of the Conception, and no letter, it is said, ever came from his hand that did not contain the words, "Blessed Virgin Immaculate." The smile that lighted up his dying face, induced his companions to believe that she had appeared before the eyes of her devoted client.*

That the Blessed Virgin took an active part in the discovery of the Mississippi, no candid mind can doubt. Marquette himself tells us

ing and holy death of the illustrious explorer of the Mississippi, on Saturday, 18th May, 1675."
—*Life of Father Marquette*, p. lxxi.

in his narrative that "he put his voyage under her protection, promising her, that if she did them the favor to discover the great river, he would give it the name of Conception, and that he would also give that name to the first mission which he should establish among those new nations, as he actually did among the Illinois."† . . . The name which the pious missionary gave to the Mississippi is found only in his own narrative, and on the map which accompanies it. The name of the Immaculate Conception, which he gave to the mission among the Kaskaskias, was retained as long as that mission lasted, and is now the title of the church in the present town of Kaskaskia. Although his wish was not realized in the name of the great river, it has been fulfilled in the fact that the Blessed Virgin, under the title of the Immaculate Conception, has been chosen by the prelates of the United States assembled in a national council, as the patroness of the whole country, so that not only in the vast

* *Life of Father Marquette*, p. lxxii

† *Narrative*, sec. i. p. 8.

valley of the Mississippi, but from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the Blessed Virgin *Immaculate* is as dear to every American Catholic as is Our Lady of Guadalupe to our Mexican neighbors."*

The immediate successors of Marquette in the evangelization of the western regions were scarcely less devoted to Mary than he was himself. Thus we find Father Hennepin, a Récollet friar, during his missions on the Upper Mississippi, chanting the Litany of the Blessed Virgin as he journeyed with his Indians in a canoe on the great river. The name of Mary, and the glorious titles wherewith the Church delights to honor her, were among the first sounds that awoke the slumbering echoes of the Father of Waters after its discovery by Europeans.

When the great valley of the Mississippi became partially peopled by settlers from the different nations of Europe, religion continued to progress until the fatal breaking up of the Jesuit missions, when those zealous champions of the Cross were

* forced to leave the rich harvest of their toil to be gathered in by others; then the scattered flock, being deprived of pastoral care, and surrounded by a half-heathen population, began to lose the fervor and simplicity of that faith which they had received in happier days. Coldness and indifference prevailed among them; and how could it be otherwise, when they had neither bishop, nor priest, nor sacrament? The Catholic regions of the West and South, the conquests of the Jesuits and Récollets, were fast falling away from their high vocation. The Eastern and Middle States were meanwhile peopled with an active, bustling population, professing either some Protestant *fancy*, which they called religion, or otherwise no religion save that of expediency and worldly prosperity. The immense countries now constituting the United States were on the point of being lost to the Universal Church, but God in his own good time raised up the means of defence. A branch of the order of St. Sulpice was founded at Baltimore, in the Catholic State of Maryland, about the year 1791, and their establishment was a tower

* *Narrative of Father Marquette*, sec. i., p. 8, note.

of strength for Catholicity. The priests whom they trained for the mission were men of rare prudence and of fervent zeal, devoted to the Blessed Mother of God, and ready to sacrifice all for the honor and glory of God. Baltimore had already a bishop, the only one south of the St. Lawrence, east or west of the Alleghanies. The venerable Bishop Carroll bore on his own shoulders the whole episcopal burden of all those infant churches founded by the early missionaries, and none but a man endowed with the rarest qualities, and the most vigorous intellect, could have borne as he did, for many years, this heavy weight of care and responsibility, or fulfilled the arduous duties of his sacred office.

In 1792 pious missionaries arrived from France, and among them was M. Flaget, afterwards bishop of Louisville. "Having unreservedly offered his services to Bishop Carroll, he cheerfully accepted from the latter the distant mission of Vincennes, where there was a considerable number of French settlers, who had been long deprived of the services of a clergyman. . . . M. Flaget

arrived at Vincennes a few days before Christmas, 1792. He found the church in a sadly dilapidated state. It was a very poor log building, open to the weather, neglected, and almost tottering. The altar was a temporary structure of boards badly put together. . . . The congregation was, if possible, in a still more miserable condition than the church. Out of nearly seven hundred souls of whom it was composed, the missionary was able, with all his zealous efforts, to induce only twelve to approach the Holy Communion during the Christmas festivities. His heart was filled with anguish at the spiritual desolation which brooded over the place."* But things were soon changed: the zealous efforts of the pious missionary, through the grace of God, soon fructified, and a manifest change took place in the congregation, so that, at his departure from Vincennes, he might say with truth, says his biographer, "that if but twelve adults could be found, on his first arrival, to approach the Holy Communion, there was then probably not more than that number

* *Life of Bishop Flaget*, ch. i., pp. 30, 33, 35.

of persons who were not pious communicants."

In 1811 the excellent pastor of Vincennes was made bishop of Bardstown, in Kentucky, the first bishopric erected in the West. It was much against his will that he accepted the appointment, but he could not disobey the positive injunction of the Holy See, and cheerfully gave up his own will for the good of religion and the salvation of souls. He tells us himself, in a letter to the directors of the Association for the Propagation of the Faith, that it was six months afterwards before he was enabled to reach Bardstown, his episcopal see, and that through a subscription made by his friends in Baltimore.*

There was, as yet, no church in Bardstown—a poor prospect for a bishop; but M. Flaget was not the man to be easily discouraged where there was question of doing good, or advancing the interests of religion. The ceremony of his installation must, we think, be interesting to our readers. "The bishop there found the faithful kneeling on the grass, and singing canticles in

* English: the country women were nearly all dressed in white, and many of them were still fasting, though it was then four o'clock in the evening; they having entertained a hope to be able on that day to assist at his mass, and to receive the Holy Communion from his hands. An altar had been prepared at the entrance of the first court, under a bower composed of four small trees which overshadowed it with their foliage. Here the bishop put on his pontifical robes. After the aspersion of the holy water, he was conducted to the chapel in procession, *with the singing of the Litany of the Blessed Virgin*, and the whole closed with the prayers and ceremonies prescribed for the occasion in the Roman Pontifical."†

Here again we see Mary presiding over the installation of the first bishop of the West; and that the new prelate considered her protection as of the last importance to religion is clearly proved by the interesting memoir from which we have already quoted. In passing through Lancaster, a village on his way, he found some Catholic fam-

* *Annals of the Propagation*, vol. iii., p. 189.

† *Life of Bishop Flaget*, ch. iv., p. 72.

ilies of good standing in society, and baptized their children. He had hopes that a good congregation would, in time, be formed there; but he remarked with regret that "the devotion to the Holy Virgin seemed unknown in those parts."*

At another station where the good Bishop remained some days, he found the church in such a miserable condition that he could not say mass. Not much more than a quarter of a century has since passed away, yet these poor villages, so utterly destitute of religious accommodation, have many of them become large cities and episcopal sees, so rapidly do things progress in the West. The biographer of Bishop Flaget quotes in this connection an interesting passage from the *Annals of the Propagation*: "Following the traces of this journey of seven hundred leagues, one would say, that wherever Bishop Flaget pitched his tent, he there laid the foundations of a new church, and that each one of his principal halts was destined to become a bishopric. There is Vincennes, in Indiana; there is Detroit,

* in Michigan; there is Cincinnati, the principal city of Ohio; there is Buffalo, on the borders of the lakes; there is Pittsburgh, which he evangelized in returning to Louisville, after thirteen months' absence, after having given missions wherever, on his route, there was a colony of whites, a plantation of slaves, or a village of Indians."

In 1799 the Russian prince Galitzin, a convert to the Catholic faith, who might well be called one of the apostles of North America, established in western Pennsylvania a mission under the title of *Loretto*, doubtless under the invocation of the Blessed Virgin.

In 1812 a convent was founded in Kentucky, by the Rev. Charles Nerinkx, for the education of young females, "and was called *Loretto*, after the famous asylum of the Holy Virgin in Italy. Besides the object alluded to above, the sisterhood was to take charge of destitute orphans, and its members were taught to love poverty, and to earn their own livelihood by manual labor. They were to cherish a special devotion towards that model and pride of her sex, the pure and holy One,—

* *Life of Bishop Flaget*, p. 109.

'Our tainted nature's solitary boast,'
the Immaculate Mary, Mother of
God made man. They were styled,
'The Lovers of Mary at the foot of
the Cross.' Standing with her near
the Cross, they were daily to sym-
pathize with the dying Son and the
afflicted Mother, with the pious ejac-
ulations: 'O suffering Jesus! O sor-
rowful Mary!' Such was the idea
of the sainted founder, and God be-
stowed an abundant blessing on his
enterprise. The society grew apace,
and the most edifying fervor reigned
throughout the establishment of Lo-
retto. The mother house was soon
able to send out colonies to other
parts of Kentucky, and subse-
quently to found houses in Missouri
and Arkansas.*

"These women sought for pov-
erty in every thing: in their monas-
teries, and in the plain neatness of
their chapels. . . . They were the
edification of all who knew them,
and their singular piety and pen-
itential lives reminded one of all
that we have read of the ancient
monasteries of Palestine and The-
bais."†

"The same year (1812) which

* gave birth to the Loretto Society,
likewise witnessed the commence-
ment of another sisterhood, destined
also to do much for promoting the
cause of religion and education."‡
The mother house of this community
is named Nazareth, in commemora-
tion of the humble abode of Mary.
The members are known as the Sis-
ters of Charity, and they are devot-
ed to the twofold object of teaching
and exercising the corporeal and
spiritual works of mercy. The in-
stitution has attained a high rep-
utation for sanctity and usefulness,
and has extended itself far and near
over the country.

In 1819, when, in consequence of
the increasing age and the numer-
ous infirmities of the venerable
Bishop Flaget, a coadjutor was
given him, the new prelate was
consecrated on the Feast of the
Assumption, in the newly-erected
cathedral of Louisville. "This was
the first episcopal consecration
which took place beyond (or west
of) the Alleghany mountains," and
we see that the ceremony was per-
formed under the auspices of Our
Blessed Lady.

* *Life of Bishop Flaget*, p. 289-90.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Ibid.*, 291, 293.

In 1820 the college of St. Joseph was founded, and in 1821 that of St. Mary's; both in Kentucky. Thus did the pious bishop, who was mainly instrumental in founding both, place the education of the rising generation under the tutelary care of Mary and her blessed spouse.

This holy patriarch of the West went to Rome about the year 1837, and having business to transact at Vienna, he made it a point to visit the sanctuary of Loretto, "to satisfy that tender devotion he had from childhood cherished towards the Immaculate Virgin, Mother of God. He made a retreat there, under the direction of the Jesuit Father.* God was pleased to attest the sanctity of this holy prelate, even by the gift of miracles, as we see from his Memoirs. The young lady thus miraculously cured was a Miss Olympia de Monti; she was attacked by a fever, which finally became of the most malignant kind, and she was reduced to the very point of death. She received the Holy Viaticum with sentiments of the greatest fervor, and made up her mind that she was to

die. Just then Bishop Flaget was induced to pay her a visit. When Madame de Monti had conducted him to her daughter's room, she retired. The bishop remained fifteen or twenty minutes with Miss de Monti. She afterwards related to her parents that he gave her his blessing twice, and made the sign of the cross on her forehead. Moreover, the holy prelate promised to pray for her intention during nine consecutive days, and recommended to her to recite the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus, *and a prayer to the Blessed Virgin*. The prayers were heard, and the young lady was restored to health. This miracle is so well authenticated that no rational mind can doubt it.† Jesus and Mary, never invoked in vain, were pleased to honor their faithful servant by this miraculous cure.

"He had always cherished a most tender devotion to the Virgin Mother of God; he had imbibed this feeling at the same pure fountain of living waters from which all the saints of God, from St. John, the beloved disciple, down to St. Alphonso Liguori, drank it in so abundantly. He had

* *Life of Bishop Flaget*, p. 315.

† *Ibid.*, p. 318-323.

made it a practice through life to recite a part of the Rosary daily; and now, while unable to perform other devotions which required reading, he gladly availed himself of the occasion to multiply this simple, but touching form of supplication."*

Following the march of civilization to the Far West, we find in the van the stalwart champion of the Cross, the Rev. Father de Smet, S. J., and M. Blanchet, now the venerable archbishop of Walla-Walla. The former may truly be called the Apostle of Oregon, the greatest explorer of the Western wilderness since the days of Father Marquette.

We find this illustrious missionary planting the devotion to Mary wherever he went, side by side with the worship of God. At each of his principal missions he gave her name to either a church, a school, or some other charitable institution. Thus, when a convent of the sisters of *Notre Dame* was established in Willamette, its chapel received the name of St. Mary's; when a church was erected amongst the Flathead Indians, it was named St. Mary's

* Church; that established amongst the Flatbaws was dedicated to Mary, under the title of the Assumption, and that of the Koetensis was called the Church of the Holy Heart of Mary.† "Nowhere," says Father de Smet himself—"nowhere does religion make greater progress or present brighter prospects for the future than in Oregon."‡ We have every reason to hope that this remark will be verified, for the foundations of those infant churches were well laid. "On the Feast of the Holy Heart of Mary," says the missionary again, "I sang High Mass, thus taking spiritual possession of this land, which was now for the first time trodden by a minister of the Most High. This station bears the name of the Holy Heart of Mary."§ Speaking of another tribe amongst whom he celebrated the Feast of the Assumption, he says: "Since my arrival among the Indians, the feast of the glorious Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary has ever been to me a day of great consolation. . . . The Cross was elevated on the border of a

* *Life of Bishop Flaget*, p. 350.

† *Oregon Missions*, p. 50.

‡ *Oregon Missions*, p. 98.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

lake, and the station received the beautiful name of the Assumption. Under the auspices of this good Mother, in whose honor they have for many years sung canticles, we hope that religion will take deep root and flourish amidst this tribe, where union, innocence, and simplicity reign in full vigor."* A Canadian, settled in those parts, had been many years without seeing a priest, and on hearing of the arrival of the missionaries at the source of the Columbia (near which he resided), he hastened thither with his wife and children in order to have them baptized. "The Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, this favor was conferred on them. . . . This was a solemn day for the desert! The august sacrifice of Mass was offered; Morigeau devoutly approached the holy table. At the foot of the humble altar he received the nuptial benediction, and the mother, surrounded by her children and six little Indians, was regenerated in the holy waters of baptism. In memory of so many benefits, a large cross was erected

* *Oregon Missions*, p. 135.

† *Ibid.*, p. 121.

in the plain, which, from that time, is called the *Plain of the Nativity*."†

The name of St. Mary's river was also given to one of the principal streams in those remote regions,‡ so that woods and wilds, and waters were alike consecrated to her, and her name impressed on every striking object. When the good Indians prayed for their benefactors, it was the rosary they recited for them, § invoking the tender heart of Mary on their behalf. "How happy should I be," writes Father de Smet to one of these benefactors; "how happy should I be, could I give you to understand how great, how sweet, how enrapturing is their devotion to the august Mother of God! The name of Mary, which pronounced in the Indian language, is something so sweet and endearing, delights and charms them. The hearts of these good children of the forest melt, and seem to overflow, when they sing the praises of her whom they, as well as we, call their Mother."|| In another place, the whole week preceding the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary was devoted

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

§ *Ibid.*, pp. 245, 246.

|| *Ibid.* p. 284.

to the preparation for receiving the Holy Communion on that festival. And again, we find the hunting-party who travelled with the missionary, stopping under the shade of a majestic tree to celebrate the Feast of the Divine Maternity. "The sun's last rays had long disappeared beneath the horizon, ere all was ready for the evening prayer. After which, notwithstanding the fatigues of the day, a fire was kindled before the missionary's tent, and the greater part of the night consecrated by these fervent children of the woods, to the reconciliation of their souls with God."*

How beautiful is the fervor of these guileless Christians; how edifying their example! Religious confraternities had been formed amongst them at St. Mary's, and when their spiritual father was forced to leave them, to bear the tidings of salvation to others of their brethren, we find them adding some short ejaculations to their morning and evening prayers; "first, to the Heart of Jesus, as protector of the men's Confraternity; second, to the Blessed Virgin, patroness of

* the women's Sodality; third, to St. Michael, model of the brave; fourth, to St. Raphael, the guide of travellers; fifth, to St. Hubert, the patron of hunters; sixth, to St. Francis Xavier, for the conversion of idolaters. We shall see," adds the zealous missionary, "that these pious aspirations were not addressed to Heaven in vain." Let us hope that such may be the case, and that the vast regions thus happily evangelized, may continue to progress in civilization—that true civilization founded on religion—and that Mary, the Mother of God, may ever reign over the hearts of its people, of what origin soever they may be.

Thus we see that the holy Mother of God presided over the discovery and the evangelization of all the northern, southern, and western regions of the American continent. If her influence was not so apparent in the discovery or settlement of the Middle and Eastern countries of North America, she has since obtained the supreme honor of being chosen patroness of all the United States. Owing to the wonderful increase of Catholicity in that country, there is no city within its vast

* *Oregon Missions*, pp. 389, 390.

extent, that has not one or more churches dedicated to the Mother of God, under her numerous titles, while churches and chapels, convents, schools, hospitals, and institutions of various kinds, bearing her name, are everywhere met. Some of the largest and grandest cathedrals either are, or will be, placed under her gracious patronage. From the stormy coast of Maine to the sunny shores of Alabama, and Florida, and Louisiana, and from St. Louis, Dubuque, Chicago, and Milwaukee, to New York and Boston, monumental churches and charities in honor of Mary Immaculate, cover the land. On the highest point of the Alleghanies is seated *Loretto*, the thriving Catholic settlement, with its handsome church, founded by the Russian prince, Demetrius de Gallitzin, in honor of the ever-Blessed Virgin; and where the mighty cataract of the North pours the waters of one region into the lap of another, over that sublime scene Our Lady of the Angels now presides in a college of the Lazarist Fathers, and Our Lady of Loretto in a convent of the Sisters of Loretto.

Each new diocese, as it springs

into existence, adds its quota of churches, chapels, convents and schools to swell the long list of Mary's foundations in America. Confraternities and sodalities in her honor, are numerous in all the cities and towns, and even in the rural districts. The Society of the Holy Rosary, those of the Scapular, the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the Conversion of Sinners, the Sodality of the Children of Mary, etc., are everywhere established. Processions in honor of the Mother of God take place regularly in the churches, and the devotion of the Month of Mary is faithfully practised in all parts of America. Even in the land of the Pilgrim Fathers, Puritan New England, churches in honor of the Mother of God raise their spires to heaven all the country over. In Boston, the chief of the New England cities, Our Lady has three stately temples dedicated to her, under her titles of the Immaculate Conception, Gate of Heaven, and Star of the Sea; so, in New York, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, and, indeed, all the cities of the Union. True, the wayside Madonnas are nowhere to be seen in the United

States, the gracious image of the Virgin-Mother smiles not down on her children in the streets or squares of our cities; nevertheless, the devotion to Mary is seated deep in the hearts of American Catholics in every section of the country.

Canada, and especially Lower Canada, has, as we have seen, been devoted from the first to the Blessed Virgin. The fervor of the early settlers has scarcely, if at all, diminished, and Mary is now, in the nineteenth century, as loved and honored by the great mass of the French Canadians as she was two hundred years ago, when Champlain and de Maisonneuve, Sister Bourgeoys, and Madame de la Pelletrie vied with each other in promoting her glory. Nor is this devotion of Mary confined to the descendants of the French settlers; the Irish emigrants are gradually spreading abroad over all the country, and wherever they go, they bring with them at least the germ of that devotion, and readily fall in with the French ceremonies and religious exercises, in honor of her who is especially dear to them as the most afflicted of Catholic nations. In

fact, no people are more sincerely devout to Mary than the Irish. From their earliest youth they are trained up in love and reverence for her; the devotion of the Rosary and that of the Holy Scapular are popular in every part of Ireland, and in the cities there are various other confraternities established in honor of Mary. Hence it is that they propagate, with the Catholic faith, that reverence for the Blessed Virgin which has raised so many noble churches and convents in her honor throughout the United States. The German Catholics have also contributed largely to spread this devotion; many of their churches in the American cities are dedicated to Mary, while the Spanish element, so strong in the South and Southwest, has done much to promote the public veneration of the Mother of God.

America, then, from north to south, from Hudson's Bay to the Gulf of Mexico, and from Chili to Massachusetts, is deeply imbued with devotion to Mary. Montreal, lately the capital of the British provinces, is still, and will, we trust, ever be the city of Mary, seated like

a queen on her own majestic river, and watching with anxious interest the increasing homage offered to her divine Mistress in the less favored countries around. Even in the United States the prospect is cheering. Religious communities are springing up everywhere under the auspices of the bishops, and the masses of the people are beginning to catch some of the holy fervor of their prelates.

In Ireland, the Apostle-nation of the world, a great revival has been going on for many years. Religious institutions are being founded and revived all the country over; the ancient churches and monasteries,

* so long ruined and deserted, are now being restored; some of them with renovated splendor, and the National University, some years ago founded in Dublin, will be, as it were, an impregnable bulwark for the Irish Church—a wall of brass rearing itself up against the furious attacks of heresy and infidelity. And Mary will reign as a queen within those honored walls, presiding over the education of the generations who are yet to come, and of the faithful missionaries who are to perpetuate the faith of Christ. and the devotion to her through all the nations of the earth, who *in her are blessed.*



Pilgrimages.

CHAPTER XVI.

PILGRIMAGES OF FRANCE.



THE practice of making pilgrimages," says M. Michaud,* "has been encouraged in all religions; it is, moreover, based on a sentiment natural to man."

This remark is just and true; all nations have had consecrated places whither they made it a duty to repair, at certain commemorative periods, to obtain favors more easily from the divinity, by visiting the sites which they believed sanctified by his presence or by his miracles.

Pilgrimages are as ancient as society itself; those of the East are, nearly all, connected with diluvian memories; indeed, those pilgrimages, whose institution is lost in the obscurity of time, have generally, for their object, the lofty moun-

tains whereon was formed the kernel of the great nations of Asia, who choose to descend, like their rivers, from the rocky bosom of their mountains. The Chinese, who style themselves Sons of the Mountains, climb on their knees the steep sides of Kicou-hou-chan; the eastern Tartars go to venerate the mountain of Chan-pa-chan, as the root of their tribes, and some of the Gentile Hindoos, that of Pyrapan-jal; the Japanese undertake, at least, once in their life, the perilous pilgrimage of Jsje, a mountain from which their ancestors descended: the Apalachites, or Floridian savages, repair, on the return of every season, to sacrifice on Mount Olaïmi, in thanksgiving to the sun, who, they say, saved their fathers from a deluge, etc. These pilgrimages are founded on traditions corrupted by time, but undoubtedly historical; in them are perceived

* *Hist. des Crois.*, t. i.

the traces and the effects of the terror which prompted the building of the famous Tower of Babel. Discouraged by the confusion of tongues, the post-diluvian tribes, finding that they could not take refuge in towers reaching to the clouds, took up their abode on high mountains, to preserve themselves, if possible, from the disastrous consequences of another deluge. It was only when pasturage failed on the mountains, and the soil would not yield sufficient produce to support the rising colonies, that they were forced to settle on the plains, which they had often to drain before they were fit for tillage. Hence comes the respect entertained by the Eastern nations for their sacred mountains—a respect which they testify by annual visits, accompanied by vows, offerings, and prayers.

After having venerated the cradle of nations, men venerated that of creeds; then the sites which recalled great remembrances; then persons who made themselves illustrious by heroic or religious acts. Thus it is that the gratitude of the Jewish people preserves, from

age to age, the tomb of Esther and of Mardocheï, whither the Hebrews, from every part of Asia, have gone on pilgrimage for two thousand years. Strange it is that the tomb of two exiles, erected by the gratitude of some captives, has survived the great Assyrian empire, and that it alone saves the ruins of Ecbatana from utter oblivion!

Man is like the ivy; he must rest somewhere, and cling to something, that he may have courage to live. When he finds neither sympathy nor consolation among his fellows, he instinctively conjures up the beings of a better world, and seeks from them that succor which society either will not or cannot give. Of this we have a remarkable proof in the conduct of the Indians, when oppressed by the first Portuguese viceroys; these unarmed and inoffensive people, finding neither protection nor support from the successors of Alfonso d'Albuquerque, sat down, as suppliants, before the tomb of that great man, to demand from the illustrious dead that justice which the living would not grant either to their rights or their prayers.

Protestantism, which discolors and pulverizes all it touches, did not fail to do away with the pious visits which Christians made in every age to places sanctified by the sufferings of Christ, or those which his Mother made famous by her favors. Turks, the infuriate enemies of images, have lighted golden lamps before the altars of Mary; but what Protestant has ever placed a lamp in the Holy Sepulchre; what Protestant has prayed before the manger of Bethlehem, as did Saladin and the Caliph Omar? "These local devotions," say they, "are superstitions: God is everywhere." Doubtless God is everywhere, and Catholics know it well; they have not yet to learn the first question of their catechism. They knew, fifteen centuries before the

* time of the apostate monk, Luther, and they know it now, that God hears in all places the prayer of the faithful soul; but what is there to prevent God from attaching some particular graces to those ancient shrines where he has often vouchsafed to manifest his power by prodigies? There was many a verdant hill in Judea which he might have pointed out to David for the place of his temple, yet he chose the rocky threshing-floor of Areuna, the Jebusite, because he had there once before displayed his mercy;* and also, if we may believe a charming tradition, preserved like a desert-flower amid the dark tents of Arabia, because the place was sanctified of old by a noble instance of fraternal love.† Man is, by nature, so imperfect and so prone to

* It was over the threshing-floor of Areuna that the destroying angel ceased his ravages, after the prayer of David. "From all time," says a great ecclesiastical writer, "God has particularly marked out certain places for receiving the prayers and vows of men. One must be more incredulous as to the history of the Church than to any other, not to believe that God wishes his saints to be specially honored in certain places, where He bestows graces not given elsewhere, and this in order to attract the nations.

† Jerusalem was a ploughed field; two brothers owned the lot of ground on which the Temple was subsequently built; one of these brothers was married, and had several children; the other lived alone; but they farmed together the piece of ground left them by their father. The harvest-time being come, the two brothers bound up their sheaves, of which they made two equal shares, and left them on the field. During the night there came a happy thought into the mind of the unmarried brother. He said to himself, "My brother has a wife and

evil, that he has always some expiation to make before approaching the source of all sanctity; when that expiation seems to him in some measure proportionate to the fault, he feels a more sensible trust in the assistance of Heaven; hence came the generous confidence of the martyrs, who hoped in proportion to their sufferings. The pilgrim acts on the same principle; to prayer he adds fatigue, privation, and the toil of travel, and he hopes, in virtue of the sufferings he imposes on himself, that he may find favor with God, who himself suffered so much! How can such a hope be vain?

The eminent historian Robertson, unblinded by the narrow privileges of his sect, candidly acknowledges

children to feed, and it is not meet that my share should be as large as his; I will go then and put some of my sheaves with his secretly; knowing nothing of it, he cannot refuse them." And he did accordingly. The same night, the other brother awoke, and said to his wife, "My brother is young; he lives alone, and has no one to comfort him in his toil and fatigue; it is not just that we should take from the common field as much as he; let us arise and add some of our sheaves to his without his knowledge, so that he cannot refuse to take the sheaves." And it was done as he said. Next day, each of the brothers was surprised to see that the heaps

the benefits for which Europe is indebted to foreign pilgrimages. In the first place, the enfranchisement of the commons, the creation of commerce and shipping, the propagation of knowledge, the improvement of agriculture, and the introduction of numberless plants and trees, with various kinds of grain, which now contribute to the maintenance of the Western nations; then, the emancipation of the serfs to which the pilgrimages contributed more than any thing else; for the feudal lord who mingled, barefoot,* with the pilgrims of all conditions who set out with him on some holy journey (*véage*), more easily understood, in those hours of penance and humility, that those despised slaves, whom antiquity

were still equal; neither could account for the prodigy. So it went on for several nights; but as each carried to his brother's heap just the same number of sheaves, the heap always remained the same, till, one night, both having sat up to watch for the cause of this miracle, they both met with their load of sheaves. Now, the place where so good a thought came at once into the minds of two men, and was so perseveringly carried out, must be a place agreeable to God, and the men blessed it, and chose it for the site of a house of prayer.

* See *Memoirs of the Sire de Joinville*.

placed in the rank of *things*, were his brethren before God, and, when he obtained the grace which he came to seek, far away from his castle, in some ancient shrine, it often came into his mind to free a certain number of his vassals, in honor of Christ, the enemy of slavery, and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is nought but meekness and mercy.*

Pilgrimages, which date from the Deluge,† and have been adopted by all nations, strengthen the religious sentiment amongst Catholics, opening the soul to many a generous and sanctifying emotion;‡ let Protestants, then, in their utter ignorance of the human heart, say what they may, pilgrimages are good, and useful, and praiseworthy, and well-pleasing to the Divinity. We see this pious practice in use from the first ages of the Church; Mary, the holy women, and the

Apostles, were the first pilgrims, and the faithful of Europe and Asia quickly followed their example.

"People throng hither," wrote St. Jerome, in the fourth century, "from every part of the world: Jerusalem is full of men from every nation. Every Gaul of distinction comes to Jerusalem. The Breton, beyond the range of our knowledge, if he have made any progress in religion, leaves his wild home to visit a land which he knows only by name and on the testimony of the Scriptures. Need I speak of Armenians, Persians, the people of India, of Ethiopia, of Egypt fertile in solitaries, of Pontus, of Cappadocia, of the two Syrias, of Mesopotamia, and the swarms of Christians that the East pours forth. According to the Saviour's own words, where the body is there shall the eagles gather. They come in crowds to these places, and edify us by the lustre

* Many old acts of emancipation still bear the pious formula, "We transfer and give up to Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin Mary all our rights over such a one," etc.

† If credit may be given to the old traditions of Asia, pilgrimages are of still more ancient origin. According to the Rabbins, the children of Adam returned more than once to contem-

plate from afar the inclosure of the terrestrial paradise, and some of the sons of Seth took up their abode on the summit of a mountain whence they could behold it, always hoping that the promised Liberator would soon restore them to it.

‡ Doctor Johnson, a zealous Protestant and a profound thinker, himself acknowledges that.

of their virtues. Their language is different, but their religion is the same."*

The Mussulmans say, with great reason, that it is a pious and salutary practice to visit the tombs of the *holy dead*, and have often knelt side by side with Christians in places where the latter went on pilgrimage. After the taking of Jerusalem, the Caliph Omar repaired to Bethlehem; he entered the church, and prayed before the crib wherein the Lord-Messiah (*Aisa Resoul*) was born. He commanded the Mussulmans to pray only one by one, lest there might arise in the crowd some confusion incompatible with the sanctity of the place; he also forbade them to go there for any other purpose than that of prayer. Saadi himself relates this fact,† and the local tradition of Jerusalem adds that the same prince went to pray at the tomb of Mary.

Besides the scenes of the Redemption, there are several famous pilgrimages in the Holy Land: Our

* St. Jerome, Ep. 17.

† Omar must needs go to Bethlehem; he entered the church and said his prayers at the crib where the *Lord-Messiah* was born. He commanded his Mussulmans to pray there only

* Lady of Edessa, in Mesopotamia, whither the first Christians repaired in great numbers; Our Lady of Seydnai, where a Sultan of Damascus founded a perpetual lamp, in gratitude for a favor which he had obtained through the intercession of Mary; Our Lady of Belment, within two hours' march of Tripoli; finally, Our Lady of Tortosa, famous in mediæval times, throughout Christendom, and where the Mussulmans themselves sometimes brought their children to have them baptized, persuaded as they were that that ceremony, through the protection of the Blessed Virgin, would preserve them from all evil.‡

We read in the Memoirs of the Sire de Joinville that he went on a pilgrimage to Our Lady of *Tortouse*, whence he brought relics and some camlets which gave rise to a droll mistake. The seneschal, who had himself brought the relics to the king, sent by one of his officers some parcels of rich stuffs to the pious Queen Margaret, to whom he

one by one, and forbade them to assemble there or make any noise.—*Gulistan, des Mœurs des Rois*, p. 301.

‡ *Tortosa* is now Tripoli of Syria.

was very willing to pay his court. The queen, knowing that the Sire de Joinville was returned, and had brought relics from Tortosa, no sooner saw his knight enter her presence with a parcel in his hand, than she fell on her knees before the package, supposing it to contain the relics in question. The knight, ignorant of the queen's motive, knelt in his turn, and kept looking at Margaret in mute surprise. The princess, perceiving this, told him to rise, adding, with pious condescension, "that it was not for him to kneel, having the honor of bearing holy relics." "Relics, your highness," replied the knight, "I have no relics. This is a package of camlets which the Sire de Joinville sends you." Then the queen and her ladies began to laugh. "And," said the queen to the knight, "*your lord has played me a pretty trick to make me kneel to his camlets.*"*

Pilgrimages in honor of the Mother

* *Hist. de St. Louis*, by the Sire de Joinville.

† *Occident et Orient*, by M. Barrault.

‡ All the East, with the exception of the Jews, is full of respect for the Virgin, whom Mahomet placed in the Koran as one of the four just women. Chardin relates that the Jews of Persia,

er of God have lost nothing of their fervor in Asia, and Europeans are sometimes surprised to meet Turkish women praying devoutly at the Virgin's tomb,† with the daughters of Sion, wealthy Armenians, Greeks from beyond the sea, and Catholics from Arabia. The devotion to the Virgin amongst the Christian nations of the East is sure to strike all travellers; they consider it worthy of note that this devotion submits all human destinies to the power of a woman, in countries where women rank so low.‡

Amongst the Gauls pilgrimages were made long before the introduction of Christianity; one of the most famous shrines of western Gaul was a gloomy cavern, consecrated to the god Belenus, on the rock—then surrounded by woods—where now rises, amid moving sands, the amphibious fortress of Mount St. Michael.§ There it was that the pilots of Armorica went to buy of the Druids of Mount Belen,

having taken it into their heads to speak ill of her before some of the followers of Ali, were near being killed for their pains, and had to leave the city where it happened.

§ The vast forest which surrounds Moun St. Michael was submerged about the year 709.

enchanted arrows to which they foolishly ascribed the power of changing the winds and averting storms. When this steep mountain, the last stronghold of Druidism, received a Christian abbey, solemnly dedicated to the archangel Michael, the grotto of Belenus was transformed into a charming marine chapel, dedicated to the Star of the Sea, to Mary, protectress of sailors. This chapel was built of pebbles polished by the waves, and thrown up by the ocean; inside, the walls and roof were adorned with coral branches, amber, and shining shells, brought there from every shore by pious mariners; the altar was a portion of rock still retaining the roughness of a shoal, and all around were hung up, as *ex-voto*, anchors saved from the ocean, and the chains of captives. Before the Revolution, this chapel was often visited by long files of mariners saved from shipwreck; those sons of the ocean, with a fervor by no means uncommon amongst them, chanted in a voice hoarse as that of the waves the *Ave maris stella*, or the sweet *Salve regina*. Nearly all the kings of France, down to Louis XV., vis-

* ited this shrine; and there is said to be an ancient prophecy preserved in the archives of the abbey, threatening great misfortunes, even to the third generation, on the posterity of that king who should fail to make a pilgrimage to Our Lady and St. Michael. If the prophecy really exists, it has been but too truly verified!

The pilgrimages of France present themselves to us surrounded by marvels which conceal their origin; we will speak of them as our worthy fathers spoke before us. These wonders, handed down by tradition from age to age, are not an article of Catholic faith, and criticism may attack them without wounding the Church; nevertheless, it is our opinion that we should gain little by rejecting them: the marvellous belongs to Gothic legends, like moss to aged oaks, or ivy to mouldering walls.

According to certain Lyonesse traditions, based on a bull of Innocent IV., St. Pothin erected the first chapel wherein Mary was invoked in the Gauls. It is said that he brought from Asia a little statue of the Virgin, which he placed in

a solitary and shaded crypt on the banks of the Saone, in front of the hill of Fourvière. In that wild and retired place he raised an altar to the true God, and there placed the image, which was afterwards removed to a temple built on the same hill, and called from it Our Lady of Fourvière. This church was famous as a pilgrimage, in the Middle Ages, through all the Lyonesse country; but the Calvinists, who pillaged and destroyed so many rich shrines, spared not that of Lyons. The church of Fourvière, where every generation from the birth of Christianity, had marked its passage by gifts which would be now as precious to the antiquary, the sculptor, and the painter, as to the pilgrim, was stripped of all but its four bare walls; these could not well be melted in the crucible that had swallowed up so many gems of art, because they had the misfortune of being gold or silver.

The chapter of St. John could not think of restoring that of Fourvière till long after the ravages of the Protestants. It was done, however, as soon as the cathedral and clois-

* ter were completed. Mary's altar was at length consecrated on the 21st of August, 1586. From that moment the confidence of the people turned towards that beacon of salvation. "The source of miracles seemed dried up," says an ancient historian, "but they began again at the close of the eighteenth century, to the great joy and satisfaction of the whole country."*

During the Revolution of 1793, the church of Fourvière was sold; but when tranquillity was restored, the zealous prelate who governed the ancient church of Pothin and of Ireneus recovered the shrine for religion. The inauguration was performed on the 19th of April, 1805, by the sovereign pontiff Pius VII.†

In 1832 and 1835, Lyons, threatened with cholera, raised its eyes to the holy mountain, and the Virgin said to the plague, "Thou shalt go no farther!" The city escaped, contrary to all expectations: the cries of terror were changed into canticles of joy, and public thanks-

* *Hist. de Notre Dame de Fourvière, ou Recherches historiques sur l'autel tutélaire des Lyonnais.*

† *Ibid.*





givings were solemnly offered to Mary in her favorite shrine.

Ever since the auspicious period when this sanctuary was restored to religion, the devotion to Our Lady has steadily increased, and Fourvière is, as it were, its fountain-head. The people who inhabit Lyons and the surrounding country crowd the paths of Mary's hill, and no matter at what hour you go there, you are sure to find yourself amidst a crowd of pious persons of every rank, age, and condition. One day, in the year 1815, a pilgrim of no ordinary mien, having first taken a view of Lyons from the top of the hill, like one who studied its strong and weak points, at length entered Our Lady's church, and the faithful, raising their down-cast eyes a moment, said to themselves, "It is Marshal Suchet!" It was indeed he—the marshal of the empire, the son of Lyons, to whom the defence of his native city was entrusted. He slowly paced up the aisle of Mary's church, with a subdued and respectful countenance; entering the sacristy, he sent to request that one of the chaplains would come to him. "Reverend

* sir," said the marshal, advancing towards the priest, "when I was quite a child, my good and pious mother often brought me here, to Our Lady's feet, and that remembrance is still before me. . . . I will say more, that remembrance is dear to me, and I have willingly cherished it. Will you have the goodness to say some masses for my intention?" And having placed three Napoleons on the table where the offerings are registered, the brilliant hero of that wondrous period knelt some time at Mary's altar in fervent prayer. Marshal Suchet, as might be expected, ended his loyal and noble career by a Christian death, as is recorded on his tomb.

The pilgrimage of Notre Dame du Puy, in Velay, is also considered as one of the oldest in France. It is said that, during the occupation of Gaul by the Romans, a Gallic lady who had been baptized by St. George, first bishop of Puy, finding herself in danger of death, was apprised that she should recover her health on the top of Mount Anicium, not far from her own dwelling. She had herself conveyed thither accordingly, and was scarce-

ly seated on a volcanic rock of the Puy,* when she fell into a gentle slumber. She then saw in a dream a celestial woman clothed in white flowing robes, with a crown of jewels on her head; she was of dazzling beauty, and surrounded by a train of heavenly spirits. "Who is she?" demanded the Gallic lady, addressing one of the attendant spirits; "who is this queen so lovely and so noble, who comes to visit a poor sick woman in her affliction?" "It is the Mother of God," replied the angel; "she has chosen this rock for a shrine, and commands thee to make it known to her servant George. Lest thou shouldst take this behest of Heaven for an idle dream, awake, woman, thou art healed!" She awoke, accordingly, without fever, pain, or even languor. Penetrated with gratitude, she hastened to the bishop, and gave him, word for word, the message of the angel.

Having listened in silence to the orders of Her whom he revered next to God, St. George bowed down,

* In Languedoc and Auvergne the name of *puy* is given to a high mountain, from the Italian word *poggio*.

as though the Virgin herself had spoken, and went without delay to visit the miraculous rock, followed by some servants and the Gallic convert. How great was his surprise to find the spot covered with snow, although it was then July! Whilst he yet stood, lost in astonishment, a deer was seen running over the snow, marking out with its light feet the site for a vast building. The holy bishop, still more amazed, had the ground thus marked fenced in with a hedge, and on that favored spot there soon arose a cathedral, around which the city of Puy was soon formed. This town was considered impregnable—thanks to the protection of Mary.

The little statue which people come from Spain and all the southern provinces of France to venerate, dates from the time of the Crusades; it is two feet in height, and is seated after the manner of the Egyptian deities, with the Infant Jesus on the knee. What is most remarkable is, that this statue is wrapped, from head to foot, in several bandages of fine linen, carefully and solidly fastened to the wood, much in the same way as an Egyp-

tian mummy. The appearance of this statue, the cedar of which it is composed, and the bandages in which it is swathed, give reason to suppose that it is the work of the hermits of Lebanon, who fashioned it on the model of the Egyptian statues. This image of Our Lady was brought by St. Louis from the Holy Land.

The sovereign pontiffs have encouraged this pilgrimage by their favors and by their example: several popes went there as simple pilgrims.

The bishops of Puy received great privileges from the court of Rome on account of Our Lady, amongst others, that of immediate dependence on the Holy See, and the Pallium. Many of the kings of France went likewise to honor Mary on the mountain of Anicium. In 1422, Charles VII., while yet but Dauphin, went there to recommend his almost desperate cause to Notre Dame du Puy, and it was in that very church that he was afterwards proclaimed king.

King René also made this pilgrimage with a great train of men and horses; a crowd of Moors,

probably converted to the Christian faith, followed in their Oriental costume.

The Chapel of Our Lady of the Mountains, or of Ceignac, seated on a hill surrounded by others, in the ancient forest of Cayrac, between the Viaour and the Aveyron, is famous through the pilgrimage of a Hungarian palatine, who, in 1150, miraculously recovered his sight, through the intercession of Our Lady. This nobleman, afflicted in the very prime of life with total blindness, left the banks of the Danube with an hundred men-at-arms, to ask Our Lady of the Mountain to put an end to his long-protracted sufferings.

He embarked on the Adriatic Sea, and, after coasting along the Italian shore, entered the Gulf of Lyons; but there, a terrible storm dispersed his ships, and it was with great difficulty that his squire saved him in a long boat, which succeeded in reaching the shore. Shocked by this sad catastrophe, and deploring the fate of his followers, the blind prince, accompanied by his faithful servant, plunged into the mountains of Languedoc, journeying

by short stages towards the Chapel of Our Lady of the Mountains, where he arrived in 1150. A huntsman, watching his snares on the verdant shores of the Viaour, pointed out the ford to the two pilgrims, and conducted them to a rising ground commanding a view of the little church. The palatine, for years deprived of the sweet light of heaven, could not behold the welcome sight; but he heard the merry chime of the morning bells, and, prostrating himself on the dewy grass, he blessed God and Our Lady for that he had reached the end of his long journey. Full of faith, he entered the sanctuary which he came so far to seek, and had a solemn Mass said at Mary's altar. The Mass ended, the blind prince was praying in tears before the image of the Virgin, when his attention was attracted by a clang of arms, as if caused by many pilgrims entering the church together. He instinctively raises his sightless eyes, and, behold! he *sees* his own banner, and those prostrate pilgrims whose Eastern costume contrasts so strongly with the brown capes of the Languedocans, they are his

own faithful Hungarians! A cry of joy and gratitude escapes him; he has recovered his sight, and his men-at-arms are there before him! Our Lady treated her vassal with royal generosity, and favored him beyond his most sanguine hopes.

Seven lamps of massive silver were the gift offered by the Hungarian noble to the Virgin; by his orders, a cross was raised on the hill where he had prayed, and on it was inscribed, in Gothic characters, the history of his cure. A group in *relievo* was placed in Mary's shrine, representing the prince palatine and his squire on their knees before the image of the Virgin; above was a Latin inscription, conceived as follows:

Ecce palatinus privatus lumine princeps,
Munera magna ferens, sed meliora refert.
Virginis auspiciis, divino in lumine, lumen
Cernit, et exultat, dum pia perficerent.
Insuper et centum famulos in littore fractos
Invenit incolumes; dicitur inde locus.

Amongst the benefactors of the Chapel of Our Lady of Ceignac are reckoned the Dukes d'Arpajon, Cardinal de la Pelagrua, nephew of Pope Clement V., with a great number of bishops and other eminent personages.

The pilgrimage of Our Lady of Roc Amadour, not far from Cahors, is situated in the most barren and mountainous part of Quercy. A saint, whom local tradition would fain set down as the Zaccheus of the Gospel, retired about the middle of the third century to a maze of rocks which rear their lofty heads above the narrow and deep ravine, through which the Lauzon rolls its waters; this ravine, now known as the Glen of Roc Amadour, was then called the Dark Valley (*val tenebreux*), and was infested with wild beasts.

This gloomy, yet somewhat grand landscape, having some resemblance to the Theban desert, had doubtless some analogy with the lofty and austere thoughts of the anchoret; he made himself a cell on one of the culminating points of the mountain, and hollowed in the rock, on a level with the eyrie, an oratory to the Mother of God. The Gallo-Roman inhabitants of the fair valleys of Figeac and St. Céré, seeing him sometimes from a distance on the crest of those bare, wild mountains, surnamed him *Amator rupis*; this name, the only one which has

* come down to us, was changed into that of *Amador*, and then *Amadour*, which is more conformable to the genius of the dialect spoken there.

The little statue of the Virgin, like those which the early Christians of Gaul venerated in the hollow of oaks, wrought miracles in behalf of the fervent pilgrims who went to visit it in its rocky shrine. Pilgrimages were multiplied, and they soon became so frequent that a city was built at the foot of the holy place; that city, though situated in a desolate region, on a barren soil, and in a place difficult of access, nevertheless became, through the devotion of our fathers, one of the principal towns of Quercy; it had its towers, its consuls, and its coat of arms—three silver rocks with golden lilies on a field *gules*.

Just over the steeple of the ancient church of Roc Amadour, at a prodigious height, was a citadel intended to protect the rich shrine of Mary; but those lofty walls, towering proudly in the air, were not sufficient to save the holy mountain from the fierce followers of Calvin, who would have braved hell itself for the sake of gold. Our Lady's

Chapel has now a surer protection * in its poverty.

This pilgrimage was famous even in the time of Charlemagne; Count Roland, nephew of that emperor, visited Roc Amadour in 778; he made an offering to the Blessed Virgin of the weight of his sword of silver, and when he fell on the field of Roncevaux, that sword was carried to Roc Amadour.* In the year 1170, according to Roger de Hoveden, Henry II., king of England and duke of Guyenne (in right of his wife Eleanor), made a pilgrimage to Roc Amadour, in fulfillment of a vow made by him during a long illness which he had had. As the people of Quercy had no great love for the English, Henry had to make this pious journey under the escort of a strong guard. The English prince left marks of his munificence in Our Lady's Chapel, and amongst the poor of Roc Amadour.

Amongst the illustrious pilgrims who went to honor Mary in her mountain-shrine were Simon de Montfort, the pope's legate; Arnaud Amalric, afterwards bishop of Nar-

bonne; St. Louis, accompanied by his three brothers; Blanche of Castile, and Alphonso, Count of Boulogne, who subsequently ascended the throne of Portugal; Charles the Fair, King John, Louis XI., and many powerful lords.

Of the great bishops who, at various times, visited the miraculous Chapel of Our Lady, there is one whose name is so dear to humanity, to Catholicity, that we cannot omit to mention it: that name, so honorable to France, so imposing even to unbelievers, is that of the Swan of Cambrai. Consecrated from his birth to Our Lady of Roc Amadour by his pious mother, Fenelon went more than once to invoke, in her favorite shrine, her who gave him that courageous wisdom which he turned to such good advantage. Two pictures, hung as *ex-voto* in Mary's sanctuary, represent two solemn phases of his existence. In the first, he is lying in his cradle, a new-born infant; in the second, a young man, and already a doctor of divinity, he is returning thanks to his divine protectress for the first

* Duplex, *Hist. de France, Charlemagne*, ch. 8.
—This *bracmar* (sword) having been stolen or

lost, was replaced by a club, which retained the name of Roland's sword.

step in his brilliant career. At a little distance there is a tomb, at which he often wept and prayed; it is that of his mother, who would sleep her last sleep in the shade of Mary's altar.

Sometimes it was not only individuals, but whole towns and provinces, that repaired to Roc Amadour. "In 1546," says M. de Malleville, in his *Chronicles of Quercy*, "the 24th of June, the Feast of St. John and of the Blessed Sacrament, was the great *pardon* of Roc Amadour; to which place the concourse of people, both natives and foreigners, was so great, that several persons were smothered in the crowd, and tents were spread over all the adjoining country like a great camp."

The offerings made at the shrine of Roc Amadour were truly magnificent; amongst them was the forest of Mont Salvy, given in 1119, by Odon, Count de la Marche, to the Blessed Mary of Roc Amadour; and the lands of Fornéllas and Orbanella, given in 1181, by Alphonso IX., king of Castile and Toledo, *for the benefit of the souls of his parents.*

In the year 1202, Sancho VII., king of Navarre, gave an annuity of forty-eight gold pieces for the lighting of Our Lady's Chapel; and in 1208, Savaric, prince of Mauléon, a great captain and a famous troubadour, gave, as a free and perpetual donation, to the Blessed Mary of Roc Amadour, his estate of Lisleau, with a full exemption from tax or charge of any kind. Pope Clement V., in 1314, left a legacy to the same church, "to keep a taper perpetually burning in a silver vase or basin in the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Roc Amadour, in honor of that ever-Blessed Mother, and for the salvation of his soul."

It would be too long to enumerate all the benefactors of Mary's Chapel; its interior was radiant with offerings of gold, pearls, and precious stones; Spanish princesses wrought rich hangings for it with their own hands, and it was lit, both night and day, by fourteen lamps of solid silver, whose chains were intertwined into a magnificent net-work. By a contrast, peculiar to Christianity, the Madonna's altar was of wood, as in the days of St.

Amadour, and the miraculous image was a little statue of rough black oak. High in the dome of the chapel, where windows of rich stained glass surrounded the steeple, there was a little bell without rope, which rung, of its own accord, when it pleased the Star of the Sea to manifest her power in behalf of distressed mariners who called upon her from the wastes of Ocean.

The Virgin of Quercy was too rich a prey to escape Protestantism. On the 3d of September, 1592, Duras took possession of Roc Amadour; the crosses were broken, the pictures defaced, the rich ornaments burned and torn to pieces, the bells melted down, and the body of St. Amadour was smashed with the hammer, and then consigned to the flames.* The atheists of 1793 gave the finishing stroke to this work of destruction.

Now the towers of the city are prostrate and overgrown with grass; shrubs are growing amid the ruins of the citadel; tall weeds are waving over the disjointed stones of the immense flight of two hundred and seventy-eight steps which led from

the city to the aërial shrine of Mary; the lute of the Languedocian *cantadour* no longer celebrates Our Lady's miracles, and the night-wind alone is heard whistling through that ancient chapel, where the organ once pealed its solemn music. The Virgin of Roc Amadour might now be called *the Virgin of Ruins*, and yet she still works miracles there.

The pilgrimage of Our Lady of Liesse, in Picardy, is not so ancient as those of southern France, since it only dates from the twelfth century; but it is even more famous than they are. The origin of the statue which decorates the sanctuary is truly marvellous; tradition has preserved the wondrous tale not only in the French province where it is located, but even in the Holy Land;† nay, it is even said to exist in the archives of the Knights of Malta.‡ The following is the story, and it bears a decidedly Eastern character.

Foulques of Anjou, king of Jeru-

* Odo de Gissey, *Hist. de Roc Amadour*.

† See *Hist. de Notre Dame de Liesse*, par l'Abbé Villette, Addit. au disc. prelim. p. 100.

‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 11, et 12.

saïem, having rebuilt the fortress of Bersabee, within four leagues of Ascalon, to protect the frontier of his kingdom from the incursions of the Saracens, entrusted its defence to the brave and pious Knights of St. John of Jerusalem. This valiant garrison had often to combat the infidels who held the ancient country of the Philistines for the Sultan of Egypt. One day, the Knights of St. John, including three brothers of the ancient and noble house of Eppes, in Picardy, fell into an ambuscade, and, notwithstanding that they performed prodigies of valor, they were taken and loaded with chains by the Mussulmans, who sent them to Egypt. The brothers d'Eppes had the majestic mien and lofty stature of the ancient knights of the north of France. The Sultan quickly distinguished them from the others, and hoping to gain them for his false prophet, he commenced by casting them into a dungeon in order to break down their courage, and then proceeded to spread before their eyes the most seducing prospect, making them all manner of fair promises if they would only give up

their religion. The three valorous knights, as they were before inaccessible to fear, were now also deaf to the voice of ambition, and not to be lured by gold. The Sultan, thus disappointed, sent some of the most famous dervises to argue religion with them, whereupon the good knights, in their hatred of Mohammedanism, became, all at once, subtle theologians, and defended Christianity as well in discussion as they had often done with shield on arm and lance in rest. The Sultan made it a point of honor to overcome the captives, and his obstinacy increasing with their resistance, he swore that these knights of St. John should follow the prophet's standard were it to cost him the half of Egypt. He had one daughter, beautiful and accomplished, and so virtuous that she deserved to have a better creed; her he sent into the dungeon where the French knights languished in chains, and charged her to give them a terrifying account of the tortures awaiting them if they still continued to hold out. The knights received the lady with all the high-bred courtesy of that chivalrous age; but they rejected

her insinuations with the firmness of men who willingly accepted martyrdom, and explained their own faith in a manner so clear and convincing, that the young princess began to reflect on the truths laid before her. A miraculous and radiant image of Mary, brought by angels, it was said, to the pious champions of the faith, completed the conversion of the young Mohammedan. Having one night bribed the guards of the prison, she made her way, with a casket of jewels, to the French knights, and escaped with them from her father's palace.

Having crossed the Nile in a bark prepared to receive them, the fugitives bent their course towards Alexandria, hoping, perhaps, to obtain a temporary asylum in one of the Coptish monasteries of the solitude of St. Macarius; but, after some hours' march, the princess, exhausted with fatigue, stood in need of some repose, and, notwithstanding the imminence of the danger, the three knights of St. John resolved to keep watch, and let her sleep for a while.

They accordingly seated her in a field of soft, long grass, and sat

down themselves at a respectful distance. The princess slept, and her companions, after struggling in vain against the drowsiness which came upon them, at last fell asleep in their turn.

No one knows how long their sleep lasted. The eldest of the brothers was the first to awake; the sun was already far above the horizon, and the birds were warbling on every tree. The crusader looked around in amazement; he fell asleep within sight of the Nile and the pyramids, under the fan-like branches of a palm-tree, and he awoke under a venerable oak, on the margin of a purling stream, in a fresh green meadow spangled with daisies. At a little distance rose the dark, round turrets of an old baronial castle, very much resembling that in which he left his sorrowing mother, when setting out for the Holy Land. His doubts were dispelled by a shepherd who was leading his flock to the pasture: the castle before him was his own good castle of Marchais, and he found himself in Picardy, under one of the old ancestral trees which his fathers had planted. He blessed

the Holy Virgin, and awoke his companions, whose surprise equalled his own.

The image of the Eastern Madonna was still in their possession; so they built a fair church wherein to place it, and the Mohammedan princess was baptized in the cathedral of Laon.

That this statuette of Mary reached France by means more natural, we may well believe; but it is quite certain that it was brought from the Holy Land by three brothers of the house of Eppe, knights of St. John of Jerusalem.

Some of the most illustrious names of the French monarchy are found on the list of the pilgrims to Our Lady of Liesse. Amongst them are the Duke of Burgundy, Louis II. of Bourbon, Prince of Condé, the Duke de Mercœur, Prince Albert Henry of Ligne, Madame Henrietta, Frances of France, Queen of England, some of the Princes de Longueville, Marshal d'Ancre, Mademoiselle de Guise, the Count of Egmont, Louis, duke of Orleans, brother of Charles VI., Charles VII., King René, Louis

XI., Francis the First, Henry II., Charles IX., Queen Mary de Medici, Louis XIII., Ann of Austria, Louis XIV., etc.

Many of these great personages, not content with leaving rich donations at Notre Dame de Liesse, also placed their statue there; that of Louis II. of Bourbon, prince of Condé, was of gold.

Mary of Arquin, who was afterwards queen of Poland, visited Our Lady's chapel in 1671; she offered to the Blessed Virgin a silver child, representing Prince Alexander Sobieski, her son, together with a chain of gold enriched with jewels, denoting that she devoted him to the Mother of God, as her slave.*

This shrine, like the others, was plundered by the Huguenots, and the Revolution completed the work; yet still the chapel of Our Lady of Liesse is frequented by a concourse of pilgrims.

In the legend of St. Liphard of Meung, who lived in 550, there is mention made of the town of Clery, and an oratory therein dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. In 1280, some laborers placed there a small

* *Hist. de Notre Dame de Liesse.*

statue of Our Lady which had been turned up by their ploughshare. This discovery was rumored abroad, and attracted the attention of the most powerful nobles of the time. Amongst these was Simon de Melun, a nobleman who had accompanied St. Louis to Africa, and was raised by Philip the Fair to the dignity of Marshal of France; he formed the design of founding a college there, but, dying gloriously soon after at the siege of Courtray, he was prevented from executing his pious intention, which was, however, carried out by his wife and son. Philip the Fair, after his victories in Flanders, was deeply sensible of what he owed to Mary; struck with the vast numbers of the faithful who visited Our Lady of Clery, he increased the number of its canons, and resolved to rebuild the church; but death came suddenly upon him, too, in the midst of so many projects, religious and otherwise, and left him little more than the merit of a good intention. The church was, nevertheless, commenced in his reign, and was duly continued, thanks to the munificence of his

* third son, Charles, duke of Orleans. The completion of the church was reserved for Philip of Valois, that noble prince who charged his soldiers, in a conquered country, to *respect the churches*. This magnificent temple was pillaged by the English during the famous siege of Orleans. Louis XI., who had new sleeves put to his old doublets so as to wear them threadbare, knew well how to act as became a sovereign prince, when he felt so inclined; he had the church of Clery rebuilt, made it a donation of 2,330 crowns, endowed it with great revenues, erected it into a royal chapel, and richly provided for its canons.

This monument, the object of so much care and expense, was destroyed by fire in 1472, whilst the workmen were engaged in covering it. The whole was consumed by fire, says the chronicle of Louis XI., but the church was constructed anew, under the inspection of the king's secretary.

Louis XI. having recovered his health at Clery, and attributing his cure to the Blessed Virgin, enriched her college with new gifts, and

caused his tomb to be constructed there. "He placed himself in it several times," says one of his historians, "in order to see whether it fitted his body well, and was ready to receive him after his death." He was buried there according to his desire. His wife, Charlotte of Savoy, was soon after laid beside him.

The Calvinists, who had as little respect for the sepulchres of kings as for the altars of saints, demolished the statue of Louis XI., and broke open his royal tomb for the sake of pillage. This tomb, reconstructed by Louis XIII., was again broken and mutilated during the Revolution, and repaired by Louis XVIII. The devotion to the Virgin is still kept up with pious fervor in the old church of Louis XI.

The pilgrimage of Our Lady of the Thorn (*Notre Dame de l'Epine*), near Chalons-sur-Marne, commenced in the first years of the fifteenth century. On the eve of the Feast of the Annunciation, A. D. 1419, two young shepherds leading their flocks by the side of a little chapel dedicated to St. John the Baptist, perceived a bright light in the midst of a thorny bush which grew near

it. The first sheep of the flock being frightened by the light, took flight; but the young lambs approached the bush; the shepherds followed their example, and discovered a small statue of the Blessed Virgin, with the Infant Jesus in her arms. The miraculous light increasing when night came, people ran from all parts to see it, and as the place where the prodigy occurred was very high, the light could be seen for ten leagues around. The bishop of Chalons came in procession with all his chapter and many of the neighboring priests to visit the place. They found the bush as green as though it were summer; and they took the little statue of the Madonna and conveyed it to the neighboring chapel of St. John.

This remarkable prodigy attracted all the faithful of Champagne to the chapel, which speedily became a famous pilgrimage. With the offerings of the pilgrims a superb church was constructed on the plan of an Irish architect; the work was steadily prosecuted; notwithstanding the war then being carried on against the English, the inhabitants, though plundered and improv-

erished, cheerfully left their plough to draw stones all the way from Lorraine. The building went on with renewed activity when Charles VII. sent a considerable sum towards the completion of the church. It took a century to build it, and during all that time the fervor of the people continued through war, and pestilence, and famine, and all imaginable plagues, the worst of which was certainly the harassing presence of the English. The cities of Chalon and Verdun would fain contribute their share towards the decoration of this building, which was to perpetuate the memory of the miraculous bush. The one gave it superb stained glass windows, representing the history of the miracle; the other, magnificent bells; the liberality of the faithful, great and small, rich and poor, did the rest.

During the religious wars the English Protestants, who were masters of Champagne, having heard of the great riches contained in the sanctuary of Our Lady of the Thorn, formed the project of pillaging and destroying it; but the lord of the soil, a man full of faith and courage,

* had the noble church surrounded with stakes, and putting himself at the head of a band of brave young men, drawn together by patriotism and devotion to Mary, they succeeded in repulsing the enemy and saving the Virgin's altar. Forced to beat a retreat, the English acted like Vandals; they fired a parting volley through the beautiful windows, which were nearly all destroyed. Nevertheless, by a sort of prodigy, the famous pane of glass on which is represented the finding of the miraculous statue remained uninjured. In memory of that happy day, the fabric (or trustees) of the church of Notre Dame de l'Epine, down to the time of the Revolution, gave to the descendants of the gentleman who saved the shrine from profanation and pillage two blessed swords, which they received on the Feast of the Assumption before the Virgin's altar.

A solemn procession took place every year in this church. A number of delicate children, bound to wear white perpetually in honor of the Blessed Virgin, assisted in the procession on the 15th of August, with tapers in their hands: these

were the petitioners of Mary. The verdict of death seemed pronounced against them on their entrance into the world: their mothers piously called on the Virgin, and hope, through her powerful aid, to preserve those fragile plants which thus grow up under her sacred protection, and depend on her for their very existence. It was an affecting sight to see those little angels, clothed in white, and pale as the flowers wreathed around their heads, kneeling at Mary's feet, and repeating the prayer which they were not able to understand, asking that their life might be spared, that life so precious to their tender mothers. . . . When the rose of health begins to bloom on their childish features, when the seventh year is past, and they at length leave off the white livery of the Virgin, how joyfully do their mothers hasten to return thanks to Mary! What heartfelt prayers are then poured forth at the altar of Our Lady of the Thorn!

There is in the Vosges a pilgrimage which perpetuates, amongst the humble matrons of the country, a beautiful superstition wherein the Christian and the maternal senti-

ment are somewhat closely commingled. About the year 1070, a monk of Senones built on the margin of a lonely torrent a hermitage and chapel, whither the people went to honor Our Lady of Meix. This pilgrimage was afterwards either discontinued or suppressed. The chapel is now in ruins, and a shattered stone cross is the only thing yet standing; but under these ruins there are subterraneous vaults, and an altar of rough stone, whereon children who die unbaptized are still laid. "They are hardly placed on that stone," says the mountaineer who serves as a guide through the gloomy cavern, "when their eyes open, a slight breath escapes from their little icy lips, the water of baptism falls on their brow, and they sleep again to go up to heaven." A little grave is made near the altar, and the mortal remains of the faded floweret are left under the protection of Mary: the ignorant, but exalted tenderness which induced the parents to ask a miracle of the Virgin, makes them bury them within the precincts of her ancient shrine, in order that she may not forget them!

Let incredulity blame as it may this superstition of the heart, to the tender and pious soul it is full of melancholy beauty, and deserving only of pity. Doubtless, more than one mother may have been mistaken in fancying that she saw the pale lips of her infant quiver with momentary life as it received the water of baptism; but no one will dare to say that Mary has not power to work miracles as great as this, at her pleasure.

Even amongst the wild recesses of the Pyrenees there are sanctuaries dedicated to Mary. The most ancient and the most famous of these is Our Lady of Heas, frequented by all the people of the neighboring valleys. Amongst the precipitous rocks of Heas there is an altar raised where the goatherd would not dare to hang up a temporary shelter against the storm: the Romans would have dedicated this altar to the Spirit of the Storm, but Christians have erected it in honor of Her who stills the winds and waves. On the 8th of September, the Feast of the Nativity of Mary, and on the 15th of August, the day of her glorious Assump-

tion, an immense concourse of people repairs to the shrine of Our Lady of Heas; each one, on going away, detaches a small fragment of the blessed rock, which is taken home respectfully to their cabins, as a relic of some value.

Mountain pilgrimages are picturesque; but how touching are those of the coasts! What a pleasing object is a sanctuary of Mary, with its tapering spire standing on the point of a promontory, whence it may be seen from afar over the deep sea! The mariner salutes it with a heavy heart on quitting the land where he leaves his wife and children, and hails it with delight on his return; that spire is to him the emblem of hope, and amid all the anxious perturbation of his heart, as he approaches his home after months, perhaps years of absence, he feels a certain religious confidence, a certain assurance that all goes well—thanks to the protection of the good Virgin. . . . And then, who knows but it was Our Lady that saved him from shipwreck, he and his vessel; and the first care of these poor people, on reaching land is to go barefoot, as

in the Middle Ages, to hang up in the maritime chapel the offering promised when the tempest shivered the masts and rent the sails. One of the Dieppe papers recently published an account of one of these touching scenes, which made a deep impression on the public mind, notwithstanding the impiety of the times. "A ceremony of a most affecting kind took place yesterday in St. James's church," said the writer. "The crew of the lugger *Automne* (which encountered so violent a storm on the 3d of September) gave themselves up for lost, when the mate, Louis Coreteur, thought of making a vow, in the name of his companions, to Our Lady of Succor, the patroness of sailors. Scarcely had he made the vow, when a golden sunbeam, darting through the mass of heavy clouds which obscured the sky, cheered the drooping hearts of the mariners with renewed hope. This vow was yesterday accomplished by these good sailors in the chapel of Our Lady of Succor. The whole crew of the vessel walked in procession to Our Lady's chapel barefooted and bareheaded, in their sea

costume, bearing on their robust shoulders the promised offering, placed on a litter, and ornamented with blue streamers; they were accompanied by their parents and friends, and followed by a numerous concourse of people. The parish priest addressed them in an affecting discourse, and after the mass of thanksgiving, he recited the *De Profundis* for the captain and four of the crew who perished during the storm."

Our Lady of Grace is one of the most ancient maritime chapels of Normandy. This sanctuary was built, as we have already said, in consequence of a vow made, during a tempest, by a Norman duke, who was very devout to the Blessed Virgin. The site of this pretty chapel, shaded by tall trees, and surrounded with flowery turf, is calm and beautiful as the rich, fresh landscapes of the magnificent province to which it belongs. Our Lady of Grace seems to be the fortress of Honfleur; the hill on which it stands commands a view of the mouth of the Seine, with the distant line of the dark green sea and the bright blue river gliding into its

bosom. There are two roads leading to this chapel—one rough and rocky, the other smooth and level. In former times, the inhabitants of Honfleur took a pleasure in keeping the road clean and covering it with fine sand, in order that a fair and gentle princess, much beloved by the people, might climb the ascent to the Virgin's shrine without fatigue. The revolutionary storm drifted the noble lady to other climes, but the memory of her beneficence still remains.

One day, not long ago, great crowds of people were assembled on the little green esplanade which extends in front of Notre Dame de Grace; they were clinging to the sides of the rock, hanging from the bushes, mounted on the tops of the trees, and every eye was turned towards the ocean in search of some expected object. The enthusiasm of the people was great, but somewhat grave and religious in its character; prayers ascended to heaven, and tears were in every eye: a ship passed under Our Lady's hill—a ship with a black flag and a coffin on the deck: the priests blessed it as it passed be-

neath, and the people wept in silence. . . . There was not a chapel of the Virgin on either bank of the Seine wherein prayers were not offered up that day for the soul of the great emperor; and Our Lady of Grace was fervently invoked for that illustrious exile who died far away from France, and—saddest of all—where the flag of England waved above him!

Within half a league of Pornic, a small seaport about ten leagues from Nantes, on a height which overhangs the ocean, stands the maritime village and church of St. Mary; this church bears the marks of great antiquity, and in its small cemetery lie the mortal remains of a crusader; it is held in great veneration amongst the Breton sailors, who often go there to accomplish vows. When a Breton ship passes under the church of St. Mary, the mariners take off their hats and say the *Ave Maria*. Not a peasant along the coast thinks of going into the sea to bathe without dipping his hand in the water and making the sign of the cross, turning his head towards the patronal sanctuary; and the fishermen, tossed

about by the storm, which is more dangerous along the coast than on the high sea, never lose hope so long as they can behold the picturesque spire of St. Mary's church: *the Virgin sees them*. That thought sustains their courage, and is, even in itself, a chance of safety.

When the stormy waves of the Atlantic rush madly into the sandy bays of Guienne, and recede from the shore with a hoarse and terrific sound, if a dismasted vessel be seen struggling with the tempest, it is Our Lady of Arcachon whom the anxious wives and mothers of the Aquitaine sailors invoke on their behalf. This chapel, around which whole flocks of sea-mews take refuge, stands in a wild and lonely place, amid clumps of gloomy pines. Many sailors, and poor, grateful women, arrive there barefoot from time to time, telling their beads with their rough, horny fingers, and many an *ex-voto* hangs in the venerable chapel, denoting that so many prayers have been heard and granted by Mary.

Our Lady of the Watch (Notre Dame de la Garde) is the last object seen or noticed by the Pro-

* vengal sailor as he leaves his native land: its chapel, built in the thirteenth century, is of blueish-gray limestone, and stands on the summit of a lofty mountain commanding a view of the Mediterranean, with its numerous isles, its castle of If, and its changeful billows. Thither does the sea-worn mariner first bend his steps when his vessel reaches the port, after a voyage to the distant countries of the Levant; it is no uncommon sight to see these seafaring people going on their knees up the mountain-path to this ancient chapel to thank Her whom they name, with true Italian familiarity, the good *Mother of the Watch*, for having saved them from the manifold dangers of sea, wind, and plague.

But it is not to sailors alone that the Madonna of Marseilles is kind and propitious; she is the guardian angel of the city, which has recourse to her in all public calamities. When the cholera, raging all over France, first broke out on the Provençal soil, the fair old Phocian city knelt as one man at the feet of its beloved patroness, who failed it not in its hour of peril. In tes-

timony of its gratitude, Marseilles has consecrated to the Blessed Virgin a superb statue of solid silver, admirably executed. That is as it should be.

In Corsica, Our Lady of Lavasina, looking down on the blue waves of the Mediterranean, refreshes the way-worn pilgrim, and even the sailor, passing in his vessel, with the perfume of its orange-trees. This sanctuary, dedicated to the Nativity of the Virgin, was long left in obscurity, visited only by the coral fishers who frequent that lovely coast, when, about the middle of the seventeenth century, miracles were wrought by the Corsican Madonna, which were noised abroad, even through Italy. The church was then enlarged and beautified; great numbers of the faithful went there, on the patronal feast, with bare feet and tapers in their hands. This pious practice is still kept up with as much devotion as in any former time. The painting which decorates this chapel, the work of an Italian artist, represents Mary when a child, with St. Anne throwing a transparent veil gracefully over her head.

SWITZERLAND.

The origin of the famous pilgrimage of Our Lady of Hermits, the Loretto of Helvetia, dates from the heroic times of Charlemagne. The saint who first inhabited the hermitage of Einsiedeln was a young Suabian lord named Meinrad, belonging to the illustrious house of Hohenzollern. Being of that contemplative turn of mind so common among the Germans, Meinrad, even in his early days, loved to wander through the woods which then overspread his native land, and to commune with the Deity face to face, where no sound broke in on the silence of the place save the murmur of streams or the rustling of leaves. Night often surprised him poring over an old book clasped with gold, which he had inherited from his fathers, or meditating profoundly on the miracles and favors of the Blessed Virgin. His soul soared aloft in solitude; pitying the world and its fleeting goods, Meinrad made his vows in the abbey of Reichenau, which he afterwards quitted for a small hermitage built on the brow of Mount Etzel. There

he passed seven years; but the fame of his virtue descended to the valleys; the shepherds and woodmen first went to visit him, then lords, then noble ladies, humbly soliciting his prayers and counsels. This public homage was torture to the young hermit, who sighed only for meditation amid the deep silence of the woods. One night he stealthily quitted his hermitage, taking with him only the statue of the Virgin, the sole ornament of his chapel, and took refuge in a forest of the canton of Schwytz, which bore the characteristic name of the Dark Forest.

Thirty-two years after, he was assassinated by ruffians with whom he had shared the water of his spring and the wild fruits of his forest. The birds of heaven pursued the murderers till they suffered the penalty of their crime.*

For nearly half a century after the tragical death of Meinrad, his cell, wherein he had wrought miracles, remained uninhabited; at the

end of that time, a little society of hermits settled there under St. Bennon, of the ducal house of Burgundy. Hence the surname of *Our Lady of Hermits* given to the chapel of Einsiedeln. St. Eberhard consecrated his wealth, which was considerable, to the erection of a monastery there, and he himself was the first abbot.

The Virgin's chapel, such as it was in the time of St. Bennon, was placed in the vast church of the convent, of which Meinrad's cell formed the choir. The French destroyed this chapel, which had withstood the furious attacks of Protestantism; but God permitted the statue of the Virgin to be saved. It was replaced in the church of Einsiedeln in 1803, with much solemnity, and in 1817 this ancient shrine recovered a portion of its former splendor, thanks to the concurrence of some distinguished artists and the abundant alms of the faithful.

The convent of Einsiedeln is not situated in the mildest climate: its

* The murderers were betrayed by two ravens, who followed them all the way to Zurich; they even made their way through the windows of the inn where the assassins took refuge on

entering the town, and never left them till they witnessed their execution. It is in memory of this event that the abbey of Reichenau bears two ravens on its arms.

steeple, covered with snow the greater part of the year, pierces the dull, heavy clouds secreted by the long frost; at its base stretches a barren waste, yielding with reluctance a scanty crop; the fruits are few and tasteless, and the fields are only adorned by the pretty lilac blossom of the potato; but still Our Lady is pleased to manifest her power there, and the rugged path of the holy mountain is often moistened with the noblest blood of Germany. More than one count of the empire, and noble German ladies not a few, make it their duty to ascend barefoot to Einsiedeln: there is still some of the ancient fervor of Frederick's knights remaining in old Germany. As for the Catholic population of Switzerland, nothing can equal their confidence in Our Lady of Hermits; and there are few families, even in the more distant cantons, who do not keep up the pious practice of making this pilgrimage.

"The first thing which strikes the eye, in the beautiful church of Einsiedeln," says a French traveller, who visited it in 1839, "is the miraculous chapel where the

* modest image of the Virgin is exposed. Mass was being said there, and a great crowd of the faithful, men, women, and children, of every age and station, were assisting at the holy sacrifice, piously awaiting the time for communion; others were gathered around the confessionals; others, after having received the Holy Eucharist, were hearing a mass of thanksgiving at some of the side-altars. Nearly all the Swiss cantons were represented there. In a group from which the other pilgrims seemed to keep respectfully aloof, we recognized the graceful mien and elegant costume of the women of France. The men, less numerous, and more uniformly clad, still betrayed their origin by a certain diversity of countenance. Amongst them we could distinguish French, Germans, and Italians; but all were equally pious and collected."

In a visit of devotion to the abbey of Einsiedeln, Queen Hortense, that fair, unhappy princess, once the brightest ornament of Napoleon's court, placed on the altar of the Swiss Madonna a superb branch of hortensia, composed of

large diamonds. This *ex-voto* was the offering of a mother who had but one son to love, and who besought the Mother of Christ to protect and save from all evil the noble-hearted youth, who remembered but too well that he was born within hearing of the cannon of Wagram, and amid the fabulous exploits of the imperial epoch.

Many volumes have been written in Switzerland on the miracles wrought by the Madonna of Einsiedeln. We shall give but one of these, a little fanciful legend of the seventeenth century, which we found in a book of devotion published in Fribourg, but now somewhat scarce. The Swiss piously believe in the authenticity of this strange fact; but others are not bound to follow their example.

In a vast mediæval hall, whose walls were adorned with paintings in *fresco* of the most terrific subjects, and around which were seen those stone benches only found in the feudal castles of Germany, were seated some Helvetian gentlemen quaffing deep draughts of Rhenish wine, from large, old-fashioned goblets. In the midst of this Teutonic

* banquet, whilst a young officer named Berthold was uttering some of the most extravagant nonsense, a pilgrim was ushered in; he was going alone and barefooted to visit Our Lady of Hermits, when the approach of a violent storm forced him to ask hospitality at the castle. The noble host arose from his seat, and courteously conducted his new guest to the corner of a vast Gothic fireplace, where whole oaks were burning. This duty accomplished, Berthold, without any respect for the austere presence of the pilgrim, resumed the silly and impious discourse which his entrance had for a moment interrupted, casting from time to time a furtive glance at the stranger to see what effect his words produced on him; but the pale, emaciated face of the holy man remained perfectly calm and motionless. The banquet over, the guests ordered their horses, and prepared to go to their several homes. "The night is dark," said the host to the young miscreant, Berthold, who was a relative of his own; "thou hast to pass through a glen haunted by evil spirits. Something bad might happen to thee.

Be advised by me, and stay here to-night."

"Pshaw!" laughed the officer, who was in the service of France, "I fear neither God nor devil!"

"Are you quite sure of that?" demanded the pilgrim, in a tone of gloomy raillery, which made all the others afraid.

"So sure, honest pilgrim, that I now drink to Lucifer, and beg the favor of his company to escort me home to-night, if it be convenient."

"And thou wouldst deserve it well," cried the host, turning pale.

"We will petition Our Lady for you," said the immovable pilgrim; "you will need her help."

"Oh, pray do not trouble yourself—I can dispense with your prayers;" and he bowed ironically to the holy man. Some minutes after, he was in the stirrups, and dashing down the hill on which the castle stands, singing the chorus of a bacchanalian song.

The night was far advanced, the silence profound, and the solitude unbroken; the full-orbed moon, fair and lonely, shone out at times through thick, dark clouds, in a starless sky, and flashes of lightning

darted at intervals along the horizon. For some reason best known to himself, the young man left off singing, but kept swearing occasionally. He at last reached the dangerous place mentioned by his friend, which was known by a name very common in Helvetia, *The Devil's Road*. It was a deep gorge, hollowed between the reddish flanks of two mountains—a wild and gloomy spot, where the Alpine goat would have scarcely ventured even in the light of day. At that dead hour of the night, when the deep stillness and the fearful gloom called forth every superstitious feeling latent in the mind, the young Swiss, becoming somewhat uneasy, mechanically placed his hand on his sword; then, ashamed of himself, he began to laugh at his own fears.

"I have specially invited Lucifer to see me home," said the miscreant, willing to indulge his pride by an idle boast; "but he is deaf, it seems—or hell is empty."

The thunder growled in the distance, and a flash of lightning illuminated the woods and mountains, showing him two hideous dwarfs at his horse's head. "Ha!" cried the

officer, with a shudder; but quickly resuming his wonted insolence, "Avaunt, ye fiends!" he cried, proudly waving his sword; "two wretched dwarfs would be only a fitting escort for some Alpine cow-herd!"

The dwarfs disappeared, and the gallop of two horses rapidly descending the almost perpendicular face of the mountain made Berthold turn his head. The horsemen were two knights, in black armor, mounted on steeds of the same color. Their eyes shone like blazing coals through the bars of their closed helmets; to the arm of each was fastened the *morgenstern* of ancient Germany, a club studded with long iron points, apparently reeking with human gore, and streams of fire waved above their helmets instead of plumes.

The gloomy knights drew up in silence on either side of the terrified officer, snatched the reins from his trembling hands, and the three horses dashed along at lightning speed; mountain after mountain disappeared; sparks of fire darted from the stones of the road, and distance was no sooner perceived than

passed. Frail bridges of flexible branches, spanning cataracts so fearful that even the boldest hunter of the Alps would scarce set foot upon them, were crossed with the swiftness of the wind. The regions of eternal snow were quickly gained, and the horses, redoubling their fury, made straight for a tremendous gulf, where, far down as the eye could see, rolled a mountain stream, its noise hardly perceptible from the immense height above. Suddenly, from amidst those gloomy waters, reddened at times by subterranean fires, a multitude of hoarse, hollow voices were heard. "Revenge! revenge!" they cried; "give us the seducer, the false friend, the duellist!"

"We bring him!" replied the knights, brandishing their ponderous clubs.

A cold sweat bedewed Berthold's brow; his hair stood on end, and his features were convulsed with mortal terror; for amongst those accusing voices there were many that he well knew—voices that pierced his very soul: remorse began to speak as loud as fear within his wretched soul.

"Give us the gambler, the slanderer, the blasphemer, the perjured!" cried the voices from the abyss; and Berthold's gloomy companions, laughing within their helmets, with a clanking, horrible laugh, answered the voices from below: "We bring him! we bring him!"

"Give us the impious!"

"We bring him!" was still the answer of the black knights, and Berthold well nigh lost his senses.

Already were the three horsemen on the edge of a steep rock overhanging the dread abyss. . . . Another moment, and all were over. . . . But suddenly the two black knights stopped in the midst of a furious gallop, and stood still and mute as statues. The light tinkle of a bell was heard from afar: it was the midnight office ringing in Our Lady's Chapel at Einsiedeln. Berthold understood that Mary's influence had paralyzed the fearful power which was dragging him down to hell, and, hastily making the sign of the cross, he fervently recommended himself to the protecting Virgin, who seemed to interpose between him and the condign punishment which his conscience

told him he so well deserved. The bell ceased ringing, and the young officer felt his heart sink as he saw the two knights once more moving on their black coursers. But the voice of repentance had ascended to the starry throne of Mary; and the demons, with an impotent gesture of rage and despair, plunged headlong into the chasm, leaving Berthold alone on the brink. The moon, just then emerging from a mass of dark clouds, shone brightly down from her meridian height, and the officer discovered, to his great surprise, that he was on the highest ridge of the mountains, and would find it extremely difficult to descend. Some days after, the young nobleman went barefooted to *Our Lady of Hermits*, to the great amazement of his boon companions, and made a vow, in expiation of his sinful orgies, never to drink any other beverage than the pure water from the spring.

In a remote corner of the canton of Unterwald, on the edge of a path which winds in a serpentine form amongst the rocky knolls which cover the mountain-side, at the narrowest part of the pass, where the

traveller sees below the most frightful precipices, and above overhanging masses of rock, where death seems threatening on either hand, there stands a small open chapel, adorned with simple pictures of the Blessed Virgin. That gracious image, placed thus so far from any habitation, and from all human succor, has received the name of Our Lady of the Traveller. This place, often accursed, was long ago called the *Devil's Cullender*. After trying in vain to make it more secure, people conceived the idea of building a chapel, and placing in it a sacred image, so that no one might forget, how great soever was his danger, to invoke the holy name of God, and make the sign of the cross. But where were workmen to be found bold enough to undertake the work? This obstacle was speedily got over, for several came forward and repaired to the spot, after renewing their fervor by hearing Mass. And the Mother of God, willing to show these pious workmen that their heroic devotion was pleasing to her, made fast the tottering rocks by *virgin's threads*, fastened to the grass and moss. "Ever since,"

* say the Swiss of Underwald, "the passage is safe; no accident happens there either day or night. Our Lady is so good as to protect all the passers by, even those who do not see, or will not honor her."*

The pilgrimage of Maria Zell, in Austria, is almost as famous as that of Einsiedeln. Its founder, whose name is no longer known, was a monk of the abbey of St. Lambert, who took up his abode, about the middle of the twelfth century, in the vale of Affleuz, for the purpose of converting some Carinthian tribes who were still idolaters. This pious German missionary brought with him a small wooden statue of the Blessed Virgin, which he exposed to the veneration of his neophytes on the trunk of a fallen tree, for want of other pedestal. The Carinthian shepherds sheltered their Madonna as well as they could, in a sort of hut erected by them for the purpose, and went in crowds to invoke her in that humble shed, where their simple demands were often heard and granted by the powerful Virgin.

Such was the commencement of

* See M. Veuillot, *Voyage en Suisse*, 1829.

this famous pilgrimage, now frequented by emperors and princes. In 1220, Henry, margrave of Moravia, and his wife Agnes, in gratitude for a marvellous cure obtained through the intercession of Mary, built the stone chapel which is now seen in the middle of the church ; on its altar was placed the sacred image, which had till then remained on the stump. Louis I., king of Hungary, after gaining an unhopedor victory over the Turks, erected the church which surrounds the chapel. The Mussulmans surrounded Maria Zell, in 1530 ; but, at the moment when the chief was directing the point of his lance against the miraculous statue of the Virgin, he was struck with blindness, and his soldiers, seized with terror, took flight. The emperors Mathias, Ferdinand II., Ferdinand III., and Leopold I., made the pilgrimage of Maria Zell. In 1728, Maria Theresa made her first communion there ; in 1814, the Emperor Francis went thither himself ; and the late emperor, no less devout to Mary than his great ancestors, made that pilgrimage with the empress and a part of his court. A magnificent offering of precious

stones signalized the munificence of the two illustrious pilgrims who went to solicit the aid of the Queen of Heaven in governing their people wisely and paternally, as their pious and glorious ancestors did before them.

On the shores of the Illyrian Sea there rises, about two thousand feet above the level of the sea, a mountain, which bears the name of *Monte-Santo* ; on the top of this mountain there is a Franciscan monastery, which possesses the miraculous image of St. Mary of Castagnavizza. King Charles X., a good prince and a pious monarch, reposes there under the guardian care of the heavenly patroness of France ; one day, perhaps, when the stormy passions of men have subsided, six feet of French earth will be granted to the descendants of St. Louis, of Henry IV., and of Louis XIV.

In the palatinate of Kalish, in Poland, there is a small town, seated advantageously on a height, and praised for the strength of its fortifications even in 1750. This town, named Czenstochowa, was always garrisoned by companies of

artillery; but it was best known through its abbey of the *Fathers of Death*, or the congregation of St. Paul, which contained a miraculous image of Mary; both natives and foreigners flocked to this sanctuary, where every wealthy pilgrim left magnificent offerings. Besides the image of the Madonna, which, according to the monks, is the identical portrait of the Virgin painted by St. Luke (an opinion somewhat questionable), they expose to the veneration of the faithful a more authentic relic: the table at which the Holy Family took their meals. Polish sentinels were stationed at the gate of Our Lady of Czenstochowa, and in different parts of the monastery; fresh-blown flowers were every morning laid at the Virgin's feet; but not all the sweet and simple grace of Mary's worship could exclude from that chapel a sort of religious horror which froze one's very blood. The catacombs, with their mournful ornaments of human bones, were scarcely more frightful than those spectral-looking monks, who wore on their drapery the death's-head and cross-bones, such as we see on

* funeral-palls,* and had similar devices painted in a hundred different places through the church. This devotion to the Virgin of Czenstochowa has been transplanted into France by the Poles of our own times. A pious Polish family, residing in the neighborhood of Paris, conceived the idea of inaugurating the image of the tutelary Madonna of Poland in an ancient oak of the Forest of St. Germain. On the 13th of August, 1840, a Polish ecclesiastic, in the presence of a multitude of Poles of both sexes, consecrated the sacred image in the beautiful tree chosen for its temple (doubtless, for want of means to build one); then, all the assembly, kneeling on the grass, began to recite aloud the Litany of the Blessed Virgin; they then prayed for the dead, and for their beloved country; they besought Heaven for happier days, and dispersed with their souls strengthened and encouraged by that religious sentiment which gives men patience and fortitude.

Belgium has been always distinguished amongst the nations of

* *Hist. des Ordres Monastiques*, t. iii., ch. 44.

Europe for its tender devotion to Mary; of the numerous pilgrimages which it had, and still has, we will only mention that of Our Lady of Hall, of which an interesting description was left us by one of the most learned writers of the seventeenth century, Justus Lipsius.

Our Lady of Hall is situated in a pretty town surrounded by a fine and fertile country, watered by the Senne; it is considered a beautiful church even in that old Catholic land, where the churches are truly magnificent. The Virgin's chapel is on the left-hand side. The statue is of gilt wood, and is crowned with fine gold. With one hand the Virgin supports her divine Son, and with the other she presents a lily, that charming flower, the emblem of chastity, poetically named by the inhabitants of the Pyrenees, *Andredana Maria arrosa* (the Virgin Mary's rose). In former times, she wore on her breast six large pearls, with a beautiful ruby in their midst. Twelve towns or cities, who had experienced the effects of her protection, undertook the charge of her adornment. Every year, on the first Sunday of September, their

deputies brought her twelve magnificent robes, in token of gratitude and devotion. On that day a solemn procession took place, and the image of the Virgin was borne in triumph by the twelve deputies through the city of Hall and its suburbs. The people of Liège are also in the habit of going there every year, in procession, on the Feast of Pentecost.*

Several princes have contributed to enrich this sanctuary. Over the altar, according to Justus Lipsius, were seen the twelve Apostles, and on either side, an angel with a lamp; the whole of solid silver. No altar could boast so great a number of lamps, coats-of-arms, banners, crosses, chalices, and various figures in gold and silver. Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy, gave, among other rich presents, a second statue of the Virgin, with a cavalry soldier and a foot-soldier, fully accoutred, all of silver; Charles, his son, gave a silver falcon; the Emperor Maximilian enriched this shrine with a golden tree; Charles V. with a coat-of-arms; Pope Ju-

* *Divæ Virgo Hollensis*.—Millot, *Hist. des Troubad.*, t. i., p. 467.

lius II. with a silver lamp. To the right were seen the statues of the Emperor Maximilian, Albert, duke of Saxony, and one of their courtiers, in a kneeling posture. Over their heads were hung the banners sent by conquerors as offerings to Mary. There was also a *Remonstrance* of silver gilt, of considerable weight, given by Henry VIII. of England. Justus Lipsius himself, not content with having carefully written the history of Our Lady of Hall, hung up his silver pen before Mary's image.

After the Holy Sepulchre and St. Peter's in Rome, there is not in all Christendom a pilgrimage more famous than that of the Holy House of Loretto,—*Santissima casa di Loreto*. The Holy House of Nazareth was venerated by Christians even in the lifetime of the Apostles, and St. Helen surrounded it by a temple which received the name of St. Mary. Under the domination of the Arabian caliphs, crowds of European pilgrims went to adore God and honor his Mother in that simple, holy dwelling where Jesus and Mary led, for so many years, a laborious and hidden life; but when

the Turks had subjugated their former masters, the Christian pilgrims who ventured into Syria to visit Jerusalem and Nazareth, were so barbarously treated, that the West became thoroughly exasperated, and rushed forth as one man to do battle against the infidels.

When Godfrey de Bouillon was proclaimed king of Jerusalem, Tancred (whose valorous deeds have been sung by Tasso) was named governor of Galilee: that prince, who was very devout to Mary, enriched the Church of Nazareth with sumptuous gifts.

After the disastrous expedition of St. Louis, this corner of the earth, which was regarded as the cradle of Christianity, was defended, foot by foot, by the brave Knights of the Temple, who shed tears of rage and blood, seeing the holy places profaned by the Saracens.

Galilee having fallen under the Mohammedan yoke, though whitened with the bones of Christian warriors, "God would not permit Mary's holy house," says Father Torsellini,* "to remain exposed to the profanation of the Barbarians; he had it

* *Historia Lauretana*, ch. 2, p. 6.

conveyed by angels to Slavonia, and thence to the March of Ancona, where it was placed in the midst of a laurel grove belonging to a pious and noble widow named *Lauretta*. It was rumored abroad," he adds, "that on the arrival of the Holy House, the tall trees of the Italian forest bowed down in token of respect, and further, that they retained that inclination till the winds or the woodman's axe laid them prostrate on the ground."

The Church of Loretto, one of the most beautiful in Italy, has been tastefully and munificently adorned by the popes, who often went there as pilgrims; three doors of chased bronze give admission to the holy temple, in the centre of which stands the Holy House, with its covering of white marble, adorned with magnificent *basso-relievo*, designed by Bramante, and executed by Sansovino, Sangallo, and Bandinelli.

The miraculous statue of the Virgin is thirty-three inches in height; it is carved in cedar-wood, covered

with the richest drapery, and placed on an altar sparkling with jewels.* It is said that the niche in which it stands is overlaid with gold.† Numerous lamps of massive silver are constantly burning before it.

La sala del tesoro (the treasure-room) no longer displays the boundless wealth that it did in former times; but even in our days it has received some splendid gifts from popes and princes. Amongst these pious offerings is seen an ostensory of gold enriched with diamonds, a chalice and a censer, offered to the Madonna by the Emperor Napoleon; a chalice of silver gilt adorned with rubies and beryls, presented in 1819 by Prince Eugene Beauharnais; another chalice ornamented with brilliants, by the Princess of Bavaria, his wife; a large cross of gold and diamonds, and a crown of amethysts, rubies, and diamonds, offered, in 1816, by the King and Queen of Spain, then on their pilgrimage to Loretto; a *bouquet* of diamonds, offered, in 1815, by Maria-Louisa, sister of the King of

* The altar of the Madonna is radiant with gold and jewels. (*Italy*, by Lady Morgan, vol. iii., ch. 25.)

† La vaga nicchia è ricoperta di lame d'oro. (Don Vincenzo Murri, *Storia della Santa Casa*.)

Spain, Queen of Etruria, and Duchess of Lucca; an immense heart of the purest gold, with a jewel in the centre, suspended by a chain of emeralds and amethysts, the Emperor of Austria's gift to the Madonna. It would be impossible to enumerate all the precious stones and rich presents of every kind offered by kings and princes, under the simple title of *dono di una pia persona* (the gift of a pious person) on the register which contains the names of the benefactors of the Holy House.

The music of the beautiful Litany of Our Lady of Loretto was the offering wherewith a famous Florentine composer repaid a miracle of the Virgin in the beginning of the eighteenth century. This composer, named Barroni, suddenly lost his hearing, like Beethoven; after exhausting all the efforts of art, he besought the assistance of Mary, and made a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Loretto. There he was cured, after having prayed with fervor and devotion; in his gratitude to the Holy Madonna he composed a chorus of praise in her honor, which, under the title of the Litany of Loretto, was executed for the first time

on the 15th of August, 1737. This Litany is since sung every year on the Feast of the Madonna; Rossini, passing by Our Lady of Loretto, was struck with the beauty of the music, and is said to have introduced it into his *Tancredi*.*

The popes have taken pleasure in showing their respect for Mary by their tender solicitude for her miraculous shrine at Loretto. Pope Pius V. offered to the Holy House two silver statues of St. Peter and St. Paul; he did still better by turning from its natural channel a river whose waters, sluggish and partly stagnant, sent up the most unwholesome exhalations to the top of the hill, where a small town was formed in the shade of Mary's magnificent church. Gregory XIII. founded a college for the Illyrian youth within the very bounds of Loretto, as if to console the Dalmatians for the loss of the Madonna, who stopped but a moment amongst them ere she took her flight to the lovely shores of Italy. Sixtus V. founded the Order of the Knights of Loretto, specially intended to protect the coast of the Mediterranean from the incursions

* *Gazette Musicale.*

of the Barbarians. Benedict XIV. embellished this sanctuary with persistent generosity; and Pius VII., on being liberated, went to kneel before Our Lady's altar before he returned to Rome, and left, as a mark of his passage, a superb golden chalice with this inscription: "The sovereign pontiff, Pius VII., restored to liberty on the Feast of the Annunciation, being on his return from France to Rome, left at Loretto this token of his gratitude and devotion." His Holiness, Gregory XVI., likewise made the pilgrimage to Loretto.

The Spaniards have consecrated to Mary the lofty mountain of Montserrat, ten leagues from Barcelona, which was, according to the celebrated naturalist Humboldt, the great Atlas of the ancients; spread out beneath lies the fair kingdom of Valencia, the ancient garden of the Hesperides. This mountain, whose singular form gave rise to its name of *Monte-Serrats* (the cut mountain), seems composed of detached pieces, which make it appear divided, and covered with spiral cones, so that at a distance it would be taken for the work of man. Seen from afar, it is

a pile of grottoes and gothic pyramids; on a nearer view, each particular cone appears a mountain, and all these cones, terminated by miniature spires, forms an enormous mass about five leagues in circumference. It was probably this strange configuration that gave rise to the fable of the giants heaping mountain on mountain in order to scale the heavens.

On a platform of this famous mountain was built the superb convent dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, one of the most renowned pilgrimages in the Christian world. The foundation of this noble monastery is recorded as follows, in an inscription over a large picture of the same time (1239): In the year 808, under the government of Geofry the Bearded, count of Barcelona, three young shepherds having, one evening, seen a great light coming down from heaven, and heard melodious music in the air, went and told their friends. The bishop of Manresa repaired to the spot, accompanied by a magistrate and a great number of the people; they also beheld the heavenly light, and after searching for some time, they

discovered the image of the Virgin, which they resolved to take to Manresa; but, on reaching the place where the monastery now is, behold! they could go no farther. This prodigy induced the Count of Barcelona to build a convent there for nuns, whom he procured from the royal abbey of *las Puellas*, in Barcelona; the first abbess of Our Lady of Montserrat was his daughter Richilda, who took possession of it about the year 895. This community of nuns existed till 976, when Borrell, count of Barcelona, with the pope's consent, established the Benedictines on Montserrat.

The convent of Montserrat is a grand and noble building, situated on a narrow table-land of the mountain, known by the name of St. Mary's Platform; it is overhung by enormous rocks, which seem ever on the point of falling; it is defended by the declivities of the mountain, like natural fortifications, and, on the side where it is accessible, by six strong towers. Besides the convent and church of Our Lady, the fortified inclosure contains a lodging-house for travellers, an hospital, and an infirmary. The Church of

* Our Lady of Montserrat, though having but one nave, is yet very spacious; the choir-stalls are of remarkable workmanship. The face of the Virgin's image is almost black, like that of Toledo, Guadalupe, and many others in Spain; it represents Our Blessed Lady of a matronly figure, and advanced in age; although very dark, her face is beautiful; she is seated on a sort of throne, and holds in her right hand a globe, from which springs a *fleur de lys*, while with the other she supports the Divine Child, sitting on her knee, giving benediction with his right hand, and holding in the other a globe surmounted by a cross.

The inhabitants of the mountain are divided into four classes, namely, monks, hermits, choristers, and lay-brothers, who regularly and uninterruptedly succeed each other at prayer. The place is so arranged, that the singing in the monastery is heard in the different hermitages; and the bells of the latter, repeated by the echoes, is conveyed from one station to another round the whole mountain. The top of Montserrat commands one of the finest pros-

pects in the world, consisting of the kingdoms of Valencia and Murcia, and even the Balearic Isles.

Spanish kings and princes often ascended on foot the mountain-path which leads to Mary's altar; and numberless captives went thither, in the old times, to hang up the chains which they had worn among the Moors. St. Ignatius Loyola, before he devoted his life to religion, went there to make his *vigil of arms*, according to the custom of ancient chivalry, with whose spirit he was strongly imbued. "After having passed the night in prayer," says Father Bouhours, his biographer, "and solemnly consecrated himself to the Virgin, as her knight, in conformity with those martial ideas in which he conceived the things of God, he hung his sword on a pillar near the altar, as a sign that he renounced the secular service; then, after receiving the Holy Communion very early in the morning, he left Montserrat."

Our Lady of the Pillar, at Saragossa, is one of the oldest and most magnificent pilgrimages in Spain. King Ferdinand went there with Queen Christina a short time before

his death; and both, after praying devoutly, like true Catholic princes, before the venerated image of the Virgin of Saragossa, left her, at their departure, munificent proofs of their devotion.

The cathedral dedicated to Mary is a vast building, five hundred feet in length, with three spacious naves, and a multitude of chapels. Modern travellers speak with admiration of these chapels of marble and of jasper, hung round with offerings of gold, silver, and precious stones; its silver lamps shed such a dazzling radiance on those walls, covered with bright and precious objects, that it produces around the statue, itself sparkling with jewels, such an overpowering brightness that the eye can scarcely bear to rest upon it; the whole like a splendid vision, with the glitter of gold and the flash of rubies and diamonds. The Virgin's statue stands on a jasper column about three feet high; her garments and jewels were valued at several millions of pounds.

A pilgrimage, still very famous in Spain, is that of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Father Mariana assures us that this image, which was re-

nowned so early as the fourth century, was sent by Pope Gregory the Great to St. Leander, bishop of Seville. King Alfonso endowed this shrine in 1340, and annexed it to his private domains. Forty-nine years after, Don Juan I. gave it to some Jeromite monks, together with the lordship of a large town formed in the neighborhood. The convent, which took the name of *Santa Maria*, is situated in the midst of the present town; and, as times were very unsettled when it was first founded, it has rather the appearance of a stately fortress than of a peaceful monastery. It has an infirmary for the sick poor, a caravanserai for strangers, two colleges, and some fine cloisters.

In 1389, the famous Spanish architect, Juan Alfonso, commenced the church, which has three naves, and its walls are hung round with magnificent offerings, acknowledging, as the Spaniards say, more than three thousand authentic miracles wrought by the Blessed Virgin. Her image is over the high altar, and was lit, some years ago, by more than one hundred lamps of massive silver; she is clothed in white, and has the

* Divine Infant in her arms. Queen Donna Maria, wife of Juan II., her son, Don Henrico, and many other princes, chose their burial-place in this church, which is adorned with good paintings by Zurbaran and Jordans.

The devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe crossed the ocean, and was established by miracles in Mexico, a country entirely devoted to the Mother of God. It is recorded, in a narrative published at Rome in 1786, that a converted Indian, who went every Saturday to Mexico—eight miles from his own village—to hear mass in honor of the Blessed Virgin, had a miraculous vision on a hill formerly very famous among the Mexican idolaters, who named it *Tepijacac*, and consecrated it to *Tonantim*, the mother of the gods. One Saturday, being the 9th of December, A. D. 1531, the pious Diego, passing the foot of this hill, heard a soft strain of music, which he took at first for the singing of birds; but on listening more attentively, he was inclined to attribute it rather to the angels. Over the *Tepijacac* hovered a variegated cloud of the loveliest hues imaginable, and from

it came forth a sweet voice, calling the pious Mexican by name. Amazed, and unable to account for this strange adventure, Diego climbed the hill, on the summit of which he perceived a woman of the most majestic beauty: from her white drapery issued rays of light, which, reflected on the surrounding rocks, seemed to have transformed them into precious stones. The Blessed Virgin, for she it was, told Diego that she wished to have a temple built to her on that hill, under the name of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and commanded him to acquaint Juan de Zumarraga, who was then bishop of Mexico. The prelate listened in silence to this strange recital, and dismissed the Indian, telling him that he would need to be assured of the truth of his statement, and to have a more convincing sign of the will of Heaven. Apprised by her messenger of the ill success of his mission, the Virgin ordered him to ascend the hill and gather a bunch of flowers. Now, it was not the season for flowers, and, moreover, the top of the rock had as yet produced only briars and thorns; but Diego obeyed, never-

* theless, and his submission was rewarded, for he quickly found himself in the midst of flowers, balmy and beautiful; he proceeded to cull a nosegay, which Mary told him to present to the bishop. "He will believe this time," said the Virgin, with a smile.

Diego repairs to the episcopal palace, where the fragrance of the flowers hid under his cloak attracts the attention of the officers of the household; they force Diego to let them see them, and stretch out their hands to take them. Astonishment! the flowers are imprinted on the cloth, and are nothing more, as it were, than painted roses and lilies! The bishop appears, and Diego, opening the folds of his garment, now exhaling a celestial odor, finds, to his extreme surprise, that the flowers had shaded themselves into a beautiful image of Mary. The prelate, after prostrating himself, takes the cloak from off the Mexican's shoulders, and exposes it in his chapel until another could be built on the spot pointed out by the Virgin. The church was erected as soon as possible, and when it was completed, the image was conveyed

thither: ever after it performed many miracles, and became the most famous Madonna in America.

This new sanctuary being unable to contain the crowds who flocked thither, people thought of building another, about the year 1695. The archbishop of Mexico, Francisco de Aquiar e Seixas, laid the first stone. This is the splendid church now so much admired. It cost 2,270,000 pounds. On the 1st of May, 1709, the sacred image was transported thither, and placed on a silver throne valued at 400,000 francs. The gifts increasing from day to day, altars were constructed of the finest marble, and the treasury was enriched with precious vessels. The great silver-gilt lamp alone weighs more than six hundred and twenty marks, and is still more valuable from its workmanship. Around the sanctuary runs a grand balustrade of silver, continued as far as the choir, which, according to the Spanish custom, occupies the lower end of the church. This first railing is protected by a second of precious wood, adorned with an infinite number of silver figures of exquisite workmanship. A vice-king of Mex-

ico, Don Antonio-Maria Buccarelli, surrounded the image with a cornice of massive gold, and enriched the altar with twelve golden candlesticks. In 1749, a chapter was founded for the service of this sanctuary.

Mexico was solemnly consecrated to Our Lady of Guadalupe, and her feast was fixed on the 12th of December, with an octave, as a festival of the first class. Benedict XIV. extended this festival to all the dominions of the Catholic king. A town has since sprung up around the sanctuary. Guadalupe is the Loretto of America. The image represents an Immaculate Conception, with the inscription: *Non fecit taliter omni nationi.**

We will content ourselves with the pilgrimages already described, as they are the most famous in Christendom: it would be tedious to enumerate all those which still exist in Catholic countries. We will merely mention, then, Our Lady of Lampadouze, placed, like a beacon, on a desert isle, between Malta

* The Mexicans, to show their respect for Our Lady of Guadalupe, gave her name to their first steamboat.

and the African coast, whose lamp, kept up alternately by Christians and Mussulmans, burned uninterruptedly for ages; Our Lady of Monte-Nero, overlooking Livourne, whose church is frequented by an innumerable crowd of pilgrims, and its walls covered with *ex-voto*; it commands a view of that fair Tuscan sea into which the Italian maidens cast, on the eve of the Virgin's festivals, those garlands of flowers which they once offered to the nymphs of Amphytrion; Our Lady of Mercy, near Savona, in the valley of St. Bernard, the fairest sanctuary constructed by the piety of the Genoese people in honor of Mary; Our Lady of Consolation, in Turin; Our Lady of Charme, in Maurienne; Our Lady of Chasms, near Chambery; and Our Lady of Passaw, where the French priests, driven from home by the Revolutionary bayonets, went to pray for a happy return to their country—sighing for the limpid streams of France on the banks of

* the majestic Danube, the king of German rivers.

As to the other sanctuaries of Mary scattered all over the world, the greater part will be found in the annexed Historical Calendar. This calendar, published during the minority of Louis XIV., contains all the pilgrimages of the Virgin throughout Christendom, with a number of pious foundations, which render it extremely valuable; it is, moreover, a very rare work, only to be found in libraries. It is needless to say that things have changed since then, and that many religious edifices consecrated to the Mother of God, and then in a flourishing condition, are now but a heap of ruins—thanks to the “march of intellect” and the “age of progress.” This calendar, which completes our notice of the pilgrimages, is given without other authority than that of the writers quoted, together with the dates and miracles as they stand from age to age.



HISTORICAL CALENDAR

Of the Feasts of the Blessed Virgin,

WITH THE FOUNDATIONS AND CHURCHES DEDICATED TO HER.

JANUARY.

1. Dedication of Our Lady of the Annunciation, in Florence, by Cardinal Guillaume d'Estonville, A. D. 1452. In this church is preserved a picture of the Annunciation, which was found miraculously finished when the painter came to give it the last touches. *Archangel. Janius.*

2. Foundation of the Abbey of Dunes, in Flanders, in honor of the Virgin, A. D. 1128, by Foulques, a Benedictine monk. *Chronic. Bertinense.*

3. Our Lady of Sichem, near Louvain, in the duchy of Brabant. This image is said to have sweat four drops of blood in the year 1306. *Just. Lips. in Hist. Sichem, cap. 5.*

4. Dedication of Our Lady of Treves, in Germany, A. D. 746, by Hydolph, Archbishop of Treves. The Princess Genevieve, wife of Syfred, palatine of Treves, and daughter of the Duke of Brabant, had this church built in a wood on the very spot where Our Lady appeared to her, and assured her that her innocence should be recognized. *Additiones ad Moranum de Sanctis Belgicis.*

5. It is stated that on this day a paralytic man was miraculously cured in the church of Our Lady of Sichem, in Brabant. *Just. Lips. in Hist. Sichem, cap. 24.*

6. Our Lady being on this day at the wedding of Canaan, prevailed upon her Son, then thirty years of age, to change water into wine ;

* this was his first public miracle. *S. Epyph. heres. 51.*

7. Our Lady's return from Egypt to Judea with Jesus and St. Joseph. *Martyrolog. Rom., 7 Januar.*

8. Our Lady of the Beginning, in Naples. This chapel was built by St. Helen, and consecrated by St. Sylvester, A. D. 320. *Pet. Stephanus, de Locis Sacris Neapolit.*

9. Our Lady beyond the Tiber, in Rome. This church was built by Calixtus I., A. D. 224. *Baronius in apparatu ad Annal. et in Annal. ad ann. 224.*

10. Our Lady of Guides, in Constantinople, where there were some of Our Lady's spindles to be seen, with some of the swaddling-clothes of the Divine Infant, given by St. Puleheria to that church. *Niceph., Tract. 3, cap. 7.*

11. Our Lady of Bessière, in Limousin. A heretic who had scoffed at the devotion testified to this image, saw his house burned before his eyes without any visible cause. *Triple Couronne, l. i., Trait. 2, S. 10, nomb. 6.*

12. Our Lady of the Broad Street, in Rome, built on the spot where St. Paul languished for two years in chains, while he preached the Gospel and wrote several of his Epistles. *Trip. Cour., place quoted, nomb. 6.*

13. Pius V. revises the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, A. D. 1571. *Balinghem in Calend.*

14. Our Lady of Speech, near Montserrat, in Spain ; so called because she is said to have

restored speech to a dumb man, A. D. 1514. *Balinghem in Calend.*

15. Our Lady of the Porch, in Rome, where may be seen an image said to have been brought from heaven by an angel to the blessed Galla, widow of the Consul Symmachus. *Ex monument. S. Mariæ in Portic.*

16. Our Lady of Montserrat, in Spain, on this day, miraculously delivers several captives from the tyranny of the Turks. *Hist. Montiser.*

17. Our Lady of Peace, in Rome. In the year 1483, the Duke of Calabria having besieged Rome to revenge himself on Sixtus IV. for having prevented him from assisting the Duke of Ferrara against the Venetians, the Pontiff had recourse to the Queen of Heaven, and engaged by vow to build her a church under the title of Our Lady of Peace, if she would vouchsafe to deliver the city from the siege, and restore peace to Italy. His prayer being heard, he accomplished his vow, and commenced a church, which was finished by his successor, Innocent VIII. *Gabriel Pennotus in hist. tripartita Canon. regul., l. iii., cap. 33.*

18. Our Lady of Dijon, in Burgundy. This image, formerly called Our Lady of Hope, delivered the city from the fury of the Swiss, A. D. 1513; in gratitude for this favor, a general procession takes place every year. *Trip. Cour., nomb. 42.*

19. Our Lady of Gimont, near Toulouse. This Cistercian church is celebrated in that part of the country for its miracles. *Trip. Cour., nomb. 34.*

20. Our Lady of Tables, in Montpellier; an ancient and very famous church. In the arms of the city the Virgin is seen holding her Divine Son in her arms. *Trip. Cour., nomb. 38.*

21. Our Lady of Consolation, in Rome, at the foot of the Capitol. This Madonna commenced to work miracles in 1471. *Trip. Cour., nomb. 38.*

22. Espousals of Our Lady. This feast, long celebrated in France by pious persons, was approved of by Pope Paul III., in 1546. *Petrus Auratus, lib. de Imag. Virt., c. 10.*

23. Espousals of Our Lady, according to the custom of Arras. This feast was first celebrated in the year 1556. *Monum. Eccles. Attrebat.*

24. Our Lady of Damascus. There is said to proceed from this image, painted on wood, a miraculous oil, which restored sight, A. D. 1203, to the Sultan of Damascus, infidel as he was. In gratitude for this favor, he founded a lamp to be kept constantly burning before the image. *Spond. in Annal., ad ann. 1203.*

25. Translation of Our Lady's shroud and tomb to Constantinople, by Juvenal, Bishop of Jerusalem, in the reign of the Emperor Marcian, A. D. 455. *Ferreol, Locrius in Chron. anacephal.*

26. Our Lady of Long-Fields, founded in 1261, by Elizabeth, sister of St. Louis. *Gallia Christ., t. iv.*

27. Our Lady of Life, at Venasque, in Provence. Chronicles say that this image frequently restored life to unbaptized children, in order that they might receive baptism. *Trip. Cour., nomb. 89.*

28. Our Lady of Succor, near Rouen. This image is famous throughout the country. *Ex archiv. hujus ecclesia.*

29. Our Lady of Chatillon-sur-Seine. Bernard had a great devotion for this image, because of a miracle which it wrought in his favor. *Trip. Cour., nomb. 43.*

30. Our Lady of the Rose, at Lucca, in Italy. Three roses were found in the month of January in the arms of this image, according to a Latin chronicle. *Cæsar Franciot. in hist. Lucensi.*

31. Apparition of Our Lady to Sister Angela de Foligny. *In ejus vita.*

FEBRUARY.

1. The Vigil of the Feast of the Purification. *Locrius in Calend.*

2. The Purification of Our Lady. This festival was instituted in 544, under the Emperor Justinian, on occasion of the plague which ravaged Constantinople, where ten thousand per-

sons sometimes died in one day. In the year 701, Pope Sergius added to this feast the solemnity of the Tapers. *Baronius in Annal. ad ann. 544.*

3. Our Lady of Seidaneida, near Damascus. From this image, painted on wood, there flowed an oil which was never exhausted, no matter what quantity was taken. The virtue of this oil was so great that it cured even the infidels themselves. *Arnold, abbas Lubec. apud Baron. ad ann. 870, et apud Spondan. ad ann. 1203.*

4. Our Lady of the Pillar, at Saragossa, in Spain. So named because, according to the tradition, the Blessed Virgin appeared to St. James the Major on a pillar of jasper, A. D. 36, and commanded him to build her a church, which the Spaniards hold to have been the first dedicated to Our Lady. *Beutereus, l. i., c. 2 et 3.*

5. Dedication of the first temple to Our Lady by St. Peter, in Tripoli, now Tortosa. *Canisius, l. v., de B. Virg., c. 32.*

6. Our Lady of Louvain, in the Netherlands. This Madonna, highly venerated in the country, began to work miracles in 1444. *Balinghem in Calend.*

7. Our Lady of Grace, in the Abbey of St. Sauve, at Montreuil-sur-Mer. *Chronic S. Salvi.*

8. Our Lady of the Lily, near Melun. This abbey of Cistercian nuns was founded by Queen Blanche, mother of St. Louis. *Gall. Christ., t. 4.*

9. Octave of the Purification of Our Lady, established in the Cathedral of Saintes, because it was said that on the night of the Octave the bells were heard to ring harmoniously of their own accord. The sacristans having hastened to the church, beheld a number of strange men with tapers in their hands, singing hymns of honor to the Virgin, venerated in that church under the title of Our Lady of Miracles, and, entering softly, they begged the nearest of the august band to give them his taper, in proof of the prodigy. This taper is religiously preserved in that church. *Sausseyus Martyr. Gall. die 9.*

10. Our Lady of the Dove, near Bologna, in Italy, built, it is said, in the place marked out by a dove, who kept for two days flying round some masons who were at work, seeming to them to indicate a certain spot. *Trip. Cour., nomb. 107.*

11. St. Mary of Liques, near Calais. This monastery, of the Premonstratensian Order, was founded in 1131, by Robert, lord of Liques. *Gall. Christ., t. iv.*

12. Our Lady of Argenteuil, near Paris, built by Clovis I., A. D. 101. This priory possesses a part of Our Saviour's seamless garment. *Thomas Bosius, l. ix., de Sig. eccl., c. 9.*

13. Our Lady of the Hot Oven, in Bourges; so called because, in the year 526, a certain Jew, it is said, shut up his son in a heated oven because he had received Baptism and the Holy Communion; he was taken out safe and sound, thanks to the protection of Our Lady. A church was built to the Blessed Virgin in memory of this event. *Annales de France en Childebert.*

14. Our Lady of Bourbourg, in Flanders. It is said that this image having been struck by an impious man, A. D. 1383, the sacrilegious offender fell dead on the spot. *Bzovius, ex Archiv. eccles. Burburg.*

15. Our Lady of Paris, built first by King Childebert, A. D. 522. About the year 1257, St. Louis had a more spacious one erected on the same site, on the foundations laid by Philip Augustus in 1191. *Du Breuil, Theatre des Antiq. de Paris, l. i.*

16. Our Lady of the Thorn, near Chalon, in Champagne; so named because this image was found in a hawthorn bush. *Trip. Cour., nomb. 54.*

17. Our Lady of Constantinople, formerly the Jewish synagogue, which was converted into a Christian church by the Emperor Justin the Younger, A. D. 566. *Locrius.*

18. Our Lady of Laon, erected into a cathedral, and founded by St. Remi, Archbishop of Rheims, about the year 500; this prelate also

consecrated St. Geneband, his nephew, its first bishop. Miracles were often wrought there, and, amongst others, we read that in 1395 there was seen on the spire a crucifix, whose stigmata shed blood. *Thomas Walsingham, Hist. Ang. in Richardo I. rege.*

19. Our Lady of Good-Tidings, near Rouen, visited by a vast concourse of people, especially on Saturdays. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 52.

20. Our Lady of Boulogne-sur-Mer. In this church there is seen an image said to have been brought in a ship by the ministry of angels, A. D. 633. Louis XI. gave this church a massive golden heart, weighing as much as two thousand crowns, A. D. 1479, and ordained that all the kings of France, his successors, should make a similar offering on their accession to the crown. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 53.

21. Our Lady of Good Haven, in Dol, propitious to mariners. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 51.

22. Our Lady of Help, at Rennes, in Brittany. *Idem.*

23. Our Lady of the Rocks, near Salamanca, in Spain. There is an image venerated in this church which was miraculously found, A. D. 434, by Simon Vela, who built a church there. *Balinghem in Calend.*

24. On this day, in the year 591, St. Gregory the Great, having the image of the Virgin which St. Luke painted, borne in procession, the plague ceased in Rome. *Balinghem in Calend.*

25. Our Lady of Victory, in Constantinople. The city was delivered from the siege of the Saracens by the aid of the Blessed Virgin, A. D. 621. *Fereolus Locrius.*

26. Our Lady of the Fields, in Paris, formerly dedicated to Ceres. St. Denis, after having cast out the demons, consecrated it to Our Lady. In it is seen an image of the Virgin, on a small square stone, about a foot in diameter, made after that which St. Denis brought to France. This house, a Benedictine priory, was occupied by the Carmelites, who were received into it, A. D. 604, and founded by Catherine, Princess de Longueville. It was the first settlement of those

nuns in France. Mother Anne of Jesus, a companion of St. Theresa, was the first superior. *Du Breuil, Theatre des Antiq.*, l. ii.

27. Our Lady of Lights, near Lisbon, in Portugal. A light was long seen shining in this place, without any one being able to account for the phenomenon, when Our Lady, appearing to a prisoner, promised him liberty on condition that he would build her a church on the place thus pointed out by her. *Anton. Vasconcell., in descript. reg. Lusitan.*, c. 7, § 5.

28. Institution of the Monastery of the Annunciation, at Bethune, in Artois, by François de Melun and Louise de Foix, his wife, A. D. 1519. *Fereolus Locrius.*

MARCH.

1. Establishment of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady, by Sixtus IV., A. D. 1476, and grants of indulgences to those who assist at mass or Divine service. *T. IV. Conciliorum.*

2. Our Lady of Apparitions, in Madrid; so named because, in 1449, the Virgin appeared on eight successive days to a young girl named Yves, and commanded her to build a church on the spot where she should find a cross in honor of Our Lady. *In vita B. Joan.*

3. Our Lady of Longpont, in Valois. This abbey, of the Cistercian Order, was founded in the year 1131, by Josselin, Bishop of Soissons. *Gall. Christ.*, t. iv.

4. Our Lady of Guard, in Arragon; so named for having saved the life of a child who fell into a well, A. D. 1221. *Bzovius, ad ann. 1221.*

5. Our Lady of Good Aid, at Nancy, in Lorraine. This image is believed to have obtained the victory for René, Duke of Lorraine, over Charles the Bold, the last Duke of Burgundy. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 55.

6. Our Lady of Nazareth, at Pierre-Noire, in Portugal. This image was honored in Nazareth from the time of the Apostles, if we may believe a document which was found by a

hunter fastened to the image, A. D. 1150. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 13.

7. Our Lady of the Star, at Villa-Vicioza, in Portugal; so called because of a star which a shepherd saw shining where the church is built. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 17.

8. Our Lady of Virtues, at Lisbon, in Portugal. *Anton. Vasconcell., in descript. reg. Lusitan.*, c. 7, § 5.

9. Foundation of Savigny, in the diocese of Avranches, in Normandy, in honor of the Blessed Virgin, about the year 1112, by the Blessed Vital, hermit, who was its first abbot. *Gall. Christ.*, t. iv.

10. Our Lady of the Vine, near Viterbo, in Tuscany. A handsome church now occupied by the monks of St. Dominick. *Bzovius, ad ann.* 1487.

11. Our Lady of Forests, at Porto, in Portugal. This image was discovered in a forest, where it had been hid by Queen Malfada, wife of Alphonso I. *Joan. Barrius, lib. de reb. inter-amnensib.*, c. 12.

12. Our Lady of Miracles, in the cloister of St. Maur-des-Fossés, near Paris. It is said that this image was found already made, when the sculptor, named Rumoldi, thought of working on it. *Du Breuil, Theatre des Antiq.*, l. iv.

13. Our Lady of the Empress, in Rome. There is a tradition that this image spoke to St. Gregory the Great, A. D. 593. *Anton. Yopez. ad ann.* 84, *divi Benedicti*.

14. Our Lady of the Breach, in Chartres, where a general procession is held every year, in gratitude to Our Lady for having delivered the city, when besieged by the heretics, A. D. 1568. It was during this siege that the image of Our Lady, standing over the Porte-Drouaise, remained uninjured by the cannonading or musketry of the besiegers, the marks of which are still seen on two or three of the fingers. *Sebastien Rouillard, Parthenie*, c. 3.

15. In the year 911, the city of Chartres was miraculously delivered from the siege maintained by Rollo or Ralph, Duke of the Nor-

mans; as he was on the point of taking the town, Gaucelin, forty-seventh bishop of Chartres, ascended the ramparts, holding a relic of Our Lady by way of a banner;* this raised such a commotion in the enemy's camp, that they were forced to retire in disorder; in memory of this event, the fields of the Porte-Drouaise are still called the Field of Retreat. *Sebastien Rouillard, Parthenie*, c. 7, nom. 5.

16. Our Lady of the Fountain, in Constantinople, built by the Emperor Leo, A. D. 460, in gratitude for the Blessed Virgin having appeared to him on the margin of a stream where he had charitably led a blind man, and promised him that he should become an emperor, though he was yet only a simple soldier. *Niceph.*, l. xv., cap. 15.

17. A. D. 1095, under Urban II., there was a council held at Clermont, in Auvergne, and the Office of Our Lady was instituted. *Concil. Clarom.*—Foundation of the Abbey of Baumont-lez-Tours, by Ingeltrude, in the year 600. *Gall. Christ.*, t. iv.

18. In the year 1586, Our Lady of Loretto was erected into a cathedral by Sixtus V. *Turssel. Hist. Lauetana*, 5, 10.

19. Our Lady Fair (La Belle Dame) at Nogent-sur-Seine. It is said to be impossible to convey this famous image from its little chapel, which is no more than four or five feet square. *Ex monument. Novigent*.

20. Our Lady of Calevoirt, at Uckelen, near Brussels. This image began to work miracles in 1454, whereupon a magnificent chapel was built there in honor of Our Lady, A. D. 1623; the shrine was piously visited that same year by the Infanta of Spain, Isabella Clara Eugenia. *Aub. Miræus, in Annal. Belg.*

21. Our Lady of Bruges, in Flanders, where there is a tress of the Blessed Virgin's hair, given by a Syrian bishop named Moses. *Hugo Farcitus, l. i., miracul. B. Virg.*

22. On Palm Sunday, in the year 1098, St.

* This relic (so called) is the wedding garment of the Blessed Virgin.—TRANS.

Robert, Abbot of Molême, retired, with twenty-one of his monks, to the diocese of Chalons-sur-Saone, where he built, in honor of Our Lady, the famous monastery of Citeaux, the mother-house of the order. *Arnold Vionus*, l. i., *Ligni vitæ*, c. 47.

23. Our Lady of Victory. This image bears that name, because the French, having happily taken it from the Greeks, in a bloody battle fought near Constantinople, A. D. 1204, it obtained a complete victory for them. *Spondanus in Annal.*, ad ann. 1204.

24. Vigil of the Annunciation of Our Lady, instituted by Gregory II. On that day Our Lady made the Pasch in Jerusalem, A. D. 49. *Balingh. Metaphrastes*.

25. The Annunciation of Our Lady. This festival was instituted by the Apostles, and is the most ancient of all. *Joan. Bonifacius*, l. ii., *Hist. Virg.*, c. 5.

26. Our Lady of Soissons, occupied by nuns of the Benedictine Order. This abbey possesses one of the Blessed Virgin's shoes. *H. Farcitus*.

27. Apparition of Our Lord to his Blessed Mother, after his resurrection. *Alphonsus a Castro*, c. 17.

28. Our Lady of Castelbruedo, at Olian, in Catalonia. It is said that every year, on the Feast of the Annunciation, three lights of an azure color are seen to penetrate the windows of this church, light the lamps and tapers, go out by the way they came, and disappear immediately. *Ludo Marinæus*, l. v., *de reb. Hisp.*, c. ultimo.

29. Apparition of Our Lady to St. Bonet, Bishop of Clermont, in Auvergne, whom she commanded to say mass one night when he had remained in the church to say his prayers. The saint, pressing against a pillar as if to conceal himself, the stone became soft, and made him the place which is still seen there. But the Blessed Virgin having compelled him to officiate, left him, when the ceremony was over, the chasuble brought by angels from heaven. This celestial gift is still shown at Clermont, where

it is religiously preserved. *In ejus vita, apud Surium*, die 15 Jan.

30. Restoration of the Chapel of Our Lady of Boulogne-sur-Mer, by Claude Dormy, bishop of that city. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 53.

31. Our Lady of Holy Cross, in Jerusalem, where there is seen a portion of Our Lady's veil, given by St. Helen. *Onuphrius*, l. vii., *Eccl.*

APRIL.

1. Octave of the Annunciation of Our Lady, in the Carmelite Order. *Balinghem in Calend.*

2. Our Lady the Great, at Poitiers. There is in this church an image of the Blessed Virgin, in whose hands were miraculously found the keys of the city, whilst a servant of the Mayor sought them everywhere, in order to open the gates to the English, to whom he had promised to deliver the city. *Jean Boucher, Annals d'Aquitaine*.

3. Apparition of Our Lord to his Blessed Mother and the Apostles, eight days after his resurrection. *Balinghem in Calend.*

4. Our Lady of Grace, in Normandy. This image is famous all over the country, and people come from all parts to venerate it. *Ex. Archiv. hujus eccl.*

5. Apparition of Our Lady to Pope Honorius IV., in confirmation of the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. *Balinghem in Calend.*

6. Our Lady of the Conception, attached to the Capuchin Convent of Douai, in Flanders. There is in this church a picture of the Immaculate Conception, which was miraculously preserved from fire, A. D. 1553. *Amatus Francisc. in libello M. S.*

7. Our Lady of the Forsaken, at Valencia, in Spain. This image is in a chapel where there is said to be a loud noise made when any one is drowned or murdered in the neighborhood of the city. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 28.

8. Feast of the Miracles of Our Lady, at Cambron, near Mons, in the Low Countries. *Locrius*.

9. Our Lady of Myans, near Chambery, in Savoy. It is thought that this image arrested the devastating progress of the lightning which had already consumed the town of St. Andrew, with sixteen villages, and prevented it from destroying Myans, A. D. 1249. *Trip. Cour.*, n. 114.

10. Our Lady of Laval, in Vivarais. This church is much frequented, in order to obtain rain for the preservation of the goods of the earth. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 41.

11. It is said that on this day a blind man recovered his sight in the church of Our Lady of Montserrat, A. D. 1538. *Balinghem in Calend.*

12. Our Lady of Charity, in the Abbey of the Bernardines, seven leagues from Toulouse. It is said that this image has several times shed tears. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 34.

13. Apparition of Our Lady to the Blessed Jane of Mantua. *In ejus vita.*

14. Apparition of Our Lady to St. Ludivina, A. D. 1433. *Joan Bruchman.*

15. In the year 1101, the Holy Virgin gave the Blessed Alberic the white habit, instead of the black one which he then wore. *In ejus vita.*

16. Our Lady of Victory, in the Church of St. Mark, in Venice. This is the famous image which the Emperors John Zimisce and John Comnenus caused to be borne on a triumphal car; it is now borne in procession by the Venetians when they wish to obtain rain or fine weather. *In ejus vita.*

17. Our Lady of Arabida, in Portugal, where there is an image which an English merchant was accustomed to wear on his person. Being one day in danger of shipwreck, he beheld his image surrounded by a great light, on the top of the rock of Arabida, where he then built himself a small hermitage, and in it spent the remainder of his days. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 16.

18. Grant of Plenary Indulgences, by Urban VI., to those who visit the Church of Our Lady of Loretto. *Balinghem in Calend.*

19. Confirmation of the Feast of the Conception of Our Lady, by the Council of Trent, A. D. 1545. *Concil. Trident.*

20. Our Lady of Scheir, in Bavaria. This church was built on the site of the castle, voluntarily made over to Our Lady by all the members of the house of Scheir, with the exception of Arnold, who, in punishment of his obstinacy, was drowned in a neighboring lake. *Thrith. de Orig. gentis et princ. Bav.*

21. Institution of the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception, in Toledo, A. D. 1506, by Cardinal Francis Ximenes, archbishop of that city. *Gomesius, in ejus vita.*

22. Our Lady of Betharam, in the diocese of Lescar, country of Bearn. This image was found in 1503 by shepherds who, seeing an extraordinary light in the place now occupied by the high altar of the chapel, approached and found there an image of Our Lady, to whom a chapel was immediately built. *Trip. Cour.*, n. 32.

23. Concession of Indulgences, by Pope Calixtus III., A. D. 1455, to those who visited the Cathedral of Arras, where there are preserved a veil and a cincture of Our Lady. *Andreas Herby, ex codice MS. Eccles. Attreb.*

24. Dedication of Our Lady of Reparation, at Florence, by Eugenius IV., A. D. 1436. *Balinghem in Calend.*

25. Dedication of the Lower Holy Chapel of Paris, in honor of Our Lady, by Phillip, Archbishop of Bourges, A. D. 1248. *Du Breuil, Theatre des Antiq.*

26. Our Lady of Naïera, in Navarre. This image was miraculously found 1048. Don Garcias de Naïera, King of Navarre, built a church for it, which was visited by several of the kings of Navarre. *André Favin, l. iii., Hist. de Navarre.*

27. It is said that in the year 1419, Our Lady of Haut, in Hainaut, restored life to a child who had been three days dead. *Just. Lips. in Hist. D. Virg. Hallens, c. 19.*

28. Our Lady of the Oak, near the town of Sablé, in Anjou. This image has wrought so many miracles that it is now very famous in that country. Marshal de Bois Dauphin built it a handsome church and an hospital for pilgrims. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 50.

29. Our Lady of Faith, in the Augustinian Church of Amiens. This image remained a long time in the oratory of a young lady, who gave it to the Augustinians, and in their church it has since wrought many miracles. *Ex. MS. Aug. Ambier.*

30. Our Lady of Nantes, in Bretagne. This church, which was dedicated to the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, by Felix, Bishop of Nantes, was thrown down by the Normans, A. D. 937, and rebuilt by Alain, Duke of Bretagne. *Fortunat., l. iii., Carm., c. 1, 2, 3 et 4.*

MAY.

1. In the year 1449, some of the principal goldsmiths of Paris began to give the May-pole to the Church of Notre-Dame. *Du Breuil, Antiq. de Paris, l. i.*

2. Our Lady of Oviedo, in Spain, where there is some of the Blessed Virgin's hair. *Balinghem in Calend.*

3. Apparition of Our Lady to the Blessed Mary Razzi, of the Order of St. Dominick, A. D. 1597. *Balinghem in Calend.*

4. Our Lady the Helper, three leagues from Caen, in Normandy. There is a solemn procession held every year at this chapel. *Trip. Cour., nomb. 51.*

5. Our Lady is present on Mount Olivet, at the Ascension of Our Lord, and then returns to Jerusalem to retire with the Apostles. *Acts of the Apostles, c. i.*

6. Our Lady of Miracles, in the Church of Our Lady of Peace, in Rome. It is said that in 1483, a man who had lost his money at play, having blasphemed this image, stabbed it four times with his poignard, when it shed so much blood that the miracle was noised abroad all through the city. This image is still preserved in the Church of Our Lady of Peace, where it is seen over the high altar, enshrined in marble. *Gabr. Pen. in Hist. Triple Canon. Regul., l. iii., c. 33, § 2.*

7. Our Lady of Haut, in Hainaut, where there

is one of the three little statues of the Blessed Virgin which St. Elizabeth, daughter of Andrew II. of Hungary, honored religiously, and bequeathed by will to her daughter, St. Sophia, who gave it, in 1267, to the Church of Haut, where several miracles have since been wrought. *Just. Lips. Hist. D. Virg. Hallens, c. 3.*

8. A. D. 1202, the learned Justus Lipsius gave his silver pen to the Church of Our Lady of Haut, in Hainaut, where it still hangs before the high altar. *In ejus vita.*

9. Our Lady of Loretto, in the March of Ancona, in Italy. This chapel is the House of Nazareth, where the mystery of the Redemption was announced. *Turselin, in Hist. Lauretana, l. i., c. 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10.*

10. Dedication of the City of Constantinople to Our Lady, by Constantine the Great, under the Patriarch Alexander. *Niceph., l. viii., c. 26.*—Our Lady of La Saussaie, near Paris. The church of this Benedictine priory was dedicated to Our Lady A. D. 1305, by Pope Clement V.

11. Apparition of Our Lady to St. Philip of Neri, whom she cured of a grievous malady, A. D. 1594. *In ejus vita.*

12. Our Lady of Virtues, at Aubervilliers, near Paris. This image has wrought so many miracles in this church, that it is called Our Lady of Virtues, although it is dedicated to St. Christopher. *Du Breuil, l. iv.*

13. Dedication of Our Lady of Martyrs, called the Rotunda, in Rome, by Boniface IV., A. D. 608. This temple was styled the Pantheon, because it was dedicated to all the gods of the Gentiles. *Bede, Hist. Eng., b. ii., ch. 4.*

14. Dedication of Our Lady of Noyon, by Hardouin, thirty-seventh bishop of that city, A. D. 998. *Chronic. Annonice, t. iii.*

15. Descent of the Holy Ghost on Our Lady and the Apostles, A. D. 34, being the forty-eighth year of the Blessed Virgin's age. *Christoph. a Castro. in Hist. Virg.*

16. Apparition of Our Lady to St. Catherine of Alexandria, whose body was found on the 13th of this month, on Mount Sinai, by a special

revelation from the Queen of Heaven. *In ejus vita.*

17. Our Lady of Tears, in the Duchy of Spoleto, in Italy. It is said that this image, painted on a wall, shed abundance of tears, A. D. 1494. *Gabriel Pennotus*, l. iii., *Hist. Tripartita*, c. 34.

18. Dedication of Our Lady of Bonport, belonging to the Order of Cîteaux, near Pont de l'Arche, in the diocese of Evreux. This abbey was founded by Richard Cœur de Lion, 11th March, A. D. 1190. *Gall. Christ.*, t. iv.

19. Dedication of Our Lady of Flines, near Douai, by Peter, Archbishop of Rheims, A. D. 1279. This abbey of Cistercian nuns was given to St. Bernard by Marguerite de Dampierre, A. D. 1234. *Chronic. Flinens.*

20. Dedication of the Church of La Ferté, diocese of Chalons, in Burgundy, in honor of Our Lady. This abbey, the first-born of Cîteaux, was founded in 1113, by Savaric and Guillaume, counts of Chalons. *Ex Archivii Abbat. Firmitatis.*

21. Our Lady of Sweat, at Salerno, in Italy. It is said that this Madonna sweat blood and water in 1611, foreshowing a great conflagration which took place next day. *P. Spinelli Tract. de exempl. et miracul., cap. ultim.*

22. Our Lady of the Virgin's Mount, near Naples. This image preserved from the flames the monastery and church consecrated to it. *Idem, loco citato.*

23. Our Lady of Miracles, at St. Omer, where there is one of the Blessed Virgin's gloves, and some of her hair. *Chronic. Bertinens.*

24. Gregory XV., A. D. 1622, issued a decree forbidding any one to maintain the opinion contrary to the Immaculate Conception. It is also forbidden by the same decree to employ any other term than that of *Conception* in the mass or office of the day. *Balinghem in Calend.*

Patronal Feast of Our Lady of Succor, Montreal, Lower Canada. This shrine is famous throughout the country, and is much frequented by pilgrims. It formerly contained an image which had been venerated for more than a cen-

* tury in a domestic chapel in France, and was sent to Montreal—or Villemarie—by the pious nobleman to whom it belonged. It was miraculously preserved from fire in 1754, but was stolen (or otherwise disappeared) in 1831. It was replaced by another in 1847. Marvellous effects have followed the invocation of Our Lady of *Bon Secours*. *Manuel du Pelerin de Notre-Dame de Bon Secours.*

25. Our Lady the New, in Jerusalem, built by the Emperor Justinian, A. D. 530. *Procopius, de Edific. imperat. Justiniani.*

26. Dedication of Our Lady of Vaucelles, in the diocese of Cambrai, by Samson, Archbishop of Rheims. This abbey, of the Cistercian Order, was founded in 1132. *In Chronic. Cisterc.*

27. Dedication of Our Lady of Naples, styled St. Mary Major, by Pope John II., A. D. 553. There is an image of the Virgin preserved in this church which was said to have been painted by St. Luke. *Schraderus*, l. ii.

28. Feast of the Relics of Our Lady, in Venice, when there are exposed to the veneration of the faithful some pieces of the Virgin's robe, her cloak, veil, and girdle. *Ex hist. ea de re, impressa Venitiis.*

29. Feast of Notre-Dame des Ardents, at Arras; there is a taper in the Cathedral of Arras said to have been brought there by Our Lady, A. D. 1095. *Jacob. Meyerus, in annal. Fland. ad ann. 1095.*

30. Dedication of the Church of the Virgin's Mountain, near Naples, built A. D. 1126, by St. William, founder of the Order of the Virgin's Mountain, and repaired in 1519. *Jean Juvenal, l. vii., de Antiq., c. 3.*

31. Our Lady of Suffering, in the Church of St. Gervase, in Paris. This image, which stood at the corner of the Rue des Rosiers, was mutilated by a Jew in 1528; Francis the First had it solemnly conveyed to St. Gervase, and caused a statue of the Virgin to be made of gilt silver, which he himself put up in place of the former. This statue was stolen in 1545, and was replaced by one of stone, which still bears the name of

Our Lady of Silver. *Du Breuil, Theatre des Antiq.*, l. iii.

JUNE.

1. Our Lady of the Star, at Aquilea, in Italy. This church is so named because it is said that a star was seen in daylight over the head of St. Bernardine, when, preaching at Aquilea, he applied to the Blessed Virgin that passage of the Apocalypse where mention is made of the woman with a crown of twelve stars on her head. *Surius, in ejus vita.*

2. Our Lady of Edessa, in Asia Minor. It is said that this image, placed under the portal of a church, spoke to St. Alexis, and made known to the people the merit of that saint. Thence it was transported to Rome, where it is highly honored. *Thomas Bosius*, l. ix., c. 9.

3. Our Lady of Sosopoli, in Pisidia. There proceeded from this image a miraculous oil, as testified by Germanus, patriarch of Constantinople, in a letter read at the second Council of Nice, assembled for the defence of sacred images. *Act. 4 Concil. Nicæni.*

4. Our Lady of the Hill, at Fribourg, where many miracles are wrought. *Trip. Cour.*, n. 85.

5. Chronicles tell that in the year 1428, Our Lady of Haut, in Hainaut, restored life to a child who had been dead for several days, in order that it might receive Baptism; that it lived five hours after being baptized, then gradually melted away like a snow-ball, in presence of seventy persons. *Justus Lipsius, de Virg. Hallens.*, c. 21.

6. Institution of the Nuns of the Visitation of Our Lady, founded at Annecy, in Savoy, A. D. 1610, by St. Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, and Jane Frances Fremiot de Chantal, who was the first member of that order. *Henri de Mau-pas du Tour*, 2d partie, chap. i.

7. Dedication of Our Lady of the Valley, of the Cistercian Order, seven leagues from Paris, under Louis XIII., April 18th, A. D. 1616. *Ex-codice MS.*

8. Our Lady of Alexandria, in Egypt, built by

St. Peter, patriarch of that city. *Baronius, ad ann.* 310.

9. Our Lady of Ligny, near Bar-le-Duc, in Lorraine. This image is much celebrated because of the numerous miracles which it operates. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 57.

10. Our Lady of Cranganor, in the East Indies. This church is said to have been built by one of the three Magi. *Osorius, t. i., de Gestis Emmam.*

11. Our Lady of Esquernes, half a league from Lille, in Flanders. This image began to work miracles about the year 1162. *Buzelinus, in Annal. Gall.* l. ii.

12. The Chronicle mentions that on this day Our Lady appeared to St. Herman of the Premonstratensian Order, and gave him a tress of her hair. *Surius, in ejus vita.*

13. Dedication of Our Lady of Sichein, near Louvain, A. D. 1604, by Mathias Hovius, Archbishop of Malines. The image of the Blessed Virgin seen in this church was first placed in the hollow of an oak. *Justus Lipsius, de Virg. Aspricol.*, c. 4.

14. A. D. 371, there fell from heaven a white fleecy substance mixed with a thick rain; the fact is mentioned by St. Jerome, who holds that, the famine being great in the country, the inhabitants of Arras had recourse to the Virgin, who sent them that heavenly gift, commonly called manna, some remains of which are still to be seen in the church dedicated to her honor. *Ex arch. Abb. Trulienne.*

15. Foundation of Our Lady of the Bernardines, in the diocese of Toulouse and Rieux, A. D. 1145.

16. Our Lady of Aix-la-Chapelle, built by Charlemagne, and consecrated by Leo III., A. D. 804; there were present on this occasion no less than three hundred and fifty prelates. Charlemagne gave to this church two of Our Lady's tunics, A. D. 810; but Charles the Bald took one of them, sixty-five years after, and gave it to the Church of Chartres. *Ferreolus Locrius*, l. v., *Marice Aug.*, c. 17.

17. Our Lady of the Forest, near Boulogne-sur-Mer. This little chapel is famous all over the country. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 53.

18. Apparition of Our Lady to St. Agnes of Mount Politian, to whom she gave, it is said, a small cross, which is now exhibited, with great solemnity, on the first day of May. *Chronic. S. Dominici*, part. i., l. i., c. 72.

19. At Treves, in Germany, in the Church of St. John the Evangelist, built in 333, there is seen Our Lady's comb, given by Agritius, archbishop of that city.

20. Our Lady of Blaquernes, on the wharf of Constantinople. In this church is Our Lady's shroud, given by the Empress St. Pulcheria, who received it from Juvenal, Bishop of Jerusalem. *Niceph.*, l. xv., c. 14.

21. Our Lady of Matarieh, at Grand Cairo, in Egypt, where there is a miraculous fountain obtained by the prayers of Our Lady, when she retired thither with the Holy Family; tradition says that she washed the clothes of the Infant Jesus at this spring. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 5.

22. Our Lady of Narni, in Italy. It is said that this image spoke to the Blessed Lucy, to whom she gave the Infant Jesus to hold. *Trip. Cour.*, trait. 3.

23. Our Lady Justiniana, at Carthage. This church was built by the Emperor Justinian, in honor of the Blessed Virgin, to whom he ascribed his victories over the Vandals. *Baron.*, ad ann. 534.

24. Our Lady of the Clos-Evrard, near Treves. This image was fastened to an oak by a vine-dresser who wished to honor it; but Our Lady ordered him to build a little hut in her honor. The miracles there wrought became so numerous that the hut was speedily converted into a small chapel, and finally a church was erected on the spot, and dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, A. D. 1449, by Jacques de Rircq, Archbishop of Treves. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 82.

25. A. D. 431, the Council of Ephesus, wherein it was declared that the Virgin was entitled to be called the Mother of God. *Concil. Ephes.*

26. Our Lady of Meliapour, in the East Indies, where St. Francis Xavier often went to pray. *In vita S. Franc. Xaverii.*

27. Our Lady of La Dorade, near Toulouse. This place, formerly dedicated to the goddess Pallas, was changed into a church for Our Lady when the inhabitants received the faith. *Forcat.*, l. i., de Gall. Imperia.

28. Dedication of the Church of the Carthusians, in Paris, under the title of *Notre Dame*, by Jean D'Aubigny, Bishop of Troyes, in Champagne, A. D. 1325. *Du Breuil, Theatre des Antiq.*, l. ii.

29. Our Lady of Buglose, two leagues from Acqs, in Gascony. This image was miraculously found, A. D. 1634, and conveyed to the parish church of Buglose. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 36.

30. Our Lady of Calais, built by the English while in possession of that city, which they occupied for about two hundred and ten years; a magnificent chapel was added to it in 1631, by Jacques de Bolloye, Vicar of Calais. *Davila*, t. ii.

JULY.

1. Dedication of the Church of Jumièges, in Normandy, A. D. 1067, by Maurice, Archbishop of Rouen, at the request of King William. *Thos. Walsingham.*

2. Visitation of the Blessed Virgin. This festival was instituted by Urban IV., A. D. 1385, and confirmed by Boniface IX., A. D. 1389. *S. Antonin*, iv. part., tit. xv., chap. 24.

3. Our Lady of La Carolle, in Paris. It is said that this image, placed at the corner of the Rue aux Ours, being struck with a knife, A. D. 1418, shed a quantity of blood. In commemoration of this event, a great fire is made every year, and a wax figure burned in it, representing the person who gave the sacrilegious blow. *Du Breuil*, l. ii.

4. Our Lady of Miracles, at Avignon, built by Pope John XXII., on the following occasion: Two criminals were condemned to be burned, and one of them having invoked the Blessed

Virgin, was respected by the flames, whilst his companion was wholly consumed. *Richard Cluniac in Joan. xxii.*

5. Dedication of Our Lady of Cambrai, A. D. 1472, by Peter de Ranchicourt, Bishop of Arras. This church was built in honor of Our Lady in 524; destroyed by the Normans in 882; rebuilt by Dossillon, twenty-first Bishop of Arras, A. D. 890; and finally, after being burned down in 1064, and again in 1148, was restored, as we now see it, in 1261. *Chronic. Hannon., t. iii., l. ii., chap. 23.*

6. Our Lady of Iron, near Blois, district of Dunois. It was in this chapel that, about the year 1631, a child who had been smothered while struggling in its cradle, was restored immediately to life as soon as its parents consecrated it to Our Lady of Iron. *Ex archiv. hujus loci.*

7. Dedication of Our Lady of Arras, A. D. 1484, by Pierre de Ranchicourt, bishop of that city. This church was built by St. Vaast, Bishop of Arras, A. D. 542, with the donations of the first kings of France, according to Baronius. The Normans destroyed it in 583, and, after being rebuilt, it was consumed by lightning, A. D. 1030, and rebuilt in 1040. *Locrius, l. ii.*

It is said that in 1410, Our Lady of Haut, in Hainaut, restored life to a child belonging to Brussels, who was drowned in a well. The child being taken dead from the well, was consecrated to Our Lady, and it was instantly restored to life. *Justus Lipsius de Virg. Hallens., c. 16.*

8. Our Lady of Peace, in the Capuchin Church, Rue St. Honoré, in Paris.

9. Dedication of Our Lady of Coutances, by Geoffroy de Mowbray, in 1056.

10. Dedication of Our Lady of Boulogne, near Paris, A. D. 1469, by Chartier, Bishop of Paris. The confraternity of Our Lady of Boulogne is so famous that six of our kings were amongst its members. *Du Breuil, Antiq., l. iv.*

11. Our Lady of Cléry, four leagues from Orleans; this church was rebuilt by King Louis

XI., who was buried there in 1483. *Locrius, M. Aug., l. iv., ch. 68.*

12. Dedication of Our Lady of All Graces, in the church of the Friars Minors, at Nigeon, near Paris, A. D. 1578. This house was given, in 1476, by Anne of Brittany, wife of Louis XII., to St. Francis of Paula, who had instituted his order A. D. 1436. *Du Breuil, Antiq. de Paris.*

13. One hundred years before the birth of Our Lord, the image of Our Lady of Chartres was carved in a forest, on the plains of Beance, by command of Priscus, king of the Chartrains, and then placed, with the inscription, *Virgini parituræ* (that is to say, *to the Virgin who is to bring forth*), on the spot where it now stands, which was then a Druid cave. St. Potentian, second bishop of Sens, whom the Apostle St. Peter had sent into France, stopped at Chartres, where he blessed this image, and dedicated the grotto for a church, A. D. 46. *Sebast. Rouillard, Parthen., ch. 4, nomb. 1.*

14. Our Lady of the Bush, in Portugal. This image was discovered by a shepherd in the midst of a burning bush. Vasquez Perdigon, Bishop of Evora, built in this place, A. D. 1403, a church and a monastery, which was given to the monks of St. Jerome. *Vasconcell., in Descript. regni Lusitaniæ, ch. 7, § 5.*

15. A. D. 1099, the Turks were defeated by Godfrey de Bouillon, who, on this day, took Jerusalem, of which he was declared king, and its festival was formerly celebrated every year, with a double office and an octave. *Molanus, ad hanc diem.*

16. The Feast of the Scapular. Tradition says that she gave it herself, about the year 1251, to the Blessed Simon Stock, of England. This devotion has spread all over the world. Popes John XXII., Gregory XIII., Sixtus V., Gregory XIV., and Clement VIII., granted indulgences to the members of the confraternity. *Cartagena, de Ortu ordinis Carmelitarum.*

17. In the year 1565, Pius V. approves of the reform of the barefooted Carmelites, instituted by St. Theresa at Avila, in Spain.

18. Our Lady of Victory, at Toledo; so named because of a signal victory gained by Alphonso IX. over the Moors, A. D. 1202, after having hoisted a flag on which was the image of Our Lady. *In Hist. Alphonsi ad Innocent III.*

19. Our Lady of Moyon-Pont, near Peronne. This image was found by a shepherd near some ponds, where are now the meadows of Amèle; a church was built there, and was repaired in 1612. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 53.

20. Our Lady of Grace, at Picpus, Faubourg St. Antoine, in Paris. This image, which is in a little wooden vessel with two angels at the end, was made in 1629, of a splinter taken from the famous image of Our Lady of Boulogne-sur-Mer. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 47.

21. Our Lady of Verdun, in Lorraine, renowned for its numerous miracles. St. Polichrainus, fifth bishop of Verdun, dedicated this church on his return from the Council of Chalcedon. *Ex archiv. eccles. Virod.*

22. Our Lady of Safety, near Marseilles. The Queen of Heaven is highly honored in this church, where, every Saturday, the Blessed Sacrament is exposed from midnight till noon. There are in it more than thirty large silver lamps, with many branches of coral of extraordinary size. *Ex Chronic. Massiliens.*

23. Institution of the Premonstratensian Order, by St. Norbert, A. D. 1120, on a revelation from Our Lady. *Biblioth. Præmonstr.*, l. i., c. 2.

24. Foundation of Our Lady of Cambron, near Mons, in Hainaut, by Anselm de Trasigny, lord of Peronne. In MS. A. D. 1148. *Hannon Chronic.*

25. Our Lady of Bouchet, two and a half leagues from Blanc, in Berry. A shrine which attracts a great number of pilgrims. The image of the Virgin is made of the wood of an old oak, where the first image was found. *Ex monumētis hujus loci.*

26. Our Lady of Faith, at Cancy, near Abbeville. This image having been removed from the oak where it now is to a chapel built for it about fifty paces distant, was miraculously

found again in its former place. *Des Archives de Cancy.*

27. In the year 1480, the Knights of Rhodes gained a signal victory over the Turks by the assistance of the Blessed Virgin, who appeared on the walls of that city with a lance in her hand; the enemy, frightened, retired in disorder, with the loss of the greater part of his forces. *Jacob. Bosius, in hist. equitum Rhod.*

28. Our Lady of Faith, at Gravelines. This image is renowned throughout all the country. *Hist. Dominæ Foyens. Gravel.*

29. A. D. 1546, it was regulated by the Council of Trent, that, regarding the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin, the decree of Sixtus IV. should be observed, under the penalties therein mentioned. *Balingh. in Calend.*

30. Our Lady of Gray, near Besançon, in Franche-Comté. This image, made of the oak of Montaigu, was much honored in the country. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 58.

31. Our Lady of the Slain, at Ceica, near Lorbán, a Cistercian monastery, in Portugal. It is said that this image was brought from heaven to the Abbé John, uncle of King Alphonso, and that it resuscitated a few persons who had been killed; that, in memory of this miracle, they had ever after a red mark round their neck, like that which is still seen on the neck of the image. *Chronic. Cisterc.*, l. vi., c. 27 et 28.

AUGUST.

1. A. D. 1218, Our Lady appearing on this day to St. Raymond, of the Order of St. Dominic, to James, King of Arragon, and to St. Peter of Nolasquez, made known to all three separately, that she wished them to establish a religious order for the redemption of captives. *Surius, in vita S. Raymundi.*

2. Our Lady of the Angels, or the *Portioncule*, six hundred paces from the town of Assissium, in Italy. The monks of St. Benedict gave this chapel to St. Francis, at his own request, and it was his wish that the convent which he built

there should be the chief house of his order. It was there that the first general chapter met, on which occasion five thousand monks were present. In this chapter he restored the spirit of the order, A. D. 1226, being the twentieth after his conversion, and the forty-fifth of his age. *Chr. Ord.*, part i., l. ii., c. 1.

3. Our Lady of Arches, in London. It is on record that this image, having been carried off in a storm, with more than six hundred houses, A. D. 1071, fell uninjured to the ground with so much force that it went through the pavement, more than twenty feet into the earth, whence it could never be raised. *William of Malmesbury*, l. iv., in *Willel.*, 2.

4. Our Lady of Dordrecht, in Holland, erected by St. Sauverus on the spot, it is said, which an angel, sent by the Virgin, pointed out; the saint afterwards won the crown of martyrdom in that same church, and, in order to honor her memory, God was pleased after her death to make a spring shoot up there, which cured fevers of all kinds. *Molan.* in *SS. Belg.*

5. Dedication of Our Lady of Snow, in Rome, called St. Mary Major, formerly of the Crib, because Our Saviour's crib is kept there. It was built by John Patricius and his wife, on the place which they found covered with snow, on the 5th of August, 367, and rebuilt by Sixtus III., about the year 432. *Baron.*, in *Nol. ad ann.* 367.

Dedication of the Church of Our Lady of the Angels, in Rome, by Pope Pius IV., A. D. 1561. This church, which was formerly a part of the baths of Dioclesian, was erected into a cardinalate, endowed with several indulgences, and given by the same pope to the Carthusians. *Balinghem in Calend.*

Our Lady of Protection, in the Church of the Bernardines, Rue St. Honoré, Paris. It was so named by the Queen, Ann of Austria, A. D. 1561, in gratitude for the favors she had received from the Queen of Heaven. *Du Breuil, Antiq.*, l. iii.

6. In the year 963, Our Lady of Chartres was

entirely burned, with the exception of the Virgin's tunic, which is still kept there. *Sebast. Rouillard, Parthen.*, c. 7.

7. Our Lady of Schiedem, in Holland. Chronicles relate that a merchant who stole this image, having embarked with the intention of selling it at the Fair of Anvers, could never get clear of the port. Frightened by this prodigy, he replaced the stolen image, which was solemnly conveyed to the Church of St. John the Baptist, where St. Ludivine passed whole nights in prayer. *Joan. Bruchman, Minorita.*

8. Our Lady of La Kuen, near Brussels. This church was built by order of Our Lady, who is said to have marked out its dimensions with a cord, which is still shown. *Auctar. ad Molan.*

9. Our Lady of Egnies, in Brabant, the birth-place of Mary of Egnies, who visited this holy image barefoot, once a year, in the depth of winter. *Jacob. de Vitriaco, in ejus vita.*

10. Institution of the Order of Our Lady of Mercy, at Barcelona, A. D. 1218. *Surius, in vita Sancti Raimondi.*

11. A. D. 810, the Emperor Nicephorus and the Empress Irene sent to Charlemagne two of the Blessed Virgin's robes; he placed them in his church of Aix-la-Chapelle, from which Charles the Bald took one, and gave it to the Cathedral of Chartres. *Locrius Anaceph.*, p. 3.

12. Our Lady of Rouen, built by Robert, Duke of Normandy. Richard the First, King of England, made great gifts to this church, and the kings of France endowed it with many privileges. *Merula, Cosmogr.*, part ii., l. lii.

13. Death of Our Lady in presence of all the Apostles, except St. Thomas. Like her Divine Son, she rose from the dead and ascended to heaven the third day after her death. *Suarez*, t. ii., in *p. Disp.* 21 sect., in *fine.*

14. Vigil of the Assumption, with a fast, mentioned by Nicholas I., who was Pope in 858. It is said that on this day the angels were heard, near the city of Soissons, singing the anthem: "Felix namque es, sacra Virgo Maria, et omni laude dignissima quia ex te ortus est Sol justi-

tiæ, Christus Deus noster." *Thom. Concep.*, l. ii, part 7.

15. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. This feast was instituted, according to St. Bernard, in the very times of the Apostles. *St. Bernard*, epist. 174.

16. On this day the Virgin's sepulchre was opened, and as a proof that Our Lady had already ascended to heaven, there was seen in it only her shroud, which shed a delicious perfume. *Sausseyus, in Martyr. Gallic., de Assumpt.*

17. Philip the Fair gained, on this day, a signal victory over the Flemings, A. D. 1304, after commending himself to Our Lady of Chartres; in gratitude for this favor, he gave her in perpetuity the land and lordship of Barres, together with a perpetual annuity, and all the accoutrements which he wore on that memorable day. This feast is celebrated, in the Church of Notre-Dame, in Paris, on the following day, the 18th, and has a double office. *Sebast. Rouillard*, chap. 6.

18. A. D. 1022, King Robert founded a chapel in honor of Our Lady in the court-yard of the palace, in Paris, on the spot now occupied by the Holy Chapel. *Du Breuil, Antiq. de Paris*.

19. Our Lady of Jerusalem, near Montecorvo, in Portugal. There is here a chapel built in imitation of that of Jerusalem; it is said that the Virgin herself gave the plan. *Vasconcell. in Descript. regni Lusit.*

20. In the famous church of the Benedictines of Affighem, in Brabant, there is seen an image of the Blessed Virgin, which is said to have spoken to St. Bernard; when the saint saluted her with, "Salve, Maria," she answered, "Salve, Bernard." *Just. Lips.*, t. ii., c. 4, § 4.

21. In the year 1022 was instituted the Order of the Thirty Knights of Our Lady of the Star, at Paris, by King Robert, who said that the Blessed Virgin was the star of his kingdom. *A. Favin, Hist. de Navarre*.

22. Octave of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, instituted by Pope Leo IV., A. D. 847. *Jacob. Bosius*, num. 2.

23. On this day, in the year 1328, Philip of Valois, being surrounded by the Flemings near Mount Cassel, had recourse to the Blessed Virgin, who immediately delivered him from the danger to which he was exposed. In gratitude for this service, on entering Paris he went straight to the Church of Notre-Dame, and, going in mounted as he was, he rode up the nave till he came in front of the crucifix, where he laid down his arms. The picture of the monarch on horseback was long seen in this church, to which he assigned a pension of an hundred livres, to be paid from his domain of Gâtinais. *Trip. Cour.*, trait 4, c. 7, nomb. 7.

24. Dedication of Our Lady of Benoiste-Vaux, within a league of Verdun, in Lorraine. In this chapel there is an image of the Virgin which is famous for working miracles; there is also a miraculous fountain, the water of which cures many diseases. *Hist. de Notre-Dame de Benoiste-Vaux*, chap. i. et ix.

25. Our Lady of Rossano, in Calabria. It is said that the Saracens, wishing to surprise the town of Rossano, and having already planted their ladders against the walls, were repulsed by Our Lady, who appeared clothed in purple with a lighted taper in her hand; this apparition frightened them so that they fled precipitately. *Gabriel de Barry*.

26. Our Lady of the Arbor, at Douai. It is on record that when some children were playing disrespectfully before this image, it made a sign of displeasure with its hands. This miracle induced the people of Douai to build a chapel for it, A. D. 1543. *Buzelin, in Annal. Gallo-Flandr.*

27. Our Lady of Monstier, eight or ten leagues from Sisteron, on the way to Marseilles. There is an old tradition that a nobleman of the country, being made prisoner by the Turks, made a vow to build a chapel in honor of the Virgin, if she would please to deliver him. The Virgin heard his prayer; an angel took him on his wings and conveyed him to his home. The nobleman erected a magnificent chapel to Our

Lady, where many miracles were wrought. *Ex MS. ea de re conscript.*

28. Our Lady of Kiovia, in Poland, metropolitan of Russia; there is in this church a large alabaster figure of the Virgin, which spoke to St. Hyacinth, A. D. 1241, and told him not to abandon it to the enemy who was besieging the city, but to take it with him, which he did without any trouble, the image having lost its weight. *In vita sancti Hyacinthi.*

29. Our Lady of Clermont, ten leagues from Cracovia, where there is an image made by St. Luke, and sent to the Empress Pulcheria; that princess placed it in the Church of Our Lady of Guides, in Constantinople, whence it was taken by Leo, Duke of Russia; the Duke of Opolia wished to remove it to his duchy, in 1380; but when it reached the mountain of Clermont it became so heavy that it could be carried no farther; seeing by this miracle that the Virgin had chosen that mountain for a dwelling-place, a church was built there for her, *Bzovius, ad ann. 1383.*

30. Our Lady of Carquera, on the river Douro, in Portugal. Egas de Monis, guardian of King Alphonso I., had that young prince carried to this ancient church that the Virgin, by her intercession, might straighten his feet, which was immediately done. *Vasconcell. in Regib. Lusit. Anacephat. 1 et 2.*

31. Dedication of Our Lady of Founders, in Constantinople. The Empress St. Pulcheria had this church built, and enriched it with Our Lady's girdle. A festival was instituted in Constantinople for this relic, under the title of the Deposition of Our Lady's Girdle. The French having taken the city, this precious treasure was taken by Nivèllon, Bishop of Soissons, and placed in the famous Abbey of Our Lady, with a part of the Virgin's veil. *Niceph., l. iv., c. 8.*

SEPTEMBER.

1. On the first Sunday of this month there is a festival celebrated in the Church of St. Peter, *

at Louvain, in honor of the Virgin, called the Collection of the Feasts of Our Lady. *Molanus, ad Usuard. Martyrolog.*

2. Our Lady of Helbron, or Nettles, in Franconia, Germany. This image began to work miracles in 1441. *Trip. Cour., nomb. 73.*

3. Dedication of the Abbey of Corneville, in honor of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, A. D. 1147, by Hugh, Archbishop of Rouen. *Gall. Christ., t. iv.*

4. A. D. 1419, Our Lady of Haut, in Hainaut, restored life to a girl named Jeanne Maillard, who, in taking water from a well, fell in, and was drawn out quite dead; her mother having devoted her to Our Lady of Haut, she immediately gave signs of life. *Just. Lips. de Virgin. Hallens., c. 19.*

5. Our Lady of the Woods, near Arras. A horseman having a mind to make a stable of this chapel, A. D. 1478, was instantly killed by his horse. *Trip. Cour., nomb. 62.*

6. Our Lady of the Fountain, half a league from Valenciennes. Tradition says that the Virgin appeared to a certain hermit in this place when the plague was ravaging the city, and commanded him to tell the inhabitants that they should fast next day and spend the night in prayer. That being done, she was seen coming down from heaven and encircling the whole city with a cord; this cord is still kept at Valenciennes. *Ex libello de ea re scripto.*

7. Vigil of the Nativity of Our Lady, instituted by Gregory II., about the year 722. *Balingh. in Calend.*

8. The Nativity of Our Lady, which happened, according to Baronius, in the year of the world 4007, on a Saturday, about the dawn of day, fifteen years before the birth of Our Saviour. This feast was instituted on the 8th of September in the Greek and Latin Churches, A. D. 436, according to the same writer, and in France by St. Maurillus, Bishop of Angers.

Dedication of the Church of Our Lady of Liesse, in the diocese of Laon, ten leagues from Rheims.

Dedication of Our Lady of Montserrat, in Catalonia.

9. Our Lady of the *Puy*, in Velay. St. Georges, who was the first bishop, marked the site for this church, which was not built till about the year 221. The Virgin herself gave it in charge to St. Evodus, or Vosius, seventh bishop of the same place, whom she ordered to transfer his episcopal see to Puy. St. Evodus obeyed the Virgin; but when he came to consecrate his new church, he perceived that it was already consecrated by angels; the doors opened of themselves, the bells rang of their own accord, the tapers were burning, and the holy chrism, which the angels had used, appeared still fresh on the altar and on the walls. *Odo Gisseus, de Virg. Aniciens.*, l. ii., c. 7, 8 et 9.

10. Our Lady of Tru, near Cologne. This church was built, under Otho I., by St. Heribert, Archbishop of Cologne, on the very spot where idols were formerly worshipped.

11. Our Lady of Hildesheim, in the duchy of Brunswick, in Germany. The image here venerated is the same which Louis the Good was accustomed to wear on his person. One day when he chanced to forget it in a wood, it became so heavy that it was impossible to move it, which induced the king to build a church for it in that place. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 75.

12. Our Lady of Healing, in Lower Normandy. Many miraculous cures have been effected in this church. *Ex archiv. hujus eccles.*

13. Our Lady of Guadalupe, in Spain. This image, sent by Pope Gregory to St. Leander, Bishop of Seville, was concealed, at the time of the Moorish invasion, with the body of St. Fulgentius, in the cave of Guadalupe, where it remained for nearly six hundred years, till Our Lady revealed it to a shepherd. *Joann. Mariana*, l. vi., *de Reb. Hispan.*

14. Dedication of Our Lady of Fontevault, in Poitou, by Pope Calixtus II., A. D. 1129. *Gall. Christ.*

15. Octave of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, instituted on the occasion of some differ-

ence which occurred at the election of the successor of Celestine IV., through the intrigues of the Emperor Frederick II., the cardinals had recourse to Our Lady, binding themselves by vow to add an octave to the Feast of her Nativity, if she would vouchsafe to give them a pope. Innocent IV. having been elected, he instituted this octave, A. D. 1243, the first year of his pontificate. *Arnoldus Wionius.*, l. v., *Ligni vitæ*, c. 22.

16. Our Lady of Good News, at Orleans, built by King Robert, A. D. 996, on the spot where he received the glad tidings that his father, Hugh Capet, had escaped death. *Locrius, Mariæ Augustæ*, l. iv., c. 62.

17. The placing of the image of Our Lady of Puy, in Velay. The holy king St. Louis gave this image to the Church of Puy, A. D. 1254, on his return from foreign parts.

18. Our Lady of Smelcem, in Flanders. Chronicles tell that certain shepherds remarked that their sheep bent the knee before this image. It was for this reason that Baldwin, surnamed *Fairbeard*, chose this place as the site for a church, in gratitude to Our Lady for having cured him of a disease which he had had for seventeen years. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 63.

19. Our Lady of Healing, near Mount Leon, in Gascony. *Geoffroy, Hist. de la Vierge de Guérison.*

20. Our Lady of the Silver-Foot, at Toul, in Lorraine; where there is an image which, according to an ancient tradition, apprised a certain woman, in 1284, of treachery meditated against the city, and as a sign, the image extended its foot, which was changed into silver. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 57.

21. Our Lady of Pucha, in the kingdom of Valencia. This image was found A. D. 1223, by means of seven stars shining over the place, whereupon the people dug into the ground, and found an image of the Virgin. *Bernard. Comes.*, *Hist. Hispan.*, l. x.

22. The name of Mary given to Our Lady, by her mother, St. Ann. *Pet. a Castro, Hist. Virg.* c. 2.

23. Our Lady of Valvanere, in Spain. This image was found in an oak, in the place now occupied by the magnificent church rebuilt by Alphonso IV., King of Castile. *Anton. Yopez, in Chronic.*

24. Our Lady of Roc-Amadour, or Roche-d'Amateur, in the diocese of Cahors, Quercy. This pilgrimage is so named because St. Amateur, vulgarly called St. Amant, remained some time on this rock, which became famous about the year 1140. *Hugo Farcitus, de Miracul. B. Virg. Rupiramat.*

25. Our Lady of Passage, at Rhodes. This image being often removed was always found again in the same place, which caused a church to be built there. *Trip. Cour., nomb. 53.*

26. Our Lady of Victory, at Tournay. The inhabitants carried the keys of the city to the Church of Our Lady, A. D. 1340, because they knew that it was only the Queen of Heaven who could deliver them from the English, who were forty days besieging the city. No sooner had they manifested this confidence in the Blessed Virgin than the siege was raised; the inhabitants at the time had scarcely three days' provisions. *Ex Archiv. Tornaccens.*

27. Our Lady of Happy Meeting, half a league from Agde. This earthen image was discovered miraculously, A. D. 1523. *Trip. Cour., nomb. 34.*

28. Our Lady of Cambron, of the Order of Citeaux, near Mons, in Hainaut. It is said that this image, being struck by a ruffian, shed blood profusely. *Hist. Cambron., edita Duaci, ann. 1602.*

29. Our Lady of Tongres, in the diocese of Cambrai. This image was taken in 1081 to a garden, where the Bishop of Cambrai had a church built. *Trip. Cour., nomb. 1602.*

30. Our Lady of Beaumont, in Lorraine, between Domremy and Vaucouleur. Joan of Arc often retired to this church to recommend the affairs of France to the Queen of heaven and earth, who ordered her to take up arms to deliver that kingdom. *Trip. Cour., traité 3. ch. 7.*

OCTOBER.

1. Foundation of Crown Abbey,* of the Augustinian Order, in the diocese of Angoulême, under the title of Our Lady, by Lambert, who was its first abbot, A. D. 1122. *Gall. Christ, t. iv.*

2. Our Lady of the Assumption, in Naples; built by the regular canonesses of St. Augustine, in gratitude for the Mother of God having warned them to leave a house which fell immediately after they had quitted it. *Trip. Cour., nomb. 42.*

3. Our Lady of the Place, in Rome. This image having fallen into a well near the house of the Cardinal Capoci, A. D. 1250, the water rose miraculously, and cast out the image, which the cardinal then placed in his chapel. But Pope Innocent IV. obliged him to build another on the spot where the miracle took place. This chapel being given to the Servites, they built a handsome church, inclosing the well within its walls. *Trip. Cour., nomb. 100.*

4. Our Lady of Vaussivière, in the mountains of Auvergne, near Mount d'Or, where there was an image which was miraculously saved from the general wreck when the English ravaged Vaussivière, about the year 1374. This image being removed to the Church of Besse, was found again in its former place. *Duchêne, ch. 9.*

5. Our Lady of Buch, in the Pine Mountains,† in Guienne. The sea threw this image on shore, whilst St. Thomas, the Franciscan, was praying for two vessels which he saw in danger of perishing. He received the image with respect, and enshrined it in that place, in a little chapel built for it. *Florimond Raymon, Hist. des Heres., l. i.*

St. Mary of Jersey, consecrated A. D. 1320, on one of the Channel Islands. *Chartrier de Coutances, dit le Livre-Noir. (The Black Book.)*

6. Our Lady of La Plebe, in the marsh of Venice, built A. D. 1480.

* Abbaye de la Couronne.

† Montagnes des Pins.



Harbour of Rhodes.

W. J. H. H. H.

A. C. Warren



7. Feast of the Rosary, instituted by Pope Gregory XIII., A. D. 1573, after the famous victory of Lepanto, obtained by the Christians over the Turks. *Joseph Stephan., Tract. de Indulg. Rosarii.*

8. Our Lady of Gifts, at Avignon. Tradition assigns the foundation of this church to St. Martha, and adds that it was consecrated by Our Lord himself. Being sacked by the Saracens, it was repaired by the Emperor Charlemagne. *Trip. Cour., nomb. 40.*

9. A. D. 723, on the night of that day on which the Prince of the Saracens had St. John Damascene's hand unjustly cut off, Our Lady miraculously united the severed hand to the wrist, that faithful servant having begged her to do so, that he might continue to write in favor of sacred images. *Joan. Patriarch. Jerosolimit., in vita sancti. Joann. Damasc. apud Surium.*

10. Our Lady of the Cloister, at Besançon. Our Lady's image, placed in the cloister of the Magdalen, was preserved from a fire, A. D. 1624, although the niche in which it stood was reduced to ashes. *Trip. Cour., nomb. 58.*

11. Our Lady the White, in the church of the Bernardine monastery, at Ouveille, district of Caux. This image is much honored in that country. *Ex Archiv. hujus Monast.*

12. Our Lady of Faith, in the district of Liège. This image was found, A. D. 1609, by a carpenter named Gilles de Wanlin, who, cutting down a tree for the purpose of making a boat, found in it, behind an iron grating, an image of Our Lady, made of whitish clay, and about a foot in height. It was removed to another oak, and thence again to a church built on the spot where the former tree had stood. *Trip. Cour., nomb. 60.*

13. Dedication of Clairvaux, in the diocese of Langres, in honor of the Blessed Virgin. St. Bernard was the first abbot of this famous monastery, where he died in 1153, at the age of sixty-three years. Alphonso I., King of Portugal, in 1142, bound himself and his successors to pay a tribute of fifty maravedis of gold every

year to Our Lady of Clairvaux. *Chronic. Cisterciens.*

14. Our Lady of La Rochette, near Geneva. A shepherd having approached a bush where he heard a plaintive voice, found in it an image of the Blessed Virgin, which caused a church to be built there. *Astolph. Hist. univers. B. Mariæ Virg.*

15. Dedication of Our Lady of Terouenne, A. D. 1133, by Milon, its thirtieth bishop. *Jacob Meyerus, l. ii., Annal. Flandriæ.*

16. Dedication of Our Lady of Milan by Pope Martin V., A. D. 1417. This church was built in 1388 by John Galéas, Duke of Milan. *Philip. Bergom., l. iv., Supplic. ann. 1388.*

17. Dedication of the Grotto of Our Lady of Chartres, by St. Pontian, A. D. 46.—Dedication of the Church of Citeaux, in the diocese of Chalons, under the invocation of Our Lady. *Sebast. Rouillard, c. 4, n. 4.*

18. Dedication of Our Lady of Rheims, built by St. Nicaise, archbishop of that city, A. D. 405. This church being ruined, was rebuilt by Ebon and Hincmar. It was finished in 845. *Flodoardus, l. i., ch. 6.*

19. Dedication of the Abbey of Royaumont, under the title of the Holy Cross and Our Lady, by John, Archbishop of Mitylene, A. D. 1235. This monastery was founded by St. Louis, in the year 1227. *Gall. Christ., t. iv.*

20. Dedication of the Church of Pontigny, four leagues from Auxerre, under the title of Our Lady. This abbey was founded in 1114 by Thibaud, Count of Champagne. *Angel. Mauriq.*

21. Our Lady of Talan, near Dijon. *Ex monumentis Divion.*

22. Our Lady of the Vault, half a league from Grand Cairo. Tradition has it that the Blessed Virgin remained some years in this subterranean chapel. *Trip. Cour., nomb. 9.*

23. Our Lady of Comfort, near Honfleur. This chapel is much frequented. Two children were in it restored to life, in memory of which their images are there in silver. *Ex archiv. hujus loci.*

24. Our Lady of Hermits, in Switzerland, where there was formerly a little hermitage in the midst of the woods, occupied by St. Meinrad, till the Emperor Otho built a church there, according to an order which he had received from heaven. This church contains a little Lady-chapel, consecrated, it is said, in 1418 by Our Lord himself, accompanied by angels and saints, who performed the functions of the ordinary officers of the church, in presence of the Blessed Virgin. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 84.

25. Dedication of Our Lady of Toledo, in Spain, about the year 1075, by Bernard, archbishop of that city. This cathedral has a revenue of more than 300,000 livres. *Joann. Mariana*, l. ix., ch. 18.

26. Dedication of Our Lady of Victory, near Senlis, A. D. 1225, by Guarin, Bishop of Senlis and Chancellor of France. This abbey was built by Philip Augustus, in gratitude for the victory which he gained at Bouvines over the Emperor Otho, A. D. 1214. *Carta Tabular. de Vict.*

27. Our Lady of La Basilla, in Lombardy, beyond the Po. This church was built by the express command of Our Lady. *Albert. Leander*, in *Descriptione Italiæ*.

28. Our Lady of Vivonne, in Savoy, where there is an image which was miraculously found by a laborer. This statue, having been thrice removed to the village church, always returned to its original place; a church was consequently built there, and given to the Carmelites. *Astolphus*, in *Hist. univers. imag. B. Virg.*

29. Our Lady of Orope, near Bielle, in Savoy. This image, made of cedar wood, and about six feet high, is in a chapel built by St. Eusebius, Bishop of Vercell, about the year 380; the saint often retired thither during the troubles of the Arians. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 112.

30. Our Lady of Mondevi, at Vic, in Piedmont, where there is an image painted by a tiler on a pillar of brick built by him for that purpose. This pillar has been surrounded by a church, where numberless miracles are wrought. *Hist. de Mondevi*, c. 2.

31. In the year 1116, a choir boy having fallen into the well of Saint Fort, which is in the Church of Chartres, was saved by Our Lady. All the time that he was in the well, he heard the angels answering the public prayers recited in the church; this gave rise to that custom in the Church of Chartres, of the choir never singing the response to the *Dominus Vobiscum*, chanted at high mass and in the canonical hours. *Sebast. Rouillard. Parthen.*, c. 6, n. 14.

NOVEMBER.

1. The Feast of All Saints, instituted at Rome, in honor of Our Lady and all the Saints, by Pope Boniface IV., about the year 608, and afterwards in all the churches in Christendom, by Pope Gregory IV., about the year 829, at the request of Louis the Good, who issued a proclamation commanding it to be observed throughout all his dominions. *Baron. ad Martyrolog. Roman.*

2. Our Lady of Emmimont, near Abbeville. This church is much frequented by pilgrims. *Antiq. d'Abbev.*, l. i.

3. Our Lady of Rennes, in Bretagne. The English having undermined the town to blow it up, it is said that the tapers in this chapel were miraculously lighted, the bells rang of their own accord, and the image of the Blessed Virgin was seen to extend its arm towards the middle of the church, where the train was laid; the danger was thus discovered, and measures successfully taken to avert it. *Trip. Cour.*, tract 3. c. 7 et 8.

4. Our Lady of Port Louise, in Milan. Tradition tells that this image one day received the homage of two angels, who were seen by several persons bending the knee before it. *Astolphus*, ex *hist. univers. imag. B. Virg.*

5. Our Lady of Damietta, in Egypt. This church was consecrated in honor of the Blessed Virgin, A. D. 1220, by Pelagius, the Apostolic legate. *Æmilius*, in *Philippo*.

6. Our Lady of Valfleurie, seven leagues from

Lyons. This church is so called because the image of the Virgin over the high altar was found by shepherds in some broom which was in full blossom, though the season was mid-winter. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 47.

7. Our Lady of the Pond, near Dijon. This image, of baked clay, was discovered in 1531, by means of an ox which always stopped at that spot, and although he kept grazing there continually, the grass grew thicker and thicker every day. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 42.

8. Our Lady of Fair-Fountain, in the diocese of La Rochelle. This image has been honored from time immemorial. *Ex archiv. hujus Abbate.*

9. Our Lady of Good Aid, in Perche, near Roumalard. This church is much frequented by persons in affliction. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 52.

10. A. D. 1552, Our Lady of Loretto cured a Turkish pacha of an incurable disease; he had been persuaded by one of his slaves, who was a Christian, to have recourse to the Blessed Virgin; the infidel believed him, and promised to set him free if Our Lady cured him. Having recovered his health, he sent many presents to the Church of Our Lady of Loretto, and, amongst others, his bow and quiver. *Tursel., Hist. Lauret.*, l. iii., c. 18.

11. On this day, about the year 1546, the Portuguese gained a great victory over the infidels, who were before the Castle of Die, in the East Indies, for seven months, and would have taken it if Our Lady had not appeared on the walls; this apparition so terrified the enemy that the siege was immediately raised. *Balinghem in Calend.*

12. Our Lady of the Tower, in Fribourg, built in a heretic country, on the very spot where an image of Our Lady was found. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 85.

13. Dedication of the Abbey of Bec, in Normandy, A. D. 1077, by Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury. This Benedictine abbey was founded about the year 1045, by Herluin, who was its first abbot. *Guillelm. Gemiticensis*, l. vi., de-duc. *Norman.*, cap. 9.

14. Our Lady of the Grotto, in the diocese of Lamego, in Portugal. This chapel was hollowed in the rock, on the spot where an image of the Virgin was found. *Vasconcell., in Descript. regni Lusitan.*

15. Our Lady of Pignerol, built in honor of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, about the year 1098, by Adelaide, Countess of Savoy. *Ex archiv. hujus loci.*

16. Our Lady of Chieves, in Hainault, where, in 1130, the lady of the place, named Ida, built a chapel near a fountain where an image of Our Lady was found; many miracles have since been wrought there. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 62.

17. Institution of the Confraternity of Our Lady of Sion, at Nancy, in Lorraine, A. D. 1393, by Ferri de Lorraine, Count of Vaudémont. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 66.

18. Our Lady of Bourdieu, near Bourges. This Benedictine abbey was built, in 928, by Ebbon, Lord of Berry. *Bzovius, ad ann. 928.*

19. Our Lady of Good News, in the Abbey of St. Victor, which Mary de Medici visited every Saturday. The abbey was founded in 1113 by Louis the Fat. *Ex archiv. S. Victoris Paris.*

20. Our Lady of Guard, near Bologna, in Italy. This image was in the Church of St. Sophia, in Constantinople, with the inscription: "This picture, painted by St. Luke, is to be taken to Mount Guard, and placed over the altar of the church." A Greek monk set out for Italy towards the year 433, with the image entrusted to him, and placed it on Mount Guard. *Bzovius, ad ann. 1433, n. 379.*

21. The Presentation of Our Lady. This feast was instituted, in the Greek Church, more than nine hundred years ago, since St. Germanus, who held the see of Constantinople, in 715, composed a sermon on it.* *Baron. in Notis ad Martyrolog.*

22. Institution of the Confraternity of the Presentation of Our Lady, at St. Omer, A. D. 1481. *Adalardus Tassart, in Chronic., ad ann. 1481.*

* It will be remembered that this Calendar was drawn up in the reign of Louis XIV.

23. Our Lady of the Vault, near the town of St. Anastasia, in the neighborhood of Florence. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 102.

24. A. D. 1535, Our Lady of Montserrat restored speech to a Savoyard who had been dumb. *Hist. Montiss.*

25. Our Lady of the Rock, in the territory of Fiezoli, in Tuscany. This image is placed in a rock, where two shepherds once retired to pray, when Our Lady commanded them to build her a church in that place. *Archangel. Janius, in Annal. PP. Servitarum.*

26. Our Lady of the Mountains, between Mount Esquilin and Mount Viminal, in Italy. This image was miraculously found, A. D. 1500. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 99.

27. Dedication of the town of Lesina, in the Campagna of Rome. This town was given to Our Lady, A. D. 1400, by Margaret, Queen of Poland, and mother of Ladislas. *Bzovius, l. ix., de Sign. eccles.*

28. Our Lady of Walsingham, in England, much honored by Edward I, who, playing one day at chequers, instinctively rose from his seat, and at the same moment a large stone fell from the roof of the vault on the seat which he had occupied. Ever after, he had a particular devotion for Our Lady of Walsingham. *Thomas Walsingham, in Hist. Ang. in Ed. I.*

29. Our Lady of the Crown, at Palermo; so named because it was there the kings of Sicily received the royal crown, as holding it from the Mother of God, and being only to wear it for her. *Thom. Fazellus, l. viii., prioris decad. de reb. Siculis.*

30. Our Lady of Genesta, on the coast of Genoa, in Italy. A poor woman, named Petruccia, undertook to build this church, which appeared utterly impossible; she, nevertheless, laid the first stone, saying she was sure she should not die till Our Lady and St. Augustine had finished the work. The result was, that in a little time after the church was found miraculously finished. *Signinus, in Chronic.*

DECEMBER.

1. Our Lady of Ratisbon, in Bavaria, founded by Duke Theodore, after being baptized by St. Rupert, Bishop of Salisbury, and Apostle of Bavaria; the same saint subsequently consecrated this church. *Canisius, l. v., de B. Virg., cap. 25.*

2. Our Lady of Didynia, in Cappadocia, before which St. Basil besought the Blessed Virgin to remedy the disorders caused by Julian the Apostate; he was favored there with a vision foreshowing the emperor's death. *Baronius, ad ann. 303.*

3. Our Lady of Filermo, in Rhodes. This image remaining amongst the ruins of the Church of St. Mark, of Rhodes, was removed to St. Catherine's Church, and, at length, the knights having quitted Rhodes, it was placed in the Church of St. Lawrence. This church was afterwards entirely burned, but the image remained uninjured. *Trip. Cour.*, nomb. 91.

4. Our Lady of the Chapel, at Abbeville. This church was built about the year 1400, on a little hill where idols were formerly worshipped. *Antiq. d'Abbev.*, l. i.

5. In the year 1584 was instituted the first congregation of Our Lady in the Jesuit College in Rome, and hence the company's pious custom of establishing it in all their houses. *Balinghem in Calend.*

6. Our Lady of Fourvière, at Lyons, famous for miracles, and for the extraordinary concourse of people who go there from the city, especially on Saturdays.

7. On this day, being a Sunday, in the year 1550, the canons of Our Lady of Paris, walking in procession before the image of the Virgin, which stands near the door of the choir, a Lorraine heretic, forcing his way through the crowd, sword in hand, attempted to strike the image; he was prevented by the assistants, and on the following Thursday he was executed in front of Notre-Dame. *Du Breuil, Antiq. de Paris, l. i.*

8. The Conception of the Blessed Virgin. This feast commenced in the East about the seventh or eighth century, for St. John Damascene, who lived in 721, makes mention of it. It was instituted in England, A. D. 1100, by St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, then in the diocese of Lyons, A. D. 1145, and finally Sixtus IV. decreed, A. D. 1576, that it should be celebrated throughout Christendom. *Joann. Molan., in Annot. i., ad Usuard.*

9. Our Lady of the Conception, in Naples; so named because, in 1618, the Viceroy, with all his court and the Neapolitan militia, made a vow in the Church of Our Lady the Great, to believe in and defend the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin. *Trip. Cour., n. 43.*

10. Institution of the nuns of the Conception of Our Lady, by Beatrice de Sylva, to whom Our Lady is said to have appeared in 1484, clothed in white, with a scapular of the same color, and a blue mantle. Beatrice, sister of the Blessed Amadeus, took this costume for the habit of her order, approved by Innocent VIII., according to the Cistercian rule. *Vasconcell. in Descript. regni Lusit.*

11. Our Lady of Angels, in the forest of Livry, four leagues from Paris. Three Anjou merchants having been abused in this forest, A. D. 1212, by robbers, who left them fastened to trees, so that they might starve to death, had recourse to the Blessed Virgin, who immediately sent three angels to liberate them. In the course of time several other miracles were wrought there, which made the chapel very famous. *Des registres de l'Abbaye de Livry.*

12. Our Lady of Good News, at Abbeville. This little chapel, in St. Peter's Priory, has always been much frequented. *Antiq. d'Abbev.*

13. Our Lady of the Holy Chapel, in Paris. This image, under the portal of the lower Holy Chapel, has wrought many miracles.

14. Our Lady of Albe la Royale, in Hungary, was built by St. Stephen, King of Hungary, who gave his kingdom to the Blessed Virgin. *Joann. Bonifacius, Hist. Virg., l. ii., c. 1.*

15. Octave of the Conception of Our Lady, instituted by Pope Sixtus IV. *Bullarium.*

16. Institution of the famous confraternity of Our Lady of Deliverance, in the Church of St. Etienne des Grès, in Paris, about the year 1533, to which Gregory XIII. granted great indulgences, A. D. 1518.

17. Cathedral Church of Our Lady of Amiens. The first bishop of this church was St. Firmin, who received the crown of martyrdom during the persecution under Dioclesian. There is in this church a portion of the head of St. John the Baptist, brought from Constantinople by a traveller named Galon, A. D. 1205. *Locrius, Mariæ Augustæ, l. iv., c. 59.*

18. Dedication of Our Lady of Marseilles, by St. Lazarus, in presence of his two sisters, Mary Magdalen and Martha, and three holy prelates, Maximus, Trophimus, and Eutropus. *Canisius, l. v., Moral.*

19. In the year 657, while St. Ildefonso, Archbishop of Toledo, was saying matins, Our Lady, it is said, appeared to him, accompanied by a vast number of blessed spirits, holding in her hand the book he had composed in her honor. She thanked him for it, and, in gratitude, gave him a white chasuble. This celestial present is still preserved at Oviedo, where Alphonso the Chaste, King of Castile, had it solemnly removed to the Church of St. Saviour, which he had built. *Baron. ad ann. 657.*

Our Lady of Etalem, in Bavaria, built by the Emperor Louis IV. *Albert. Krantzzius, l. i., Metropol.*

20. The Abbey of Our Lady of Molême, order of St. Benedict, in the diocese of Langres, was founded on this day, A. D. 1075, by St. Robert, who was its abbot. *Gall. Christ., t. iv.*

21. Foundation of St. Acheul, near Amiens, under the title of Our Lady, by St. Firmin, first bishop of that city. *Ex archiv. S. Achioli.*

22. Our Lady of Chartres, in Beauce. This church, which was built in the times of the Apostles, after being several times destroyed, was put in its present state by St. Fulbert, fifty-

fifth bishop of Chartres. *Sebast. Rouillard, Parthenie*, c. 5.

23. Our Lady of Ardilliers, at Saumur, in Anjou. The name of this church is illustrious all over France, because of the vast concourse of people drawn thither by a miraculous fountain which cured many diseases. The image represents Our Lady of Pity, holding in her arms her dead son, whose head is supported by an angel. *Locrius, Mariæ Augustæ*, l. iv., ch. 60.

24. Celebration of the Chaste Nuptials of Our Lady and St. Joseph, long solemnized as a festival in Sens, and several other churches of France. *Sausseyus, in Martyrol. Gallic.*

25. On this day, at the hour of midnight, the Blessed Virgin brought forth the Saviour of the world, in the stable of Bethlehem, where a fountain sprang up miraculously on the same day. *Baron., in Appar. ad Annal.*

26. Institution of the Confraternity of the Conception of Our Lady, at the Augustines of the grand convent, in Paris, A. D. 1443, to which many indulgences were subsequently granted by Innocent III. *Du Breuil, Antiq.*, l. ii.

27. Institution of the order of the Knights of Our Lady, A. D. 1370, by Louis II., Duke of Bourbon. *Andr. Favin*, l. viii., *Hist. de Navarre*, et l. iii., *du Theatre d'Honneur*.

28. Our Lady of Pontoise, seven leagues from Paris. This image, standing in the portal of the suburban church of that city, on the road to Rouen, is famous for the miracles wrought therein. *Ex archiv. hujus eccles.*

29. Our Lady of Spire, in Germany. St. Bernard, entering this church on the 29th of December, 1146, was honorably received by the canons, who conducted him to the choir, singing the anthem, "Salve, Regina;" the anthem finished, St. Bernard saluted the image of the Virgin in these terms, "O clemens! O pia! O dulcis Virgo Maria!" and the image is said to have answered, "Salve, Bernarde." The words of the saint to the image are engraved in a circle on the pavement of the church, on the spot where he pronounced them, and subsequently the "Salve, Regina" was added; this anthem was composed in 1040, by Herman, surnamed Contract, a Benedictine monk. *Angel. Manrique, Annal. Cist., ad ann. 1146*, c. 10, etc.

30. St. Mary of Boulogne, in Picardy. This church was founded by the monks of St. Augustine, A. D. 1159; it was destroyed by Henry VIII., King of England, A. D. 1444, secularized and made a cathedral, 1559, according to Locrius. *Gall. Christ.*, t. iv.

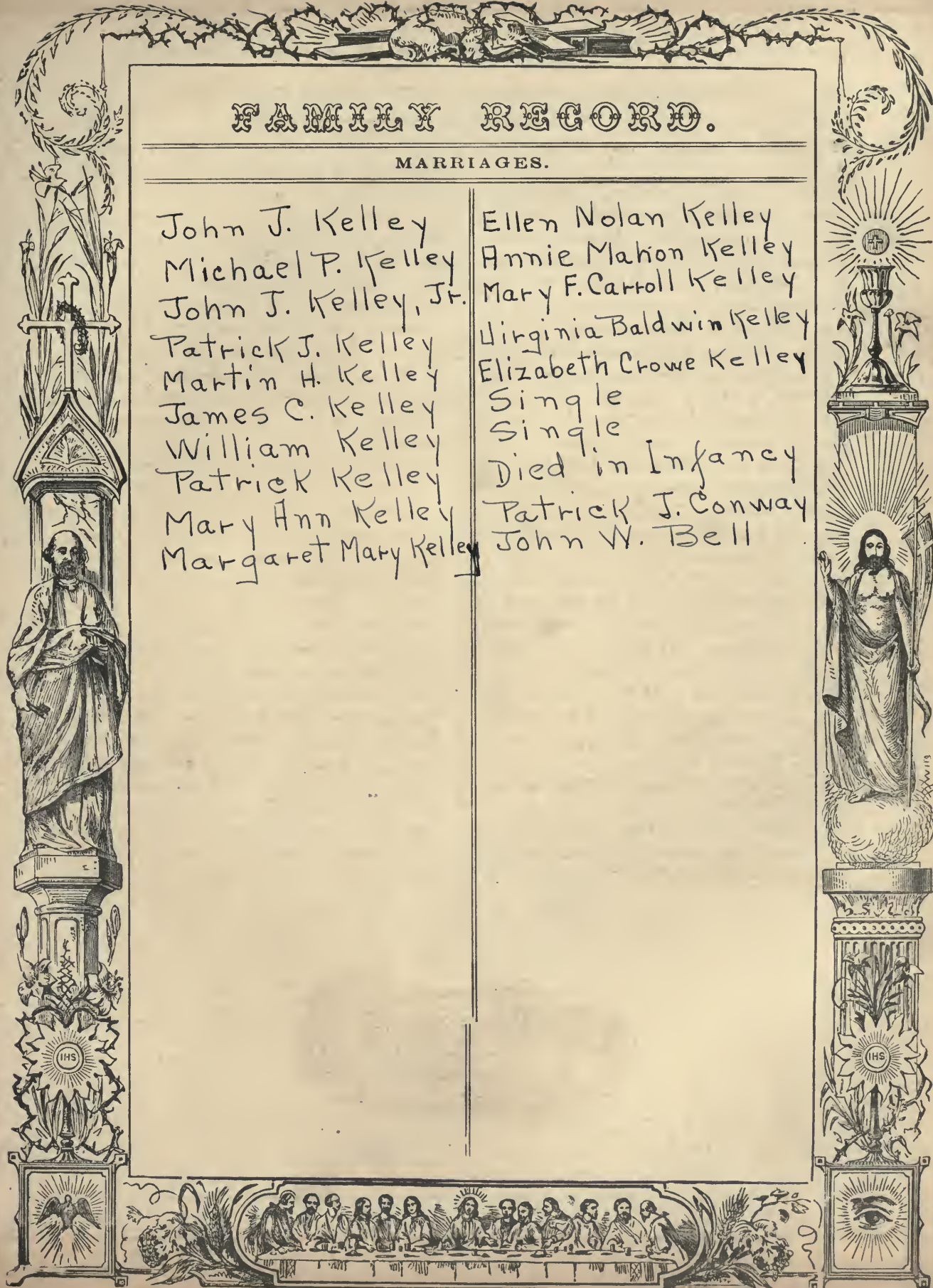
31. About a hundred years before the birth of Our Saviour, the image of Our Lady of Chartres, consecrated by the Druids to the Virgin who was to bring forth, restored to life the son of Geoffrey, king or prince of Montheury, who, having fallen into a well, was found dead; in gratitude for this favor, he made several presents to the image, as is recorded in the history of this miracle, represented on the windows of the church. *Sebastien Rouillard, Parthenie*, c. 3.



FAMILY RECORD.

MARRIAGES.

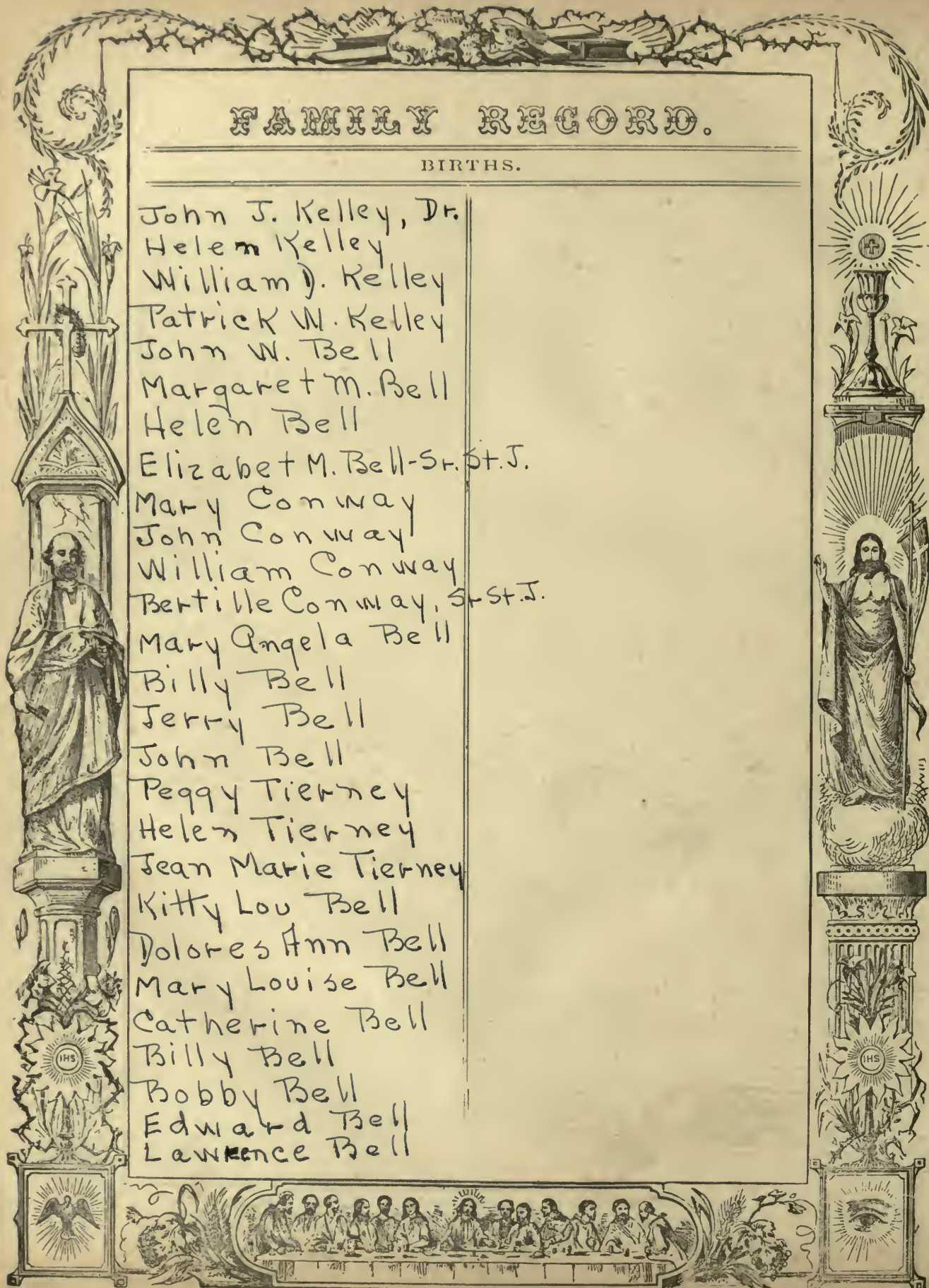
| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| John J. Kelley | Ellen Nolan Kelley |
| Michael P. Kelley | Annie Mahon Kelley |
| John J. Kelley, Jr. | Mary F. Carroll Kelley |
| Patrick J. Kelley | Virginia Baldwin Kelley |
| Martin H. Kelley | Elizabeth Crowe Kelley |
| James C. Kelley | Single |
| William Kelley | Single |
| Patrick Kelley | Died in Infancy |
| Mary Ann Kelley | Patrick J. Conway |
| Margaret Mary Kelley | John W. Bell |



FAMILY RECORD.

BIRTHS.

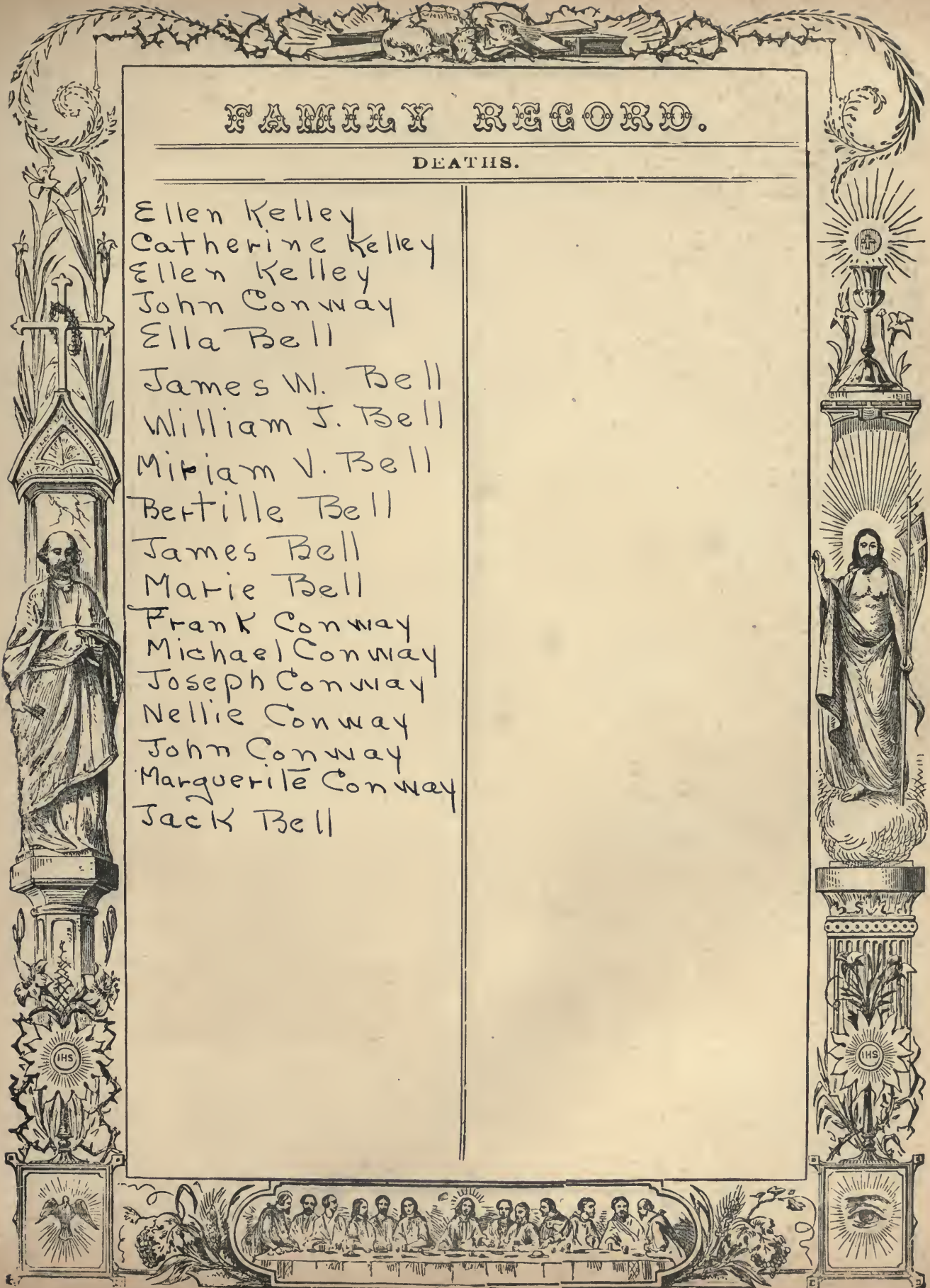
John J. Kelley, Dr.
Helen Kelley
William J. Kelley
Patrick W. Kelley
John W. Bell
Margaret M. Bell
Helen Bell
Elizabeth M. Bell-St. J.
Mary Conway
John Conway
William Conway
Bertille Conway, St. J.
Mary Angela Bell
Billy Bell
Jerry Bell
John Bell
Peggy Tierney
Helen Tierney
Jean Marie Tierney
Kitty Lou Bell
Dolores Ann Bell
Mary Louise Bell
Catherine Bell
Billy Bell
Bobby Bell
Edward Bell
Lawrence Bell



FAMILY RECORD.

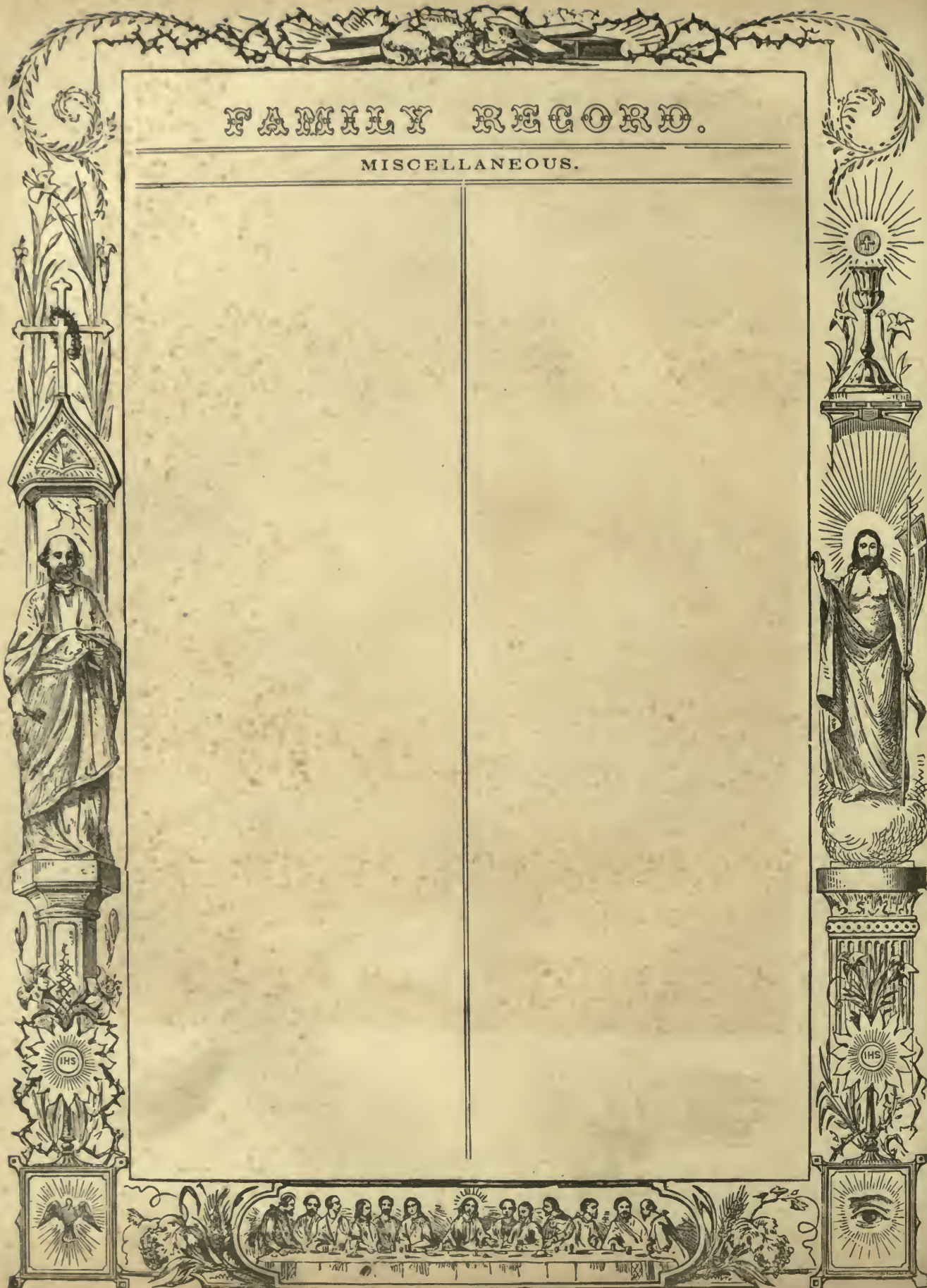
DEATHS.

Ellen Kelley
Catherine Kelley
Ellen Kelley
John Conway
Ella Bell
James W. Bell
William J. Bell
Miriam V. Bell
Bertille Bell
James Bell
Marie Bell
Frank Conway
Michael Conway
Joseph Conway
Nellie Conway
John Conway
Marguerite Conway
Jack Bell



FAMILY RECORD.

MISCELLANEOUS.





The salutation of the virgin

A MONUMENT TO THE GLORY OF MARY.

MEDITATIONS

ON THE

LITANY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF THE ABBÉ EDOUARD BARTHE,

BY

MRS. J. SADLIER.

*PUBLISHED WITH THE APPROBATION OF THE LATE MOST REV. JOHN HUGHES, D. D.,
AND THE MOST REV. J. McCLOSKEY, D. D., ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK.*

A NEW, ENLARGED AND REVISED EDITION.

New York:

PUBLISHED BY D. & J. SADLIER & CO., 31 BARCLAY STREET.

MONTREAL:—CORNER OF NOTRE DAME AND ST. FRANCIS XAVIER STS.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1853,

By D. & J. SADLER & CO.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of New York.

APPROBATION OF HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF PARIS.

MARIE—Dominique—Auguste Sibour, by the grace of God and the favor of the Holy Apostolic See, Archbishop of Paris, on the report of the examiner by us appointed, and the favorable opinion of our *Commission des Études*, have approved, and do hereby approve, of a book entitled "Monument to the Glory of Mary, The Litany of the Blessed Virgin," illustrated, accompanied by MEDITATIONS by the ABBÉ ÉDOUARD BARTHE, Honorary Canon of Rodez, published by P. J. Camus, Paris.

Given at Paris, under our seal, the signature of our Vicar-General, president, and the countersign of the Secretary of our *Commission des Études*, July 2d, 1851:

Sec. Com.

JUL. FLANDRIN, *Can. Hon.*

Pres. Com.

L. BAUTAIN, *Vic. Gen.*

APPROBATION OF HIS LORDSHIP THE BISHOP OF RODEZ.

It is with as much pleasure as attention that we have read, according as they appeared, all the numbers of Abbé Barthe's *Meditations on the Litany of Loretto*. We have everywhere found in that work the most exact orthodoxy, with the utmost beauty and elegance of style, a rare and profound knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures, with the charm and the unction of lively faith and tender piety. All these numerous merits, to which we have already borne testimony, are based on the solid foundation of Catholic teaching, and the pure doctrine of the Church, and hence it is that we think it our duty, once more, to recommend this beautiful and excellent work, which is solely for the glory of the Immaculate Mother of God, and must therefore be dear and precious to the faithful children and devoted clients of that Queen of the Church and Mother of Christians.

Given at our residence in Vabres, on the Feast of All Saints, in the year of grace, 1850.

JOHN, *Bishop of Rodez*.

THE TRANSLATOR TO THE READER.



READER, if you are a Catholic Christian, you are a child of Mary, and as such will kindly welcome this MONUMENT TO THE GLORY OF MARY. It comes to us, as you see, with high recommendations; and, even allowing for what it loses in the translation, I trust you will find it fully deserving of all that has been said of it. The distinguished French prelates who so warmly recommend it to the Faithful, seem fully convinced that it is calculated to promote devotion to the Blessed Virgin—one of the strongest bulwarks of our holy faith—and, if so, your time and my time will not be lost. If the perusal of this work makes you in any degree more devout to Mary, our sovereign lady and mistress,—if it induces you to have recourse to her in all your trials, temptations, and dangers, it will help to promote both your temporal and eternal happiness, and Mary will give you a portion of the reward which she never fails to confer on those who love and honor her. Hoping that you will receive it well, for Her sake, I now beg leave to present it to your notice.

MONTREAL, August, 1854.



And behold how faithfully all generations have accomplished this prediction! Hear how the echoes of Catholic history for eighteen hundred years repeat the matchless name of Mary, and proclaim, as "with the noise of a great trumpet,"¹ the grandeur, the merits, the power of that divine Mother.

Going back to the primitive Church, we find, from the very beginning, the glory of Mary celebrated by the arts. Not to speak of the picture attributed to the Evangelist, St. Luke,—a picture formerly so highly honored in the East, and whose authenticity is not altogether destitute of scientific proof,²—we have, from the second century, or at least from the third, a painted likeness of Mary, on which the antiquarian may still feast his eyes in the catacombs of Rome. This ancient monument of Catholic devotion clearly proves that, no sooner was the Church, in the midst of persecutions, established in the world, than Christian artists began to consecrate their pencil to the Blessed Virgin. In the fourth century we find, on many sarcophagi or Christian tombs, a group of the Virgin and Child, the countenance of the Mother breathing at once a radiant youth and a divine purity. This it was that caused a learned writer of our day, M. Raoul Rochette, to make that important remark, founded on his knowledge of arts and monuments: "It is incorrect to say, as did the Protestant historian Basnage, that it was not till after the Council of Ephesus that the Virgin began to be represented; for," he adds, "amongst the Christian sarcophagi of the Vatican, where she is seen, there is certainly more than one anterior to that period."³ The fifth century presents, in the reign of the Greek emperor Anastasius, imperial coins, whose reverse bears the monogram of Mary, surrounded by stars. This mark of respect was continued by a great number of his successors; amongst others, the empress Theophania had the figure of Mary stamped on her money, her head encircled with the nimbo, with the inscription: Θεοτόκος, *Mother of God*. From the fifth century to our own times, it is well known how the arts have multiplied testimonials of devotion to the Blessed Virgin. It is true that, at one time, they fell into singular aberrations—for instance, inventing black statues of the Mother of God—but these specimens of bad taste are still so many proofs of the faith and piety of those times, now called the Dark Ages, which, nevertheless, produced, in their incomparable stained windows, and their wonderful churches dedicated to God under the invocation of Mary, things which our modern civilization has no longer the secret of fabricating, and has hardly the courage to undertake.

Still, we are not to suppose that churches dedicated to Mary date only from the Middle Ages: if we would ascertain their origin, we must go back to Pope Calixtus I., who built a chapel, under the title of Our Lady, beyond the Tiber, in the most populous part of Rome, in the year 224; nay, we must ascend still higher, for, even prior to that time, there was at Sara-

¹ Isaias xxvii. 13.

² *Annales de Philos. Chré.*, t. ix., p. 74 et suiv.

³ *Discours sur l'art du Christianisme*, p. 34, note 1.

gossa, in Spain, the church of Our Lady of the Pillar, and in Syria several other churches, likewise dedicated to the divine Virgin. Thus it is that, by an uninterrupted chain of monuments, reaching from the first ages of Christianity till the present time, architecture, inspired by faith and piety, has united its powerful voice with that of the other arts to exalt the glorious name of Mary. What a magnificent sight would it be, were it given to man to contemplate, in one stupendous whole, all the wealth of stone and marble, of wood and precious metals, of gold and azure, offered by the arts to God, throughout the Catholic world, for eighteen centuries, to bless and glorify Him for the graces, the virtues, the power wherewith he endowed it on behalf of men! . . . What eye could gaze on that ravishing spectacle! what heart consider it without emotion! what lips would not cry out, with transport—"Glory be to God, who has made every age so faithful in fulfilling that prophecy of his divine Mother—"Behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed!"

But there is a voice as superior to that of all the arts as the moral order is to the physical—the voice of science, of eloquence, of genius by word and pen; and, assuredly, it has not been wanting in the fulfillment of the Virgin's prophecy. There remains to us but very few writings of the first two Christian centuries, and yet, even in the second century, we read in the words of the illustrious martyr St. Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, an eulogy of Mary, most expressive in its conciseness. "Eve," says he, "allowing herself to be seduced by the words of the tempter, disobeyed God and sought to flee from his presence; the Virgin Mary, acceding to the words of the Angel Gabriel, and obeying the orders of God, consented to bear Christ in her womb, so that by that submission, she became the pattern of Eve."¹ After him St. Athanasius, St. Basil, St. Ephraim, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Jerome, St. Chrysostom, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Cyril, St. Epiphanius, St. John Damescene, then St. Bernard, St. Anselm, and that great genius who is called the last of the Fathers of the Church, the immortal Bossuet,—in a word, all the most eminent writers of Eastern and Western Christendom have, in turn, celebrated the glory of Mary, her dignity, her virtues, her privileges, and the wonderful efficacy of her intercession.

The Litany of Loretto forms, as we have said, a full and complete abridgment of all these praises, of all these marks of veneration and love, of devotion and confidence; it is, therefore, one of the best acts of homage we can render to that divine Mother. Hence, Pope Clement VIII., in 1601, forbade any other to be recited in her honor in the public prayers; in 1606, Paul V., in his turn, granted sixty days' indulgence to all those persons who would assist on Saturdays at the solemn chanting of those pious invocations in the Dominican churches; Sixtus V. and Benedict XIII., two hundred days to all the faithful who would recite them

¹ *Contra hæres.*, lib. v., c. 19.

devotly; and Pins VII. extended this last indulgence to three hundred days. We thereby see how this Litany became so dear to Catholic piety, which has delighted to multiply its repetition, to vary its music, and to embellish it with all the charms of melody and of the sweetest harmony. The art of engraving, which speaks to the eye as singing does to the ear, could not fail to lend its valuable aid to this pious tribute of musical art. In fact, towards the end of the eighteenth century some famous German engravers published a series of figures and symbolical images, as ingenious as significant, intended to explain to the eye, in succession, all the titles which the Church bestows on Mary in the Litany of Loretto.

May the author of these Meditations, O Mary, be successful in the mission which circumstances, in some way providential, have given him! Undoubtedly it will be sweet, and very sweet, to me, to pour forth my soul before thee and in thy honor, and to exert myself to make known the holiness, the goodness, the tenderness, and the glory of the divine Mother of my Saviour. But how can I speak of thee in adequate terms, after all that has been already written by others so much more competent? How can I even attempt it, when St. Bernard said that "nothing frightened him more than having to speak of thy greatness and glory?"¹ I will, nevertheless, attempt it, O Mary, O thou whom I delight to call my good and amiable mother; I will attempt it for the sake of thy divine Son, who is glorified through thee; I will attempt it for thy sake, O masterpiece of Almighty power! brightest image of his adorable perfections! I will attempt it with the confidence of a child who works for his mother and before her eyes, and who looks to her for help and encouragement. To thee, then, O divine Mary, I give up my mind, my heart, and my pen, and to thee do I dedicate this feeble testimony of my respect, and confidence, and filial devotion.

¹ Sermon 4, *de Assumpt. B. M. V.*

MEDITATIONS
ON THE
LITANY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

MEDITATION I.

LORD, HAVE MERCY ON US.



HY is it that the Church makes us send up to God the humble sigh of prayer, before commencing the different invocations which she afterwards makes us address to Mary? It is to remind us of that truth of faith so forcibly expressed by the Apostle St. Paul: "Of him, and by him, and in him are all things: to him be glory forever."¹ Yes, truly, the creature, even the most august, the most adorned with virtue, the most resplendent in power and in glory, is nothing before him, nothing without him, nothing but by him. If the Bless-

* ed Virgin can marvellously assist us by her protection, it is to him that we owe that inestimable advantage: from him alone comes that power, from him alone come all the graces that flow on us.

The object of the Church is to inspire us with a high idea of the supreme greatness of God, a deep and lively sentiment of respect, of religious fear, of pious prostration of all our faculties before "Him who is."² He alone owes nothing to any one; all that thinks and wills, all that breathes, all that lives, all that exists, owes to him alone thought, will, breath, life, being, and the preservation of being. He alone, existing by himself, "blessed and only mighty,"³ who only hath immortality,⁴ who alone doeth wonderful things,⁵ who is alone immor-

¹ Romans xi. 36.

² Exod. iii. 14.

* ³ 1 Tim. vi. 15. ⁴ 1 Tim. vi. 16. ⁵ Ps. lxxi. 18.

tal by *his own essence*,¹ alone the beginning and the end of all;² than whom there is no other God;³ He alone merits the title of *Lord* by excellence; and by that title the Church wishes to excite our faith in the infinite majesty of Him whom we have the immense honor of addressing. Oh! let us be sensible of our extreme inferiority to him, our inexpressible littleness as creatures before his infinite greatness as Creator; and, imploring his mercy, let us remain as supplicants at the feet of his supreme majesty, prostrate in profound respect and adoration. Let us acknowledge, with all the powers of our soul, that we are but dust and ashes;⁴ that in his presence we are nothing;⁵ that we do not deserve to address Him even with the mute worship of the heart.

Why, once more, does the Church, in this first invocation of the Lord, make us say, as though crying out in distress, *Lord, have mercy on us!* It is because we are, indeed, much to be pitied; that our misery is great, profound, and almost immeasurable. In the body, weakness, infirmity, pain, suffering—at

* times, almost intolerable. In the soul, weariness, sadness, poignant grief, devouring passions; darkness in the understanding, inordinate affections in the heart; dangers, degrading inclinations, and ignominious disorders in the senses. Within and around us, numerous enemies of our eternal salvation. In our will, weakness, indecision; often, and very often, cowardice, indolence, and even mortal lethargy. Oh, yes, assuredly we are much to be pitied. Our misery is inexpressible. At every moment, we run the risk of losing all, irrecoverably; of incurring an endless and irretrievable misfortune. We have, then, but too much reason to exclaim, with St. Theresa, "Alas! Lord, so long as this mortal life endures, the eternal is always in danger! O life, so opposed to my happiness, why am I not permitted to end thee? I bear with thee, because my God bears with thee; I take care of thee, because thou art His. But do not betray me, and be not ungrateful to me. Alas! Lord, but my exile is long! It is true that all time is short to gain thy

¹ 2 Mach. i. 24, 25.² Apoc. xxii. 13.³ Deut. xxxii. 39. ⁴ Gen. xviii. 27. ⁵ Ps. xxxviii. 7.

eternity ; but a single day, a single hour, is too long for those who fear to offend thee, and who even know not whether they do offend thee!"¹ We have but too much reason to cry out with the Apostles, beaten by the tempest, "Lord, save us, or we perish ;"² and with the Church, our mother, *Lord, have mercy on us!* It is for us ever to pronounce these words with a lively sentiment of our immense need of Divine commiseration, of infinite mercy, exceeding the vast extent, the profound depth of our misery. Prostrate here, before the infinite majesty of the Lord, let us say to him, as humble and most wretched petitioners, as sick persons groaning in mortal anguish, as mariners who have death before their eyes:—

Supreme Being, Being by excellence. Being of beings, from the height of thy supreme greatness, deign to hear our voice. It is the cry of nakedness, the cry of infirmity, of pain, of peril ; it is the cry of the heart which invokes, which beseeches thy omnipotence and thy infinite goodness ; it is the cry of

faith, which shows us in thee the "God of mercy,"³ at the same time that it makes us say, *Lord, have mercy on us.* It is the cry of faith, which shows us also in heaven, near the throne of thy eternal glory, a mother whom thy Church makes us call *Mother of mercy* ;⁴ a mother whose praises thou wouldst have "the whole earth" proclaim as it proclaims thine own ;⁵ a mother to whom it is so sweet to send up our accents "of benediction," which fall back on our heads as a dew of grace and of divine blessing ;⁶ a mother who prays for us, and with whom we unite in saying to thee—

LORD, HAVE MERCY ON US !

Kyrie eleison !

MEDITATION II.

CHRIST, HAVE MERCY ON US.

THE soul that is deeply sensible of its misery, and impressed with the majesty of the Lord, from whom alone it can expect relief, strength, and salvation, implores

¹ Elevation à Dieu.

² Matt. viii. 25.

³ 2 Esd. ix. 31.

⁴ *Salve Regina*, etc.

⁵ Habac. iii. 3.

⁶ Num.b. xxiv. 9.

him but with fear and trembling. * It remains, as it were, annihilated in presence of his infinite greatness. The Church encourages it in the second invocation, where she veils, in some degree, the infinite distance between God and the creature, and makes it consider Him to whom the invocation is addressed under the most accessible point of view, and in the way best calculated to excite hope. And what does the name of *Jesus Christ* say to the ear of Catholic faith? "The Word made flesh," which "dwelt among us, full of grace and truth;"¹ the one Mediator of God and men;² the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world,³ who was tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin,⁴ who was in all things made like unto us,⁵ so that he might compassionate us as a brother, having compassion on our sad state, having been man's companion in misfortune; "the great High-priest, who hath penetrated the heavens, who hath the key of David;⁶ He that openeth, and no man shutteth."⁷

In placing on our lips the name of that divine Pontiff, the Church, then, proposes to us the motive most proper to dilate our hearts, compressed with fear; she invites them, in the most effectual manner, to give themselves up to the sentiment of Christian hope, which holds the soul duly balanced between despair and presumption. How can we presume on the goodness of God, when we believe that, to "blot out the handwriting of the decree which was against us," it was necessary that Christ should "fasten it to the Cross?"⁸ How can we despair of obtaining strength, or the forgiveness of our sins, how enormous soever they may be, when we believe that "God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting?"⁹ Ah! we do not justly appreciate this faith in Jesus Christ; we are not sufficiently sensible of its advantages. It is a supernatural gift, which surpasses not only all human strength, but all human un-

¹ St. John i. 14.² St. John i. 29.⁶ Heb. iv. 14.⁶ Colos. ii. 14.³ 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6.⁴ Heb. iv. 15.⁷ Apoc. iii. 7.⁹ St. John iii. 16.⁵ Heb. ii. 17.

derstanding, and all the desires which our nature is capable of forming. It is a gift, without which it is impossible to obtain everlasting happiness; for, "without faith, it is impossible to please God,"¹ and how can any one who is not pleasing to God be judged worthy of a share in his eternal bliss? It is a gift worth nothing less than eternal life, the eternal possession of the sovereign good; for the divine Master has said, "This is life everlasting," to "know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."² And even in this world, is it not the only true happiness? "He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me," says the Man-God once again, "is passed from death to life."³ It follows that the life of those who have not faith in Christ is death. In fact, to be a slave of "the Prince of Darkness,"⁴ to be destitute of infallible light, amid the cruel uncertainty of the understanding as to the duties of man and his destiny; to be without a guide, without a pilot amid the shoals of life, without consola-

* tion amid the sorrows of this world, without strength against the assault of the passions, misfortune, and afflictions; to be deprived of the calm, pure truth of the teachings of the Incarnate Word, the incomparable force of his example, the inexhaustible resources of his merits, the magnificent hopes founded on his word, what a fate would that be! what a deplorable condition! and what obligation do we not owe to the Saviour, who has endowed us with the priceless treasure of faith!

O Jesus! O eternal Priest! adorable Pontiff! divine victim of our salvation, it is thou who hast given us our faith in thee; be thou forever blessed by every pulsation of our hearts! What thanksgivings can ever equal the favors he has conferred upon us, for "he hath not done in like manner to every nation,"⁵ many of whom are still seated in the darkness and shadow of death!"⁶ Ah! vouchsafe to "confirm what thou hast wrought in us;"⁷ deign to fructify the gift which we have received from thy infinite

¹ Heb. xi. 6.³ St. John v. 24.² St. John xvii. 3.⁴ Ephes. vi. 12.⁵ Ps. cxlvii. 20.⁶ St. Luke i. 79.⁷ Ps. lxxvii. 29.

liberality." Help; "increase our faith,"¹ so that it may "work by charity."² It is true, we are very ungrateful, very culpable; but are we not "thy brethren,"³ for whom thou hast shed all thy blood? Behold, moreover, between thee and us, thy divine Mother, "under whose protection we take refuge"⁴ in our distress. Is not the voice of Mary still more powerful over thy heart than was that of Bethsabée over the heart of King Solomon? And if that prince said to his mother, "Ask, for I must not turn away my face,"⁵ how much more wilt thou grant to the entreaties of her at whose request thou didst work thy first miracle?⁶ She here interposes her prayer to defend us from those "dreadful arrows"⁷ which thine adorable heart desires so much to see changed, by our compunction, into the burning darts of divine love, as she formerly, in her apparition to St. Dominick, showed you that faithful servant uniting his zeal with that of St. Francis of Assisium, and thus appeased thine outraged justice. Full of confidence

in her maternal intercession, we venture to say to thee, "from the depths"⁸ of our nothingness—

CHRIST, HAVE MERCY ON US!

Christe eleison!

MEDITATION III.

LORD, HAVE MERCY ON US.

AFTER having penetrated our hearts with the sentiment of Christian hope, exciting our faith in the divine Mediator, the Church makes us repeat, *Lord, have mercy on us!* It is that, the adorable name of Jesus, once piously invoked, the name of *Lord* given to God need no longer inspire us with terror. If the Man-God vouchsafes to cover us with his infinite merits as with a shield, why should we henceforth tremble before the supreme Majesty? Why should we imitate Adam, when, after his fall, he was so afraid of God that he became, in some degree, senseless? for he sought to hide himself from his presence,⁹ as though he knew

¹ St. Mark ix. 23; St. Luke xvii. 5. ² Gal. v. 6.

³ St. John xx. 17. ⁴ *Sub tuum.* ⁵ 3 Kings ii. 20.

⁶ St. John ii. 3, 4.

⁷ Job vi. 4.

⁸ Ps. cxxix. 1.

⁹ Gen. iii. 10.

not that "there is no creature invisible in his sight; but all things are naked and open to His eyes,¹ to whom darkness is not dark, and night as the light of day."² Ah, why should we not, rather, speak to the Sovereign Master, in the name of that sweet Saviour, with filial confidence, since it was he who "sent his Son, that we might receive the adoption of sons, and who sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father?"³ Prodigious honor, prodigious favor conferred on guilty man! That God, from whom we deserved only condemnation, is not content with redeeming us, with restoring us by his only Son; he would, moreover, "that we should be named, and should be the sons of God."⁴ "Behold," then, "what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us;"⁵ behold what we owe to the merits of Jesus Christ. They have so admirably "reconciled all things"⁶ that they have made man, reprobate man, doomed to hell by the infinite justice of God, the beloved child of God himself.

* It is true, we have lost sight of that high dignity conferred upon us by baptism; it is true we have diminished, by faults "which are not unto death,"⁷ or have even forfeited, by mortal sin, the rights appertaining to that fair title. But, however that may be, we are still entitled to rely on the merits of the Saviour, to recover, by the means which himself has provided for us, the high position from which we may have fallen. Yes, that infinite treasure of his mortal life, his sufferings and his immolation on Calvary, Jesus Christ has irrevocably placed in our hands. He has given it to us; he has made it, as it were, our inalienable property; and, till our latest moment, we may use it to implore the *Lord*, and to obtain the graces of which we stand in need. For Jesus himself has said, "If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you."⁸ Oh, with what honor, riches, and power, it has pleased God to endow the Christian soul! And what faithful heart will not be happy to borrow here the sublime words of the holy

¹ Heb. iv. 13.³ Gal. iv. 4, 5, 6.⁵ 1 John iii. 1.⁷ 1 John v. 16.² Ps. cxxxviii. 12.⁴ 1 John iii. 1.⁶ Colos. i. 20.⁸ St. John xvi. 23.

man Job, "What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him?"¹

In repeating to God, *Lord, have mercy on us!* let us then internally prostrate ourselves before him; let us be seized with admiration and motionless surprise, that we may, at any moment, speak to a God so great, and that a God so great should deign to lend an ear to creatures so degraded by sin. But at the same time let us expand our hearts, and pour them forth, as it were, into the bosom of a father who cannot help cherishing a tender love for his children. For when we unite with Jesus, and appear before God in the adorable person of his Son, it is impossible that this cry of the heart calling on him for mercy should not be graciously heard. Our voice, united with that of our divine Mediator, changes its nature, if we may say so; it loses its human qualities, its weakness and unworthiness, and its great defilement, to participate in the strength, the purity, the divine sanctity, the divine efficacy of the voice of Jesus.

Lord, it is in the name, and

through the infinite merits of the Mediator whom thou hast had the ineffable charity to give us; it is in him and by him that we pour out our prayer in thy sight, and before thee declare our trouble,² crying, *Have mercy on us!* "We are no more servants, but sons, and if sons, heirs also,"³ "through Christ, by whose blood we have a confidence in the entering into the sanctuary."⁴ We are "his brethren, he is the first-born amongst us,"⁵ but we are joint heirs with him."⁶ "We go, then, with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy,"⁷ and that we may entreat thee to have mercy on us as thou wouldst have mercy on himself, if it were possible that he could be in the state of necessity and of danger in which we are. Ah, *Lord*, it is no longer we who address thee; it is He himself, our divine brother, who says to thee, by our heart and tongue, *Have mercy on us!* and, with him, his august Mother, that cherished daughter of heaven, who tells thee she is "our sister;"⁸ that she is "our kinswoman according

¹ Job vii. 17.

² Ps. cxli. 3.

³ Gal. iv. 7.

⁴ Heb. x. 19

⁵ Rom. viii. 29.

⁶ Rom. viii. 17.

⁷ Heb. iv. 16.

⁸ Gen. xii. 13.

to the flesh¹ in which Jesus Christ came²—Jesus Christ, “the lion of the tribe of Juda,”³ who triumphed over death by his resurrection, over the corruption of the world by his admirable purity and infinite sanctity, over the devil by the glory and power of the Cross. In the name of that divine Saviour, and in union with Mary, we once more cry out to thee—

LORD, HAVE MERCY ON US!

Kyrie eleison!

MEDITATION IV.

CHRIST, HEAR US!

THE more we unite our heart and voice with the heart and voice of Jesus, to implore the divine goodness and mercy, the more our prayer ascends towards the throne of the Eternal as “an odor of sweetness.”⁴ Here, then, in order to excite a more lively faith and confidence in that “Mediator of the New Testament,”⁵ who is able also to save forever them that come unto God

by himself,”⁶ in order to enter intimately into the admirable dispositions of his adorable heart, praying solemnly, on the eve of his death, “for those who should believe in him,”⁷ let us once more address ourselves to Him, beseeching him to *hear us*. Not that his ear is ever closed against us, or that his heart is not ever disposed to hear those whom he loved more than himself; but we entreat him to hear us, as a good father hears his poor children, or a kind mother the cherished fruit of her womb, however ungrateful we may have hitherto been. We ask him to hear us with that ear of the heart which listens with tender interest to a beloved voice, which answers that voice with overflowing kindness and affection, and establishes between himself and the Christian soul an ineffable communion of sentiments worthy the admiration of the angels themselves. Ah, blessed is the soul which, possessing the inestimable gift of sanctifying grace, can speak thus to Jesus as friend to friend, as the Spouse in the Canticles to her be-

¹ Rom. ix. 3.

² 1 John iv. 2

³ Apoc. v. 5.

⁴ Ephes. v. 2.

⁵ Heb. ix. 15.

⁷ St. John xvii. 20.

⁶ Heb. vii. 25.

loved, her adorable Spouse! Blessed are they who can say, with a just confidence, "My beloved to me, and I to him,"¹ and who deserve to hear, in their intimate connection with the divine Jesus, those words so consoling, so full of heavenly sweetness, "Let thy voice sound in my ears, O my love, for thy voice is sweet²"

But, alas! our want of fidelity, our want of zeal, our want of faith and charity, often deprive us of these delightful communings with God. We admit a third party between him and us; we divide a heart which is his by so many titles. We persist in fostering inclinations, passions, small, it is true, but still displeasing to him, and infringing on the absolute right which he has to be preferred to all without reserve; and he punishes us but too justly by the privation of those favors whose value neither men nor angels can estimate, or describe in adequate terms.

Yet we must not be discouraged, though our infirmity leaves us little hope of always maintaining with Jesus this ineffable connection, the

* lot of predestined souls. Whatever we are, we may and should aspire to go far enough into the privacy of his adorable heart to enjoy his friendship, to persevere in his grace, to live and die in his holy love. . . . Ah, let us studiously avoid all that might break or even loosen the sacred bond which unites us to that divine Saviour. Let us, on the contrary, do all we can to strengthen it every day, every hour, so that we may die in that holy exercise of the truly Christian heart.

O Jesus! O thou who "knowest so well how to be a friend,"³ who art so admirable in thine effusions of love to hearts that thou findest void of creatures and of self, be glorified on earth as in heaven, for that thou vouchsafest to cherish in so marvellous a manner souls so little worthy of thee. Let those, especially, who have the happiness of "tasting and seeing how sweet thou art"⁴ in thy divine favors, unite to sing with transport the name and heart of their adorable Spouse. . . . But let those who can only admire from afar the ineffable mysteries of thy love, celebrate, at least, with

¹ Cant. ii. 16.

² Cant. ii. 14.

³ Life of St. Theresa, ch. xxv. ⁴ Ps. xxxiii. 9.

a lively sentiment of gratitude, the incomparable goodness which prompts thee to hear the voice of their supplication. O good and gracious Jesus, it seems as though we heard thee say from the highest heavens, "I have heard the groaning of the children of" the new "Israel;"¹ I will hear them, and forgive their sins."² We entreat thee, with all the fervor of our hearts, to preserve us from ever displeasing thee, especially so as to lose thy grace. And if we had that misfortune, we beseech thee beforehand to save us from the fatal consequences which so often follow the loss of thy divine love. How great is the favor which we thus ask of thee! But it is Mary, our mother, who bears to the throne of Thy mercy the humble supplications of her children, presented by our angels to her who is their Queen. Oh, preserve us, through her, from all sin; preserve us from the just severity of thy slighted and outraged love; preserve us from the unclean spirit, from all that dishonors man in thy sight; preserve us from all the diseases of the soul, and from all the

* bodily ills that might injure the soul; preserve us from the bolts of thy justice, from a sudden and unprovided death. Vouchsafe to grant us the grace of "being always thine, whether we live or whether we die."³ Sweet Lord Jesus, we beseech thee hear us.

CHRIST, HEAR US!

Christe, audi nos.

MEDITATION V.

CHRIST, GRACIOUSLY HEAR US!

IT is not enough to have said to Jesus, Hear us; the Church repeats the adorable name of Christ, and adds, *Graciously hear us*. And why do we repeat a name which has been just pronounced? It is that a name so sweet and precious, a name of help and consolation, a name of benediction and of salvation, can be uttered again and again, without danger of weariness or disgust. On the contrary, the oftener it reaches the ear and the heart, the more unction, the more sweetness does it bring with it. It is, more-

¹ Exod. vi. 5.

² 2 Paral. vii. 14.

³ Rom. xiv. 8.

over, that wretched degraded children, as we all are from the fall of our first father, unhappy exiles, voyagers on an ocean so exposed to tempests, so full of quicksands, so fruitful in shipwrecks, we can never have recourse too often to a name so powerful. Ah, when we know and believe that "there is no other name given to men whereby they may be saved;"¹ that "in that name every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and in hell;"² that by that name the Apostles wrought the most stupendous miracles;³ that even yet, in the name of Jesus Christ, the most marvellous effects are every day produced by the sacraments, effects which, though invisible, are none the less admirable prodigies—knowing and believing all this, we must find happiness in pronouncing and invoking that divine name. We derive from that invocation a profound sentiment of joy and relief, a mild light which guides us securely through the shades of this life, a firm courage, a persevering energy in defending ourselves from the en-

emies of our salvation. For the name of the Spouse in the Canticles "is as oil poured out;"⁴ "it lights," says St. Bernard, "it nourishes and softens, it strengthens, it even saves the soul from despair."⁵

But why say to Jesus Christ, *Graciously hear us?* Had not *Hear us*, as we have seen, its sweetness and its charm? Would it lose, then, in being repeated? . . . Undoubtedly not; but the Church hereby insinuates to us that Jesus may sometimes hear us, without being disposed to answer our prayers. In fact, he defers, in certain circumstances, granting us the object of our petitions, how humble and fervent soever they may be, in order to excite our faith more and more, to inflame our ardor and our zeal, and to procure for us the great merit of perseverance. And as we are tempted too often to be discouraged by such trials, we entreat Jesus to free us from that danger. Ah, let us, then, earnestly beseech that Mediator, so good, so beneficent, so devoted to our interest, to "make haste to help us."⁶ Yet,

¹ Acts iv. 12.² Phil. ii. 10.³ Acts iii. 6.⁴ Cant. i. 2.⁵ Serm. xv. *super Cantica*.⁶ Ps. lxi. 2.

nevertheless, if it please his adorable Providence to subject us to the holy probation of delay, in regard to our demands, let us entreat him no less earnestly to grant us the precious grace of perseverance in prayer. Discouragement is, in fact, injurious to the infinite goodness and mercy of God, the truth of his promises, the infinite merits of Jesus, the efficacy of which we seem to doubt when we cease to implore the Lord if we do not immediately obtain what we ask. Perseverance, on the contrary, in fidelity to prayer, even when it pleases God to appear deaf to the groaning of our hearts, is a beautiful homage rendered to his perfections. It makes us adore his goodness, his mercy, his infallibility, even when they seem to hide from us—his wisdom, his providence, when their ways are the most inscrutable—with as much faith as though they were clearly visible in the success of our demands. It makes us, besides, place all our hopes in the infinite merits of the Saviour, even when they seem to have lost their efficacy in our behalf, with as much firmness

* as though we felt their powerful effects.

O Jesus, who, to manifest the plenitude of thy mercy, made thyself "our advocate with the Father,"¹ permit not that we should ever cease to implore thy love, although our prayers appear useless. Grant, rather, through thine all-powerful grace, without which we cannot even "pronounce thy name,"² that we may redouble our confidence and fervor, when thou seemest not to hear our voice. O thou whose tenderness has vouchsafed to represent itself to us under the touching figure of "the hen gathering her chickens under her wings,"³ our filial confidence makes us pour forth into thine adorable heart our pains and our sorrows, our woes and our supplications. Oh! that we may ever persevere in that holy confidence, through the intercession of thy divine Mother! It is by her sacred hands that we present all our demands; it is through her that we hope to obtain grace to pray without ceasing, till she is moved to say to our angels: "The Lord has heard me"⁴ on behalf of my faithful sup-

¹ 1 John ii. 1.

² 1 Cor. xii. 3.

³ St. Matt. xxiii. 37.

⁴ Deut. ix. 19.

plicants; "go, ye swift angels,"¹ convey the blessing of my Son to those who unceasingly say to him:

CHRIST, GRACIOUSLY HEAR US.

Christe, exaudi nos.

MEDITATION VI.

GOD, THE FATHER OF HEAVEN, HAVE
MERCY ON US.

RESTING on the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, and closely united with him, as our divine Mediator, by the preceding supplication, we may and ought to implore, with new confidence, the most Holy and most August Trinity.

The Church makes us successively invoke the three divine persons, and first of all she teaches us to say: *God, the Father of Heaven, have mercy on us!*

God, the Father of Heaven Is not the Deity on earth, then, as well as in heaven? Does he not fill the universe with the majesty of his presence? Did not the prophesying, soaring on the wings of faith and love, find him equally present,

¹ Is. xviii. 2.

equally adorable, "in heaven, in hell, in the uttermost parts of the sea, in the light of day, and in the darkness of night?"² Ah! undoubtedly, God is everywhere. He is everywhere by his knowledge, for he knows and sees all things; by his power, for in any place whatsoever he has but to will, and his will is instantly done: even nothing itself hastens to obey him. He is everywhere by his essence, for he is infinite, and the infinite knows neither measure nor distance, nor any bounds. "In him we live, and we move, and we are."³ He surrounds us, he penetrates us with his knowledge, his power, his invisible essence, as the sun surrounds and penetrates the crystal with his impalpable rays. Wo, then, to us, if we banish him, in thought, to heaven, as to a distant palace, far away from the voice of our supplication! We should, thereby, commit a grievous mistake, and, by detaching God from this sad world, render our unhappy lot, as children of Adam, worse than it really is.

No, truly, God is not far from us: he is in us, and we are in him. It

² Ps. cxxxviii. 8, 9, 12.

³ Acts xvii. 28.

needs no effort to send up to him * the sighs and supplications of our exile: he whose mercy we solicit is more present to us than we are to ourselves. May we never forget that saving truth!

Why, then, once more, the words *Father of heaven?* Ah! it is that in heaven God has prepared for his elect a delightful dwelling, an everlasting home, an eternal kingdom, where, without being any more present than he is elsewhere, he manifests his adorable presence to the angels and saints. There he shows himself to them, for it is written, "We shall see him as he is,"¹ that is to say, in his beauty, in his truth, in his goodness, in his power, in his love, in all his perfections. Here below nothing could satisfy our desires, however fortunate our life might be, according to the world; however multiplied, however varied might be our enjoyments, still the banishment made itself felt in one way or another. And, moreover, is not the whole life long, for the greater part of mankind, but one tissue of fatigue, weariness, disgust, grief, suffering of every kind

¹ 1 John iii. 2.

Hence, we all sigh, more or less, and all eat the bread of bitterness, moistened even with tears. Were, then, the gratuitous goodness of God to offer us only a natural happiness in the world to come, we ought to praise and bless him forever, and to seek that happiness with the greatest eagerness. To be eternally exempt from the ills of this world, to be eternally sheltered from indigence, disease, pain, mourning, from all trouble, from all sadness, would not even that be too much for such miserable, guilty creatures? But, O prodigy of goodness! God is so generous as to call us to a supernatural bliss, to a bliss with which our nature has no proportion, which is immeasurably beyond all the aspirations of our heart, all the dreams of our imagination, to a bliss which is nothing less than a participation in the divine nature.² How can we but esteem and ardently desire such happiness? how can we esteem and desire it without the liveliest apprehension of not fulfilling as faithfully as we should the conditions necessary to obtain it? Let us, then,

² 2 Peter i. 4.

beseech God, with all the fervor of *
our soul, to have mercy on us!

O God, the Father of heaven, have mercy on us. O Father, "who hath predestined us unto the adoption of children, through Jesus Christ,"¹ and who hast loved us so as to make us thy "heirs and co-heirs,"² vouchsafe "to enlighten the eyes of our heart, that we may know what is the hope of thy calling, and what are the riches of the glory of thine inheritance in the saints."³ May the sight of that inheritance wherein "thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure,"⁴ inspire us with the ardor, the courage, the strength required "to run in the list so that we may obtain the prize,"⁵ and "the crown of life, promised to those who love thee."⁶ And thou, O Mary! show, by the effects of thy protection, "whose daughter thou art."⁷ We delight to offer thee that homage of the faithful heart! *Hail, daughter of God the Father!* Such thou art by a title infinitely more precious than the other daughters of Eve, O thou! mother of the "Word made flesh;"⁸ and whilst

thou wert still on earth thou couldst say to him, with a thousand times more confidence than we, his adopted children: *Our Father who art in heaven.* Grant, then, O Mary! that, by thy powerful intercession, we may address him in this humble prayer:

GOD, THE FATHER OF HEAVEN, HAVE
MERCY ON US.

Pater de cœlis, Deus, miserere nobis.

MEDITATION VII.

GOD, THE SON, REDEEMER OF THE WORLD,
HAVE MERCY ON US.

THIS invocation of the Son of God, "consubstantial to the Father, true God of true God,"⁹ reminds the Christian soul of the great, the ineffable mystery of the world's redemption: a mystery ineffable in itself, ineffable in its marvellous effects.

It is, then, true that, from the Redemption wrought on Calvary, the salvation of man is purchased by the death of a God. He who feared not to humble himself by

¹ Ephes. i. 5. ² Rom. viii. 17. ³ Ephes. i. 18.

⁴ Ps. xxxv. 9.

⁵ 1 Cor. ix. 24.

⁶ St. James i. 12.

⁷ Gen. xxiv. 23.

⁸ St. John i. 14.

⁹ Nicene Creed.

being "made flesh,"¹ thought not that he made too great a sacrifice by suffering and dying for us the most ignominious and cruel death. Oh! but we "are bought," then, "with a great price!"² and what a high value we should set on our souls! How important we should consider all that can increase its dignity before God, and contribute to adorn its immortal crown! and how carefully, how anxiously should we avoid all that may impede its salvation!

We were lost, lost forever: in consequence of the guilty fall of the first man, we were all struck with an eternal anathema. An expiation was required, and an expiation of infinite value, to satisfy the infinite majesty of God outraged by sin. But who was capable of making this atonement? Was it men? Certainly not. Was it angels? No; they are pure, elevated, sublime; but there is between them and the Infinite an infinite distance. Our misfortune was, therefore, without remedy, without hope Yes, if the eternal Son of God became not "our victim of propitiation."³ He

clothed himself with our nature, and, entering into the world, said to the Most High: Behold me ready for the sacrifice; he took "upon himself all our iniquities;"⁴ he gave himself up to be "wounded for our iniquities, and bruised for our sins,"⁵ in order that justice and peace might kiss⁶ "in his person." He even went so far as to desire, with unequalled ardor, to suffer and to die for us;⁷ and that burning desire was accomplished in his passion. Oh! yes, accomplished: what is the Saviour's passion but one continued series of suffering of mind and heart—a succession of unheard-of pains and sacrifices for worthless and ungrateful sinners?

In presence of a devotion so capable of exciting our devotion, and of making our hearts throb with the liveliest gratitude and the most tender affection, let us first pause a moment, while we adore, in the silence of admiration, that mystery which entrances the angels. Let us, then, contemplate that "great mystery;"⁸ let us study and fathom, as far as our limited reason can, the

¹ St. John i. 14.² 1 John ii. 2.³ 1 Cor. vi. 20.⁴ Is. liii. 6.⁵ Is. liii. 5.⁷ St. Luke xii. 50.⁶ Ps. lxxxiv. 11.⁸ Tim. iii. 16.

secret depths of the love and mercy of our God. Immersed in that bottomless and shoreless ocean, let us give up our hearts to the pious transports wherewith it may please God to animate them. . . . And then we shall admire "the abundant riches of his grace,"¹ of which redemption is the source.

Sanctifying grace! sublime and supernatural gift! It marvellously unites our soul to God, communicates to it a divine life, a life which is the beginning of the life of heaven, for St. Paul says that "the grace of God is life everlasting."² And this divine life of our soul, which the sacraments are intended to give, to maintain, to increase, to restore, when we have had the misfortune of losing it, this divine life imparts to all our acts an admirable power, that of meriting an eternal reward, and of constantly increasing our eternal happiness and glory. Yes, by sanctifying grace we may make of our smallest actions works so precious that each of them is preferable to all the treasures of the earth; we may, in one moment, do

more, by a single secret act of the will which loves God, than all men together could do, in thousands of ages, by all their natural force.

"Wonderful! wonderful!" is all that we can say, O adorable Son of the eternal Father, when we consider the ineffable work of our redemption by thy blood, and the precious fruits that we daily gather from it. Oh! how justly does the apostle St. Paul tell us that thou hast loved us to excess! and how well may we exclaim: "The thoughts" of thy love "are exceeding deep;"³ too deep for our limited understanding; thy greatness is far beyond our praise; thou art greater than our imagination can conceive, "greater than our heart!"⁴ it cannot repay such love as thine, even by giving all its love. "We know that thou livest, divine Redeemer, and this, our hope, is laid up in our bosom,"⁵ for thou livest to make intercession for us."⁶ Let not thy blood, the merits of which flow incessantly on the earth, become useless through our fault. The voice of that precious blood says

¹ Ephes. ii. 7.

² Rom. vi. 23.

³ Ps. xci. 6.

⁴ 1 John iii. 20.

⁵ Job xix. 25, 27.

⁶ Heb. vii. 25.

to thy Father: "Save my people,"¹ my "purchased people;"² and Mary says with thee: "My people for which I request."³ Ah! suffer us not, by the abuse of thy grace, to paralyze the efficacy of thy mediation and the intercession of her whom we happily hail as "*Mother of the Son of God!*"

O GOD, THE SON, REDEEMER OF THE WORLD, HAVE MERCY ON US.

Fili Redemptor, Mundi Deus, miserere nobis.

MEDITATION VIII.

GOD, THE HOLY GHOST, HAVE MERCY ON US.

GOD is love," says St. John,⁴ The Father, then, is love, the Son is love, the Holy Ghost is love. But the works of divine love, consequently the operations of grace, whether on the mind or on the heart, are attributed to the Holy Ghost, although they belong equally to the three persons. The reason is

that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and from the Son by love, and that he is the substantial and reciprocal love of both.

Hence Jesus told his disciples that "unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;"⁵ that the graces of that divine Spirit should be like unto "rivers of living water"⁶ flowing from the hearts of the faithful. And the great Apostle teaches that "the charity of God is poured out into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us;"⁷ that he "is the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation;"⁸ that it is he who renews us,⁹ who helpeth our infirmity," and "asketh for us, with unspeakable groanings."¹⁰

Ignorant and impotent as we are, how ardently should we beg of the Holy Ghost that "burning and shining lamp"¹¹ which dispels the darkness of the understanding, and inflames and enlivens the heart. How fervently should we beseech him to make us judge all things "not in

¹ Esther vii. 3.

² 1 Peter ii. 9.

³ Esther vii. 3.

⁴ 1 John iv. 16.

⁵ St. John iii. 5.

⁶ St. John vii. 38, 39.

⁷ Rom. v. 5.

⁸ Ephes. i. 17.

⁹ Titus iii. 5.

¹⁰ Rom. viii. 26.

¹¹ St. John v. 35.

carnal wisdom,"¹ but in the wisdom of the Gospel; to direct and support our will; to render our whole conduct supernatural. For this is the distinctive character of the true child of God, the true Christian; and this it is that places the distance from heaven to earth between his thoughts, his affections, his views, his desires, his actions, and the thoughts, the affections, the views, the desires, the actions of the worldling.

The true Christian, in fact, thinks of God as his centre; of heaven, as his home; of salvation, as "the one thing necessary."² If he regard creatures, it is in God and for God; to Him alone he attaches himself as his sovereign good, as the rock which can alone withstand the tempestuous waves of time. The worldling, on the contrary, thinks of creatures, forgets heaven and salvation; he seeks his interest or his pleasure in all the various attachments which divide his heart. He desires, he covets that which disappears in the twinkling of an eye; he madly pursues fragile goods,

* "which elude his grasp like frozen water, melting away, and leaving only defilement on the hand that held it."³

The true Christian and the slave of the world often do the same works, transact the same business, meet with the same accidents, but with intentions and dispositions so dissimilar, and in a manner so different, nay, so opposite, that in the hand of one they are pure gold for eternity, in that of the other vile lead, which, far from enabling him "to lay up treasure in heaven,"⁴ can only "drown him in perdition."⁵

The one "lives in the Spirit, and walks by the Spirit;"⁶ his whole life has something noble, elevated, grand, pertaining to heaven, to God. The other lives but in his own low, corrupt nature, in connection with the spirit of evil and his dreary doom.

Ah! then, let us once more entreat the Holy Ghost to make us act in all things in a supernatural manner, and never to permit us to be so unfortunate as to "extinguish the

¹ 2 Cor. i. 12.

² St. Luke x. 42.

³ *Fun. orat. on Anne de Gonzague*, by Bossuet.

⁴ St. Matt. vi. 20.

⁵ 1 Tim. vi. 9.

⁶ Gal. v. 25.

Spirit"¹ within us, or even "to grieve Him."² Let us say, with a sincere resolution of faithfully corresponding to His grace:

"Oh! Holy Spirit,
Fount of life, and fire of love,
And sweet anointing from above;"³

"lead us into the right land, and quicken us in thy justice;"⁴ maintain us even in that charity which is "from a pure heart, a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith."⁵

We even venture to beg of thee that our charity "may more and more abound in knowledge, and in all understanding, that we may be replenished with the fruit of justice,"⁶ going from "virtue to virtue," till "the God of gods shall be seen in the heavenly Sion."⁷ Vouchsafe to grant us this grace through Mary, whom we honor and respect as thy divine spouse. She could say at the accomplishment of the august mystery of the Incarnation, "God hath endowed me with a good dowry."⁸ Thou couldst say of her: Thou art "full of grace;"⁹ one is my dove, my perfect one;¹⁰ how

* beautiful art thou,"¹¹ and how justly did her mother call her "blessed of the Lord!"¹² In the name of that favored Virgin, we beseech thee,

GOD, THE HOLY GHOST, HAVE MERCY ON US.

Spiritus Sancte, Deus. miserere nobis.

MEDITATION IX.

HOLY TRINITY, ONE GOD, HAVE MERCY ON US.

THE adorable mystery of the Holy Trinity, "one and indivisible,"¹³ is the foundation of our religion, the source of all the other mysteries, and of all the divine mercies. Hence it is that the Church, after making us successively invoke the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, makes us say, *Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us.*

A day shall come, if we remain faithful, when we shall see, without obscurity, what we now believe, and the adorable Trinity will reveal

¹ 1 Thes. v. 19.

⁴ Ps. cxlii. 10, 11.

² Ephes. iv. 30.

⁵ 1 Tim. i. 5.

³ Hymn, *Veni Creator.*

⁶ Phil. i. 9, 11.

⁷ Ps. lxxxiii. 8.

¹¹ Cant. iv. 1.

⁸ Gen. xxx. 20.

¹² Ruth iii. 10.

⁹ St. Luke i. 28. ¹³ Cant. vi. 8. ¹⁰ Brev. Rom.

to us its ineffable secrets. We shall then comprehend how the Father, knowing himself from all eternity, necessarily begets "his own image,"¹ who is the Son; how, this knowledge being absolute and indivisible as well as his substance, he communicates the latter to the Son unreservedly and undividedly. We shall understand how it is that from the eternal union of the Father and the Son necessarily proceeds their mutual love, who is the Holy Ghost; how, that union being equally absolute and indivisible, "the Holy Ghost proceeds from it with the same perfection that the Son receives from his Father."²

But the light of heaven is not made for earth: *home* can never be found in the land of exile. "Till the day" of eternal happiness "breaks, and the shadows retire,"³ till a holy death comes to rend the veil of faith, and "we shall know God even as he knows us,"⁴ let us humbly adore, with our whole mind, the mystery which he has been pleased to reveal to us; let us praise and bless him with all our

hearts, for that he has vouchsafed to make us sharers in the divine knowledge, and to admit our poor understanding even to the eternal sanctuary of his "light inaccessible."⁵ What an infinite honor has he conferred upon us by imparting to us, in this place of probation, in the darkness of our exile, a truth which dazzles the angels, and gives us reason to pine for "the courts of the Lord,"⁶ where we shall enjoy a spectacle so glorious! Unity in trinity, Trinity in unity: how marvellous! how incomprehensible! Unity of nature in a trinity of persons, trinity of persons in a unity of nature, what admirable concord, what ravishing harmony! "Yes," says St. Augustine, "in God there is number, in God there is no number: when you reckon the three persons, you behold a number; when you ask what it is, you find no number: the answer is, that it is one only God. Because they are three, there is number; when you seek to examine their nature, the number escapes; you find only simple unity."⁷

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 4.² Cant. iv. 6.³ *Sermon on the Holy Trinity*, by Bossuet.⁴ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.⁵ Ps. lxxxiii. 3.⁶ 1 Tim. vi. 16.⁷ *In Joan. Tract. xxix. No. 4.*

O, unity so inviolable that number cannot divide it! O, number so well arranged that unity cannot confuse it! How magnificent is the hope of one day seeing thee "face to face!"¹ And, meanwhile, it is sweet to be able to adore thee with the divine certitude of faith, and to bless thee for the supernatural connection with thyself which thou givest us in Christianity!

The Father, by his adoption, raises us to the sublime quality of children of God; the Son, by the Incarnation and Redemption, marvellously associates us² with the divine nature; the Holy Ghost, by the effusion of his charity into our hearts,³ establishes an admirable communication⁴ between God and us. Ah! may we estimate, at their just value, these divine revelations, and esteem ourselves according to the nobility and grandeur of our dignity! May we well understand that, God having raised us so high, all that is not God is beneath us; that, having the inestimable honor

of being the sons of God,⁵ the brethren of the Son,⁶ the temples of the Holy Ghost,⁷ we should ever respect ourselves as belonging to a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, that *we* may declare his virtues, who hath called "*us* out of darkness into his admirable light!"⁸

"Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who art but one and the same substance,"⁹ to thee, "the only God, be glory and magnificence, both now and forever;"¹⁰ to thee who hast honored us with the revelation of thine eternal essence, to thee who hast raised us to a superhuman dignity, the completion of which shall be, in heaven, a transformation into thy Divine image.¹¹ Ah! before "the breadth, and length, and height, and depth"¹² of thy love for us, what can we do but stammer like the prophet¹³ the accents of praise and admiration, in union with Mary, who, astonished herself at the great things thou hast done in her,¹⁴ contemplates thee in transports of gratitude and love. We

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.² 2 Cor. xiii. 13.³ 1 John i. 3.⁴ 1 John iii. 1.⁵ Rom. v. 5.⁶ St. John xx. 17.⁷ 1 Cor. vi. 19.⁸ 1 Peter ii. 9.⁹ 2 Cor. iii. 18.¹⁰ 1 John v. 7.¹¹ Ephes. iii. 18.¹² St. Jude 25.¹³ Jerem. i. 6.¹⁴ St. Luke i. 19.

adore thee as "the Alpha,"¹ the eternal origin of all; we reverence her as the first of thy creatures, and the nearest to thee by the perfections thou gavest her, and by the sublime ties of daughter, mother, and spouse, wherewith thou hast honored her. Grant that, beseeching thee, by her pure lips, to keep us always faithful, always worthy of thee and of our magnificent title of Christians, we may say to thee:

HOLY TRINITY, ONE GOD, HAVE MERCY ON US.

Sancta Trinitas, unus Deus, miserere nobis.

MEDITATION X.

HOLY MARY, PRAY FOR US.

THE first title of honor which we give to the Blessed Virgin, when invoking her, is her own name of Mary—a name which, after that of Jesus, is the delight of pious souls.

What more sweet than the name of a mother, and of a mother as tender, as august! A mother! Is there

any thing so precious in nature, any thing which dilates the heart like her presence, any thing so moving as her memory? A mother! Ah! God has created nothing in this world to be compared to her in kindness, in pure and sweet affection, in devotion, in sublime heroism of heart. When we have the happiness, then, of being animated by a lively faith, when we firmly believe that Jesus is our divine brother, that Mary his mother is also ours, that she necessarily extends to us that inexpressible tenderness with which she is filled for the "blessed fruit of her womb,"² for that Jesus who has so loved us, what pious emotions, what exquisite feelings, should not the name of such a mother excite within us.

But what joyful admiration should the mysterious meaning of that blessed name inspire. It signifies at once *Sovereign, Radiant Star, Queen of the Sea*³ . . . and to whom could these touching titles apply but to Mary? *Sovereign*, has she not the honor of having brought forth "the King of kings, and the Lord of lords,"⁴ to whom belongs

¹ Apoc. i. 8.

² St. Luke i. 42.

³ *Lexic. bibl.* Weitenader.

⁴ 1 Tim. vi. 15.

“magnificence, power, glory, and victory,”¹ and who, by glorifying her in heaven, gave her a power of intercession like to none other? *Radiant Star*, is it not she who has given to the world “the true Light”² of men, “the Sun of justice,”³ whose divine disk, without dawn or twilight, east or west, unceasingly displays the fullness of his inexhaustible rays? Is it not she who shines in the splendor of the purest, the most perfect virtue—in the splendor of a miraculous virginity, and of a glory which eclipses that of the angels and saints? *Queen of the Sea*, is it not she whose admirable example, like a heavenly beacon, surmounts the troubled waters of this life, and guides into the port of eternal bliss those who keep its beneficent light in view? Is it not she who has received from God, so to say, the power of appeasing at will the storms and tempests which so often beat on our frail bark, when the invocation of her all-powerful name stills the winds and the waves?

Undoubtedly, the name of Mary

is not “strong and mighty”⁴ in comparison with that of Jesus, except in that inferior degree which necessarily distinguishes the creature, even the most perfect, from its Creator and its God; moreover, it has no virtue except through Jesus himself. But it has pleased that divine Son to manifest his glory by his august mother, and to communicate the admirable efficacy of his own name to that of Mary. Like that of Jesus, the name of this divine Virgin consoles and strengthens. “Invoke it,” says St. Bernard, “in your dangers, your doubts, your anguish, let it be incessantly on your lips and in your heart. Then there will be no more wandering, no more despair, no more error, no more falling, no more fear, no more fatigue, but a sweet experience of the profound meaning of those words of the Gospel, ‘*The name of the Virgin was Mary.*’”⁵ Like that of Jesus, this name, so dear to our hearts, puts the spirit of darkness to flight. “If the wind of temptation assail you,” says the same holy doctor, “call Mary to your aid.”⁶ It was

¹ 1 Paral. xxix. 11, 12.

² St. John i. 9.

³ Mal. iv. 2.

⁴ Ps. xxiii. 8.

⁵ Rom. ii. *super Missus est.*

⁶ Rom. ii. *super Missus est.*

of her that, in the beginning, God said to the tempter of Adam and Eve those energetic words, "She shall crush thy head,"¹ and that prediction resounds anew, like a crash of thunder for Satan, as often as the Christian soul invokes the name of the Blessed Virgin.

O Mary! blessed be the Lord who "hath so magnified thy name that thy praise shall not depart out of the mouth of men."² Ah, tell us by what name thou art called;³ make us feel and comprehend its dignity, its sweetness, and its power; penetrate us with the respect, the confidence, and the love which it merits. It is to the pious heart "a plentiful olive-tree, fair, fruitful, and beautiful;"⁴ it is precious as a vase exhaling sweet perfumes. So powerful do we esteem it, that when invoking it, we think we see the fallen angel taking flight with the forced cry, "Terrible is the name of the Virgin!" O Mary! may that sacred name be ever terrible to hell in our behalf, may it be "terrible as an army set in array"⁵ to all the

enemies of our salvation. May we never separate it in our heart from the adorable name of thy divine Son, and may it be, after that of Jesus, our refuge and our shield, our strength and our consolation. It is with the hope of obtaining this grace that we say to thee with the Church—

HOLY MARY, PRAY FOR US.

Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XI.

HOLY MOTHER OF GOD, PRAY FOR US.

A SIMPLE virgin of the tribe of Juda, *Mother of God!* How wonderful! What greatness and majesty is contained in that title, what honor and glory, what incomparable magnificence!

In the general opinion of men, the dignity of the mother is computed by that of her son. What must then be the dignity of Mary, who brought forth the adorable humanity of the eternal Son of God!

If she had given birth to an illustrious saint, even that would make

¹ Gen. iii. 15.

² Judith xiii. 25.

³ Gen. xxxii. 29.

⁴ Jer. xi. 16.

⁵ Cant. vi. 3.

her very honorable in our eyes; she would be still more honorable if she had brought into the world an incarnate angel; and much more so had it pleased God that "one of the chief princes"¹ of heaven "was made flesh"² in her chaste womb. But, Mary, Mother of God! who can ever estimate, or comprehend, or express the dignity, the elevation of the Blessed Virgin? And who is there that, penetrated with a lively faith, will not cry out with the Angel of the Schools, that "this title has made her something infinite, because of the infinite good which is in her Son,"³ and with the blessed Peter Damian: "But we have reason to remain mute with astonishment and admiration, nor dare to raise our eyes before the immense glory of such a dignity!"⁴

God is infinitely powerful: what wonders soever he may produce, he can always produce others greater still. And yet we need not fear to say that, all-powerful as he is, he could not make Mary either greater or more noble than he has made her in her dignity of Mother of God.

* Could he, in fact, give her a Son greater or more noble than he who, "without robbery, is equal to God,"⁵ and who says, "I and the Father are one?"⁶ Could he give her a Son superior to himself? Mary enjoys, then, by her divine maternity, all the dignity possible for a mother to have; and even as the Creator could not make a man greater than the Man-God, so neither could he make a mother more august or honorable than her who can say to that Man-God, "Thou art my Son."⁷

O, let us admire, praise, exalt this masterpiece of the Almighty power, of the adorable wisdom of the Most High. He could bring about the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation without giving a mother to the humanity of his Son. But was it not fitting that the Divine Repairer of man's fall should be "the Son of man,"⁸ at least by his mother, so that it might be one of ourselves who made for us all the infinite satisfaction due to eternal justice? And then, Adam and Eve having both transgressed, and having both, by their fall, involved their whole

¹ Dan. x. 13. ² S. Thomas, 3 p. q. 25, a. 6, ad 1.

³ St. John i. 14. ⁴ *Serm. de Nativ. B. M. V.*

⁵ Phil. ii. 6.

⁶ St. John x. 30.

⁷ Heb. i. 5.

⁸ St. Luke xix. 10.

posterity in the same ruin, does it not seem that each sex ought to have its share in the restoration and salvation of mankind? Divine Wisdom, then, admirably provided for the work of redemption by creating a Mother of God. By Mary, Eve's sex has given to the world its Saviour, and by that Saviour, that of Adam has redeemed the world.

But God has done still more. He has favored us all "with a continual and perpetual extension of the mystery of the Incarnation. Thus speak the Fathers of the Church."¹ By our participation in the mystery which supposes all others, the adorable Eucharist, have we not the infinite honor of contracting that union with God which approaches the nearest to that of Mary with her Son Jesus, and that of the Word with his humanity, since "we are therein really incorporated with the divine flesh of Christ."² And Jesus himself has said, "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him."³ Ah! let us here humble ourselves before

the Lord, for that a favor so prodigious leaves us cold, tepid, indifferent, instead of inflaming our hearts, and filling us with a boundless zeal and devotion!

O Mary! we are happy to proclaim, with the Church, that thou art truly the *Mother of God*. We joyfully acknowledge that it was thou who "brought forth"⁴ the first-born by excellence, called by St. Paul "the first-born amongst those who are conformable to his image;"⁵ that it is thou, and thou alone, who art entitled to the literal application of those sacred words, "He that made me rested in my tabernacle;"⁶ and that, as the Eternal Father says to his Son, "Before the day-star" of time "I begot thee,"⁷ as thou canst thyself say to him, "And I also begot thee, *in time!*" We venerate, then, and honor with all our heart thy divine maternity; we offer thee all the homage due to thine incomparable dignity. Obtain for us, O Mary! to appreciate the admirable participation in thy glory and the glory of his adorable humanity,

¹ Bourdaloue, *sur le Tres-Saint Sacrement*.

² S. Chrys., *Homil.* 63, ad popul. Antioch.

³ St. John vi. 57.

⁴ St. Matt. i. 25.

⁵ Rom. viii. 29.

⁶ Eccles. xxiv. 12.

⁷ Ps. cix. 3.

which thy divine Son, in the sacrament of his love, vouchsafes to give us :

HOLY MOTHER OF GOD, PRAY FOR US.

Sancta Dei Genitrix, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XII.

HOLY VIRGIN OF VIRGINS, PRAY FOR US.

VIRGIN OF VIRGINS! what title could be more suitable to her who first consecrated the love of holy virtue by the seal of a perfect vow! A vow so precious in the eyes of Mary, that she only accepted the ineffable glory of the divine maternity, after the Angel had assured her, on the part of God, that this glory should be nowise incompatible with the sacred engagement she had contracted with the Most High! *Virgin of Virgins!* what title could better express the pious admiration of the Church for her miraculously perpetual virginity! So, also, what emblem could be more illustrative of Mary's favorite virtue and this magnificent privilege than that lily-stem, whose triple

flower tells us so well that she was a virgin while bearing the divine Jesus, a virgin before and after that august mystery.

The lily! What flower is there of sweeter perfume, of purer beauty, of more delicate white? There is, therefore, no more perfect symbol of the fairest, the most exquisite virtues; of that angelic virtue, whose triumph is manifested in the Virgin of Virgins on the day of the Incarnation of the Word, when the angel said, to reassure her: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee!"¹ Hence, the Scripture represents to us, under the figure of a girdle of lilies,² the inviolable chastity of the Spouse of the Canticles, and the predilection of the heavenly Bridegroom for virginal purity, by telling us that he is "the lily of the valleys," and goes to his garden "to gather lilies."³

These charming figures have each a sweet and expressive lesson for us. It is, that Jesus loves to rest with "the clean of heart;"⁴ that he

¹St. Luke i. 35.

²Cant. vii. 2.

³Cant. ii. 1; vi. 1

⁴St. Matt. v. 8.

loves to abide in hearts whose pure thoughts, pure desires, pure affections, pure emotions, are for him like "a bed of aromatical spices."¹ And, consequently, we may perceive what delight our divine Saviour must take in Mary, whose spiritual purity, truly perfect, was enhanced by another miraculous purity, so that the very name of this twofold virtue has become her own name, and she alone is, by excellence, called *the Virgin*!

But let us sound our own hearts, and are we a holy object of complacency to the divine Lamb who is followed by virgins "whithersoever he goeth?"² Alas! even without falling into the slough of vice, do we never permit ourselves to do aught that might displease him? How many imprudent or even dangerous looks! How many liberties which, without exceeding the strict bounds of virtue, are yet incompatible with the holy integrity of a chaste delicacy! How many thoughts, how many remembrances, perhaps even regrets, how many desires, how many projects, how many

* dreams of the imagination, which are far from having for their emblem the dazzling whiteness of the lily! How many words which are far from breathing "the good odor of Christ,"³ the Son of a virgin, and the tender, intimate friend of St. John, because, as the Church tells us, the latter "wore the spotless crown of virginity?"⁴ Finally, how many affections, of which God is neither the beginning nor the end; how many attachments formed (though we will hardly acknowledge it to ourselves), not so much by the spirit as by the flesh!... Ah! let us courageously banish from our hearts, not merely anything that might offend the divine Son of Mary, but anything that might not be pleasing to him. Let us respect our bodies as being "the members of Christ,"⁵ and never convert them to any but a holy use. Let us remember that where the eye of man cannot penetrate, the eye of God sees and judges! for "hell *itself* is naked before him, and there is no covering for destruction!"⁶ Let us remember that his eyes, sweet "as

¹ Cant. vi. 1.² Apoc. xiv. 4.³ 2 Cor. ii. 15.⁴ Brev. Rom.⁵ 1 Cor. vi. 15.⁶ Job xxvi. 6.

those of the dove"¹ for virgin souls, are "as a flame of fire"² for those who attempt before their Creator what the mere look of a mortal would make them avoid as reprehensible. Ah! would that we understood this better, and would always keep it in mind!

O Virgin of Virgins! living miracle of purity! who wast on earth Christ's "dove," his perfect one; the daughters of *Sion* saw thee and declared thee most blessed. Numberless are the "young maidens"³ whom thy powerful example has induced to renounce the world and all its most seductive charms, to consecrate themselves to God in solitude, to serve Jesus with inexpressible love in the person of the poor, or to follow thy footsteps, even amid the cares of the world! "Queens" themselves, amid the splendor of their courts, have "praised thee"⁴ by the sublime virtues which they practised after thine example, and under thine auspices!

Glory be to thee, O Mary! incomparable model of that virtue which

¹ Cant. v. 12.

² Apoc. i. 14.

³ Cant. vi. 7, 8.

⁴ Cant. vi. 8.

makes man's life like to that of the angels, as though his soul were not connected with corruptible organs. Ah! make us, by thy protection, thy faithful imitators, and zealous lovers of the holy virtue of purity. It is that we may always resemble thee, and thus merit the favor of thy divine Son, that we may say to thee,

HOLY VIRGIN OF VIRGINS, PRAY FOR US.

Sancta Virgo Virginum, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XIII.

MOTHER OF CHRIST, PRAY FOR US.

TO say of Mary that she is the Mother of God, is to reveal to us, all at once, the full extent of her greatness and glory. But this the human mind could not comprehend unless it could embrace infinite majesty. Hence it is that the Church, after making us invoke Mary under that title, here presents her to us in a way that we can more easily understand.

Is it not true that a mother ap-

pears to us the more honorable in proportion as her son is distinguished by more eminent qualities, and does greater things for the happiness of his fellow-creatures? What admirable glory reverts, then, to the Blessed Virgin as the Mother of Christ? Does not Jesus possess, even as man, all the perfections suitable to our nature? "God anointed him with the Holy Ghost,"¹ who is personally united to him. "In him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;"² in him all the treasures of goodness, meekness, humility, patience, compassion, charity the purest and most devoted; in him the plenitude of feelings, the noblest, the most elevated, the most delicate, the most generous, the most captivating to the human heart. . . . But who may tell what he has done for the happiness of those whom he was pleased to make his brethren?³ Not to speak of the salvation which he prepared for us with his own life, how numerous are the blessings which he has otherwise conferred upon us? What improvement, both moral and intellectual, has he not

brought into the world! What a prodigious transformation has he not wrought in it! Even now Christianity prevents more evil in one day than all human laws could repress; it produces, in one day, more acts of virtue, often sublime, than the pompous maxims of philosophy could ever achieve.

To whom is due the restoration of woman, who was in olden times considered and treated as a mere *thing* in the family—is it not to the Son of Mary? . . . To whom is due the respect for childhood, the moderation of paternal authority, formerly so arbitrary and tyrannical—is it not to the Son of Mary? From whom came the abolition of slavery? who has invested the servant with a sacred and august character in the eyes of the Christian master, and taught us to regard all men as our brethren—is it not the Son of Mary? . . . Whence proceed all the helps, all the consolations, all the good and admirable works of which our holy religion is the soul and the inexhaustible source—is it not from the Son of Mary? . . .

Ah! even if the Blessed Virgin were not the Mother of God, were

¹ Acts x. 38. ² Colos. ii. 3. ³ Heb. ii. 17.

Christ, her adorable Son, nothing more than the greatest of men, the most signal benefactor of humanity, his Mother would be the noblest, the most august, the most honorable of mothers.

And, in the supernatural order, where is the good of which Jesus is not the author? Without him, fallen man would have neither sanctifying grace, nor merit for heaven, nor any of those actual graces so necessary to our weakness. Without him, either before or since his appearance on earth, there would be no connection of love, of favor, between God and man, none of the consolations of piety, none of the guiding lights of faith, no beacon of hope for eternity.

But how blind and ungrateful we are to enjoy all these blessings, and yet love their author so little! Each step of ours is marked by some favor of Christianity, and we heed it not. At the sight of these precious gifts our hearts should be more and more inflamed with love for the divine Son of Mary, but far from that being the case, we refuse him that time which so justly belongs to him, we employ it in violating

his holy laws, in gainsaying his example, in wilfully offending him. What ingratitude is ours! . . . Ah! if we have ever so little tenderness of heart, let us endeavor to repair by our own repentance this base ingratitude, and henceforward to live unceasingly for him who unceasingly pours down his blessings upon us.

O Mary! who could say to this adorable benefactor, "Thou art my Son,"¹ I bore thee in my womb, I gave thee suck, and nourished thee."² What must have been thy feelings when thou hadst "to wrap up" the delicate limbs "of that divine child," the "first-born"³ of all those who by their divine adoption were to become "his brethren."⁴ Ah! doubtless thou didst pour forth thy heart in expressions of love and admiration, thou wert happy to give him continual proofs of devotion, of consecration, of entire self-abandonment. The most amorous words of the Spouse in the Canticles hardly sufficed to express the sacred transports of thy love while thou saidst, "My beloved is mine, he shall abide

¹ Heb. i. 5.

³ St. Matt. i. 25.

² 2 Mach. vii. 27.

⁴ Rom. viii. 29.

between my breasts."¹ Obtain for us, then, O Mary! a share in thy admiration, thy gratitude, thy love for Jesus, who never ceases to load us with favors. Permit us not to remain ungrateful, at least so far as to deliberately offend so liberal a benefactor. Yes, we beseech thee with all the fervor of our souls, repeating with the Church—

MOTHER OF CHRIST, PRAY FOR US.

Mater Christi, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XIV.

MOTHER OF DIVINE GRACE, PRAY FOR US.

HAIL, full of grace!¹ said the heavenly ambassador sent by the Most High to announce to Mary the sublime mystery of the Incarnation. These are words of such profound meaning, that no human intellect could understand, no human lips explain it. *Full of grace!* Who, then, can estimate the quantity, or appreciate the value of this treasure? If it be true that more or less grace is the effect of the great-

er or lesser love which the Lord has for a soul, what soul could ever receive as much as Mary, the specially beloved of God? . . . *Full of grace!* "Perfect expressions," says St. Sophronius, "for grace is given to others as it were by shares; to Mary, it is given in its plenitude."² Mary alone, of all mankind, was called to the triple dignity of beloved Daughter of the Father, beloved Mother of the Son, beloved Spouse of the Holy Ghost; and it also required an incomparable sanctity to correspond with that incomparable dignity; to produce that unprecedented sanctity an unprecedented supply of grace was requisite, nay, even the plenitude of grace. Hence, the angel, willing to express this marvellous sanctity which distinguishes Mary amongst all creatures, called her not by her name, although that name is, as we have seen, rich in admirable signification; he saluted her with the very title of "full of grace,"⁴ as it were to designate her by that which is her special characteristic before the Most High.

But she is, moreover, the Mother

¹ Cant. i. 12.

² St. Luke i. 28.

³ *Serm. de Assump. V.*

⁴ St. Luke i. 28.



N.Y. D.R. J. Sadlier & Co.

of him who is "the God of all grace,"¹ and of whom St. Paul says that, in his person, "the grace of God hath appeared *visibly* to all men."² Why should not she who gave birth to such a Son be called the *Mother of Divine grace*, especially she to whom that same Son has, if we may say so, confided the distribution of his favors? For Jesus, from the Cross, gave his mother to us in the person of St. John, who, as the only disciple present, represented all the faithful;³ and what the great Apostle said of the gift made us by the Eternal Father of his own Son, we may, in due proportion, say of the gift which the Son made us of his divine Mother. "How hath he not also, with *her*, given us all things."⁴ Thus it is that the holy doctors of the Church are prodigal in their expressions of praise and homage towards this favored creature. "Be mindful of us, O blessed Virgin!" exclaims St. Athanasius, "and in return for the feeble praise we offer thee, grant us rich gifts

from the treasury of thy graces."⁵ "In thee, our patroness and mediatrix with the God who was born of thee," cries St. Ephraim, "in thee the human race places all its joy; in thee alone is found the refuge and the surety of those who trust in God;"⁶ and in another prayer, he says: "After the Trinity, thou art mistress of all; after the Paraclete, another Paraclete; after the Mediator, mediatrix of the entire world."⁷ "Because thou art the only hope of sinners," says St. Augustine, "through thee we hope for pardon of our crimes; through thee, O blessed one! we expect the heavenly reward."⁸ "Mary is the ocean of grace," says St. Peter Chrysologus,⁹ St. John Damascene,¹⁰ and St. Bonaventure.¹¹

She is the fountain through which all graces are poured forth on the world like a spring of living water: "the fountain of gardens,"¹² destined to "water the torrent of thorns,"¹³ that is to say, to change our hearts, to make all virtues grow in them; a

¹ 1 Peter v. 10.² Titus ii. 11.³ Bossuet, *Sermon for the Feast of the Holy Rosary*.⁴ Rom. viii. 32.⁵ *Serm. in Annuntiat.*⁶ *Op. græco-lat.*, t. iii.¹⁰ *Orat. i. de Nativit.*⁷ *Op. græco-lat.*, t. iii.¹¹ *In specul.* v.⁸ *Serm. de Annuntiat.*¹² Cant. iv. 15.⁹ *Serm. cxlvi.*¹³ Joel iii. 18.

fountain so full of grace, that this sweet Virgin, according to the angelic doctor, has enough to bestow on all mankind."¹

Let us, then, approach, how great soever our misery may be, let us approach, with an overflowing heart, to that "throne of grace,"² established for himself in the bosom of the divine Virgin by the Son of the Eternal King. Let us ever implore her assistance; even when our affairs appear to be in the most desperate condition, let us beseech her from the bottom of our hearts, "assured," says St. Bernard, "that we are thereby entering into the designs of Him whose will it is that all should come to us through Mary."³

O Mother of "the Word made flesh," who hast vouchsafed to "dwell amongst us, full of grace and truth,"⁴ with the angel we salute thee, "full of grace!" Thy divine Son is the source, the inexhaustible, the infinite source of grace; and in taking up his abode in thee first of all mankind, he gave thee the right to say, "In me is all grace."⁵ Thy blessed hands are, as it were, the

* favored channel whereby this divine treasure overflows the entire world, refreshes all that is dry and arid, and "maketh *the wilderness even as the garden of the Lord.*"⁶ To thee, then, will we have recourse in all our wants; in thee, after Jesus, do we place all our confidence; through thee, do we expect from him, unworthy as we are of his mercy and goodness, the pardon of our numberless transgressions, the assistance so necessary to our weakness, and the crowning grace of final perseverance.

MOTHER OF DIVINE GRACE, PRAY FOR US.

Mater divinæ gratiæ, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XV.

MOTHER MOST PURE, PRAY FOR US.

IT was fitting," says St. Anselm, "that the sanctity of the Virgin-Mother should be such, that no greater could be conceived after that of God."⁷ For otherwise it would have been manifest that God

¹ P. iii. quæst. xxvii. art. 5. ² Heb. iv. 16.

³ *Serm. ii. de Assumpt. B. M. V.*

⁴ St. John i. 14.

⁵ Is. li. 3.

⁶ Eccles. xxiv. 25.

⁷ De Concept., c. xviii.

did not raise her for whom he had reserved the infinite dignity of being his Mother, so as to place her on a level with that high honor, and that he did not create her worthy of a rank which never had or never can have an equal in the world. This gave St. Thomas occasion to write those remarkable words: "It is possible for a creature to exist so pure as that nothing purer could emanate from the hand of the Creator, and such was the purity of the Blessed Virgin, of her who never knew either original or actual sin."¹

God and sin are irreconcilable; the opposition between these two terms is absolute, infinite. Wherefore it is, that we can only approach God by removing from evil, from which we also remove the farther the more we approach the "Holy of holies."² But how can we imagine a creature having such an intimate connection with God as the Mother of God? How then can we conceive one who has attained, or can attain a purity of heart like that of the Blessed Virgin?

¹ I. Sent. disc. xlv. q. unica, art. 111, ad. 3.
Concil. Trid. Sess. v. et vi.

² Dan. ix. 24.

* Hence the Angel of the Schools teaches that "in her the effusion of grace was so abundant, so complete, that she enjoyed the closest possible union with the divine Author of grace, and thus deserved to receive into her bosom Him who is the source thereof."³

It would not be sufficient, then, to give Mary the first place in the hierarchy of creatures, even the holiest. She who approaches God as nearly as possible, is superior to them by the full height of her incomparable dignity; she is distinguished as "the lily among thorns;"⁴ her sanctity overtops that of all the elect, of all the blessed spirits, as "going up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices, of myrrh and frankincense, and of all the powders of the perfumer."⁵

While admiring, in this august Mother, the privilege of special sanctity wherewith the Lord endowed her, let us endeavor to comprehend the necessary hatred of God for all that is offensive to his divine Majesty. Sin, whatever it may be in its object and in its circum-

³ III. part., quæst. xxvii., art. v., ad. 1.

⁴ Cant. ii. 2.

⁵ Cant. iii. 6.

stances, is always a violation of the moral order—a real disorder which God must necessarily abhor, because he is himself order by his essence, order substantial, necessary, immutable. Sin is a revolt against God, that sovereign power, that supreme power, that eternal power who forbids it, and who cannot, in justice to himself, leave unpunished, in his universal empire, one single act of rebellion. Sin is an ingratitude towards the first, the greatest of benefactors; an ingratitude so much the blacker, in that we voluntarily offend Him who preserves our life, at the very moment we are employing it against himself, and that it is impossible to offend him without turning one of his own blessings against him. How could it be that God would not hate ingratitude with an infinite hatred, since even men brand it as odious and disgraceful?

Ah! let us not pass lightly over truths so proper to inspire us with a holy horror for all, even the slightest violations of the adorable will

of God, so capable of exciting our zeal, our vigilance, our endeavors to shun even the smallest evil. Like him who “would not understand that he might do well,”¹ we should be in danger of being “cast out”² by the Lord; or like those fools who “despise wisdom,”³ we should deserve to be ourselves despised by the Most High, and given up to a reprobate sense.⁴ Let us rather reflect seriously on these saving truths, and try to derive therefrom “that *pious* fear which neglecteth nothing,”⁵ having always in view that great maxim of the divine Master: “He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater.”⁶

O thou whose admirable sanctity renders thee “fair as the moon,”⁷ from the depth of our hearts do we say to thee: “Thou art all fair, *O Mary*, and there is not a spot in thee,”⁸ O thou house of the Lord which holiness becometh,⁹ and thou tabernacle of the Most High which himself hath sanctified.”¹⁰ Yes, we, thy cherished children, are rejoiced

¹ Ps. xxxv. 4.² Prov. i. 7.⁶ St. Luke xvi. 10.⁸ Cant. iv. 7.³ Ps. xxxv. 13.⁴ Eccles. vii. 14.⁷ Cant. vi. 9.⁹ Ps. xcii. 5.⁵ Eccles. vii. 19.¹⁰ Ps. xlv. 5.

to contemplate in our august and tender Mother, that glorious privilege before which the Church, ever guided by the Holy Spirit, has solemnly bowed down, proclaiming to the Catholic world that she did not include thee amongst sinners.¹ Obtain for us, O Mary, a sensible feeling of the hatred which God necessarily has for sin, whose disorder never troubled the repose or marred the beauty of thy spotless soul; what horror we should feel for that act of rebellion and ingratitude, even though it did not go so far as to produce that deadly division betwixt God and us which it effects, alas! too often. Vouchsafe, by thy intercession, to preserve us from it; deign to hear those who address thee in that pious invocation:

MOTHER MOST PURE, PRAY FOR US.

Mater purissima, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XVI.

MOTHER MOST CHASTE, PRAY FOR US.

IS there anything greater or more noble than the virtue which leaves the mind its freedom for

* good, disengaging it from the slavery, and, as it were, from the weight of the body, which it constantly maintains in the path of duty? So it is that, in all ages, and amongst all nations, the most civilized and the most debased by Paganism, chastity has been honored.² One would say that, by a sort of instinct, Memphis, Athens, Rome, and the savage tribes of America, were sensible of the pre-eminence of that virtue which raises man above his own nature, almost to a level with the pure spirits.

But see the marvellous splendor of chastity in the divine Mother of Jesus. Although connected, like all the children of Adam, with a passible and mortal body, Mary, who had been preserved from original sin, was also preserved from the humiliating consequences of that birth-stain. Would it have been expedient or proper that the Lord, excepting her from the transmission of the sin of Eve, should still leave her that unhappy concupiscence which was unknown to Eve herself in her state of innocence. . . . He

¹ *Con. Trid. Sess. v. et vi.*

² *The Pope, by de Maistre, v. ii. ch. 3.*

would, then, have made Mary a creature inferior to the companion of the first man in her primitive condition, and the Mother of God would have had to send up to heaven that complaint of the Christian soul: "Unhappy that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?"¹ Ah! what truly pious heart would not reject such thoughts as injurious alike to the Son and the Mother. "I would be horrified to say," says St. Augustine, "that that sacred flesh which had furnished the virginal body of Christ was delivered to worms after death."² But if it were freed from the corruption of the grave, which, after all, is not out of order, how much more must it have been preserved by the Lord from all tendency to moral disorder.

Mary was, therefore, in her body, as far as matter can be compared to spirit, what she was in her soul, all pure and all holy. Of her may be said, literally, what St. Augustine said figuratively of virginity, that "she had in her flesh something not of the flesh,"³ something

which belonged to the angelic nature rather than to ours, something superhuman, which caused the King of glory to "not abhor the Virgin's womb."⁴

But we must beware of thinking that, although Mary had no combat to sustain, the glory of her chastity was at all diminished. How honorable soever danger may be when crowned by victory, whatever glory there may be in succeeding in a struggle of which God is the witness, the prize and the crown, it was assuredly much more honorable to be respected by that unclean spirit whose assaults have harassed the greatest saints, so that he never dared to make even the slightest attempt. Such was, by nature, the prerogative of the adorable Jesus; such was, by grace, the privilege of his Mother, whose "eye hath *always been able* to look down upon"⁵ the infernal powers overcome by the Cross of her divine Son.⁶

For us who experience but too often "the evil which is present with us,"⁷ and the combats arising from it, let us apply with filial confidence

¹ Rom. vii. 24. ² *De Assumpt.* t. ix., n. 23.

³ *De Sancta Virginit.* n. 12, t. vi.

⁴ Hymn *Te Deum.*

⁵ Ps. liii. 9.

⁶ Col. ii. 15.

⁷ Rom. vii. 21.

to the maternal protection of Mary. Let us remember that how weak soever we may be, "we can do all things *by the grace of God* that strengtheneth us,"¹ and that, by the intermediation of his Mother, we may hope never to want that grace. But let us not count on her protection without using the means and taking the precautions pointed out by faith; that would be attempting to render Mary the accomplice of our presumption and of our culpable imprudence. Let us "watch and pray."² Let us watch narrowly over our senses, our imagination, and the motions of our heart; let us shun even the appearance of danger; it is only by flight that chastity secures the victory. Let us pray "at all times,"³ let us pray especially at the moment of danger, "that we enter not into temptation."⁴

O Mary, we bless the Lord for that, from the moment of thy conception, "*thy heart and thy flesh* rejoiced in the living God;"⁵ we bless him for that in thee are realized, in an admirable manner,

* those words of the great Apostle, that "the fruit of the spirit is continency *and* chastity."⁶ What continency can ever be compared to thine? Where is the chastity that is not eclipsed before that which God preserved from all the attacks of concupiscence, and to which, by the power of "the lion of the tribe of Juda,"⁷ he gave the glory of a perpetual triumph?⁸ Alas! but our lot is very different; and how inimical to us and to our eternal welfare are "the carnal desires which war against the soul,"⁹ and "the spirits of wickedness"¹⁰ by whom we are surrounded. In the name of thy glory, O Mary, suffer not those who implore thine assistance, and who fight in the shadow of thy tutelary power, even to fail in the combat. Pray for us that "the God of Peace may crush Satan under our feet,"¹¹ and that "by the Spirit we may mortify the deeds of the flesh."¹² Once more, then, we beseech thee—

MOTHER MOST CHASTE, PRAY FOR US.

Mater castissima, ora pro nobis.

¹ Phil. iv. 13.

⁴ St. Mark xiv. 38.

² St. Mark xiv. 38.

⁵ Ps. lxxx. iii. 3.

³ Ephes. vi. 18.

⁶ Gal. v. 23.

⁷ Apoc. v. 5.

¹⁰ Ephes. vi. 12.

⁸ 2 Cor. ii. 14.

¹¹ Rom. xvi. 20.

⁹ 1 Peter ii. 11.

¹² Rom. viii. 13.

MEDITATION XVII.

MOTHER INVIOLETE, PRAY FOR US.

WHEN God revealed to the prophet of old, seven centuries before its accomplishment, the miracle of the Virgin-Mother, Isaiah said to Mary's ancestors: "Hear ye, therefore, O house of David; . . . a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel."¹ This is, in fact, one of those prodigies which God draws from the treasures of his power when he wishes to strike men with awe and admiration, and this is also what the Church wishes us to praise and honor by the invocation, "*Mother inviolate, pray for us!*"

"O prodigy! O ineffable wonder!" exclaims St. Augustine, "a Virgin has become a Mother! Yes, she is a Mother, but still a Virgin! She has a son, but he has no father according to the flesh; she has brought forth, but her purity remains untouched."² St. Bernard outdoes the immortal bishop of Hippo: "If," says he, "I wish to extol her virginity, many virgins present themselves

to my mind as partakers in the glory of that virtue. If I set about praising her humility, I find many of the faithful who, at the bidding of her divine Son, became meek and humble of heart. If I undertake to laud the abundance of her mercy, are there not men of great mercy, and women who are models of compassionate goodness? But in this no one either before or after could ever be compared with her! In this she stands alone, viz., in the union of the joys of motherhood with the glory of virginity. Yes, this is Mary's exclusive privilege; no other creature can ever be so honored."³

Doubtless, this prodigy is beyond all the laws of nature. But if our first father came into the world by a simple act of the will of God, was it any more difficult for that omnipotent will to unite, in a mortal, the flower of virginity and the divine fruit "of the Holy Ghost?"⁴ And, moreover, does not the image received and reflected by "the unspotted mirror"⁵ give us a sufficiently clear idea of how "the splendor of the glory of God"⁶ could

¹ Is. vii. 13, 14.² Serm. xiii. *de tempore*.³ Serm. iv. *de Assumpt. B. M. V.*⁴ St. Matt. i. 20.⁵ Wisdom vii. 26.⁶ Heb. i. 3.

come and manifest itself in the world in a manner as admirable as it is astonishing? . . . For the rest, it would seem that the Lord wished gradually to prepare the human mind for believing this prodigy, the object of our faith; for the solemn prophecy which announced it so long beforehand amongst God's own people, found an echo amongst nearly all the pagan nations of antiquity; their religious traditions all agreed in expecting a liberator in the Son of a Virgin.¹ It would also seem that the mystery of a Man-God being in itself an unparalleled miracle, its glory was to be manifested in his birth, as well as in his conception.

Let us here praise the Lord for the admirable prodigies wherewith he dignified the mystery of his annihilation in human nature; let us bless him for the glorious favors which he bestowed on the Blessed Virgin, and endeavor to penetrate ourselves more and more with a high esteem, a generous love for the virtue which he honored in Mary by such great marvels. Ah! if we only knew how pleasing this virtue

is to that God who "is a spirit," and who "must be adored in spirit,"² and how our flesh participates, in its own way, as far as it possibly can, in the elevation, the dignity, the purity of that adoration! What unceasing efforts should we make to practise that chastity of the senses which refrains even from that which is permitted, for fear of exceeding the prescribed limits; that chastity of the heart which excludes all excessive affection, even when legitimate; that chastity of the imagination, which repels even the passing thought of any irregularity or of any dangerous object! And how carefully should we regulate our whole exterior so as to inspire others, by our modesty and reserve, with love and esteem for a virtue which can alone render our homage worthy of the Blessed Virgin.

O Mother inviolate, styled by the Apostle St. John "a great wonder,"³ we love to contemplate thee, with him, "clothed with the sun, having the moon under *thy* feet, and on *thy* head a crown of twelve stars."⁴ The sun surrounds thee with his

¹ Letter of M. Drach.² St. John iv. 23.³ Apoc. xii. 1.⁴ *Ibid.*

dazzling radiance—a figure of the divine “Sun of justice,”¹ whom thou didst bear in thy chaste womb, and who rendered thy purity as unalterable as his brilliant rays. Twelve stars compose thy diadem, their living splendor an image of thy miraculous purity. Thou hast the moon under thy feet, emblematical of the triumph of thy virginity over all inconstancy, all imperfection, represented by that ever-changing planet. Let us join in the pious transports of St. Ambrose, who, on the feast of Christmas, made all his people sing, “The whole world admires the miraculous childbearing of the Blessed Virgin. Such must be the birth of a God!”²

We ardently desire to honor in thee, O Mary! the wonderful works of the Lord, by our fidelity in imitating thy superhuman purity, as far as is consistent with our weakness. That we may obtain that grace,

MOTHER INVIOLETE, PRAY FOR US.

Mater inviolata, ora pro nobis.

¹ Malac. iv. 2.

² Quoted by Pope St. Celestine, *Epist. decretal. Roman. Pontif.*

MEDITATION XVIII.

MOTHER UNDEFILED, PRAY FOR US.

TO be worthy of God, the splendor of the miracle of the Virgin-Mother must necessarily be unalterable, and the chaste womb wherein “the Word was made flesh” must remain forever incorruptible, as a sanctuary “shut for the Prince of Peace.”³ So it is of faith that Mary was always a virgin, that nothing ever tarnished “the flower of purity in her so admirably united with the fruit of honor and riches,”⁴ and that this same flower, at the close of its mortal existence, was as fair and spotless as at its first opening. Furthermore, the Church tells us in her sacred liturgy that, far from losing aught of its perfection, the virginity of Mary “received through the miraculous birth of the Saviour, as it were, a divine consecration.”⁵

This, then, is the “fountain sealed up,”⁶ this is truly that “garden enclosed,”⁷ which is the inaccessible dwelling of the divine

³ Ezec. xlv. 2.

⁶ Cant. iv. 12.

⁴ Eccles. xxiv. 23.

⁷ Cant. iv. 12.

⁵ Miss. Rom. in *Concept. B. M. V.*

Majesty, guarded "by the cherubim with a flaming sword."¹

Even if we had not on this head the certainty given by the infallible teaching of the Church, where is the Christian who does not understand that Mary, by her divine maternity, became the true temple of the eternal Son; that the uncreated Word, having dwelt for nine months in her virginal womb, it thereby became the purest and most august of sanctuaries; that if "the place where his feet stood"² was of old considered worthy of solemn veneration, this living sanctuary of the Divinity was incomparably more so? . . . But, on the contrary, who could suppose without horror, that God would have permitted the profanation of that dwelling which he had chosen for his Son,³ that Mary could for a single moment cease to respect what God had made so venerable, or that she could ever have forgotten that sacred contract which she mentioned to the Angel Gabriel as "a treasure which she would not have resigned even for

the sublime maternity announced to her?"⁴

Ah! far, very far from us be such thoughts—thoughts which would be not only contrary to faith, but which would accuse Mary "of a sacrilege degrading to her, and a profanation degrading to Jesus Christ himself."⁵ Let us rather unite with the holy doctors who have celebrated the untouched purity of the Virgin by excellence. Let us say with St. Jerome, "She remained ever holy both in soul and body, eternally a virgin;"⁶ and with St. Ambrose, "Mary is the mistress of virginity, whose glory was never eclipsed in her;"⁷ and with St. Peter Chrysologus, "By her bearing of the Man-God her purity did but increase, her chastity assumed a new lustre, her virginity became but the more inviolable."⁸

But from this truth let us draw a useful lesson for our soul. The holy and adorable Eucharist, as we have already seen, gives us a connection with Jesus so close, so honorable, as to have a wonderful similitude

¹ Gen. iii. 24.

² Ps. cxxxi. 7.

³ Ps. cxxxi. 13.

⁴ St. Greg. Nys., hom. in *Nativ. Chr.*

⁵ *Elev. sur les mysteres*, par Bossuet.

⁶ Ep. x. ad Eus. de ass. In *Ezech.* l. xiii.

⁷ *De Instit. Virg.*

⁸ Serm. cxlii,

with that which existed between Mary and the Eternal Son of the Most High. Why, then, is it that we do not gather from that ineffable union, from that immense honor, a steady and persevering love of virtue, an invincible strength against the seduction of the senses? . . . Ah! it is that before communion we do not sufficiently estimate the value of the grace conferred upon us by God, and that, after communion, we too soon forget the incomparable favor we have received. When believing "with the heart,"¹ how can any one, before participating in the sacred banquet, say to himself without emotion, "A house is prepared not for man, not for an angel, but for God?"² And after being so closely united with the Man-God, how is it that we do not "live in God, participating in the divine feelings?"³ After being nourished "with that virginal body, that body conceived and born of a Virgin,"⁴ how can we consent, with the remembrance of such a favor before our minds, ever to be other than pure and

spotless, even for a single moment? O Mary! "new paradise where purity puts forth her fairest flowers,"⁵ in what terms shall we praise the glory of thine inviolate and perpetual virginity? . . . "Unheard-of miracle," shall we say with St. Ephraim, "inexplicable prodigy, incombustible bush, golden censer exhaling a delicious perfume, alone pure in soul and body, alone above all integrity, all innocence, and all virginity?"⁶ Ah! let us, henceforward, through thy protection, delight in that virtue which was 'so precious in thy sight, let us "love that chastity" for which "thou shalt be blessed forever."⁷ "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water,"⁸ so may we sigh after that adorable mystery wherein we taste "the corn of the elect, and wine springing forth virgins."⁹ Above all, when we have had the infinite, the inexpressible happiness of participating therein, may we ever preserve the remembrance of it, and lead a "holy and a blameless" life, under the patronage of her to whom

¹ Rom. x. 10.

² 1 Paral. xxix. 1.

³ *Medit. sur l'Eu.*, by Bossuet.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ St. Basil, *Orat.* xxx.

⁶ Sancti Eph., *Opera græco-lat.*, t. iii., p. 524-552

⁷ Judith xv. 11. ⁸ Ps. xli. 2. ⁹ Zach. ix. 17

we address this supplication, weak * and helpless as we are :

MOTHER UNDEFILED, PRAY FOR US.

Mater intemerata, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XIX.

MOTHER MOST AMIABLE, PRAY FOR US.

THE sacred canticle wherein the Holy Ghost typifies the union of the Incarnate Word with his Church, is also a magnificent painting of all the qualities which secure to Mary the title of *Amiable Mother*. In that divine picture the heavenly Spouse represents her in the most varied colors, and under the brightest and most captivating figures: flowers and fruits, and the rarest plants; perfumes the most precious that art or nature can produce; comparisons full of grace and sweetness; delicate and graceful ornaments of the rarest beauty. But all that belongs to earth is too much beneath the *Amiable Mother*; and hence it is that she is saluted by the mouth of the virgins of Jerusa-

lem with that cry of admiration: "Who, *then*, is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun?"¹ Yes, her loveliness has the brilliant hues of the early dawn, the mild radiance of the moon, the gorgeous splendor of the orb of day; and justly did St. Epiphanius say to her with pious enthusiasm: "After God, thou art the first beauty: that of the cherubim, that of the seraphim, and of all the angelic choirs, is effaced before thine."² How much more, then, does it exceed the charms of Rachel and Rebecca, the winning grace of Esther, the stately beauty of Judith, all honorably mentioned in Holy Writ!³

But let us not stop at the terrestrial ideas conveyed by the senses; this beauty, this loveliness of the favored daughter of the King of kings, "*is entirely from within*,"⁴ and from the inestimable gifts wherewith the Lord has adorned her. If men were capable of seeing a soul in possession of sanctifying grace, they would find it of ravishing beauty; and if it be so with

¹ Cant. vi. 9.

* *Serm. de laudib. Virg.*

³ Gen. xxiv. 16; Gen. xxix. 17; Esth. ii. 7; Jud. viii. 7.

⁴ Ps. xliv. 14.

any soul which enjoys that precious treasure, how great must be the beauty of those who, by their fidelity, their zeal, their fervor, merit every day, and, if one might say so, every hour, an increase of that celestial gift, that magnificent, that divine adornment of the Christian soul! What an idea must we then have of the interior beauty, the supernatural loveliness of Mary! In her conception, she had received the effusion of grace in a degree far superior to that with which any other creature could be favored. The Lord having chosen her in his eternal counsels to be his Mother, she must, necessarily, be more pleasing to him than all others, even from her very origin; and to remain worthy of her incomparable destiny, she must also be pre-eminently assiduous, united with God in mind and heart, and ever eager to increase her treasure by new acts of divine love. No other was enriched, like her, every moment, with new traits of supernatural beauty; no other ever possessed, like her, the virtues inseparable from such an abundance of grace. Never, therefore, was creature so humble, so patient, so

charitable, so compassionate, so considerate; never was heart so generous, so devoted, so pure, so noble, so great, so nearly resembling the adorable heart of her divine Son.

Let us here learn to love, like Mary, before all else, that which is truly amiable—God, and the means of pleasing and being united to him. Let us learn to despise, like her, that frail external beauty which fades and withers away, and falls at length under the stroke of death, to give place to something hideous and disgusting. Let us fix our hearts on that interior loveliness, that spiritual beauty which renders us so amiable before God, that every Christian dying in the state of grace is by him associated in his glory and happiness. Finally, let us remember that while meriting for our soul the felicity of heaven, we merit it also for our body; and that, consequently, all that we do, in time, for the supernatural beauty of the soul, we do it, not merely to promote its eternal blessedness, but also to secure the glorification of our body for all eternity.

O Mary! masterpiece of Almighty





Paul Reni pinx.

J. G. S.

The Assumption of the Virgin Mary

power, how dazzling is thy beauty to the eyes of faith! Yes, thou art worthy "of being called," by excellence, "Amiable to the Lord;"¹ for thou art adorned with all the perfections which can make a creature amiable. How sweet it is, beloved Mother, to cry out with one of thy devout servants, that "thou dost ravish the hearts of those who contemplate thee!"² How sweet it is to assure thee of our sincere desire ever to love thee according to thy merit, to prefer, like thee, the beauty of the soul before all else, and to labor incessantly to increase it by the fervor of our charity! Bless this desire, O divine Mary; and that we may obtain its accomplishment,

MOTHER MOST AMIABLE, PRAY FOR US.

Mater amabilis, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XX.

MOTHER MOST ADMIRABLE, PRAY FOR US.

MAN has made use of what God gave up to his patient industry, and has produced admirable

things. He has, by his inventive genius, mastered the most rebellious of the elements; even light itself he has made subservient to his will; he has made astonishing achievements, worthy the admiration of all who can appreciate the beautiful and the sublime in art. But what are all the works of man compared with what God has produced by a single act of his all-powerful will? And what are all the works of creation in comparison with the *admirable Mother*?

God, it is true, has drawn forth from the infinite treasury of his power wonders the greatest and most varied; he has strewn them over illimitable space like the dust of our fields; he has adorned the earth with creatures of amazing strength and of enchanting beauty; he has bedecked the heavens with azure, gold, and silver; he has established throughout the universe the most profound combinations of opposing elements, the most skillful harmony of laws, sublime in their diversity, in their unity, in their

¹ 2 Kings xii. 25.

² Medit. in *Antiph. Salve Reg.*, attributed to St. Bernard.

stability; he has created man, who is the king of nature, the living abridgment of all the wonders of creation. And yet he has done still more: he has created Mary, the admirable Mother; admirable in her grandeur and in her privileges; admirable in the incomparable prodigy of her divine maternity; admirable in the august influence given her to exercise on the fate of men, denoting her co-operation in our salvation, as well as the immense efficacy of her intercession. All the elements seem to be submissive to her: at her voice the pestilential air loses its malignity, fire suspends its ravages, the swollen wave sinks again into its bed, the sterile earth resumes its fruitfulness.

Mary is at once virgin and mother, the marvel of nature confounded by grace; the creature of the Most High, and yet his Mother; "the handmaid,"¹ and the "Mother of God;" the daughter of fallen Eve, and yet the true Eve, the "true Mother of all the living."² Mary! the epitome of all the goodness, the charity, the mercy, the power of the

* Creator, "the abridgment of his incomprehensible perfections," says St. Andrew of Crete.³ She is, after God, the centre of the prayer and praise of the Catholic world; she is, to faith, the Holy by excellence, inseparable from the Man-God; their names are repeated every day by every mouth; in their honor, the East and the West have united, and will always unite, their songs of praise and homage.

"He that is mighty hath" therefore "done *many* great things"⁴ for this incomparable virgin; he has so prodigiously glorified her in heaven and on earth, that, according to St. Cyril and St. Bernard, "the most eloquent tongue can hardly describe her glory and her greatness."⁵

But are we to content ourselves with a profound sentiment of admiration for this most perfect of God's works? Let us enter into ourselves; let us examine with the eyes of faith. Is there nothing wonderful in ourselves? Has not God made us truly admirable? "We were by nature the children of wrath;"⁶ and we have become

¹ St. Luke i. 48.

² Serm. ii. *de Assumpt.*

³ Gen. iii. 20.

⁴ St. Luke i. 49.

⁵ St. Cyril, *Homil. habita in Nestor.*; St. Bernard, *in deprec. ad B. Virg.* ⁶ Ephes. ii. 3.

the "most dear children"¹ of God, * the objects of his tenderest love and most watchful solicitude. Moreover, we poor mortals, so mean and so contemptible, are raised, by grace and the Holy Eucharist, to the sublime life of the angels, to the divine life of heaven. We are destined to the everlasting enjoyment of the highest glory, even the glory of God, for it is written, that "we shall be like him,"² and that we shall reign *with him* for ever and ever."³ Ah! if we were deeply penetrated with these magnificent teachings of faith, how great and how generous would be our devotion to God! how much better would our conduct correspond with his favors and the sublimity of our hopes!

Thou art, O Mary, and shalt ever be, worthy of admiration, not only because of thy perpetual and miraculous virginity, prefigured by the prodigy which appeared to Moses on "the mountain of God,"⁴ but

because of the sublimity of all thy privileges, the superabundance of grace wherewith thou wert filled, the incomparable power given to thee, and the unequalled glory wherewith thou art invested. "Wonderful"⁵ is the name by which the Heavenly Father would have his divine Son called; the Church gives to thee the name of Admirable, as approaching the nearest to the adorable greatness of the Man-God, and giving the most perfect reflection of his glory. August object of "the wonder of princes,"⁶ O thou whose "magnificence is wonderful,"⁷ ah! render us sensible of the great dignity to which it has pleased God to raise ourselves in this land of exile and probation, and to the still more wonderful height of glory which he is pleased to promise us hereafter; render us worthy, through thy intercession, of a destiny so high and so magnificent!

MOTHER MOST ADMIRABLE, PRAY FOR US.

Mater admirabilis, ora pro nobis.

¹ Ephes. v. 1. ² 1 John iii. 2. ³ Apoc. xxii. 5.

⁴ Exod. iii. 1; Brev. Rom. *Office of the Circumcision.*

⁵ Isaiah ix. 6.

⁶ Wisdom viii. 11.

⁷ Eccles. xliii. 32.

MEDITATION XXI.

MOTHER OF OUR CREATOR, PRAY FOR US.

THE divine act of the Creator is the grandest, the most astonishing to our understanding; in it we have to contemplate, to fathom, as it were, the grand transition from nothing to being, a secret which God has reserved for himself, and which can never come under the cognizance of human reason. Hence it is that God, who is so great in other respects, manifests himself to us, if we may say so, in all his power as Creator of the universe; and the Church, penetrated with this truth, makes us here invoke Mary, under the title of *Mother of our Creator*, in order to give us the highest possible idea of her dignity and greatness.

Mother of our Creator! Is there not an apparent contradiction between these two terms? What! can the stream produce its source? the work its author? Who ever saw, who ever heard the like? . . . Undoubtedly, if there were in Jesus Christ only the divine nature, this title could not belong to the Blessed Virgin: the Divinity exists by itself

* from all eternity, and has no other principle than itself. But "the Word was made flesh,"¹ and Mary, by an unequalled miracle, became the mother of his human nature. And the Word is Creator as well as the Father and the Holy Ghost, these three adorable persons having together produced all creatures by the indivisible act of their will.

Let us then exclaim, with St. Peter Chrysologus, "Yes, truly, Mary brought into the world Him who created the world and herself!"² Let us offer to her our fervent congratulations, saying, with the same holy doctor, "For ever blessed art thou! thy Creator vouchsafed to be conceived in thy chaste womb; thy first beginning was pleased to owe his birth to thee; thy Heavenly Father deigned to become thy son; thy God vouchsafed to become incarnate in thy flesh."³

But for whom did the Creator of all things raise Mary to so high a degree of glory? It is for all of us; by her he came into the world, came to effect a change in each of us more wonderful, perhaps, than the creation itself. In the

¹ St. John i. 14. ² Serm. 143. Serm. 142.

beginning "*God spake, and all was made.*"¹ What could resist the omnipotent power of his word? But in the admirable operations of "the grace which is given us by Jesus Christ,"² God permits our free will to oppose an obstacle, in order to give us an occasion of merit; and hence it is that grace, triumphing over our will, while respecting it and allowing it to act in a meritorious manner, presents something greater, we might almost say, in some respects, than the primitive act of creation. This is what St. Paul appears to imply when he makes use of the words *new creature* to express the transformation of man by the grace of Christianity. "If then any be in Christ," wrote he to the Corinthians, "a new creature:"³ and to the Galatians, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."⁴ Alas! we see not this *new creature*, and hence it is that we are little impressed by the admirable act of divine power whereby it is produced. Accustomed as we are,

* moreover, to behold human nature when, in some degree, transformed by baptism in its earliest infancy, we are less sensible of the favor, because we know not, by experience, what it is to grow up and advance in life under the fatal influence of original degradation, without remedy and without supernatural assistance. Ah! it was well understood by those converted pagans, to whom the great Apostle said, after describing the most humiliating fruits of corrupt nature, "Such some of you were: but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁵

Let us, then, think often of what we should be without baptism, and all the marvellous helps of which it is, as it were, the sluice; let us compare ourselves with the unbelievers to whom God "hath not done in like manner,"⁶ and we shall give up our hearts, without reserve, to all the sentiments which the liveliest gratitude can inspire.

Vouchsafe to make us understand, O Mary, what gratitude and love

¹ Ps. cxlviii. 5.

² St. John i. 17.

³ 2 Cor. v. 17.

⁴ Gal. vi. 15.

⁵ 1 Cor. vi. 11.

⁶ Ps. cxlvii. 20.

we owe for the prodigious change wrought in us by the grace of thy divine Son—an ineffable favor, which makes us pass from the narrow limits of our nature to a super-human order, incomparably more elevated than the fairest moral order! Considering “the renovation of the Holy Ghost,”¹ and its blessed effects, with their inestimable value, our “heart *should be* inflamed, *we should be* brought to nothing”² with wonder and admiration; but, alas! we are cold, ungrateful, and deliberately sinful. Permit us not, O Mary, longer to delay in “giving to God the things that are God’s,”³ in offering to the Creator, whose majesty “rested in *thy* tabernacle,”⁴ the sentiments so justly due to him; and, in order that we may henceforward be grateful and always faithful,

MOTHER OF OUR CREATOR, PRAY FOR US.

Mater Creatoris, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XXII.

MOTHER OF OUR REDEEMER, PRAY FOR US.

HERE we have the most touching of Mary’s maternal titles; *

the one dearest to Christian piety. *Mother of our Redeemer!* that is to say, O thou who, by thy co-operation in the divine incarnation, hast given us Him whose name of *Jesus* was revealed by the Angel Gabriel to thy chaste spouse, Him who was to “save his people from their sins!”⁵ *Mother of our Redeemer!* O thou to whom we are indebted for him whose adorable name should be unceasingly on our lips and in our heart, if we were only impressed with a lively sense of what we owe him! In order to understand what Mary is to us, let us try to understand the nature of our obligations to that sweet Saviour whom she brought into the world.

Two things give value to a favor. its own intrinsic importance, and the generosity with which it is conferred. Oh! how precious, then, how truly inestimable, is that which we owe to the adorable Son of Mary!

What a fate should we have had for all eternity were it not for that divine Saviour! The Holy Ghost

¹ Titus iii. 5.

² St. Luke xx. 25.

³ Ps. lxxii. 22.

⁴ Eccles. xxiv. 12.

⁵ St. Matt. i. 21.

describes it as "eternal death:"¹ that is to say, a state without end, wherein the horrors of death are every moment renewed; a life, imperishable indeed, but deprived of the sovereign good, with a ceaseless and intense desire to possess it, and the fatal certainty of never obtaining it; an eternal life of "eternal pains"² But, as though it were a small thing to save us from such a fearful destiny, Jesus has merited for us the inestimable privilege of being one day seated with him "in the heavenly places,"³ of being "glorified with him,"⁴ of living and reigning eternally with him,⁵ of being eternally "like to him;"⁶ that is to say, to be happy forever, happy beyond all human expression, happy beyond all conception or desire. And this twofold service he has rendered to us with the most disinterested, the most magnanimous devotion.

What were we to Jesus that his heart should inspire him with the thought of saving us by his own blood? Were we as dear friends, excellent brethren, for whom it is

sweet to make a sacrifice, and whose fate inspires the liveliest interest? Not yet. As strangers, deserving of pity because of their virtue as well as their misfortunes? Alas! no: we were only wretched, sinful creatures, unworthy of a single glance from him, and from whom he had not even common gratitude to expect. What do I say? from whom he well knew he should receive no other return than lamentable indifference, cold tepidity, or even a multiplicity of offences, often, alas! willful. Nevertheless, he loved us "unto death, even the death of the cross."⁷ To love, to love even to excess, him who deserves not even sympathy; to love him who loves not in return, nor will ever testify a just gratitude—what wondrous love! But to die for him in whom there is nought but misery, insensibility, from whom there is scarcely anything to be expected save base and obstinate ingratitude, what love could be purer, stronger, or more generous?

When shall we repay even a portion of our Redeemer's love, of the

¹ 2 Thess. i. 9.

³ Ephes. ii. 6.

⁵ 2 Tim. ii. 12.

⁶ 1 John iii. 2.

² 2 Thess. i. 9.

⁴ Rom. viii. 17.

⁷ Phil. ii. 8.

gratitude we owe him? We who detest ingratitude in others, when shall we cease to be ungrateful? . . . We would love a man who, at the risk of his life, had saved this corporal life, this life so frail, so miserable, so full of tears and bitterness; we would shrink from even the appearance of ingratitude, we would be horrified at the thoughts of doing him an injury. How ungrateful, then, are we to the adorable Son of Mary, who, by the most cruel and ignominious death, has delivered us from an eternity of wretchedness, and merited for us an eternity of happiness! And how much more ungrateful should we be, if, after having meditated on truths so capable of touching our hearts, we should still refuse to pay him a debt so every way sacred. Let us, therefore, belong, henceforward, not to ourselves, for "we are not our own,"¹ but His who purchased, "with a great price,"² our love, our fidelity, our devotion.

O Mary, thy quality of Mother of the Redeemer associates thee in the work of man's Redemption,

accomplished by his Passion, the torturing instruments of which, recalling his sufferings and thine, speak eloquently to every feeling heart. Love, ardent, inviolable, eternal love to Jesus! After Jesus, to thee, most holy Virgin, fervent and faithful and unceasing love! Beloved and august Mother of that divine Son, whose name of "*Saviour*"³ was revealed by an angel to the shepherds invited to visit his crib and adore his birth, how much more applicable to him is the title of "*Saviour of the world*," than to Joseph that of the *Saviour of Egypt*!⁴ Joseph acquired the title by a service rendered to the people of Egypt, without any personal sacrifice on his part; but Jesus bears the name, if we may say so, written on his adorable brow with his own blood. Obtain for us, O Mary, that our hearts may return him, if not blood for blood, at least love for love—that true and perfect love which manifests itself by works!

MOTHER OF OUR REDEEMER, PRAY FOR US.

Mater Salvatoris, ora pro nobis.

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 19.

² *Ibid.* 20.

³ St. Luke ii. 11.

⁴ Gen. xli. 45.

MEDITATION XXIII.

VIRGIN MOST PRUDENT, PRAY FOR US.

HAVING made us honor Mary in all the glories of her maternity, the Church makes us celebrate her as a Virgin, and presents at once for our homage the prudence which distinguishes her from all the daughters of Eve, even the most perfect.

From her childhood, she flies the corrupt atmosphere of the world to go breathe the pure air of the sanctuary; she hedges round with the most watchful prudence a heart which yet has nothing to fear from the seductions of the world, for the Lord possesses it from its very conception, and permits it not to know either the dangers or the attacks of concupiscence.

When a prince of heaven appears before her with the most glorious message, Mary is troubled. She is accustomed to a life so solitary, so full of reserve, that "the presence of the angel in mortal form sufficed," says St. Ambrose, "to inspire her with a holy fear;"¹ and that fear increases, when she hears

¹ *De Officiis*, lib. i., ch. 8.

* from his mouth the announcement of a dignity naturally incompatible with the vow she has taken, that vow so dear to her heart. Then, O prudence, truly admirable! far from suffering her mind to dwell on the glory of the divine maternity, Mary thinks only of enlightening her conscience before she gives her consent. She states her perplexity to the angel with modest simplicity. The heavenly messenger gives her a satisfactory explanation, and immediately, without any further delay, she consents with a humility, a resignation truly sublime: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word."²

Now, what does she proceed to do? Does she not hasten to announce the great mystery to her worthy spouse? No, she is silent, guided by superhuman prudence. But surely, when Joseph, that "just man,"³ is, soon after, a prey to the most cruel anxiety on her account, anxiety which she cannot fail to perceive, Mary will speak the truth: is she not bound to defend her own reputation? . . . O! let us here

² St. Luke i. 38.³ St. Matt. i. 19.

renew our admiration of that *most prudent Virgin*. She understands that, to reassure her husband, something more is wanted than the word of a mortal, especially one who would seem to be actuated only by her own interest; she knows, on the other hand, that they who hope in the Lord are never confounded;¹ she is, therefore, silent, awaiting the moment appointed by Divine Providence, and her confidence is speedily justified.

Afterward, when she hears marvellous things said of her new-born Son, far from joining in the conversation going on, she restrains her inexpressible love, she keeps the words, "pondering them in her heart,"² knowing that Jesus is not yet to be manifested to the world. When the day of purification arrives, she faithfully accomplishes the Mosaic law, "although there was no taint of impurity," says St. Bernard, "in the bearing of him who is the source of all purity;"³ in that, she would, doubtless, give the example of an obedience which goes beyond duty; but she would,

moreover, wish to conceal a miracle which it would not, as yet, be prudent to reveal. For the same reason it is that, when she finds Jesus in the Temple amongst the doctors, she speaks to him in such a way as to conceal both the divinity of her Son and her own miraculous virginity.

But who knows not that, under another point of view, Mary was always incomparably prudent? That she was always the perfect model of those wise virgins mentioned in the Gospel, who are ever waiting to be admitted "to the marriage supper of the Lamb,"⁴ keeping always in their lamps⁵ the precious oil of the love of God and good works? "Yes," says St. Bernard, "the lamp of that glorious Virgin never lost its brightness, and its light was always so brilliant that the angels themselves admired it as a prodigy."⁶

And we also are invited to that divine banquet, and it is "at what hour we think not"⁷ that we shall hear the cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him."⁸ Do we, in good faith, en-

¹ Ps. xxx. 2.² *Serm. de Puritate.*⁵ St. Matt. xxv. 4, 10.⁷ St. Luke xii. 40.³ St. Luke ii. 19.⁴ Ap. xix. 9.⁶ *Serm. ii. in Assumpt. B. M. V.*⁸ St. Matt. xxv. 6.

deavor to prepare as we ought for that hour, so uncertain? We may be called "at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing;"¹ in short, at any moment; are we ready? . . .

Alas! Mary, we, "the children of light," have been hitherto "less wise than the children of this world."² Furthermore, the Lord has given "understanding"³ to the bird whose song heralds the dawn, "wisdom to the" industrious insect who "provideth her meat for herself in the summer,"⁴ and cunning to the serpent; to us he has given that piercing intellect which can observe, calculate, foresee misfortune, and bring about success; we employ it skillfully and well in conducting the affairs of time, but for the eternal interests we act as blind men, "enemies to our own soul."⁵ Vouchsafe to ask for us the grace of making our salvation paramount over all, O thou in whom we admire a prudence much more eminent than that of Abigail, praised in Scripture for having, by a generous sacrifice, gained the favor and good-will of one who was justly angry.⁶ Obtain

for us that we may use the wisest precautions in all that concerns our soul and life everlasting:

VIRGIN MOST PRUDENT, PRAY FOR US.

Virgo prudentissima, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XXIV.

VIRGIN MOST VENERABLE, PRAY FOR US.

ALL that is great and noble, learning, virtue, a fair character, makes an impression upon us more or less lively, tending to make us bow down and render homage; and when that learning, that virtue, that character, are found united in one single person with exalted dignity, our respect is still more profound.

Let us contemplate Mary with the eyes of faith. Never could human science be compared to the sublime communications wherewith the Lord was pleased to favor her. To judge of them it is unnecessary to revert to the fact that, in her private life with Jesus at Nazareth, she drew at will, if one may say

¹ St. Mark xiii. 35.

² St. Luke xvi. 8.

³ Job xxxviii. 36.

⁴ Prov. vi. 6.

⁵ Tobias xii. 10.

⁶ 1 Kings xxv. 3.

so, from the "treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge;"¹ it suffices to think of that supernatural glance of her soul which, even before the Saviour's birth, saw throughout the lapse of ages her God glorified in her by the perpetual homage which she was to receive from all the nations of the earth.²

Where else amongst all creatures can be found virtue so lofty, so pure, so sweet, so heroic? To point out but a few instances; what amazing chastity was that which, in early youth, made a vow whose accomplishment naturally precluded the honor of giving birth to the Messiah, an honor, nevertheless, so coveted by the Jews, that amongst them barrenness was considered a disgrace. "What sublime humility," says St. Bernard, "was that which maintained itself at the summit of greatness, nor failed under the weight of the greatest glory! Mary is the Mother of her God, yet she styles herself his handmaid."³ And what considerate, delicate charity, when she requests her divine Son to work a miracle, in order to spare

* the feelings of the bride and bridegroom of Cana, at the humble banquet whereat he was pleased to assist!⁴ Then, what incomparable fortitude, what strength of mind, when she witnesses the sacrifice of Calvary!" "The disciples have fled," says St. Ambrose, "the Mother is there standing at the foot of the Cross; she contemplates with inexpressible tenderness, but with superhuman courage, the bleeding wounds of her beloved Son; she thinks, not that he is going to die, but that by dying he is going to redeem the world."⁵

Finally, what shall we say of her all but divine glory, crowned in heaven with a glory inferior only to that of God? "What is most respectable on earth," says the holy abbot of Clairvaux, "is the virginal womb wherein the Son of God was made flesh; what is most eminent in heaven after the throne of Jesus, is that of his holy Mother, whose glory is in proportion to the incomparable grace given her, in this world, above all other creatures."⁶

The Blessed Virgin is, therefore,

¹ Colos. ii. 3.

² St. Luke i. 48.

³ Rom. iv. *super Missus est.*

⁴ St. John ii. 3.

⁵ Serm. i. in *Assumpt.*

⁶ S. Bern. Serm. de *Nativ. B. M. V.*

most worthy of our humble homage: she is entitled to a profound veneration for her august name, for her festivals, her altars, the shrines dedicated to her, for all, in short, that is comprised in the boundless honor and affection which belong to her! Ah! let us faithfully fulfill this sacred duty to Mary, a duty founded on the respect due to God, and promoting it in an admirable manner. For, if it be true that the Catholic Church is the greatest school of respect which the world ever saw, first, for God, and consequently for all that is more or less like to him, it may also be said that in our holy religion the devotion to Mary gives a consoling sweetness to this sentiment of respect for God. When a pious mother instills into the mind of her child the veneration and love of the Blessed Virgin, she speaks of her by the sweet name of the *Mother of God*—a name which indicates, in a daughter of Eve, in a nature like to ours, her by whom that God, so great, vouchsafed to lower himself to us, in order to save us: does she not thus impress on that young heart a respectful and soothing confidence in the Most High,

* steering midway between fear, properly so called, and presumptuous familiarity?

King Solomon of old, wishing to honor his mother, arose from his throne, advanced to meet her, and having respectfully saluted her, seated her on a throne on his right hand.¹ This is to us, O august and most blessed Virgin, a feeble image of the respect with which Jesus honored thee during his mortal life, and the glory wherewith he crowned thee on thine assumption into heaven. Happy in rendering homage to her whom our divine Saviour so honored, “we offer thee from the depth of our heart, and with the most devoted affection, the tribute of our veneration,”² which is, in the language of men, the highest expression of respect. “Keep forever this will of *our* heart,”³ and for that end, obtain for us a boundless respect for God, and a corresponding reverence for all that is holy in heaven and on earth.

VIRGIN MOST VENERABLE, PRAY FOR US.

Virgo veneranda, ora pro nobis.

¹ 3 Kings ii. 19.

² 1 Paral. xxix. 13.

³ S. Bern., Serm. *de Nativ. B. M. V.*

MEDITATION XXV.

VIRGIN MOST RENOWNED, PRAY FOR US.

PROPERLY speaking, God alone is worthy of praise. Still, merit has a right to our praise, provided that praise reverts to Him from whom proceeds every good and perfect gift,¹ and that it be kept within the bounds of truth. But where, on earth, is that merit to be found which can be praised without fear of error or exaggeration? Alas! "God *alone* knoweth the heart; and *very often* that which is high to men is an abomination before God."²

In eulogizing Mary, and proclaiming her worthy of all praise, certainly, we need not fear that we are mistaken, or praising her above her deserts; for the Lord himself "weighed *her merit* in a just balance,"³ and she was saluted with incomparable praise. Have we ever duly considered how great and how glorious to Mary was the salutation of the Angel Gabriel? We see in the holy Scripture many privileged persons honored with the visit of an

* angel; but nowhere do we find them saluted by a heavenly messenger in pompous and magnificent terms. "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou amongst women."⁴ Could anything be said more honorable to a human being? And is it not, according to St. Ambrose and St. Peter Chrysologus, an unheard-of salutation, for which we can find no example?⁵ Nevertheless, nothing can exceed the merit of her to whom these surprising words are addressed: they are spoken by an angel, the faithful organ of "the God of truth,"⁶ who, soon after, passes a similar encomium on Mary, by the mouth of St. Elizabeth, the holy mother of St. John the Baptist.

The Gospel, indeed, tells us that it was not of her own accord, but after being "filled with the Holy Ghost," that she "cried out with a loud voice and" repeated the words of the angel, "Blessed art thou amongst women," adding "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb."⁷ Words which wonderfully enhance the greatness of Mary by the ineffable

¹ St. James i. 17.² Job xxxi. 6.³ St. Luke xvi. 15.

St. Luke i. 28.

⁵ S. Am. in *Luc.* c. vi.; S. Pet. Chrys., Ser. 140.⁶ Ps. xxx. 6.⁷ St. Luke i. 41, 42.

greatness of Him whose Mother she is! Elizabeth says of the Blessed Virgin that she is "blessed amongst women," and of her offspring, in an absolute manner, that he is "blessed." "O Mary," exclaims St. Bernard, speaking on this subject, "that precious fruit of thy womb is not blessed because thou art thyself blessed amongst all the daughters of Eve, but thou art so blessed because He has himself re-endowed thee with his blessings. Whilst thou art blessed amongst women, he is not blessed amongst men or amongst angels: he is, according to the Apostle,¹ over all things, God blessed forever."²

But has Jesus himself said nothing in praise of his divine Mother? . . . Coming to teach men to be, like him, "humble of heart,"³ the Saviour took care to exalt before them her whose Son he was. Once, when a Jewish woman, delighted to hear him, cried out from amongst the crowd: "Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the paps that gave thee suck!"—But he said, "Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear

the Word of God and keep it."⁴ Thereby, according to the idea of the Venerable Bede, "He delicately stamped with his divine approbation that magnificent eulogy of his divine Mother, giving to understand that, if Mary was too happy in being the Mother of Incarnate Wisdom, she was still more so in faithfully observing its adorable precepts."⁵

And we also, let us give the Blessed Virgin all manner of praise, and say to her honor, with St. Basil of Seleucia, that "we need never fear to violate truth, whatever praise we give her, because no words of ours could ever compass her grandeur."⁶ Let us make up for our impotence by our devotion to her; let us avail ourselves of every opportunity to speak of her greatness and glory, and to inspire others with a filial confidence in her protection; let us honor her, especially by the imitation of her virtues, so that seeing and hearing us, men may have cause to glorify our divine Mother in her children.

"O Mary, how can we sufficiently

¹ Rom. ix. 5. ² Serm. in Assumpt. B. M. V.

³ St. Matt. xi. 29.

⁴ St. Luke xi. 27, 28. ⁵ Liv. iv., c. 40, in Luc. xi.

⁶ Serm. de Incarnat. Verb.

honor thee, who didst bear in thy womb Him whose immensity the heavens cannot contain!"¹ "The God of majesty"² alone merits infinite praise; but, after God, thou alone art "above all praise."³ "O thou whom the Apostles loaded with praise, afterwards repeated throughout the earth;"⁴ thou whom all preachers of the divine Word, and all faithful Christian hearts, have ever delighted to "call blessed;"⁵ thou whose "praise shall not depart out of the mouth of men;"⁶ ah! since we are not able to give thee fitting praise, grant that we may, at least, endeavor to do our duty to thee by zealously promoting thy glory, and faithfully walking in thy holy traces!

VIRGIN MOST RENOWNED, PRAY FOR US.

Virgo prædicando, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XXVI.

VIRGIN MOST POWERFUL, PRAY FOR US.

IF Jesus Christ, as God, possessed omnipotence by nature; if, as

man, he held it from his personal union with the Deity, from the moment of his incarnation, its splendid manifestation to the world after his resurrection, became the price of his sufferings and death: this he indicated to his disciples, when he told them "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth."⁷ This sovereign power, the divine Son of Mary communicated to his august and blessed Mother in marvellous abundance.

And did not Mary's co-operation in the mysteries of the Man-God, and her intimate participation in his sufferings and his sacrifice on Calvary, merit for her the privilege of being associated in Christ's dominion over all creatures? Moreover, was it not fitting that she who had so long exercised, in this world, the rights of a mother, and so admirably discharged the pious duties of that high office, should retain, in heaven, that influence which the most perfect of mothers should naturally have over the heart of the most affectionate of sons, so that "for her to be heard was to have her

¹ Brev. Rom. in Festis B. M. V.

² Ps. xxviii. 3.

³ Eccl. xliii. 33.

⁴ St. Cyr. Alex., Serm. de Virg. contra Nestor.

⁵ Prov. xxxi. 28. ⁶ Jud. xiii. 25. ⁷ Matt. xxviii. 18.

request granted?"¹ Was it not fitting, in fine, that in such a mother, this incomparable power of intercession should have a character of grandeur and universality worthy of Him whom she brought into the world?

And that the Blessed Virgin has such power is attested in the Catholic world by the most striking proofs. Is there question of the greatest interests of kings and nations? Glorious memory of Lepanto, you prove to all generations the admirable power of Mary's intercession, the victory which went forth from Mary's throne, to break, terrible and crushing, on the formidable fleet of the infidels, to save Christendom, and, with it, the civilization of all Europe! And you, magnanimous hero, who cried out, at the head of your warlike columns, in the strong inspiration of faith, "Onward, the Mother of God is our guide," did you not thereby show, O illustrious Sobieski, to whom you owed your victory over that fierce belt of hostile armies which encircled the walls of Vienna?

And you, also, inveterate enemies

of Catholic truth, are not you yourselves forced to become the trophies of the Virgin's power and glory? . . . The Church solemnly felicitates her on having "crushed all heresies throughout the world;"² and it pleased God, especially in the twelfth century, to give the most splendid manifestations of Mary's power against error. A dreadful heresy then overspread the south of France, overthrew temples and altars, slaughtered the ministers of the Lord, and committed everything sacred to the flames. Against this impious, this all-destroying devastation, rose up the humble St. Dominick. Wherewith shall this new David arm himself; at least, with the shepherd's sling? . . . Not so; it is with his rosary in his hand that he stops, subdues, gains over the blindest and most infuriate enemies of the Church.

And who could enumerate the signal instances of Mary's power in favor of all those who have piously sought her protection? Ah! how many sorrows has she consoled! how many sudden deaths has she prevented! how many violent temp-

¹ St. Bern., *Serm. de Aquad.*

² *Brev. Rom. in Festis B. M. V.*

tations has she enabled persons to overcome! how many graces of all kinds has she obtained for those who have asked her assistance on land or sea! Witness, in answer, the countless monuments erected to her honor, monuments so famous through the enduring remembrances which faith and gratitude attach to them.

How many facts, too, admirable facts, have remained, and do every day remain, hidden in the hearts of men? Amiable and holy bishop of Geneva, we well know that you owed to Mary your victory over a frightful temptation of despair; you, St. Andrew Corsini, your conversion and your eminent virtues; and you, immortal Nepomucenes, noble martyr of the seal of confession, the courage and the fortitude which gained you so much glory. In heaven only shall we be enabled to see and admire the innumerable effects of that prodigious power given her by God to guide, to enlighten, to heal the souls ransomed by the blood of her divine Son, and to overthrow the dominion of that infernal spirit whose head she was destined to crush.¹

Let us, then, have recourse to that Blessed Virgin in all our troubles, in all our dangers, in all our wants, and let us always make it our pious duty to extol her power.

Yes, august queen of the universe, we will ever joyfully proclaim that in you the Lord "hath showed might in his arm;"² that "in thy hand is power and might;"³ that through you we "can do all things;"⁴ that the glory of Jahel and of Judith,⁵ victorious over the enemies of the people of God, is not even the shadow of that wherewith you are invested. Ah! vouchsafe constantly to shelter under thy protection those who never cease to invoke thee. Above all, when the final moment shall arrive, when our trembling soul is about to appear before its Judge, vouchsafe to defend it against its enemies, strengthen and encourage it, and, on its entrance into eternity, receive it into thy maternal hands, and present it to thy divine Son.

VIRGIN MOST POWERFUL, PRAY FOR US.

Virgo potens, ora pro nobis.

¹ Gen. iii. 15. ² St. Luke i. 51. ³ 1 Paral. xxix. 12.

⁴ Phil. iv. 13. ⁵ Judges iv.; Jud. xiii.

MEDITATION XXVII.

VIRGIN MOST MERCIFUL, PRAY FOR US.

WHY does the Church make us implore the mercy rather than the goodness of Mary? Kindness has in it something so sweet, so affecting; and in Mary that quality is so amiable, so perfect! Does she not unite in her immaculate heart all the kindness of the most tender mother, all the compassion, all the charity of those souls most eminent for their inclination to do good to all who mourn, to all who suffer, to all who groan under the weight of misery?

Ah! yes, undoubtedly. Mary is good, immeasurably good: she has a heart so tender as only to be surpassed by that of her divine Son. But the Church, by making us invoke her clemency, would remind us that our profound wretchedness as sinful creatures, our detestable ingratitude towards God, naturally render us unworthy the benign protection of this august Mother. Being identified with Jesus, towards whom we are so criminal, has she not much to pardon before she can interest herself in us? And, be-

sides, were it only our carelessness in imitating the virtues we contemplate in her, it would be sufficient to prevent her from pouring down upon us the favors we expect from her, were she not the Virgin full of clemency and of sweet compassion, the Virgin most merciful?

Yes, that grand characteristic of noble hearts is admirably manifested in that of Mary. "It is indeed of her," says St. Bernard, "that we may understand that magnificent image of a woman clothed with the sun, seen of old by the prophet of Patmos: for even as that orb of day sheds his light indiscriminately on the good and the bad, so is Mary regardless whether the person invoking her has been more or less guilty in times past; she shows herself mild, merciful, clement to all who seek her aid; she clasps, as it were, in the embrace of extreme charity, all their wants and all their miseries."¹ And how could we conceive it otherwise? Has she not "brought us forth to the Church by her charity?" says St. Augustine,² and must not that ineffable charity

¹ *Serm. de Assumpt. B. M. V.*² *De Sanctâ Virginitate*, No. 6, t. vi.

constantly inspire her with the feelings of a mother, but of a mother "whose heart is become," as it were, "like wax, melting" with compassion "before the flame?"¹ "Yes, truly," says the immortal bishop of Meaux, speaking on this subject, "yes, truly, she is always the same to us; always kind, always motherly. The love of our salvation lives always in her, and is neither less faithful nor less efficacious than it was when she gave her consent to the august mystery of the Incarnation."²

It is not, then, without good reason that piety delights in representing Mary, as well as Jesus, under the figure of the pelican who, to satisfy the hunger of her little ones, nourishes them, in some way, with her own substance; and under that of the hen, who tenderly covers her young brood beneath her maternal wings. In giving us her Son for a Saviour, did she not give her own blood for all of us, whom Jesus honors with the title of brethren,³ and whom she herself cherishes as members of the body of that divine

Son?⁴ And like that mother who affectionately runs at the cry of her chickens, to shelter them from all danger, does not Mary, when she hears our sighs and lamentations, cover us with her protection to save us from all that might become fatal? . . . Hence, however ungrateful we may have hitherto been towards the Son, let us never despair of the Mother's mercy, but, joining confidence to repentance, cast ourselves fearlessly into her arms, sure of being well received. After having formerly experienced the sweet effects of that same clemency, if we are so happy as to remain faithful, how much more may we reasonably count on the unfailing assistance of her who so tenderly loves "them that are beloved in God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ!"⁵

"O clement, O pious, O sweet Virgin Mary,"⁶ it may well be said of thee, as of the Lord, "that power belongeth to thee, and mercy!"⁷ If, on earth, an exquisite kindness, far exceeding that wherewith Rebecca treated Eliezer,⁸ induced thee to

¹ Ps. xxi. 15. ² Serm. pour la fête de l'Annonciat.

³ St. John xx. 17.

⁴ Ephes. v. 30.

⁷ Ps. lxi. 12, 13.

⁵ St. Jude i. 1

⁶ *Salve Reg.*

⁸ Gen. xxiv. 19.

request of thy divine Son the miracle of changing water into wine,¹ how prodigious must that kindness be in heaven, when "from this valley of tears"² we humbly beseech thee to come to the assistance of unhappy creatures ransomed by the adorable blood of Jesus! O thou, on whose sacred "tongue is the law of clemency,"³ thou in whom that noble virtue is for us "like the latter rain,"⁴ which falls to refresh the earth, thou who art "nigh unto all them that call upon thee,"⁵ be propitious to us, notwithstanding our ingratitude, till the last moment of our lives!

VIRGIN MOST MERCIFUL, PRAY FOR US.

Virgo clemens, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XXVIII.

VIRGIN MOST FAITHFUL, PRAY FOR US.

OH! how well does the title of *Faithful Virgin* characterize her who was always so faithful to the

* Lord, so faithful to every duty, so faithful to grace, so faithful to the will of heaven, even in one of those extreme cases when it would be excusable for a mother's heart to give way to sorrow!

Fidelity must be a thing fair and noble before God, since he calls himself "Faithful and True,"⁶ and gives, by the mouth of the royal prophet, as a title of honor and distinction, the name of "the faithful of the earth"⁷ to the "just, upon whom his eyes are" fixed with pleasure.⁸ But if it be so of all the just, with what pleasure must the Lord regard that Virgin, in whom fidelity, far from ever suffering the slightest injury, was, on the contrary, increasing from day to day, "going from virtue to virtue,"⁹ till the glorious moment when "the Lord, the just judge," rendered to her "the crown of justice!"¹⁰ Conceived, not "in sin,"¹¹ like the rest of mankind, but "in holiness and justice,"¹² by a peculiar and inestimable privilege, she belonged to God from the first moment of her existence, and not only

¹ St. John ii. 3.

² *Salve Reg.*

³ Prov. xxxi. 26.

⁴ Prov. xvi. 15.

⁵ Ps. cxliv. 18.

⁶ Apoc. xix. 11.

⁷ Ps. c. 6.

⁸ Ps. xxxiii. 16.

⁹ Ps. lxxxiii. 8.

¹⁰ 2 Tim. iv. 8.

¹¹ Ps. i. 7.

¹² St. Luke i. 75.

did she never relax that precious bond by the least fault, but she ceased not to draw it closer and closer till the day of her translation from this land of exile to the celestial country. Hence it is that St. Anselm exclaims, in his admiration of her, "When I consider the immensity of grace which is in thee, O Blessed Virgin, my mind is lost, my tongue is struck dumb!"¹ "Oh! how beautiful *were* thy steps,"² we may add, with the spouse in the Canticles, how sublime were they in the ways of grace, beloved daughter of the King of kings, Virgin ever faithful, in all "faithful in the sight of God!"³ The little of it that it has pleased God to reveal to us is charming: what, then, must that be "which is hid within"⁴ that sacred sanctuary which His eye alone can penetrate!

The Gospel, indeed, tells us of thee, O Mary, that thou didst carry the love of duty so far as to decline accepting the dazzling honor of the divine maternity, till assured by the ambassador of the Most High that that inconceivable glory was compatible with the vow which conse-

* crated thee forever to the Lord. It also tells us that thou wert so faithful to the law as to submit to the humiliating ceremony of purification, thou who wert, on so many accounts, exempted from that which is obligatory on other mothers. And we admire thee, and bless God, who shows us in thee so fair and so noble an example. But when we consider thee on Calvary, when we there see thee so faithful to the adorable designs of Providence as to overcome the feelings of a mother, at the foot of the Redeemer's cross; ah! then we are deeply moved, we are enchanted by thy sublime resignation and thy superhuman devotion. What a son was Jesus! What a mother wert thou, O Mary! What inexpressible tenderness on both sides! . . . Oh! how true, then, is it of thee, how emphatically true, that thou wert "faithful even unto death;"⁵ yes, even to assist, even to join, with all the power of thy will, in the painful and humiliating death of thy only Son, that son the most amiable and most beloved!

After this unexampled act of devotion to God for men, need we be

¹ *Lib. de excellent. Virg.*

² Cant. vii. 1.

³ Eccl. xlviii. 25.

⁴ Cant. iv. 1.

⁵ Apoc. ii. 10.

surprised that "it was never known, in any age, that any one who fled to Mary's protection, implored her help, or sought her intercession, was left unaided?"¹ Ah! this admirable constancy of her merciful kindness to those who invoke her, is it not sufficiently manifested by the sacrifice which her magnanimous heart had the courage to make in our behalf? But if such be her goodness to all "poor banished children of Eve, who send up to her, from this valley of tears, their sighs, mournings, and weepings,"² how great must be her zeal for the interests of those who profess a particular devotion to her, and who desire to be her "good and faithful servants."³ May we be of that happy number, and succeed in pleasing both the Son and the Mother!

O Mary, thou didst prove thyself, while on earth, "faithful before God."⁴ And so, in heaven, hast thou also proved to men who, for more than eighteen hundred years, have constantly found in thee, after God, their safest and sweetest ref-

* uge. Yes, thou art faithful to them in a way far superior to all human fealty, all human devotion: in comparison with thy fidelity we can hardly reckon that of Rahab, who saved the messengers of Israel,⁵ or that of Michol, who, to save her husband, feared not to brave her father's anger.⁶ Ah! vouchsafe to obtain for us that we ourselves may be always faithful to Jesus and to thee, so that we may deserve constantly to experience the happy effects of thy special protection!

VIRGIN MOST FAITHFUL, PRAY FOR US.

Virgo fidelis, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XXIX.

MIRROR OF JUSTICE, PRAY FOR US.

THE Church, having, as it were, exhausted all the titles which could serve to honor Mary as Mother and Virgin, goes on to another order of ideas in search of new themes for praise.

And first she invokes her under

¹ *Memorare.*

² *Salve Regina.*

³ St. Matt. xxv. 21.

⁴ 2 Esd. ix. 8.

⁵ Joshua ii.

⁶ 1 Kings xix.

the image of a mirror, which admirably reflects "the brightness of eternal light."¹ If it be true, in fact, of the Eternal Word that he is the splendor of his Father's "glory, and the figure of his substance,"² is it not Mary who reflects with all possible fidelity the adorable attributes of that "Word made flesh?"³ Does she not resemble him more than any other rational creature? The Lord intended her to hold the first rank amongst all "the works of his hands;"⁴ to be, as St. Anselm has it, "above all that is not God;"⁵ could he not adorn her with gifts and with merits the nearest to his own infinite perfections? . . . Hence it was said by St. Peter Chrysologus, that "he who contemplates Mary without being ravished and amazed, is regardless of God himself, who has made her his most perfect mirror!"⁶

But wherefore does the Church call her *Mirror of Justice*? . . . First, because Mary is the faithful mirror of Him who is named the "Sun of Justice,"⁷ whose divine rays warm

and fructify souls, until they bud and blossom into every Christian virtue. Jesus himself gives us the sum of these virtues when he tells us: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice;"⁸ they who ardently desire to be perfect, and who labor with constancy and zeal to become so! . . . But there is in this word, as here used by the Church, another meaning, calculated to arrest the attention of every pious soul.

The Apostle St. Paul gives the name of "justice"⁹ to the state of sanctifying grace which entitles the possessor to eternal bliss. This supernatural state, so honorable, so precious, man, by his disobedience, had forfeited for himself and all his posterity. But soon after his fall the Lord announces to him that a woman shall crush the head of him who made him fall: hence, he may contemplate in this daughter of Eve, as in a mirror, both the depth of his misery, which nothing less than the death of a Man-God could cure, and the necessity of penance, without

¹ Wisdom vii. 26.² St. John i. 14.³ Heb. i. 3.⁴ Ps. cxxxvii. 8.⁵ *Lit. de exord., humanæ vitæ, c. 7.*⁶ Serm. 104.⁷ St. Matt. v. 6.⁸ Malach. iv. 2.⁹ Rom. i. 17.

which he cannot profit by the redemption to be effected by the Son of Mary. On the other hand, the faithful angels behold in this privileged creature the Mother of Him who is the origin and the source of their perseverance and of their confirmation in grace; for it may be said, on the authority of St. Paul,¹ and several holy doctors of the Church,² that it is to Christ the good angels are indebted for the merit and the reward of their fidelity. Finally, is not the fallen angel condemned to behold in Mary, conceived in grace, exalted on account of her humility,³ so profound even in the divine maternity, the folly of his pride, his immense misfortune in losing his supernatural beauty, and, by contrast, the hideous ugliness to which he is consigned? Does he not there see, at the same time, the enormity of his sin, for which there was no redemption, because he voluntarily fell from a state much higher than that of man,

through pure malice, and without being exposed to the seduction of the senses? And is he not forced to cry out with all heaven and earth, that "God is just,"⁴ and renders to every one according to his works?"⁵

While considering in the Blessed Virgin the inestimable favor of our deliverance from sin,⁶ ah! let us beware of imitating "a man who, beholding his natural countenance in a glass, went his way, and presently forgot what manner of man he was!"⁷ Let us rather penetrate our whole minds with the thought that, "being made free from sin, we are become the *happy* servants of justice,"⁸ and that "as *we* have yielded our *faculties* to serve uncleanness and iniquity," so let us "now yield *them* to serve justice unto sanctification."⁹

O Thou, in whom "we see, as in a mirror,"¹⁰ the adorable perfection of the Most High, deign to shed on our souls some salutary rays from the

¹ Ephes. i. 10; Col. i. 17, 20.

² S. Jerome, in cap. i. *ad Ephes.*; S. Greg. i. i. ch. 2, in lib. i. *Reg.*; S. Bern. Serm. 22 *in Cant.*; S. Thom., lect. 10, in cap. i. *Joan.*, *et quæst.* 7, *præced.*, art. 9.

³ St. Luke i. 48.

⁴ Apoc. xvi. 5.

⁵ St. Matt. xvi. 27; Rom. ii. 6; Apoc. xxii. 12.

⁶ Rom. vi. 18.

⁷ Rom. vi. 18.

⁸ St. James i. 24.

⁹ Rom. vi. 19.

¹⁰ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

dazzling radiance of thy sublime virtues. Vouchsafe, by thy mildness, to correct our peevishness and impatience; by thy humility, our pride and our vain pretensions; by thy purity, our sensual appetites; by thy charity, our coldness towards God, our want of fraternal love for our neighbor! Deign, above all, by thy holy protection to restore us to the grace of God, if we have had the incomparable misfortune of falling from it; if we are so happy as to possess the friendship of God, that infinite treasure, deign to preserve it to us, and help us to become more and more "conformable to the image of thy Son,"¹ by imitating thee, who art "his living image."²

MIRROR OF JUSTICE, PRAY FOR US.

Speculum justitiæ, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XXX.

SEAT OF WISDOM, PRAY FOR US.

SON of the Eternal Father, adorable Word, "interior word,

thought, reason, uncreated substantial intelligence of God,"³ thou art the source of wisdom.⁴ Yes, it was thou who "came out of the mouth of the Most High, the first-born before all creatures;"⁵ that Wisdom "who sendeth knowledge as the light, whose thoughts are more vast than the sea, and her counsels more deep than the great ocean;"⁶ that Wisdom "that reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly."⁷ Thou art that infinite Wisdom that "rested" in the womb of the Blessed Virgin as in "a tabernacle,"⁸ and whom Christian faith loves to contemplate on that divine Mother's knee, under the appearance of "the most beautiful of the sons of men!"⁹

And thou, O Mary! thou art for that incarnate Wisdom a magnificent throne, far more precious and more valuable than anything we can know or imagine of created beauty, or glory, or splendor! . . . Sacred History, describing the marvellous grandeur of King Solomon's ivory throne, tells us that "there

¹ Rom. viii. 29.

² S. Joan Damasc. *Orat. de Nativ. B. V.*

³ Bossuet, vii. *Elev sur les myst.*, xii. semaine.

⁴ Eccl. i. 5.

⁵ Eccl. xxiv. 5.

⁶ Eccl. xxiv. 37, 39.

⁷ Wisd. viii. 1.

⁸ Eccl. xxiv. 12.

⁹ Ps. xlv. 3.

was no such work made in any kingdom."¹ Ah! let us not fear, then, to say that the Lord, in his Almighty power, never created anything to equal Her whom he made the living throne of his divine Son: "the incomparably excellent throne," says the blessed Peter Damian, "whereon the great God was pleased to rest;"² "the august dwelling of the Supreme Ruler of the world," says St. Peter Chrysologus; the sacred "house which Wisdom hath built for herself;" the noble and magnificent sanctuary which she decorated with "seven pillars,"³ emblematical "of the seven gifts which the Holy Ghost poured into the soul of Mary in such admirable abundance!"⁴

What heart was ever so wholly penetrated with that religious fear of displeasing the Lord, which is careful to weigh and consider even the most trifling actions of life? Or what heart was ever so eminently endowed with that tender piety which inspires the soul with a boundless devotion to God, and

* makes it to "delight exceedingly in his commandments?"⁵ What human creature ever received so rich an effusion of that "knowledge of the holy,"⁶ which enlightens man on all his duties, and marks out the road he has to follow in order to reach his last end? The retreat of Mary in the temple while still a child, her entire consecration to the Lord, her words to the angel in the mystery of the Annunciation, her life at Nazareth, "hidden in God,"⁷ all clearly manifest how highly that privileged soul was endowed with these precious gifts. And in what other but Mary on Calvary was the gift of fortitude ever fully displayed—that fortitude which soars above every trial? In what other than Mary, the *most prudent Virgin*, was ever manifested the gift of counsel, which directs and governs in the most delicate circumstances; or the gift of understanding, which penetrates the most elevated ways of grace, as in her "whose very repose," say the holy doctors,⁸ "did in no wise interrupt sublime contem-

¹ 3 Kings x. 20.⁴ Serm. 140, *de Annunc.*² Serm. *de Annunc.*⁵ Ps. cxi. 1.³ Prov. ix. i.⁶ Prov. ix. 10.⁷ Col. iii. 3.⁸ S. Amb., *Lib. de Virg.*; S. Antonin., t. 2, Serm. 5, art. 1, c. 2; S. Bernardin, t. 2, Serm. 51, p. 4, tit. 15, c. 2.

plation?" What other creature, in short, ever possessed in so high a degree the gift of wisdom, which crowns all others, and which consists in knowing well the Author and the end of all things—acting, living, breathing but for Him alone? And did not Mary always live for God alone, and was not her sweet and glorious death "the effect of a last effort of divine love?"¹

Let us here, then, offer our humblest homage "to that royal throne,² that divine throne³ of Eternal Wisdom;" and let us beseech her who has been raised to such immense dignity, to obtain for us, with an abundant participation in the precious gifts which adorned her fair soul, the grace to value as we ought that Christian wisdom taught us by her divine Son; the grace to make it the exclusive rule of our conduct, "seeking first the kingdom of God and his justice,"⁴ and securing for ourselves, by our good works, "treasures that neither the rust nor the

moth doth consume, nor thieves steal."⁵

O Mary! let us never permit ourselves to be deceived by the false wisdom of the flesh which is the enemy of God, or by "the wisdom of this world, which is foolishness with God!"⁶ Obtain for us, rather, by thy powerful intercession, that we may be the faithful disciples of "the wisdom which is from above, which is chaste, peaceable, modest, full of good fruits;"⁷ which keeps the mind in evangelical calmness and moderation; which represses the inordinate motions of the passions; which inspires reserve and circumspection in judgment; which teaches indulgence towards others, and severity towards one's self. O Thou who wert the temple of Incarnate Wisdom, of that divine Jesus through whom "was made known the manifold wisdom of God,"⁸ beg of him a plentiful effusion for our souls.

SEAT OF WISDOM, PRAY FOR US.

Sedes Sapientiæ, ora pro nobis.

¹ Boss., 1st Sermon on the Assumpt.

² S. Greg. Thaum., Sermon de Annunc.

³ S. Ephr., de Laudib. Deip.

⁴ St. Matt. vi. 33.

⁵ St. Matt. vi. 20.

⁶ 1 Cor. iii. 19.

⁷ St. James iii. 17.

⁸ Ephes. iii. 10.

MEDITATION XXXI.

CAUSE OF OUR JOY, PRAY FOR US.

WHEN the world was plunged in the thickest darkness, when no ray of Christian hope illumined humanity beyond the tomb, when the unhappy children of Adam were sunk in the triple degradation of the senses, the heart, and the understanding, true joy was not known on earth. Mary comes into the world; God ordains that she shall co-operate in our salvation; she gives birth to the Redeemer. Soon all is changed! Man, restored to his primary condition, receives the surest and most consoling revelations on the nobility of his nature, the magnificence of his destiny, and the means of attaining it, the most abundant helps for the cure of his moral wounds and the alleviation of all the miseries of life. He may, henceforward, experience here below joys the purest and most delicious, which are, as it were, the pledge and foretaste of the divine and everlasting joys which the Saviour promises to bestow in the other world.

Where were ye before the coming

* of that good and kind Saviour¹ given us by Mary,—where were, ye, O holy joys of charity, chastity, modesty, humility—holy joys of the devotions inspired by faith—holy and sweet joys of Catholic piety, ineffable delights of the adorable Eucharist? . . . Yes, it is to Mary, after God, that we are indebted for all that moves, expands, elevates the heart in the religion of Christ. It was she who secured to us so many precious gifts, so much happiness, even in this world, by her acquiescence with the words of the angel whom the Most High “commissioned to ask her consent, before giving himself to us by his interposition.”²

Hence, the illustrious martyr, St. Irenæus, almost a contemporary of the Apostles, calls this acquiescence of the Blessed Virgin “the cause of the salvation of all mankind.”³ “She has procured,” says St. Augustine, after him, “the redemption of man, who, left to himself, were irretrievably lost.”⁴ “By Mary,”

¹ Titus iii. 4.

² Bossuet, *Deuxieme Serm. sur l'Annonciation*.

³ Lib. v. *Contra Hæres*, c. 19.

⁴ Serm. 55, *de Sanctis*.

adds the blessed Peter Damian, "in Mary, and with Mary, the Son of God would regenerate humanity: without her nothing had been done;¹ nothing reinstated, nothing restored."²

It is, therefore, in this Virgin, ever worthy of our gratitude and love, that all the members of the Church find their happiness and joy. She was the object of the most fervent wishes of the primitive just, who, from afar, saluted in her person the mother of the divine Liberator, and in limbo awaited her birth as the dawn of that happy day which was to introduce them into the kingdom of God. She was on earth, after our Lord's ascension, the "support and consolation of all the faithful."³ She is, in the heavenly country, the joy and pride of the elect; for, in ascending to heaven, "she increased," says St. Bernardine, of Sienna, "the joy of its blessed inhabitants;"⁴ "and their greatest glory, after the vision of God," says St. Bonaventure, "is to behold herself."⁵ She is also,

according to the pious belief of the Church, the joy and consolation of the suffering souls in purgatory: "thou art their zealous advocate," says St. Andrew of Crete;⁶ "I am their mother," said Mary herself to St. Bridget, "and I never cease to relieve them by my intercession."⁷ She is, finally, the joy of all Christians in this world.

In all ages, in all situations, is not thy holy name, O Mary! full of hope and sweetness, strength and comfort, to those who trust in thee?

Let us bless God for having given us in Mary a cause of joy so pure, so true, so lasting; let us bless Mary for having given us the source of all joy.

Ah! if the Jews of old testified their admiration and gratitude to Judith and Esther by public acclamations and rejoicings,⁸ what should we not do to honor this divine Virgin, to whom *our* obligations are incomparably greater! What devotion should we not have for her august person, what fervor in cele-

¹ St. John i. 3.

² Serm. *de Annunciat.*

³ Bossuet, 2 Serm. *sur l'Assompt.*

⁴ Serm. *de Assumpt.*

⁵ Orat. 1, *de Dori.*

⁶ *In Spec.* Lect. vi.

⁷ Lib. iv. *Revel. l. c.* 133.

⁸ Judith xvi.; Esther xvi.

brating her festivals with as much joy as tender piety!

O thou good and tender Mary, whose simple salutation alone sufficed to make the holy Precursor leap for joy in his mother's womb,¹ thou who canst "turn into joy"² all the sorrows of the true believer, thou who, after Jesus, art "our hope,"³ oh! until we can enjoy with the angels and saints the happiness of contemplating thee, we will unceasingly bear in mind the charm of thy virtues, and repeat thy praises over and over. Yes, we love to cry out in the fullness of our gratitude and love: "If I forget thee, O sweet Virgin! let my right hand be forgotten! Let my tongue cleave to my jaws if I do not remember" all the claims thou hast on my affection, and "if I make thee not," after thy divine Son, "the beginning of my joy!"⁴

May we, then, in perpetual remembrance of thy benefits, O Mary! unceasingly repeat with increasing fervor—

CAUSE OF OUR JOY, PRAY FOR US.

Causa nostræ letitiæ, ora pro nobis.

¹ St. Luke i. 44.

² St. John xvi. 20.

³ *Salve Regina.*

⁴ Ps. cxxxvi. 5, 6.

MEDITATION XXXII.

SPIRITUAL VESSEL, PRAY FOR US.

INASMUCH as mind is superior to matter, even so, is the body ennobled while raising itself by the purity and righteousness of its acts towards the dignity, the natural sublimity of the soul. In like manner, by as much as the order of grace prevails over all that is most eminent in the order of nature, even so it is with the body of the Christian who endeavors, on supernatural motives, to sanctify the use of all his faculties—it assumes a character of admirable greatness and nobility. It is to honor, in Mary, this nobility, this greatness, that the Church here invokes her under the emblem of a precious vessel, a figure so often used in the sacred writings,⁵ and it is in order to make us understand the sublime degree of that same greatness that she calls her *Spiritual Vessel*.

Does not that tell us in fact that this Virgin of virgins enjoyed beforehand, if one may say so, a sort of transformation approaching that

⁵ Prov. xx. 15; Acts ix. 15; Rom. ix. 23;

1 Thess. iv. 4; 2 Tim. ii. 21.

which shall take place in the elect on the great day of the general resurrection; that her sacred body possessing by anticipation some of the qualities of "a spiritual body,"¹ her soul felt neither weight nor shackle in its intercourse with God, but could soar at will towards its Creator, and nourish itself with his adorable presence as though it were enslaved by no action of the senses.

Mary had been preserved from original sin and the concupiscence which is its deplorable consequence.² "She enjoyed," says Louis of Blois, "some of the privileges of our first parents in the terrestrial Paradise, when, during their state of innocence, the faculties of their soul were united to God, and all their senses in perfect subjection to the spirit."³ But, moreover, was it not fitting that that flesh which was to become the "divine flesh of Jesus,"⁴ should be made worthy of that immense honor by qualities analogous to the beauty of the soul which dwelt within it? The latter be-

longed wholly to God: "it was, as it were, transformed into God,"⁵ says the same Father, after St. Dionysius;⁶ how could it be supposed that her body, created by the Lord to have so great a share in the mystery of the Incarnate Word, could in any way impede the flight of that fair soul, or be but in perfect harmony with its sublime destination?

Let us then joyfully adopt the sentiment transmitted to us by Richard de Saint-Victor from several Fathers of the Church, that "her exterior as well as her interior was wholly angelic,"⁷ and admirably reflected the marvellous communion of her soul with God. If, in fact, "the eyes of John the Baptist, destined to see the Christ announced by the other prophets, disdained to look on any creature,"⁸ no one can doubt but that Mary concentrated in her divine Son the use of all her senses, and that all in her showed the life of a pure intelligence, rather than that of a human being.

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 44.

² Medit. xvi. précéd.

³ *Institut. Spirit.*, append. i., c. 2.

⁴ *Serm. 8 de Assumpt. B. V.*

⁵ *Serm. 35 de Sanctis.* ⁶ *In Epist. ad S. Paul.*

⁷ *In Cant.*, cap. 26; S. Amb., *de Institut. Virg.*, c. 7, 2 de Virgin; S. Thomas, *Sent.*, dist. 3, q. 1, art. 2 ad 4; S. Bonav., dist. 3, part. 1, art. 2.

⁸ S. Jerome, *Epist.* iv.

Alas! but we are far removed from such a model; we who attach ourselves so strongly to vain idols, which time disfigures and bears away with the rest; we who gaze with longing eyes on the fragile things of this world, and foolishly put forth all our energy and activity in pursuit of their deceitful enjoyment; we who seem to have but a doubtful faith in "the things which are not seen,"¹ the things of eternity; we who too often permit ourselves to be overcome by that body whose troublesome weight impedes our communion with God in prayer, and prevents us from walking joyously onward in the service of our divine Master. Ah! henceforward, let us generously endeavor to become "spiritual men,"² remembering that "he that soweth in the spirit of the Spirit shall reap life everlasting."³ If we can in any way resemble Mary, that divinely privileged creature, let us, at least, restrain "with fervor of spirit"⁴ the fatal influence of "the corruptible body which is a load upon the

soul,"⁵ and obstructs it in its sublime flight towards its Author.

O Mary, the Lord had made thee, from the first, "a most pure vessel."⁶ But when the Holy Ghost came upon thee,⁷ to operate in thy chaste womb "the great mystery of piety manifested in the flesh,"⁸ and to raise thee at the same time to the most august dignity amongst creatures, he rendered thee still more pure and holy, he filled thee more and more with that "perfect spirit"⁹ which makes man live for God and for the goods of eternity. We honor in thee that superhuman life so perfect, and all the privileges wherewith it pleased the Most High to invest thee. May we imitate thee as far as is compatible with our weakness, freeing ourselves in all things from the captivity of the senses, "walking" towards the other world "as children of the light, in justice and truth," and in all "that is acceptable to God."¹⁰ Oh! do not refuse to ask this grace for us.

SPIRITUAL VESSEL, PRAY FOR US.

Vas Spirituale, ora pro nobis.

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 18.

² Gal. vi. 8.

³ 1 Cor. iii. 1.

⁴ Rom. xii. 11.

⁵ Wisdom ix. 15.

⁶ Prov. xxv. 4.

⁷ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

⁸ St. Luke i. 35.

⁹ Ps. l. 14.

¹⁰ Ephes. v. 8, 9, 10.

MEDITATION XXXIII.

VESSEL OF HONOR, PRAY FOR US.

IT is a great honor for a body to be united to a soul which is the image of God; and the more beautiful that soul is, and the more enriched with the gifts of the Lord, the greater the dignity to which that intimate union raises the body; it becomes thereby a vessel which is so much the more precious in proportion as the perfume it contains is rarer and more exquisite in the eyes of faith. What an honor is it, then, for Mary's body to be united to a soul which, after that of Jesus, is the noblest, the purest, the holiest, the most adorned with the favors of Heaven!

But how much more honorable is that sacred body on account of the divine maternity! It was, undoubtedly, a high honor for Abraham of old to receive the Lord in the form of an angel;¹ but God did not substantially unite himself to that holy patriarch. It was a great honor for Moses to penetrate the awful cloud which covered the summit of Mount

* Sinai, and to be enabled, in the midst of thunder and lightning, to converse face to face with the Most High;² but God did not substantially unite himself to that immortal legislator. It was a great honor for Elias to hear and to see striking marks of the infinite greatness of the Supreme Being;³ but God, while manifesting to him his adorable presence, did not substantially unite himself to that faithful prophet. It was a great honor for Zacheus to receive Christ at his table;⁴ for Lazarus and his sisters to entertain him in their house, and even to enjoy the signal favor of his divine friendship;⁵ but what are all these relations, precious and honorable as they are, to the intimate, the incomparable connection between the Man-God and his Mother! . . .

Ah! let us not be surprised that the holy doctors, struck with admiration of that divine Mother, saluted in her, in the most expressive terms, that august womb wherein the Son of God assumed human nature. "Mary's flesh," says St. Augustine, "is the very flesh of Jesus."⁶ "Her

¹ Gen. xviii.² Exod. xix. 20.³ 3 Kings xix.⁴ St. Luke xix.⁵ St. Luke x.; St. John xi.⁶ *Serm. de Assumpt. B. M. V.*, cap. v.

body is a living heaven," says the blessed Peter Damian; "it is the corporal sanctuary of the fullness of the Divinity."¹ "The Lord," says St. Thomas of Villanova, "the Lord, in making the daughter of Abraham his Mother, raised her to such a height, that neither man nor angel can look up to her."²

We justly honor the precious vessels wherein the Church preserves the holy and adorable Eucharist. But is there any proportion between that gold or that silver, magnificently adorned, and the august and ever venerable body which furnished for our divine Saviour the adorable blood wherewith he redeemed us? Yes, that is, by excellence, "the vessel of election,"³ infinitely more valuable than "a massy vessel of gold adorned with every precious stone;"⁴ that is the pure and sacred body which, having so worthily borne God,"⁵ knew not the corruption of the tomb, but, on the contrary, according to the pious tradition of the Church, was glorified by resurrection like the body of the divine Jesus.

Let us here reanimate our faith; let us remember that, by the ineffable mystery of the Eucharist, our body, corruptible as it is, is raised to a sublime union, which makes it, too, a vessel of honor, and that we should always fear to defile it by the slightest stain. . . . Ah! we do not meditate as we should on this adorable mystery in all its bearings. By communion, we become the temples of Jesus; and not only that, not only sanctuaries of Jesus, tabernacles of Jesus, but more still—we become sacred vessels, real living vessels, wherein Jesus rests. What do I say? we become living vessels, with whom he unites himself in a manner so intimate, "that he and they are but one," says St. Cyril.⁶ We, then, who "are in honor," let us not be so unfortunate as "not to understand," lest we "be compared to senseless beasts, and become like unto them."⁷ We who have a just veneration for the sacred vessels of our altars, ah! let us learn, in all places, and at all times, to respect ourselves; let us learn to keep our thoughts, our affections,

¹ *Orat. de Nativ. B. V.*

² *Acts ix. 15.*

³ *Serm. 3 de Nativ. B. M.*

⁴ *Eccles. i. 10.*

⁵ *1 Cor. vi. 20.*

⁶ *Lib. iv. in Joan., cap. 17.*

⁷ *Ps. xlviii. 13.*

our desires, our views, and all our actions, on a par with the nobility, the greatness, the admirable glory to which we are raised by a single communion!

O Mary, thou who, after God, art worthy of all praise, thou didst bear for nine months in thy chaste womb Him whose awful majesty the angels adore covered with their wings.¹ How can we express our admiration of the honor he has done thee in borrowing from thy substance the body which he assumed, thus giving thee a sort of "ineffable identity with himself?"² Receive here the humble expression of all the sentiments which so much greatness and honor ought to inspire in the hearts of all the faithful. Make us feel how high the divine Eucharist places ourselves amongst creatures, and how, becoming by it more august than the sacred vessels in which it is contained, we may conduct ourselves, always and in all things, as "vessels of honor prepared unto glory."³

VESSEL OF HONOR, PRAY FOR US.

Vas Honorabile, ora pro nobis.

1 Is. vi. 2.

² B. Peter Damian, *de Nativ. Virg.*

³ Rom. ix. 21, 23.

MEDITATION XXXIV.

VESSEL OF SINGULAR DEVOTION, PRAY FOR US.

PIETY, devotion, fervor! words wholly inadequate to express the burning zeal of Mary for the service of the Lord. Who could describe the lively ardor of her prayer, her intimate union with God, her ecstatic silence, her peace, her spiritual joy, so sweet, so delicious, her continual aspirations to her beloved, the holiness of her thoughts, the purity of her desires and affections, her devotion, so generous, so magnanimous, so absolute, for the glory of her Creator?

Temple of Jerusalem, where she passed so piously the first years of her life, oh! what admirable secrets were concealed within thy sacred walls! August house of Nazareth, where she lived so long in the presence and in the continual contemplation of her God, become her Son; thou whose venerable walls speak so eloquently to the heart of the pilgrim of Loretto, tell us, then, something of all those wonders of adoration, praise, and love—those superhuman communings of Mary's

soul with the divine heart of Jesus ! And thou, sacred abode, where she dwelt with the beloved Apostle, after the death of our Lord,¹ ah ! what bursts of incomparable devotion thou didst hide from the knowledge of men ! what transports, what ineffable sighs, when Jesus had ascended to heaven ! “ what impetuosity of love, concurring with all that is tender in nature, all that is efficacious in divine grace ! ”²

If Queen Esther could say to God, “ Thou knowest that thy handmaid hath never rejoiced but in thee ; ”³ if the holy king David could bear testimony of himself that the praise of the Lord “ was always in his mouth ; ”⁴ if he exclaimed in the fervor of his soul, “ Oh ! when shall I come and appear before the face of God ? ”⁵ if the Apostle St. Paul could say, “ I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me, ” and my desire is “ to be dissolved, and to be with Christ ” forever ;⁶ finally, if the illustrious missionary of the Indies, amid the enervating emotions of

his tender piety, feeling himself fainting away with love, begged of God to moderate his favors, “ Enough, O Lord ! enough ! ” what must we think of the august Mother of the Saviour, she whom the Saints called “ a furnace of divine love, ”⁷ and whom the Spouse in the Canticles compares to “ a lamp of fire and flames ? ”⁸ Was there for her a day, an hour, a moment, in which her thought, her speech, her will, every act of her being, had not God for its sole object ? a moment in which she did not “ do the things that please Him, ”⁹ and that with an eagerness, a purity of intention, a devotion hardly to be conceived ? Rather let us ask the Angels and the Seraphim, “ ravished, ” says St. Bernard, “ with the warmth and the brightness of the sacred flame of her devotion. ”¹⁰ And who could tell the joys, the sweetness, the marvellous delight with which that devotion overflowed her heart ? Thou thyself, O Mary ! givest us some idea of it by that joyful exclama-

¹ St. John xix. 27.

² Bossuet, 1 Sermon sur l'Assompt.

³ Esther xiv. 18.

⁴ Ps. xli. 3.

⁵ Ps. xxxiii. 2.

⁶ Gal. ii. 20 ; Phil. i. 23.

⁷ S. John Damas, de Dormit. B. V. ; S. Bern. of Sienna, Sermon. 9 de Visit.

⁸ Cant. viii. 6.

⁹ St. John. viii. 29. ¹⁰ Sermon. 2, in Assumpt.

tion of thy holy canticle, "My spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour."¹

O piety! O sweet and tender Christian piety, the origin and the support of all the magnificent works of charity! thou, that givest resignation to the grief-fraught heart, and strength to the soul assailed by despair; thou, that drawest forth from the eyes of repentance tears of sweetest consolation, and excitest heavenly rapture in the pure heart inflamed with divine love, come, oh! come to penetrate us with thy precious unction; come and make us "vessels unto honor, sanctified and profitable to the Lord, prepared unto every good work!"² that by thy celestial influence all our members may be in the hand of God "instruments unto justice,"³ to fight and overcome sin! that our bodies may become "a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God!"⁴

Vouchsafe, O Mary! "admirable vessel, work of the Most High,"⁵ vouchsafe to obtain for us the grace to be pious, and to show ourselves both sweet and firm in our piety. In ancient days, when, at the bid-

ding of the prophet Eliseus, a poor widow, oppressed by a merciless creditor, made her sons procure a great number of empty vessels, she poured into each a small portion of the little oil she had; suddenly and miraculously the vases were all filled, so that she had not only wherewith to pay her creditor, but the means of supporting her family.⁶ To thee, likewise, O holy Virgin! at the bidding of the Angel who saluted thee as "full of grace,"⁷ at the bidding of the Church, who calls thee *Vessel of Singular Devotion*, we present our hearts, alas! too void of Christian piety and the good works of which it is the source. Do not refuse to give us of thy superabundance, so that we may not only satisfy the divine justice by our fervor, but acquire precious merits for heaven. It is written that "piety has promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come;"⁸ that this consoling promise may be fulfilled in our favor,

VESSEL OF SINGULAR DEVOTION,
PRAY FOR US.

Vas insigne devotionis, ora pro nobis.

¹ St. Luke i. 47.

² 2 Tim. ii. 21.

³ Rom. vi. 13.

⁴ Rom. xii. 1.

⁵ Eccles. xliii. 2.

⁶ 4 Kings iv.

⁷ St. Luke i. 28.

⁸ 1 Tim. iv. 8.

MEDITATION XXXV.

MYSTICAL ROSE, PRAY FOR US.

IN the Sacred Books we hear the voice of the celestial Bridegroom comparing his spouse to a garden redolent "with all the chief perfumes."¹ "Arise," says he, "arise, O north wind, and come, O south wind, blow through my garden, and let the aromatical spices thereof flow."² Christian piety loves to recognize the Blessed Virgin under the figure of all the plants and odoriferous flowers of that garden mentioned by the Spouse in the Canticles. It is Mary whom we delight to call, with St. Sophronius, "the true pleasure-garden, abounding in the sweetest flowers, and the celestial odor of all the virtues."³ Amongst these flowers the Church chose the Rose to give a name to that Beloved of the Lord, thus giving her the most delicate and graceful praise, the fittest to captivate our mind and heart.

O Rose, whom the Creator has made so sweet and so fair, so rich in beauty and in perfume; O Queen

of all those earthly flowers, so magnificent in their matchless attire, and yet so varied in the shades of their colors and in their odorous exhalations, how joyfully do I hail thee as the emblem of Mary, my divine Mother; that Queen of all intelligences, even the most adorned with grace; that Queen of all the spiritual flowers which form and shall form the ornament of the Church of heaven and on earth; that Queen, in fine, of all creatures. Like thee, but in a manner infinitely superior, Mary is radiant in beauty and charming in the sweetness and perfume of her divine virtues! . . .

Never did the fair soul of the Blessed Virgin undergo any, even the slightest alteration; never did the lightest breath of evil tarnish the freshness, the lustre of that *Mystical Rose*; never did the calix of that marvellous flower, so truly the Beloved of God, cease to exhale the sweet incense of love and praise—of love the most ardent, and praise the most pious. Although planted, like her sisters, in a soil where so many storms bend and blight their stems and wither their brilliant

¹ Cant. iv. 14.² Cant. iv. 16.³ Serm. de Assumpt.

petals, never did she lose aught either of her original beauty, the sweetness or the excellence of her perfume.

Thou hadst thy thorns, it is true, O Mystical Rose, sharp and piercing thorns, but they were only for thyself. Thou couldst not but resemble, O Mary, the divine Head of the elect, that adorable Saviour who, through sufferings, was to enter into his glory!"¹

And, moreover, was it not expedient that, like thy divine Son, thou shouldst learn by experience to "have compassion on our infirmities,"² and to feel for us that lively sympathy attendant on the endurance of the same sufferings. . . . But to us, thy brethren according to the flesh, thy beloved children according to grace, to us thou art "a rose without a thorn." . . . "Thou hast nothing hurtful," says St. Ambrose, "nothing but what is the very expression of universal benevolence."³ "What is there in thee," says St. Bernard, "to excite fear or distrust? Thou hast nothing stern, nothing austere; to us

thou art all sweetness. . . . Peruse attentively the whole Gospel history," adds this holy doctor, "carefully examine its sacred pages; if thou findest in Mary the least trait savoring of reproach or severity, the slightest indication contrary to meekness, I will agree to speak no more of that divine Mother."⁴

Ah! let us "run to the celestial odor" of that immortal rose which embalms the innocent heart, and constitutes its joy and its delight; "let us run after her."⁵ Let us beware of being seduced by the ephemeral perfumes of the earth, the foolish incense of worldly flattery, or of suffering ourselves to be dazzled by the deceitful beauty of creatures which "in the morning grow up like grass, in the evening fall, grow dry, and wither."⁶ Let us remember that every thing in this world was given us to raise our souls to God, and that, far from fixing our hearts on sublunary things, as though they were our last end, we should employ them to excite in us the desire and the eager pursuit of that true country where there

¹ St. Luke xxiv. 26.

² Heb. iv. 15.

³ *Lib. de Virginit.*, cap. 2.

⁴ *Serm. 1 de Assumpt.*

⁵ *Cant. i. 3.*

⁶ *Ps. lxxxix. 6.*

are none but immortal flowers, and where the *Mystical Rose* is the admiration of saints and angels.

O Mary, thou art "exalted as a rose-plant in Jericho,¹ thou hast budded forth as the rose planted by the brooks of waters,² thou art fair as the lily,³ and as the flower of roses in the days of the spring."⁴ But who shall give us an idea of "the good odor of Christ."⁵ so sweetly exhaled by thee. Who shall tell us how much the perfume of thy virtues exceeds "the sweet odor of the best myrrh and the purest balm?"⁶ Yes, thou art that chosen flower which alone, in the arid vale of this world, "drew down the divine dew, the just by excellence."⁷ O blessed Flower! O marvellous Flower! O Flower of heaven! it is there only that it will be given us to know thee well, and to praise thee as thou deservest. Grant that we may walk "to the odor of thy ointments,⁸ in the unspotted way"⁹ of the true children of God, so as, one day, to have the happiness of seeing thee and glorifying thy Son

for all the favors so lavishly bestowed upon thee!

MYSTICAL ROSE, PRAY FOR US.

Rosa Mystica, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XXXVI.

TOWER OF DAVID, PRAY FOR US.

IF the pride and the strength of Jerusalem was the tower of David, built with bulwarks, a thousand bucklers "hanging upon it, all the armor of valiant men,"¹⁰ is not Mary the glory and the invincible fortress of the Church? And, besides, does not the blood of David flow in her veins—the blood of that holy king who, before he reached the throne, knew how to unite the modest bearing of the shepherd with the heroic valor that overcame the Philistine giant? How justly, then, may Mary be called the *Tower of David*, she in whom we admire so much humility with so much greatness and so much glory! . . .

But in what sense should we

¹ Eccl. xxiv. 18.

³ Is. xxxv. 1.

² Eccl. xxxix. 17.

⁴ Eccl. l. 8.

⁵ 2 Cor. ii. 15.

⁶ Eccl. xxiv. 20, 21.

⁸ Cant. i. 3.

⁷ Is. xlv. 8.

⁹ Ps. c. 2.

¹⁰ Cant. iv. 4.

specially apply to the Blessed Virgin the image of a "great tower,"¹ defending a beleaguered city? It is especially on account of her protecting, from the incessant assaults of Satan, the Church, who is the depositary of the truth brought from heaven by our Lord Jesus Christ. "Oh! but she is powerful against hell, that august Queen!" exclaims St. Bonaventure. "She is more terrible than an army in battle array."² So it is that the Evil Spirit has never failed, when attacking the Church, to attack, at the same time, that glorious Virgin who is, as it were, its impregnable fortress.

Ever since the second century, when the impious Cerinthus dared to dispute one of the prerogatives secured by the Catholic faith to Mary, there has scarcely been a heresiarch whose tongue or pen did not, either directly or indirectly, assail her; not one whose audacious folly Mary did not confound by the dread authority of the Church, ever ready to defend Jesus Christ attacked through his august Mother. Hence it is that that faithful guardian of the divine doctrine is pleased

to represent "the old serpent"³ as always trying to lift his head from under the conquering foot of the divine Virgin, whose wondrous power against error it pleases the Lord to manifest, in an especial manner, in these latter ages.

It is worthy of remark, that those nations who are the most devout to Mary have been preserved, either wholly or in a great measure, from the ravages of the heresy of the sixteenth century. Look at Italy, Spain, Belgium; look at France, . . . France, where the protection of the Queen of Heaven was manifested anew, and in a striking manner, at the end of the eighteenth century. It was then worse than heresy—it was impiety, infidelity, armed with political power, reigning with absolute sway. No more temples, no more altars, no more priests; faith itself was a crime deserving of death O Mary! canst thou, then, forget that France has ever been thy favored country; that it was consecrated to thee by one of its kings, of pious memory?⁴ Wilt thou not hear the fervent sighs of thy servants, still so numerous amidst all

¹ 2 Esd. iii. 27.² Cant. vi. 3.³ Apoc. xii. 9.⁴ Louis XIII.

this grievous apostacy? and do not our pastors, in the land of exile, unite their pious supplications with those of the faithful flocks from whom they have been compelled to fly? . . . Oh! that good and tender Mother will not forsake her own people; all the assaults of exulting infidelity shall at last fail before this new Tower of David. A little while, and the temples are re-opened, the altars are raised again, the pastors are restored to their hearers; and it is on the very day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin that the Sovereign Pontiff signs the famous concordat which secures the restoration of the Church of France.

Let us here felicitate ourselves, before God, on our happiness in being born in a land which belongs to Mary by solemn consecration,¹ a consoling pledge of the preservation of the precious treasure of faith in our beloved country. But, let us never forget that the Apostles of old, although assured by the promise of their divine Master that the persecution of the Synagogue should

* be powerless against the infant Church, did, nevertheless, "with one accord lift up their voice to God,"² to ask of him victory. Let us also beg of the Lord that the faith of Mary's chosen people may never fail; and in all our temptations, especially those which are contrary to that fundamental virtue of Christianity, let us fly to her, and take refuge in that Tower of David where the darts of the enemy cannot reach us.

O divine Mother of Him who calls himself "the Truth,"³ it is to thee that thine adorable Son seems to have confided the care of his Church; for it is to thee that that same Church⁴ refers the glory of her triumph over all the errors that have assailed the true doctrine, and sought to shake the foundations of "the city of God."⁵ Thou art for her "a tower of strength against the face of the enemy;"⁶ thou art the "strong tower"⁷ which saves her children "in the day of tribulation."⁸ Ah! protect us, holy Virgin, against any danger that might

¹ It will be remembered that this work was originally written in French.—TRANS.

² Acts iv. 24.

³ St. John xiv. 6.

⁴ Brev. Rom. in *Festis B. M. V.*

⁵ Ps. lxxxvi. 3.

⁶ Ps. lx. 4.

⁷ Prov. xviii. 10.

⁸ Ps. xix. 2.

assail our faith; shield us, especially at the hour of our death, and prepare us for that final struggle which is to insure our eternal triumph. Obtain for us, from God, a lively and unshaken faith.

TOWER OF DAVID, PRAY FOR US.

Turris Davidica, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XXXVII.

TOWER OF IVORY, PRAY FOR US.

IVORY has a dazzling whiteness, a remarkable polish, pleasing to the eye, and at the same time a solidity, a strength analogous to the gigantic animal which furnishes it for the use of man: a double figure, equally applicable to the Blessed Virgin. In what other human being could we find, as in her, that innocence, that purity of soul which the angels themselves admire, that lustre of virginity which, during the time of her mortal pilgrimage, was diffused over her whole person, and penetrated all hearts with

an indescribable feeling of respect?¹

But, without dwelling here on that amazing purity which has already been several times the object of our meditations, let us apply ourselves to consider the mystical "Tower of Ivory"² as the model and the support of our perseverance in the service of the Lord.

What was the perpetual devotion of Mary to her God, amid all the sacrifices which filled up her holy life in this world! From the parting with her family, which the Most High demanded of her at so tender an age, what tribulation, what anguish, what certain and heart-rending anticipations, what excruciating sorrows raised even to sublimity her constancy in the path of duty! The perplexity of St. Joseph on account of a mystery which prudence forbade her to reveal to her chaste spouse; the journey to Bethlehem, so painful in every respect; the poverty and desolation of the stable, the only shelter left the infant God; the double prophecy of the holy old man Simeon, regarding the unjust persecution which the Saviour was to undergo, and "the sword which was

¹ S. Den. Areop., *Ep. ad Paul apud Carthus.*, Sent. in 1 dist. 16, q. 2.

² Cant. vii. 4.

to pierce his mother's heart;"¹ the flight into Egypt, with all the hardships and privations of exile; the losing of Jesus for three days after the feast of the Passover; the humiliating labors to which she saw him subjected in the poor workshop of Nazareth; all the fatigues, all the troubles of his public life; the intrigues, the persecutions, the atrocious calumnies of his enemies, whereby she was so deeply affected; all the ignominy, all the unheard-of sufferings of his passion; finally, the cross standing before her maternal eyes, and she at the foot of that cross. Oh! what an unbroken series of hard trials, very fit to shake and to subdue the courage of a daughter of Eve! But in the midst of all these trials we see Mary always calm and serene, Mary always submissive, always inseparably united to the will of her God, Mary always strong and self-devoted, Mary always the same! What an example! what an eloquent lesson for us who are so infirm, so inconstant in good!

So long as the dangerous occasion is far from us, or temptation leaves us at rest, or the world is not dis-

* posed to quarrel with us for discharging our duty to God, so long do "our feet stand in the direct way;"² they even run after salvation. But no sooner do obstacles arise in our path, no sooner is it necessary to do violence to our own inclinations, to break the deceitful spell of the heart or of the senses, or to withstand the foolish laughter of "the children of the world,"³ than we feel ourselves fail at once. Ah! if we imitated Mary, far from being discouraged by the tempests which Providence permits us to encounter, we would consider them as precious means of expiating the past, of acquiring a holy distrust of ourselves, and an entire confidence in God alone, of confirming us in good by resisting evil, of gaining inestimable merits for eternal life. And you, also, pious souls, if you walked in the footsteps of her whom you love to call your good Mother, would you not bear with more courage and confidence the weight of the interior troubles which may assail you? . . . Ah! never forget, then, that one day of fidelity to God in dryness or darkness of mind, in weariness or dis-

¹ St. Luke ii. 35.

² Ps. xxv. 12.

³ St. Luke xvi. 8.

gust, is worth more than a thousand days passed in the holy joys of devotion. There are two ways, according to St. Augustine, one of which depends on the other: "that of trial, which we have to undergo; that of beatitude, which we are to expect."¹ In the second life, every one of your sighs and tears, every act of resignation, will be available before God; and you shall find them at the feet of "the just Judge,"² transformed into so many precious pearls, whose celestial brightness shall enhance the beauty of your immortal crown.

O Mary, incomparably more beautiful in the eyes of God by thy virtues, thy merits, than were ever, in the eyes of men, "the house of ivory,"³ built by the seventh king of Israel, or King Solomon's "great throne of ivory,"⁴ we will always "lift up our eyes" to thee, as the tower of help, "from whence help shall come to us"⁵ against the world and the devil, the evil inclinations of our own nature, the darkness of our understanding, and the feebleness of our will. Considering the

temptations of every kind, of which our life is but one continued series,⁶ perseverance in virtue is a blessing above all price, and we cannot ask it too earnestly or too frequently. It is through thy gracious intercession that we hope to obtain it; and it is in thine immaculate heart that we will henceforward take refuge, as a safe and sure asylum. O thou, whom we here invoke with the fullest confidence,

TOWER OF IVORY, PRAY FOR US.

Turris Eburnea, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XXXVIII.

HOUSE OF GOLD, PRAY FOR US.

HOW marvellous was the Temple of Jerusalem raised by King Solomon! Not to speak of the rare stones of which its walls and foundations were composed, how admirable were the ceilings of cedar sculptured with so much art, the cherubim, the palms in *relievo*, the golden flowers, the very pavement covered with plates of

¹ Lib. 2, de Act. cum Fel. Munic., c. 10.

² 2 Tim. iv. 8.

³ 3 Kings xxii. 39.

⁴ 3 Kings x. 18.

⁵ Ps. cxx. 1.

⁶ Job vii. 1.

that precious metal, which was lavished in such profusion that "there was nothing in the temple that was not covered with gold,"¹ so that it might be literally styled a *house of gold*!

But how much more does that name apply to the Blessed Virgin, the living sanctuary whom the Lord made for himself; "the *august and sacred* dwelling which he hath chosen for himself;"² or rather, with whom he united himself by sanctifying grace more closely than with any other creature, and by the divine maternity, in a manner the most approximate to the mystical tie which makes the Eternal Word and the Son of Mary one and the same person! Even before the Incarnation, thou wert, O incomparable Virgin, in a marvellous sense, "the house of the Lord," his *House of Gold*; thou whom he had adorned with so many prerogatives, infinitely more precious than all the gold of this world; thou whose every thought, desire, word and action were, in his eyes, far more valuable than gold is to men, who seek with ceaseless ardor that seductive metal,

* too often the mainspring and the idol of their entire life! But on the ever-memorable day of the Annunciation, thou didst become, in a still more admirable sense, his *House of Gold*; for of thy most pure substance the Word then and forever formed his own; he dwelt within thee the first nine months of his expiatory life on earth, living with thine own life; and that sublime connection, that ineffable union, "made thee worthy of being called blessed by all generations, blessed by all the prophets, by all the heavenly powers; yes, blessed in thy mind, in thy heart, blessed by the common voice of our praise."³

And besides, how justly is the title, *House of Gold*, bestowed on that Virgin endowed with perfect purity, a quality of which gold is the best symbol; that Virgin inflamed with divine love, of which gold, from its fiery color, is also the emblem. Is not her perpetual integrity, in reality, one of the greatest miracles of the Lord? "Does not the excellence of her purity," says St. Anselm, "incomparably surpass the purity of all creatures?"

¹ 3 Kings vi. 22.

² Ps. cxxxi. 13.

³ S. Ildefonso, *Lib. de Virginit. B. M*

And was it not that which rendered her worthy of becoming the renovator of the world, plunged in the deepest abyss of perdition?"¹ No less surprising is her love of God. "Who can doubt," exclaims St. Augustine, "that Mary's womb, wherein the God of charity reposed corporally for nine months, was wholly transformed into charity?"² Wherefore it is that St. Bernardine said of this Blessed Virgin: "So great was her love that she would willingly have died for her Son, not once, nor a thousand times, but an infinite number of times, if it had been possible."³

Alas! that it is not so with us, at least as far as our frail nature would permit! Why is it that we who, by baptism, by confirmation, by the eucharist, have been consecrated to God "as his temples,"⁴ show ourselves so little worthy of the Holy of holies,⁵ who has vouchsafed to make us his living temples? Why are we so eager to adorn our dwelling when it is to have the honor of receiving a distinguished

guest, yet so negligent in making our soul and body a *House of Gold* for the reception of the Lord? Why, once more, instead of being inflamed with love of the divine good, do we suffer our hearts to be ensnared by the "bewitching of vanity,"⁶ and are coldly indifferent to that God so entrancing in beauty and in love? Shame and confusion for us? But also repentance, and, henceforward, frequent acts, as frequent as possible, of piety, of devotion, of ardent love for him whose temples we are, by a special favor, permitted to become!

It is through thee, O Mary, through thy powerful intercession, that we hope to have accomplished in us that saying of thy divine Son: "If any one love me he will keep my Word; and my Father will love him, and he will come to him, and will make an abode with him."⁷ In thee the Lord chose to dwell in a wonderful manner,⁸ and he filled thee with his glory⁹ in a more marvellous way than he formerly filled Solomon's temple. Oh! if we could

¹ *De excel. B. V.*, c. 9.

² Quot. by S. Bonav. in *Spec.*, c. 14.

³ *Serm. de Nat. B. V.*

⁴ 2 Cor. vi. 16.

⁵ Dan. iii. 24.

⁶ Wisdom iv. 12.

⁷ 3 Kings viii. 10; 2 Paral. v. 8.

⁸ St. John xiv. 23.

⁹ Ps. cxxxi. 14.

but comprehend the dignity to which he raises us by making us his living temples, how faithful we would be in preserving ourselves pure and holy; faithful in immolating nature to duty on the altar of our heart, and the transitory joys of the present for the future and permanent joys of eternity; faithful in keeping the fire of holy love constantly burning there! Pray for us, that we may have that inestimable happiness. It is with all our heart that we beseech thee,

HOUSE OF GOLD, PRAY FOR US.

Domus Aurea, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XXXIX.

ARK OF THE COVENANT, PRAY FOR US.

IF the magnificent temple of Solomon, where, we may say, all was gold, be an emblem of Mary, what was most august in that "house of the Lord,"¹ the ark of the covenant, is a still more striking figure of this divine Virgin.

The ark was made of incorruptible wood,² although it grew from

a corruptible stem. And thou, O Mary, although the offspring of a guilty race, thou wert preserved from the original stain, and beyond the reach of corruption.

The ark was overlaid within and without with pure gold; it was surmounted by a golden crown, and closed with the mercy-seat, which was likewise made of that precious metal; two cherubim, also of gold, with their wings outspread, shaded the mercy-seat, from which the majesty of God gave directions to the children of Israel.³ And thou, O Mary, "full of grace,"⁴ how dazzling, how pure, how priceless is the gold wherewith thou art clothed! What a throne thou didst offer in thyself to the Lord! May we not say of thee, with St. Andrew of Crete, that "thou art the universal propitiatory of the world,"⁵ the living sanctuary whence the Incarnate Word pronounced the words of salvation for the whole world?

In the ark were deposited "the golden urn that had manna, the rod of Aaron that had blossomed *miraculously*, and the *two* tables of the Testament,"⁶ given to Mount Sinai.

¹ 3 Kings viii. 11. ² Exod. xxv. 10. ³ Exod. xxv.

⁴ St. Luke i. 28. ⁵ *De Dormit. Virg.* ⁶ Heb. ix. 4

And thou, O august Virgin, thou hast had the happiness of conceiving and bringing forth Him who was made for us the true celestial manna, "the living bread which came down from heaven."¹ Thou hast had the infinite honor of becoming the Mother of a Son who was formed in thee and born of thee by a prodigy much greater than that which struck the twelve tribes with admiration when they saw the withered rod of the high-priest covered with fruit and flowers.² Thou hast borne within thee, by an unparalleled favor, the very Author of the two tables of the law; thou art become, as it were, "the depository of the sacred titles of the Old and New Testaments,"³ the abridgment of all the divine oracles,⁴ the book of the divine Word, whose sacred pages are opened by the Eternal Father himself to the eyes of all the world."⁵

In ancient times God inspired his people, sometimes even the Gentiles, with a profound respect for

the ark of the covenant, by means of divers prodigies of which it was the occasion;⁶ before it the Israelites prostrated themselves to render heaven propitious,⁷ and its sojourn in the house of Obededom drew down on him and his household the blessing of the Lord.⁸ Before thee, O Mary, do the faithful prostrate themselves to obtain from thy divine Son the favors of which they stand in need, knowing that it is through thee he is pleased to pour out his gifts on men, and that "all grace flows from thy hands."⁹ Thousands and thousands of miracles, both in the temporal order and in that of salvation, are wrought by thee to the great admiration of the faithful; and does not thy holy image, piously venerated in Christian families, draw down upon them innumerable blessings?

Finally, who does not see in David's solemn introduction of the ark into Jerusalem, the figure of thy glorious and triumphant assumption, O Thou! Ark of sanctity, raised

¹ St. John vi. 51.

² Numb. xvii.

³ Rupert., in *Cap. 4 cant.*

⁴ Andr. of Crete, *Serm. de Assumpt.*

⁵ *Serm. de laudib. Virg.*, attributed to St. Epiph.

⁶ Exod. xxv. ; Josh. iii. vi. ; 1 Kings v. vii.

⁷ Josh. vii. 6.

⁸ 2 Kings vi. 11.

⁹ Bern., *serm. 3, de nomine Mariæ.*

from earth to "thy resting place" in heaven,¹ to sit at the right hand of God,² there to show thyself a Mother³ to all who have recourse to thee?

Ah! may we show ourselves true children of Mary, and find in that august Ark of the new covenant a continual safeguard and a source of celestial blessings. "Whosoever neglects the service of the Blessed Virgin," says St. Bonaventure, "runs the risk of dying in his sins, but whosoever honors her worthily shall be justified, shall be saved;"⁴ for she is, according to St. Peter Chrysologus, "the gracious Mediatrix between man and the Man-God;"⁵ "and if the merits of the supplicant are insufficient," adds St. Anselm, "those of the divine Mother who intercedes for him are accepted in his behalf."⁶

As the ark, going before the Hebrews across the Jordan, introduced them into the promised land, even so dost thou, O Mary, conduct us in safety through the perilous waters

of this life; thou art "the living Ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth."⁷ Ah! undoubtedly, the covenant wherewith "the God of Majesty"⁸ was formerly pleased to honor Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their children, was very precious. But yet it was only a figure, a shadow of that wherewith the Eternal Son favored us by becoming man in thy womb, regenerating us by his adorable blood, the merits of which he applies to us by sacred rites, which sanctify us at our birth, aid, strengthen, and console us during life, and at our last hour encourage and prepare us for the dreadful passage to eternity. O Thou, by whom all these blessings come to us, "paradise of the new Adam,"⁹ living palace of the Most High,"¹⁰ obtain for us the grace to make a holy use of them, and always to say to thee with the fervor of a faithful heart,

ARK OF THE COVENANT, PRAY FOR US.

Fœderis Arca, ora pro nobis.

¹ Ps. cxxxi. 8.

⁴ *In Psalt*

² St. Mark xvi. 19.

⁵ *Serm. de Annunc.*

³ Hymn *Ave Maris Stella.*

⁶ *De excellent. Virg.*

⁷ Josh. iii. 11.

⁸ Ps. xxviii. 3.

⁹ S. John Damas., *Orat. de Dormit. B. M.*

¹⁰ S. J. Chrys., *Homil. 2, in Fest. S. Joan.*

MEDITATION XL.

GATE OF HEAVEN, PRAY FOR US.

I AM the door,"¹ says Jesus Christ; "no man cometh to the Father but by me."² In calling Mary the *Gate of Heaven*, do we not, therefore, attribute to her what belongs solely to the Man-God? do we not transfer to the Mother some of the inalienable rights of the Son?

Ah! assuredly, the Church, "who is the pillar and the ground of truth,"³ does not forget the saying of St. Paul, that as "there is *but* one God, *so there is but* one Mediator, between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus."⁴ But she teaches, with St. Jerome, that "all honor paid to Mary, tends to the glory of Jesus as its end;"⁵ and with St. Anselm, that "if Mary hath so much power, it is from Jesus she holds it, and with him she exercises it."⁶

It is, therefore, to the greater glory of the Man-God that the Church here invokes the Blessed Virgin as the *Gate of Heaven*, a title

admirably adapted to that divine Mother. Was it not through Mary that heaven was, as it were, transported to earth, when she brought amongst men him whose name signifies "God with us?"⁷ for she had "conceived him in her heart," says St. Leo, "before she conceived him in her womb."⁸ Was it not by her that "the goodness and kindness of our Saviour God appeared"⁹ in human form, "Him who is the resurrection and the life,"¹⁰ and whose triumphant ascension could alone introduce into the mansions of bliss even the holiest souls of those who died before he "entered into his glory?"¹¹ "Was it not for Mary," says St. Augustine, "that God came visibly on earth, so that by her men might merit heaven?"¹²

And art thou not, "O sweet Virgin Mary,"¹³ an all-powerful help to those who seek thine aid, who humbly entreat thee to help them to procure admission into the regions of bliss? How justly did St. Anselm say,¹⁴ that "it is by thee poor

¹ St. John x. 9.⁴ 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6.² St. John xiv. 6.⁵ *Ad Eustach.*³ 1 Tim. iii. 15.⁶ *De excell. Virg.*, c. 12.⁷ St. Matt. i. 23.⁸ Serm. 1. *de Nativ. Dom.* ¹¹ St. Luke xxiv. 26.⁹ Titus iii. 4.¹² Serm. 18 *de tempore.*¹⁰ St. John xi. 25.¹³ *Salve Regina.*¹⁴ *In medit.*

exiles are called to their eternal home!" Thou dost enlighten, encourage, support them; for thou art, according to the immortal bishop of Hippo, "the Mother of all the faithful who are the members of Jesus Christ, since thou by thy charity hast co-operated in their spiritual birth;"¹ and if they did not counteract, by their malice, the powerful influence of thy benign protection, thou wouldst happily conduct them to the port of salvation. It was this thought that drew from St. Antoninus, after St. Anselm, those remarkable words, "As it is impossible that he from whom thou turnest away thy merciful eyes should be saved, so is it certain that he for whom thou dost intercede, shall obtain justification and glory."²

If, then, we have hitherto endeavored to render ourselves pleasing to the Blessed Virgin, let us rejoice and bless the Lord "who inspires," says St. John Damascene, "with a tender devotion to Mary those whom he predestines for salvation."³ Let us joyfully raise our eyes to the

* eternal paradise of pleasure: there we shall see, not a cherub armed with a fiery sword, forbidding our approach, as of old at the gate of Eden, but we shall have the consolation to see a Mother, the sweetest, the most tender, the most considerate of mothers, constantly watching us with eyes of love, as we wend our weary way through this same valley of tears once marked by her own blessed footsteps; we shall see her, with her hands stretched out towards this place of exile and probation, inviting us to trust in her protection, to do violence to ourselves in order to gain that kingdom⁴ which the blood of her divine Son opened to our hopes and wishes.

If, hitherto, we have had the misfortune either to forget Mary, or to have for her only a feeble devotion, too often belied by our works, let us deplore our ungrateful coldness, and tear the veil from our illusions. A mother's mercy is great; what, then, must be the mercy of such a Mother as Mary! But let us, henceforward, have a devotion for her worthy of Jesus, whom we ought to love and

¹ *Lib. de sanctâ Virginit., c. 6.*

² *De excellent. Virg., c. 11.*

³ *IV. Part., tit. 13, c. 14.*

⁴ *Orat. de Assumpt.*

glorify in Mary; worthy of Mary, whom our brethren should learn to love and glorify after the example of those who call themselves her servants.

The patriarch Jacob, seeing in a dream a mysterious ladder, from the top of which the Lord announced to him the sublime destiny of his posterity, cried out, in an ecstasy of holy fear, "How terrible is this place! this is no other but the house of God and the gate of heaven!"¹ What shall we say of thee, O holy Virgin, with whom that same God vouchsafed to contract the ties of nature and of blood, the closest and the sweetest! Ah! thou art ever worthy of our respectful fear, because of thine admirable greatness. But the motherly tenderness with which thou dost "open the doors of heaven, and rain down in marvellous abundance the manna of every grace,"² can only inspire us with filial confidence. It is with that sweet feeling that we recognize thee as "the true gate of the Lord, by which the just enter³ their eternal rest,"⁴ and by which we our-

selves hope to enter. Pray, then, for us, unworthy as we are.

GATE OF HEAVEN, PRAY FOR US.

Janua Cœli, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XLI.

MORNING STAR, PRAY FOR US.

IMMORTAL *Morning Star!* divine Mary! thou art as grateful to our eyes as thou art radiant and sparkling. If thou dost not, like the sun, shed torrents of light which illumine, warm and fructify all nature, thou shinest, at least, like the star which heralds the approach of that giant of the heavens!⁵

But who can tell the beauty of that new day which thou didst announce to the earth, O glorious star of Jacob,⁶ who appeared on the horizon of idolatrous humanity, "to enlighten them who sat in the shadow of death?"⁷ Who can paint the happiness of the world in being able to salute thee as the herald of its deliverance, the august and holy dawn of that adorable "sun of jus-

¹ Gen. xxviii. 17.

² Ps. lxxvii 23 24

³ Ps. cxvii. 20.

⁴ Heb. iv. 10.

⁵ Ps. xviii. 6.

⁶ Numb. xxiv. 17.

⁷ St. Luke i. 79.

tice,"¹ who, after having, as it were, veiled his splendor in thy chaste womb, manifested himself gloriously to the eyes of men, diffusing on all sides his radiant beams, giving to those who were misled by error the light of truth, communicating to the unhappy "sons of death"² the only true life, that is, life everlasting? Star of salvation, thou didst shine "as the sun when it shineth;"³ thou art truly "the bright and morning star"⁴ of that blessed day when the world beheld the rise of the divine orb of its redemption and ineffable regeneration! O be thou forever blessed by every heart and by every tongue! for thou wert, as it were, the inestimable pledge of the reconciliation of earth and heaven,⁵ of our sanctification through Christ,⁶ of our eternal salvation,⁷ of our vocation to the kingdom and glory of God.⁸

And even now, is not that mystical *Morning Star* the pledge of our hopes, and of our salvation? "Without Mary," says St. Bonaventure, "what should we be, unfortunate as we are? what should

* become of us amid the darkness of this world, were we deprived of her mild light?"⁹ Alas! who knows but there are perilous moments when the light of faith appears eclipsed by thoughts contrary to her divine teachings; moments when we feel strongly inclined towards what our will hates and despises; when the imagination takes fire, and is induced to delight in things which the soul abhors when once the false charm is dispelled and tranquillity returns? But if we then raise our suppliant voice to that Star of Benediction, she fails not to show her consoling rays, and all is again quiet. Who knows not, too, by sad experience, that there are hours of bitter disgust, of consuming weariness, of dark and gloomy dejection, of profound sadness, when the heart seems ready to fail, if it be not sustained by a supernatural power? But if, in those hours of gloom and despondency, our fervent sighs ascend to Mary, her radiant brow speedily dispels the storm, and restores us to ourselves;

¹ Mal. iv. 2.² Eccles. i. 7.³ Col. i. 20. ⁴ 1 Cor. i. 30. ⁵ Heb. v. 9.⁶ 1 Kings xxvi. 16.⁷ Apoc. xxii. 16.⁸ 1 Thess. ii. 12.⁹ *In Spec. B. M. V*

for "in all the tempests that assail us here below," says St. Bernard, "it suffices to regard that tutelary Star, and we are saved from shipwreck."¹

Let us, then, fervently implore the assistance of Mary; let us entreat her to disperse "the powers of darkness,"² as the first rays of the orb of day drive back the wild beasts to their dens;³ let us beseech her to guide us safely over the stormy sea of this life to the shore of a happy eternity. She takes pleasure in saving the mariner who trusts in her protection; and the grateful mariner takes pleasure in repeating to the winds and waves the praises of "the Star of the Sea," and singing, with enthusiasm, the name of the Virgin of Safety, the Virgin of the Watch, the Virgin of Good Aid. Ah! how much more does the sweet Mary love to sustain, to direct, to save, the pious Christian who invokes her amid the storms of the heart, the storms of the mind, the storms of the senses! And we who have, perhaps very often, been consoled by the cheer-

ing rays of that beloved Star, how grateful and how faithful should we be to our celestial benefactress, honoring her by a life pure as the changeless beams of her light!

O Thou, sure refuge of the tempest-tost mariner, Virgin ever helping, shield us from the storms and quicksands of this perilous ocean on which is launched the frail bark that bears our eternity, happy or unhappy. Heavy clouds, surcharged with calamity, may lower above us, but they shall never hide thee from our loving eyes! "Star ever radiant, ever consoling, ever protecting! following thy mild light, we never go astray; imploring thee, we never lose hope; with thy support, we cannot fail; under thy shield, no more fear; under thy guidance, no more fatigue; under thine auspices, we are sure to gain the wished-for haven;⁴ and as the sea-star guides the mariner to the port, so dost thou conduct Christians to glory."⁵ Deign, then, to work all these wonders, O Mary, on behalf of those who, in calm and

¹ Homil. *super Missus*.

² Ephes. vi. 12.

³ Ps. ciii. 22.

⁴ S. Bernard. Hom. 2, *sup. Missus*.

⁵ S. Thomas, op. 8.

in storm, will always say to thee, *
with tenderest love,

MORNING STAR, PRAY FOR US.

Stella Matutina, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XLII.

HEALTH OF THE WEAK, PRAY FOR US.

SUFFERINGS! they are the lot of humanity. For one child of Adam who advances lightly and cheerily on the road of life, there are a thousand who drag their lingering steps along, a prey to disease or infirmity, more or less painful, now sighing in sadness or dejection, and again groaning aloud in anguish.

But in the midst of this mournful concert of human lamentations, there is heard one name—a name of sweetness and of majesty—a name of strength and consolation to the suffering Christian: and that name, piously invoked, soothes pain, restores strength, relieves and even cures the most inveterate evils, the most incurable maladies: that name is the divine name of Mary. And to whom, after Jesus,

* could the suffering Christian so fitly apply? Ah! did not Mary learn to pity while contemplating the long and bitter sufferings of her adorable Son on the ignominious tree? Did she not, at the foot of the cross, receive from his divine lips, as an inalienable inheritance, all the faithful, in the person of the beloved disciple?¹ Has she not, ever since, gathered us all, with ineffable tenderness, into the sweet embrace of her incomparable charity? . . . And they who invoke that heavenly Mother in their weakness, do they not know that her power equals her love? . . .

It is only in certain places that the devotion of nations has raised monuments of gratitude and devotion to other saints; but to Mary it is all over the Christian world. Who has not heard of those famous shrines dedicated to that divine Mother, and who has had the happiness of visiting any of them, without being piously moved by the sight of the innumerable testimonials of corporal favors obtained through her intercession? . . . Inscriptions dictated by gratitude;

¹ St. John xix. 26.

divers gifts offered at her altar; human limbs of gold or silver, laid at her feet as trophies of her power over diseases which defeated the art of man; wooden crutches which had supported her supplicants as they dragged their helpless limbs to the holy place where they were healed by her intercession, hung up around the sacred walls, as a simple and touching homage to her glory: oh! how eloquently do these speak to faith! what lively confidence they excite in her whom the Church justly styles, *Health of the Weak!*

Doubtless, she does not always obtain for us what we ask, because the accomplishment of our wishes, far from being conducive to our true happiness, which is that of the other world, would be often prejudicial to it. But still that *Mother of grace* becomes our *health* in infirmity; still, if the suppliant heart interposes no voluntary obstacle, she obtains for it the grace to make its sufferings available to salvation; she clothes it with patience and fortitude, fills it with resignation and tranquillity, during the long, sleepless nights and wearisome

days; still does she penetrate it with the sentiment which animated the holy man Job when he exclaimed, "That this may be my comfort, that, afflicting me with sorrow, he spare *me not in this place of probation*, nor I contradict the words of the Holy One!"¹ And when, at the appointed time, the last hour arrives, to them who suffer under the auspices of Mary, it is neither terrifying nor torturing, but peaceful and serene, like the joyful transition from the toil of battle to the reward of victory, from "this valley of tears"² to that magnificent kingdom where "God *himself* shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."³

Let us, then, apply, with entire confidence, to the Blessed Virgin, in all the corporal ailments where-with God permits us to be afflicted; and let us never fail to solicit her intercession with the adorable Jesus, remembering those words of St. Bernard: "God has given her absolute power in heaven and on earth; he has placed in her hands our life and death."⁴ Let us specially implore her for our last moments, and, in

¹ Job vi. 10.

² Apoc. vii. 17.

³ *Salv. Reg.*

⁴ *Serm. 1, sup. salve.*

order to make sure of her powerful succor at that decisive moment, let us "die daily,"¹ that is to say, let us spend every day as though it were to be our last.

O Thou whose tender heart might say with still more justice than the great Apostle, "Who is weak, and I am not weak?"² praises be to thee for that thou dost so often, and in such an admirable manner, display thy power for the relief or the cure of our corporal sufferings. Ah! thou art for all of us a never-failing resource, whilst the pool of Bethesda healed only at times, and none but the one favored person who first went into it after its waters had been troubled by the Angel of the Lord.³ We bless thy divine Son for that "a virtue goes out from thee, and heals all;"⁴ and we beseech thee to manifest it especially for us at that dread and final hour when we are about to enter upon eternity.

O sweet Virgin, who "vouchsafes to receive with maternal kindness the last sigh of him who confidently commends himself to thee,"⁵ grant

that, at our last moment, we may experience, in all its extent, the efficacy of that pious invocation of the Church:

HEALTH OF THE WEAK, PRAY FOR US.

Salus Infirmorum, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XLIII.

REFUGE OF SINNERS, PRAY FOR US.

IT is in the nature of man to have a great apprehension of appearing before him whom he knows he has offended, even were it to testify his repentance and solicit forgiveness; this is especially the case if the offender be much inferior, and has shown himself very ungrateful towards a generous benefactor. Ah! what relief, what consolation for him, when a common friend, a devoted, influential friend, comes forward to mediate and to facilitate the reconciliation.

But if it be the mother of the injured benefactor who presents herself as a mediatrix, who deigns to

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 31.

² 2 Cor. xi. 29.

³ St. John v. 4.

⁴ St. Luke vi. 19

⁵ S. Jerome, ep. 2 ad Eustoch.

intercede with a son full of tenderness for her, what joy! what happiness!

Sinners, whosoever you be, bless the divine Mary, who comes, with marvellous goodness, to place herself between you and her adorable Son, whose incomparable blessings, whose infinite love you have overlooked, whose supreme majesty you have audaciously offended. Ah! undoubtedly you are but too guilty towards him. Were you only to regard the Saviour-God whom you have, alas! so grievously offended, would you not be tempted to fly "from the wrath of the Lamb,"¹ from "the *avenging* lion of the tribe of Juda,"² and cast yourself headlong into the gulf of despair? But behold! his august Mother looks upon you with eyes of sweetness and compassion; she recalls, on your behalf, the days when the Man-God lay a babe in her arms, thereby rendering her, as it were, the depository of the infinite treasure of his graces. Take courage, then, were you a thousand times more guilty; she is powerful enough

to obtain your pardon, and she is well disposed to ask it.

Can she be ignorant of all the ineffable compassion of her divine Son for the helpless children of Adam, the wretched slaves of sin? Ah! no one on earth ever manifested so tender an interest in them as Jesus: he even went so far with it that his enemies made it a subject of reproach and accusation.³ But did not his sweet Mother participate his sentiments more intimately than any other creature? and, ascending to heaven, did she not carry with her to that blessed abode that heart always so good, so sensibly interested for the salvation of souls, redeemed by blood which she knows to be beyond all price? "Her mercy," says St. Bonaventure, "did but increase with her glory; now that she reigns with Jesus, that compassion of hers is so much the greater, as she sees more clearly the unhappy state of men"⁴ who disregard the admirable mystery of redemption.

Hence it is that the holy doctors, speaking of her compassionate kind-

¹ Apoc. vi. 16.

² Apoc. v. 5.

³ St. Matt. ix. 11; St. Luke vii. 34.

⁴ In *Specul. B. V.*, c. 5.

ness to sinners, extol it beyond measure. St. Ephraim calls her "the most powerful resource of all sinners, the sure haven of all who have suffered shipwreck."¹ "Thou art their only hope, O Mary!" exclaims St. Augustine.² "I consent to speak no more of thy mercy," says St. Bernard, "if ever any one could say that he asked it in vain!"³ "O Mary!" cries St. Bonaventure, "the sinner, were he even the outcast of the world, is never rejected by thee; but thou dost welcome him with maternal kindness, and quittest him not till thou hast reconciled him to his dreadful Judge!"⁴

Admiration, praise, eternal benediction to that God who has left such an asylum for the miserable transgressor of his laws! Confidence, boundless, unfailing confidence in Mary, whether we beseech her to obtain forgiveness for our sins, the conversion of our brethren, or the cure of our spiritual infirmities. Confidence, once more, in Mary, when discouragement or even despair threatens to destroy our good

resolutions and our virtuous inclinations; let us, therefore, exclaim with the Church, "Hail, holy Queen! Mother of mercy! our life! our sweetness! and our hope!"⁵

As the Apostle St. Peter saw, in a vision, a vast number of unclean creatures purified by the power of God and taken up to heaven,⁶ so do we see, O Mary, with admiration, a multitude of souls defiled by sin, converted through thy intercession, cleansed from their sins, and "brought to the haven of eternal salvation."⁷ Ah! thou art truly, for the greatest sinners, a more secure asylum than was the fortress of Bethsura for the Jews of old "who had forsaken the law;"⁸ surer than the altar of which Adonias "took hold" in order to escape the vengeance of King Solomon.⁹ Many and many a time might the just Judge, appeased by thy mediation, say to thee as David said to Abigail: "Thou hast kept me to-day from coming to blood, and revenging me with my own hand."¹⁰ How often hast thou deigned to "be

¹ *De Laudib. B. V.*

² *Serm. de Annunciat.*

³ *Serm. de Assumpt.*

⁴ *In Psalt.*

⁵ *Salv. Reg.*

⁶ *Acts x.*

⁷ *Ps. cvi. 30.*

⁸ *1 Mac. x. 14.*

⁹ *3 Kings i. 50.*

¹⁰ *1 Kings xxv. 33.*

mindful of" the little acts of homage done thee by those who might well be likened to the sinful "Rahab, or the children of Babylon,"¹ and saved them from the gulf of perdition. Multiply, O Mary! multiply unceasingly these instances of thine admirable goodness to so many poor, misguided sinners, who are hastening to everlasting destruction; they are, by the close bonds of Christian charity, as it were, "members of ourselves,"² and hence it is that we say to thee,

REFUGE OF SINNERS, PRAY FOR US.

Refugium peccatorum, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XLIV.

COMFORT OF THE AFFLICTED, PRAY
FOR US.

WHERE are the souls without affliction, hearts without anguish, or eyes without tears? This world is for man but a school of misfortune, where he must learn to rise to God, to humble himself before him, to pray to him, and to aspire to a better world, to the

* felicity of heaven; and to all the many sorrows of life is added the natural horror of death, which is, nevertheless, inevitable, and, meeting us at every turn under divers forms, seems to say, "Your turn shall soon come." Ah! if we only considered the griefs, the cruel deceptions, the profound sorrows, the inconsolable mournings, the heart-rending cares, known to God alone, should we not be tempted to exclaim, in the words of Bossuet, "Sad it is that we must live!"

But for us, Christians, God, in his admirable goodness, has deigned to prepare, side by side with these troubles, an inexhaustible source of ineffable consolation: it is the heart of Mary—a heart full of compassion; the heart of a Mother, such as never was or never shall be here below; the heart of a Mother who identifies herself with her children, who in some measure forgets herself to "weep with them that weep,"³ and to relieve, by the most tender attentions, the various ills wherewith they are afflicted.

O Mary! what a precious gift art thou from God to us, who mourn

¹ Ps. lxxxvi. 4.

² 1 Cor. xii. 27.

³ Rom. xii. 15.

and weep in this valley of tears.¹ * Beloved Mother, the very remembrance of thee is enough to lighten the load of sorrow which oppresses the heart, to assuage the bitterness with which it is filled to overflowing, to heal its most inveterate and most painful wounds! Thou wert thyself so grievously afflicted, thou so holy, thou the august Mother of our God; thou hadst to drain a chalice far beyond all human power to bear; thou wert plunged into an ocean of inconceivable affliction! And yet, even in thy greatest extremity, thou wert so calm, so resigned, so entirely given up to the divine will. Where is the sinner (and we are all sinners) that does not feel relieved in his affliction, seeing that thou, notwithstanding thine innocence, hadst to bear the full measure of human grief, and to undergo the most excruciating tortures? Who is there, besides, that does not feel a sentiment of pious consolation, thinking of all thy maternal tenderness for us, thy lively sympathy, thy devotion, thine ever-active and compassionate charity?

¹ Lamentations of Jeremias, ii. 18.

² Cant. iv. 11.

³ Cant. ii. 13, 14.

Yes, our divine Mother has for us, unhappy as we are, an expansive and benevolent tenderness beyond our reach of comprehension. The celestial Spouse compares the sweetness, the gentleness expressed in all her words while on earth, to every thing sweetest in nature. "Thy lips," says he, "are as a dropping honeycomb, honey and milk are under thy tongue."² And, elsewhere, wishing to excite our admiration of Mary's ravishing sweetness, he is, as it were, captivated by it himself. "Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come, let thy voice sound in my ears, for thy voice is sweet."³ Hence St. Bernard might well say that "she was all benignity, all goodness, that she made herself all to all, and showed unto all a superabundant charity."⁴ "O Mary!" exclaims that holy doctor, "O Mother, inexpressibly amiable, still and always does thy name penetrate the heart with a holy emanation of that divine sweetness wherewith the Lord enriched thy fair soul!"⁵ "No, no," adds St. Antoninus, "there is not one among

⁴ Serm. de Verbis Apoc. Signum magnum.

⁵ Serm. Paneg. B. M. V.

the saints in heaven who compassionates our miseries like that blessed Virgin Mary."¹

Let us then apply to that heavenly comforter in all our troubles, especially our spiritual troubles; let us pour them forth into her maternal heart; she will not betray our confidence, for "she is the sweetest relief for anguish," says St. John Damascene, "the surest remedy for moral sufferings."²

Who could measure, O blessed Virgin, "the breadth, and length, and height, and depth"³ of thy merciful goodness! "From thine infancy mercy grew up with thee, and it came out with thee from thy Mother's womb;"⁴ it was for men, *before* the foundation of the Church, like the morning-star in the clouds; *after*, like the full-orbed moon; and since thou hast ascended to heaven, it has shone with all the splendor of the glorious sun. O Thou whom we love to call, after God, "the comfort of our life,"⁵ our hope in the day of affliction,"⁶ thou whom the Lord employs to change our grief and mourning into joy, as he formerly

made use of the pious Esther to succor and console his people, be also our support in our sufferings and our desolation! We will approach thee, O Mary, with that lively faith, that sincere piety, which ought to distinguish thy true servants. Grant always that sighs and tears, sorrow, and suffering, and tribulation, may be profitable to all who say to thee, in the fullness of their filial affection,

COMFORT OF THE AFFLICTED, PRAY FOR US.

Consolatrix Afflictorum, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XLV.

HELP OF CHRISTIANS, PRAY FOR US.

THOU wert, in every age, O Mary, the succor, the protecting arm of thy Son's disciples, and the Church their mother; but this was especially the case on certain memorable occasions when all seemed to conspire for the annihilation of the admirable work of the divine Jesus!

¹ P. 4, t. 15, c. 2.

² Orat. 2 de Dormit. Deip.

³ Ephes. iii. 18.

⁴ Job xxxi. 18.

⁵ Tobias x. 4.

⁶ Jerem. xvii. 17.



1 2222 50

Pope Pius 7

NEW YORK, D. & J. SADLER & CO



Islamism, in the sixteenth century, threatened to invade Europe and destroy Christianity. A formidable fleet sailed proudly into the Gulf of Lepanto, under the ensign of the Crescent; the ships of the faithful, though inferior in number, hesitated not to range themselves before them in battle array, trusting in thy protection, and Juan of Austria, their chief, made a vow to visit, in person, thine august sanctuary of Loretto. Meanwhile, the city of Rome resounded with the solemn and public singing of the Rosary, intended to propitiate thee on behalf of the Catholic arms. On a sudden, the holy Pope, Pius V., cries out, under thine inspiration, "The Christian fleet has conquered!" And so it had; official news speedily arrived announcing the entire defeat of the Mussulmans; and, in memory of such a magnificent testimony of thy protection, the same holy Pontiff added to the Litany which we all so love to repeat in thy honor, that new invocation, *Help of Christians, pray for us!* Often since then, O glorious Queen, hast thou vouchsafed to manifest thy protect-

* ing care of thy people in a manner equally striking.

Under the walls of Vienna, in the seventeenth century, two hundred and thirty thousand Turkish soldiers were put to flight by a Christian army incomparably less numerous. This took place within the octave of thy Nativity, and on the very day when solemn supplications were offered up, in the city of Munich, to Mary the *Help of Christians*. The honor of that brilliant victory was referred to thee by the conqueror himself, who, on the morning of the action, having assisted at the holy sacrifice and participated in the divine mysteries, had encouraged his officers by promising them the assistance of Heaven through thine intercession.

Thirty years after, the Emperor Charles VI. obtains a signal victory over the same enemies of the Christian name, on the day when thy protection, O divine Virgin, was solemnly invoked for him in Rome! and, very soon after, on the octaveday of thy glorious Assumption, Corfu hails thee with joyful acclamations for having put to flight the infidels by whom it was besieged.

Admirable series of victories gained over the Crescent by Mary's assistance! They shall live forever in the grateful hearts of the faithful, who owe her the consolation of celebrating, every year, the solemnity of the holy Rosary throughout the whole extent of the Catholic world!

But that was not enough for the glory of the Blessed Virgin! Providence had ordained that her title of *Help of Christians* should be consecrated by a special festival. During his long and arduous struggle against the most formidable prince and captain of modern times, Pius VII. had never ceased to invoke that heavenly *Help*. His confidence was not betrayed. Napoleon, that mighty Colossus, fell; the venerable old man returned in triumph to the Eternal City, and he decreed that the anniversary of that joyful day should be solemnized by the special feast of Our Lady, the *Help of Christians*.

Yes, the constant, the powerful, the universal *Help of Christians*! Help against the might of armies; help against the oppression of political power; help against persecu-

tions; help against all the storms that hell can raise around the Church of God on earth, and which tend to retard her precious conquests, to diminish the number of the faithful, to draw multitudes of souls to destruction. Let us every day invoke, with new fervor, the *Help of Christians*, that she may vouchsafe to avert all these dangers. But let us also supplicate her for ourselves, that we may be confirmed in faith and in virtue; that we may prevail over the scandals of every kind by which we are surrounded; for it is written, "Let him who stands, take heed lest he fall."¹ Let us, then, have recourse to her with all the confidence she deserves. "All is subject to her control," says St. Antoninus.² "Thy name alone is omnipotent, after God," exclaims St. Bonaventure!³

O Mary! "invincible shield"⁴ of Christians, who hast so wonderfully manifested thy protection, to thee, still more than to Judith, it belongs to say, "Wo be to the nation that riseth up against my people: for the Lord Almighty will take revenge

¹ 1 Cor. x. 12.

² Serm. 61.

³ In Can. 4.

⁴ Wisdom v. 20.

on them."¹ Eternal glory be to thee for having "broken," in our behalf, "the powers of bows, the shield, the sword, and the battle,"² and for having given us such consoling motives for trusting in thee against all the enemies of God's children and of his holy Church. With her we love to say, "Vouchsafe to assist those who groan under the weight of their misery; deign to animate the slothful, to strengthen the weak, to console the afflicted. Vouchsafe to pray for all Christian people, to intercede for the clergy, and for the devout female sex. Let all the faithful feel the effects of thy powerful succor, but especially those who are mindful of thee,"³ and implore thee with a sweet and filial confidence.

HELP OF CHRISTIANS, PRAY FOR US.

Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XLVI.

QUEEN OF ANGELS, PRAY FOR US.

LET us rise on the wings of faith to that immortal country where

* God himself is the infinite reward of the just,⁴ and renders to every man according to his works.⁵ What shall we see there? The thrones of pontiffs, martyrs, apostles, prophets, patriarchs, and our eyes will contemplate with delight, with ecstasy, that vision of grandeur and glory. But in vain would we look for Mary there. Let us go still higher, even up to the choirs of angels; the cherubim, the seraphim, all those "thousands of thousands"⁶ of pure spirits who shine before "the holy of holies"⁷ like changeless suns; is it there that the VIRGIN by excellence enjoys her beatitude? No, no, higher, higher still. Above angels and archangels, near the throne of the glorified Man-God, another throne will meet our dazzled eyes, another throne only lower than that of Jesus, and loftier than those of all the heavenly powers; and on that throne sits a daughter of Eve invested with glory only less than that of Jesus, but richer, more entrancing than that of even the highest angels of the heavenly hierarchy; it is the

¹ Judith xvi. 20.

² Ps. lxxv. 4.

³ Sancta Maria, *Succurre miseris*, etc.

⁴ Gen. xv. 1.

⁶ Dan. vii. 10.

⁵ St. Matt. xvi. 27.

⁷ Dan. ix. 24.

most Blessed Virgin, the Creator's masterpiece, the *Queen of Angels*.

"She is, in fact," says St. Epiphanius, "above all beings, except God alone."¹ "Her dignity as Mother of the Creator," says St. John Damascene, "makes her the Queen of all creatures."² "She who is entitled to call God her Son," exclaims St. Bernard, "must necessarily be superior to all the choirs of angels. Ah! do homage, ye heavenly spirits, to the Mother of your divine King, ye who adore the blessed fruit of our beloved Virgin's womb!"³ "Jesus," says St. Antoninus, "has placed on her head a diadem of glory and magnificence, which makes the angels themselves subject to this divine Queen."⁴

And was it not this future greatness and glory of the Blessed Virgin that the Archangel Gabriel honored beforehand, when he saluted her with so much veneration, and in terms so pompous and magnificent? Veneration and honor lawfully due to her who was to be invested with the admirable quality of beloved

* Daughter of the Eternal Father, beloved Mother of the Son, beloved Spouse of the Holy Ghost, and who was to be raised by her divine maternity above all the powers of earth and heaven. Moreover, how could the celestial messenger fail to recognize "his Queen in her whom he saluted as Mother of his divine King?"⁵ And if the angels are infinitely inferior to the human nature of the Incarnate Word, for St. Paul says, "To which of the angels hath God said at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?"⁶ why should they not be inferior to her who could likewise say to that same Jesus, Thou art my Son,⁷ I bore thee in my "womb, and nourished thee?"⁸

But who then is this creature of such exalted dignity, before whom the angels bow down penetrated with respect and admiration, this creature whom they hasten to serve, repeating in a transport of holy joy, "Rule thou *eternally* over us and thy Son?"⁹ . . . Ah! it is the humble daughter of Anne and Joachim, it

¹ *De Laudib. Virg.*

² *Lib. 4 Fidei orthod.*, c. 15.

³ *Honil. super Missus est.*

⁴ *Serm. de Assumpt.*

⁵ *St. Athan., Serm. de Deip.*

⁶ *Heb. i. 5.*

⁷ *Heb. i. 5.*

⁸ *2 Mac. vii. 27.*

⁹ *Judg. viii. 22*

is the obscure Virgin once betrothed to a poor mechanic; it is the pitiable young Mother who found in Bethlehem only a stable, a crib, a little straw whereon to place her new-born infant, who was forced to fly her native land and take refuge in a strange country to save the precious life of her adorable child, who lived always simple, always hidden, even after the glorious resurrection and ascension of her divine Son. The way to glory, solid glory, the only glory worthy the name, eternal glory, is, then, the way of humility in this world. To be little in the eyes of others, little in one's own eyes, and great before the Lord, by a simple, unostentatious virtue, this is the precious secret which Mary teaches us by her life, as Jesus teaches it by his divine precepts and his divine example, as he remains ever before our eyes in the ineffable mystery of the Eucharist. Let us imitate him, let us imitate his divine Mother, and humble ourselves that we may be eternally exalted.¹

¹ St. Matt. xxiii. 12.

"Hail, O Queen of Heaven enthroned,
Hail, by angels mistress own'd!"

What is there, after God, so great as thee, who received infinite majesty into thy womb, thee whom that infinite majesty vouchsafed to obey! "Miracle on both sides," justly observes St. Bernard. "In the Son a miracle of humility, in the Mother a miracle of greatness and elevation!"² O Mary! Queen of Angels, vouchsafe to be mindful of thy servants on earth, look down on them with pitying love and kindness, as afflicted brethren, unfortunate children. Deign to assist us, to keep us ever in the way of salvation, till the moment of our final departure from this world of trial; vouchsafe to send our angels to visit and console us if we are condemned by divine justice to the temporary fire of expiation, and plead for us that we may be speedily admitted into heaven. May we merit these inestimable favors by constantly saying with sincere devotion:

QUEEN OF ANGELS, PRAY FOR US.

Regina Angelorum, ora pro nobis

² Hymn Ave, Reg. cœl. ³ Homil. 1 sup. Missus est.

MEDITATION XLVII.

QUEEN OF PATRIARCHS, PRAY FOR US.

ON earth, the holy patriarchs had "saluted from afar"¹ with a lively faith, a sweet and firm hope, that wondrous woman whom the Lord had announced, in the beginning, as about to bring forth the Saviour of the world. In heaven they offered her, with unequalled joy, the tribute of their love and veneration, as having, through Our Lord Jesus Christ, introduced them "into the everlasting dwellings."²

First, it is Adam who admires and blesses in Mary the new Eve, the true "Mother of all the living,"³ whose heel has crushed the head of the infernal serpent,⁴ the seducer of the first Eve; she whose divine Son came to repair the primitive fall in so marvellous a manner that the Church cries out in the fervor of her gratitude, "O happy transgression! which obtained for us a Redeemer so great and so admirable!"⁵

After Adam, Noah, chosen to be the second father of mankind, doom-

* ed to perish* in the Deluge, contemplates with delight her whom the Church calls "our life and our hope;"⁶ Abraham, who did not hesitate to sacrifice to God his only son, on whose life naturally depended the existence of the people destined to bring forth the Messiah, Abraham honors and praises with transport the Mother of the adorable only Son of whom Isaac was the symbol,⁷ and in whom "all the nations of the earth have been blessed,"⁸ according to the promises of God. Then it is Jacob who celebrates the glory of that excellent Virgin, of whom was born on earth "the salvation of the Lord,"⁹ the object of his most ardent wishes. Again, it is Joseph, the Saviour of Egypt,¹⁰ who renders solemn homage to the Mother of "the Saviour of the world,"¹¹ whose sanctity, sufferings, and glory were so admirably prefigured by his own innocence, misfortunes, and subsequent elevation; Moses, too, admires and extols her who has since given to the world "the *divine* Prophet, like unto *him*;"¹² like him, legislator,

¹ Heb. xi. 13.⁴ Gen. iii. 15.² St. Luke xvi. 9.⁵ Rom. Miss., Holy Sat.³ Gen. iii. 20.⁶ *Salv. Reg.*⁷ Heb. xi. 19.¹⁰ Gen. xli. 45.⁸ Gen. xxii. 17, 18.¹¹ St. John iv. 42.⁹ Gen. xlix. 18.¹² Deut. xviii. 15, 18.

miracle-worker, and liberator; in a word, all "the chief fathers and heads" of the elect of the Lord, now happy inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem,¹ all delight to acknowledge that it is through HER the immortal diadem encircles their radiant brow, crying to her forever: "Thy dominion is of truth, and meekness, and justice; and thy right hand shall conduct thee wonderfully!"²

But what was it that merited for them this inestimable crown? Their fidelity to God, their faith in the future Redeemer, and their desire to "see *his* day,"³—fidelity, faith, desire, which had attained the highest degree of perfection in the soul of the Blessed Virgin before she was favored with the blissful embassy from above. If, for instance, the faith and fidelity of Abraham were little less than miraculous, how must it be with Mary, elevated so high in heaven above that holy patriarch, in heaven where each takes precedence according to his merit! If Abraham so longed to see the coming of Christ, how

intense must have been that same desire in the soul of her of whom St. Proclus said, that "no patriarch could in any way be compared to her!"⁴

For us, O ineffable happiness! we have not to desire, we have but to enjoy; we have not only the sweet consolation of hope, but the delicious fruit of reality. Jesus came "from heaven,"⁵ he hath visited *the earth*;⁶ he hath enlightened, sanctified, and saved it, endowed it with gifts the most magnificent, and spiritual resources the most precious. Still more, he has fixed his dwelling "in this valley of tears,"⁷ which would have been but too highly favored by possessing him for some years, nay, moments. . . . Alas! and we are regardless of his continual and adorable presence; and we neglect to visit that divine guest, who seems to forget himself, and to make it "*his* delight to be with the children of men!"⁸ Oh! might it not be truly said of us what John the Baptist said of the Jews, contemporaries of the divine Jesus: "There standeth one in the

¹ 1 Paral. viii. 28.

² Ps. xlv. 5

³ St. John viii. 56.

⁴ Orat. 5, in *S. Deip.*

⁵ St. John iii. 13.

⁶ St. Luke i. 78.

⁷ *Salv. Reg.*

⁸ Prov. viii. 31.

midst of you, whom you know not; the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose!"¹

O Mary! "sweet hope of the patriarchs,"² who didst possess in a manner so intimate Him who was their "desire," make us appreciate the infinite happiness that we enjoy in possessing Him ourselves, together with all the graces of which he is the inexhaustible source. As the Messiah to come had been the centre of thy most ardent wishes, so the Messiah, when he did come, was the centre of all thine affections; and he has been, under thine auspices, the only object of the love and devotion of those illustrious founders of religious orders known in the Church as the Patriarchs of the New Testament. May it be so with us, O divine Mother! May our faith especially become so lively, that we may clearly see and sensibly feel that, by the adorable mystery of the continual presence of Jesus on our altars, "earth becomes a heaven,"³ and that the holy Eucharist ought to be the chief object of our

thoughts, desires, and affections! In order that we may faithfully discharge this pious duty to the glory of thy divine Son,

QUEEN OF PATRIARCHS, PRAY FOR US.

Regina Patriarcharum, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XLVIII.

QUEEN OF PROPHETS, PRAY FOR US.

LIVING prodigies of supernatural knowledge, the prophets of old drew the most perfect picture of the Messiah, many ages beforehand. "The most ancient made, as it were, the first sketch; those who came after them successively finished the imperfect work of their predecessors. The nearer they came to the event, the more lively became their colors; "and when the picture was completed, the last, as he withdrew, pointed out the holy Precursor who was to say, 'Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world!'"⁴

¹ St. John i. 26, 27.

² St. Ephraim, *de Laudib. B. V.*

³ S. Chrys., *Homil.* 24, in 1 Cor.

⁴ Letters of M. Drack, a converted Rabbin.

But while painting the several stages of the Saviour's mortal life, the divers characters of his person and ministry, the marvellous fruits of his mission, could they not perceive the august Mother of the Man-God, that admirable daughter of Eve, whose glorious co-operation in the salvation of the world had been announced by the Lord himself at the very beginning?¹

Ah! undoubtedly the sweet and majestic figure of Mary must often have made their hearts throb as they wrote the prophetic history of her divine Son; how often must this have been the case with David,² with Ezechiel,³ with Isaiah,⁴ who were favored with special revelations of the greatness of the Virgin-Mother!

Now that they behold her glory unveiled, in the mansions of eternal bliss, now that they see her crowned "as universal sovereign of every creature,"⁵ how joyfully do they render homage to their heavenly Queen! how profoundly do they venerate the excellence of the di-

vine lights wherewith she herself was favored by the Lord!

It was only on certain phases of the Redeemer's life that each of the prophets was enlightened: but thou, Queen of Prophets, thou didst embrace the whole course of their predictions, thou didst penetrate their whole meaning, according to the thought of St. Liguori;⁶ thou hast seen and heard what they desired to see and hear!⁷ The prophets, animated by the sacred fire of inspiration, reached an elevation of thought and tone which charms and astonishes us in their writings; and thou, filled with the Holy Ghost,⁸ transported with joy in God thy Saviour,⁹ thou hast composed, in his honor, a hymn of gratitude, in which we find a fullness of feeling, a sublimity of expression, a divine enthusiasm far exceeding these ancient oracles of the Most High! Thou didst predict, thou, the poor and humble daughter of the tribe of Juda, that "all generations should call thee blessed;"¹⁰ an astounding prophecy which all ages and all

¹ Gen. iii. 15.

² Ezech. xlv. 2.

³ Ps. xlv.

⁴ Is. vii. 14.

⁵ S. J. Damascene, Lib. 4, *de Fide Orthod.*

⁶ *Sermon on the Sorrows of Mary.*

⁷ St. Luke x. 24.

⁸ St. Luke i. 47.

⁹ St. Luke i. 35.

¹⁰ St. Luke i. 48.

nations have constantly fulfilled for eighteen centuries! Thou didst likewise foretell the future destiny of the Church, the true people of God, the true Israel which the Lord "hath received, being mindful of his mercy; as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed," which is to last "forever;"¹ and the perpetual combats, the perpetual triumphs of the Church have ever since testified the divinity of the inspiration which dictated the words!

"How happy are we," says the great bishop of Meaux, speaking in this connection; "how happy are we, in that God has vouchsafed to bind himself to us by promise! He might have given us what he would; but why promise it to us, if not, as Mary said, to transmit his mercy from age to age;"² that mercy so admirably manifested by the coming of the Messiah, who himself promises to preserve his work "even to the consummation of the world."³ Let us rest, with unshaken faith, on his divine word: "heaven and earth shall pass away, but *it* shall not

pass away."⁴ Let us profit by the faithful accomplishment of Mary's prophecy and her Son's promise, from the dawn of Christianity to the present day, in order to revive our confidence in the other words of the Holy Gospel; and let us give ourselves wholly up to the blessed hopes of faith, wherein we ought "to drown all the false hopes with which this world seeks to amuse us."⁵

In the ecstasy of thy gratitude to the Lord, the future was opened to thine eyes, O Mary, and thou didst announce the pious and solemn worship wherewith "all generations" were to honor thee, together with the perpetuity of the Church, which is to live, and struggle, and triumph, "even to the consummation of the world." Ah! it is with sweet consolation that we behold the marvellous fulfillment of thy words, through the lapse of so many ages; it is with heartfelt joy that we recognize in thee, with St. Basil, her whom Isaiah had designated under the title of "prophetess,"⁶ and to whom "the seers of Israel"⁷

¹ St. Luke i. 54, 55.

² St. Matt. xxviii. 20.

³ *Elev. sur les Myst.*

⁴ St. Matt. xxiv. 35.

⁵ Bossuet, *Elev. sur les Myst.*

⁶ *In. Is. proph.*, c. 8.

⁷ Is. xxx. 10.

give testimony"¹ in their predictions regarding the divine Redeemer. O thou whom David calls "the glorious daughter of the king, clothed round about with varieties!"² vouchsafe to obtain for us that we may always join our feeble voices in the universal concert which proclaims thee "blessed;" to rest always on the infallible oracles of the Gospel; never to let ourselves be shaken either by scandals or by persecutions, but to "persevere *faithfully* to the end,"³ in the faith and works which she alone inspires.

QUEEN OF PROPHETS, PRAY FOR US.

Regina Prophetarum, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION XLIX.

QUEEN OF APOSTLES, PRAY FOR US.

WHAT the most learned philosophers, the most eloquent orators, the ablest and most powerful men never thought of undertaking; nay, what they could never have accomplished, even if they had dared to attempt it, twelve poor

fishermen of Galilee, without any human resource, not only undertook, but happily accomplished. The Apostles divided the world amongst themselves for conquest, to establish "all over the earth a new worship, a new sacrifice, a new law, promulgated by Jesus, crucified in Jerusalem. All the inducement they had to offer was this: Come and serve Jesus; whosoever gives himself to Him shall be happy after his death; but in the mean time he must undergo all manner of suffering."⁴ And, to preach this doctrine, they brave torments, nay, death itself; and they "draw all things to *themselves*,"⁵ and soon the whole heathen world adores Jesus and follows his Gospel.

Divine zeal, divine devotion, and, undoubtedly, divine success! But what part had Mary in this great work, to merit the title of *Queen of Apostles*? Ah! that august Virgin, who had a right to that title from the very pre-eminence of her divine maternity, contributed wonderfully to the formation, increase, and support of the infant Church.

¹ Acts x. 43.

² Ps. xliv. 15.

³ St. Matt. x. 22.

⁴ Bossuet, *Panegyric on St. Andrew*.

⁵ St. John xii. 32.

Do we not see her, in the beginning, during that pious retreat by which the Apostles prepared themselves, according to the Saviour's recommendation, to "receive the power of the Holy Ghost,"¹ do we not see her "persevering in prayer with them?"² "And who could suppose," says St. Antoninus, "that she did not receive with them, on the day of Pentecost, the marvellous gifts wherewith they were all endowed by the Holy Ghost, in order that nothing might be wanting to complete her greatness?"³ "Yes, truly," observes St. Thomas, "the Blessed Virgin was plenteously endowed with the gift of wisdom, the gift of miracles, and the gift of prophecy."⁴ Doubtless, she was not to exercise the ministry of the Apostles; but all these graces were bestowed on her as appendages due to her dignity as Mother of God; could such a mother, in so far as comporting with her sex, be left inferior to those who called themselves "the servants of Jesus,"⁵ and

of whom St. Anselm and St. Bonaventure did not hesitate to say "that they were the disciples of Her who brought Him forth."⁶

And, in fact, it was Mary who must have revealed to the Apostles all those circumstances of the mysteries which could not have come under their cognizance, and which they were yet to make known to the world; it was she who had to furnish them with the precious and consoling details of the hidden life of Jesus; for, according to the words of the Gospel, "she kept all these things, pondering them in her heart,"⁷ "in order," says Venerable Bede, "that when the time came, she might communicate them to the Apostles and Evangelists."⁸ And how can we doubt that she was their teacher and preceptress when St. Ambrose said that "it was from her that St. John, that sublime eagle, derived his high and admirable notions of the divinity of the Word?"⁹

But she is still more entitled to

¹ St. Luke xix. 42; Acts i. 3.

² Acts i. 14.

³ 4 Part., tit. vi., c. 12.

⁴ 3 Part., i. c. 22, art. 5.

⁵ St. James i. 1; 2 Peter i. 1; Jude i.

⁶ St. Anselm, *de Concord. Verp.*, c. 21; St. Bonaventure, *in quest. serm. in Prov.*

⁷ St. Luke ii. 19.

⁸ Homil. in Luc., cap. 2.

⁹ Lib. de mundat. Verp., c. 7; Præf. in Joan.

be called *Queen of Apostles* from her benign influence on the spread of the Gospel. Her example was an effective lesson: was she not, in a word, the most faithful image of the divine Jesus, "the most striking reflex of his life?"¹ says St. Lawrence Justinian. Her discourse had a marvellous efficacy: it is written that "from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh,"² and the "heart of Mary was," says St. Bernardine, "a furnace of divine love."³ Her prayers were at once the purest, the most humble, the most fervent; and who can tell with what zeal and fervor that divine Mother begged of Heaven the development of her Son's great work?

In imitation of Mary, let us ever concur, as far as we are able, in promoting the interests of the Church, and assisting the pious missionaries who still carry on the work of the first apostles. Let us be apostles ourselves, by our example, our discourse, our co-operation in good works, so that "the

name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in us."⁴

O Mary, whom Jesus left on earth, after his glorious ascension, to exercise a zeal more than apostolic, "to be the strength and support of his Church,"⁵ thou who didst not only participate in all the gifts which the Apostles received from Heaven, but wast also their light and their model, oh! how justly art thou called the Queen of those twelve *heroes* whose names are written in the foundations of "the holy city."⁶ May thy heart, so zealous for the glory of Jesus, communicate to ours some sparks of that sacred fire which pious souls always seek to diffuse around them! Grant, at least, that, by a good and holy life, "our light may so shine before men, that they may see *our* good works, and glorify *our* Father who is in heaven."⁷

QUEEN OF APOSTLES, PRAY FOR US.

Regina Apostolorum, ora pro nobis.

¹ *De triumphâ agon. Christ.* ² *Serm. ix. de Visit.*

³ St. Matt. xii. 34.

⁴ 2 Thess. i. 12.

⁵ Bos., *Serm. sur l'Assompt.*

⁶ Apoc. xxi. 10, 14.

⁷ St. Matt. v. 16.

MEDITATION I.

QUEEN OF MARTYRS, PRAY FOR US.

WHO will give us to describe the sorrows of the Virgin-Mother in suitable terms? O Mary! how well mightest thou say that thy affliction was "great as the sea."¹ Attend and see if there be any sorrow "like unto my sorrow!"²

We are moved by the sight of blood, we cannot view with indifference that of one of our fellow-creatures shed by violence; we suffer cruelly if it be that of a friend, still more if it be that of a brother; more, ah! much more, if it be that of a loving and beloved son. But, if it be the most tender of mothers who has to witness that sad spectacle, how much deeper and more acute is the feeling! And, if the son whom she sees immolated be an only son, endowed with the rarest qualities, ah! no human tongue could express the extremity of that moral suffering.

Thou wert that Mother, O Mary! Jesus was that only Son, that incomparable Son at whose execution

* thou hadst to assist. O thou whom the Church so aptly styles "the Mother of sorrow,"³ tell us—for we can neither feel nor describe it—tell us how sharp the sword was which pierced thy heart,⁴ at every stroke of the hammer when Jesus was nailed to the Cross; tell us how great was thine anguish, what a long and fearful agony was thine, when, for three hours, thou wert forced to contemplate that most amiable Son so cruelly suspended on an infamous gibbet. Or rather be silent, O divine Mary! keep up that silence, so heroic, so eloquent, so sublime, which thine immense grief imposed on itself on Calvary; that superhuman silence tells us more, infinitely more, than all the cries, all the groans, all the sobs of a desolate mother! . . . Oh! how willingly wouldst thou have given thy life for his; what a consolation it would have been for thee at least to mingle thy blood with his. But no; it was necessary that thou shouldst be "more than martyr," according to St. Bernard⁵ and St. Bonaventure,⁶ by suffering all that

¹ Lament. ii. 13.² *Stabat.*³ Lament. ii. 12.⁴ St. Luke ii. 35.⁵ Serm. 12, de *Prærogativis B. M. V.*⁶ *In Spec.*, lect. 4.

must naturally have killed thee, with the certainty that death would not come to terminate thy inexpressible torments. Thus it was that thou wert to win the glorious title of *Queen of Martyrs* by the unheard-of excess of thy sufferings, compared with which St. Anselm "estimates lightly all the sufferings of all the heroes of Christianity,"¹ who, nevertheless, "endured scourging, chains, and imprisonment, were stoned, sawed asunder, tortured in every possible way, they of whom the world was not worthy."²

But Calvary was not the only scene of the Virgin's martyrdom. When the sacred body of our Lord had been taken down from the Cross, tradition says that it was laid in her arms before being consigned to the tomb. Who, then, can conceive what was passing in the heart of such a mother at such a moment? To hold in her arms the inanimate body of her beloved Son, that body so cruelly torn and mangled; to regard with her loving eyes the deep wounds through which had flowed the precious blood

that was to regenerate the world; to retrace in her mind all the frightful scenes of the passion—oh, what torture! St. Augustine says that "all the sorrows of Jesus had been the sorrows of Mary, that the Son's cross and nails had been also the Mother's."³ Hence, all that she had before felt, all that had crushed and torn her tender heart, was renewed, but with still increased bitterness, with extreme desolation, with unequalled and inexpressible sufferings.

What a lesson for us all, children of the Gospel! Jesus and Mary entered upon eternal glory by the way of suffering and pain. Jesus, the Holy One, by excellence! Mary, the holiest of creatures! And we, sinners by nature, sinners by inclination, would we pretend to gain it by any other way? The Cross is the earthly portion left us by the Man-God—the Cross, which is, as it were, the sure pledge of the "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled,"⁴ which he promises to our patience, to our resignation, to our tried fidelity, for it is written,

¹ *De excellent. Virg.*, c. 5.

² Heb. xi. 36, 37, 38.

³ *Serm. de Pass. Dom.*

⁴ 1 Pet. i. 4.

"If we suffer we shall also reign with him."¹

O tender Mother, who didst endure, at the foot of the Cross, sufferings much more exerceiating than the martyrdom of the body; O Thou whose prayer and example must have greatly encouraged all those "who overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony,"² in whose name the glorious St. Stephen offers thee his palm and his crown, deign to compassionate our troubles and sustain our weakness. Turn away the chalice from us if it become too bitter for our feeble virtue, or, otherwise, obtain for us strength to say boldly with the Saviour, "Thy will be done!"³ Make us well understand that saying of the divine Master, that "whosoever doth not carry his Cross and go after *him*, cannot be his disciple;"⁴ and that we may have the happiness "in our patience *always* to possess our souls."⁵

QUEEN OF MARTYRS, PRAY FOR US.
Regina Martyrum, ora pro nobis.

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 12.

² St. Matt. xxvi. 42.

³ Apoc. xii. 11.

⁴ St. Luke xiv. 27.

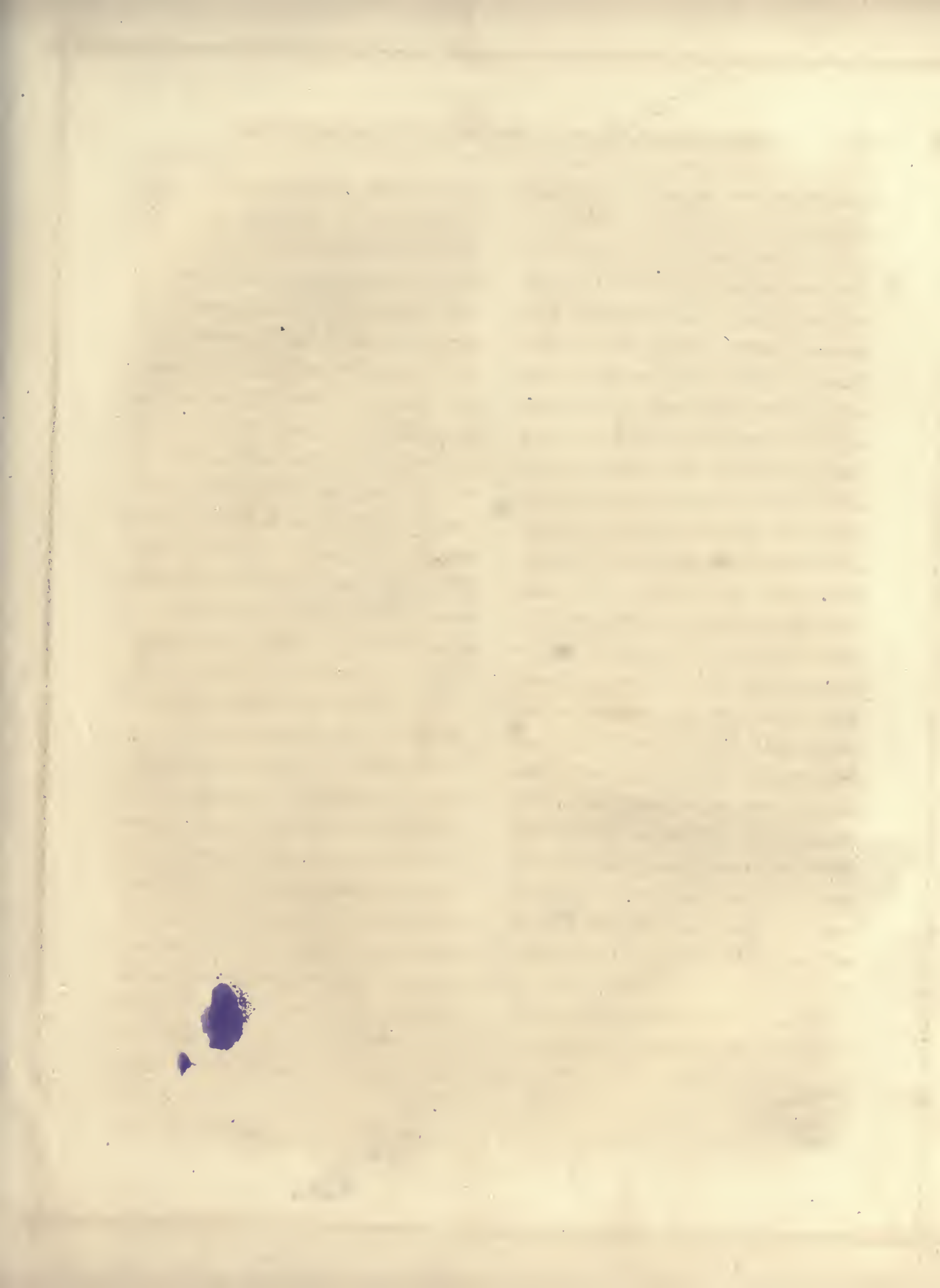
⁵ St. Luke xxi. 19.

MEDITATION LI.

QUEEN OF CONFESSORS, PRAY FOR US.

GLORY to you, noble confessors of the faith, who counted it as precious "gain" to brave the wrath of the enemies of Christ, and boldly proclaim yourselves his disciples at the peril of your lives! Glory to you, who, when Providence did not call you to such trials, still professed your subjection to that divine Master by the practice of every evangelical virtue, by the eminent sanctity of your life! But still greater glory to Mary, by so many titles your august Queen!

You proved yourselves ever and always the devoted servants of the divine Saviour; but was not Mary still more, more courageously devoted to her divine Son? Your heart was penetrated with an ardent and generous love for him; but was not Mary's heart a furnace of incomparable love? You braved, for him, outrages, dangers, obstacles of every kind; but did not Mary participate in all the sufferings and privations of his mortal life, and in all the persecutions which he had to undergo? How many times was





he calumniated, reviled by his enemies! How many times did the contumely heaped on the Son revert to the Mother! Consider the scoffing tone in which those who refused to believe in Jesus said, "Is not his mother called Mary?"¹ how, even in the extremity of his torment, his enemies loaded him with derision, contempt, and bitter reproach; and Mary, standing beneath the infamous gibbet, must she not have had her share of their hatred and vituperation?

In the midst of all the ribaldry, all the blasphemous sarcasms uttered by the persecutors of Jesus, O Mary, "O woman, by excellence, the pride and glory of thy sex, how great is thy faith,"² how admirable are thy love and thy devotion! All the Apostles of Jesus deserted him, with the single exception of St. John; even Peter, their chief, who had so boldly protested that he would be faithful even unto death, denied him three times publicly and on oath; and thou, in presence of the furious Jews, in presence of the executioners reeking with the blood of Jesus, thou displayest the heroism

* of thy great soul, thou regardest the bleeding Victim with adoration, love, and tender devotion, when Heaven itself seems to abandon him! Who, then, can ever be compared with thee, O Mary! O thou whose faith in the divine Redeemer was so magnanimous!

And who, moreover, ever equalled this divine Virgin in the sublime practice of all the virtues which distinguish a holy soul and make its life an eloquent Gospel lesson, or in the possession of the precious gifts which secure an eminent rank in heaven? Purity, modesty, humility, meekness, detachment, poverty, obedience, piety, fervent love of God, inexhaustible charity for her neighbor, burning zeal for the glory of God, perfect submission to his adorable will, absolute abandonment to his providence, patience in every trial; in a word, all the virtues shine in Mary, in the very highest degree. Hence it is that St. Peter Chrysologus calls her "the living assemblage of all the treasures of sanctity;"³ St. John Damascene, "the sanctuary of all virtues."⁴

¹ St. Matt. xiii. 55.

² St. Matt. xv. 28.

³ Serm. 146.

⁴ Lib. iv. *de Fide Orthod.*

Let us learn of this admirable Queen of all confessors to despise human respect, and to live as worthy disciples of Jesus Christ. Amid all the sarcasms of the world let us proudly raise our heads, marked with the noble sign of the Cross in baptism and in confirmation; let us brave, with a holy courage, the threats and scoffs of "the children of this world,"¹ remembering that infallible saying of Him who will judge them as well as us: "Whoever shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven; but whosoever shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven."² Let us not forget that earnest admonition of the divine Master: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven!"³

Most august Virgin, before whose throne the confessors of the faith of Christ prostrate themselves, and

render homage, some for the "crowns"⁴ which they have worn, under thine auspices, to his greater glory; others for the heavenly "doctrine" which shone in their lives and in their writings, and which they had, as it were, "received"⁵ through thy benign protection. O thou who didst always and in all things confess the name of "the Holy One,"⁶ obtain for us grace to "fight the good fight of faith,"⁷ amid the impious and corrupt world in which we are placed. Thou who wast always the perfect created model of every evangelical virtue, obtain for us grace to make our faith honorable by our works, "lest the name and doctrine of the Lord be blasphemed;"⁸ and that "by doing well, we may silence the ignorance of foolish men,"⁹ and induce them by our example to "glorify God,"¹⁰ whom we beseech thee to propitiate by thy powerful intercession.

QUEEN OF CONFESSORS, PRAY FOR US.
Regina Confessorum, ora pro nobis.

¹ St. Luke xvi. 8.

² St. Matt. v. 16.

³ St. Matt. x. 32, 33.

⁴ Apoc. iv. 10.

⁵ Deut. xxxiii. 3.

⁶ Eccl. xlvii. 9.

⁷ 1 Tim. vi. 1.

⁸ 1 Tim. vi. 12.

⁹ 1 Pet. ii. 15.

¹⁰ 1 Pet. ii. 12.

MEDITATION LII.

QUEEN OF VIRGINS, PRAY FOR US.

YES, thou art the *Queen of Virgins*, O admirable Mary, who, first amongst the daughters of Eve, and contrary to the prejudices of thy nation, "promised to the Lord a perpetual chastity!"¹ It was thou who, according to St. Ambrose, "raised the standard of virginity,"² thou who didst carry the angelic virtue to such perfection, that St. John Damascene calls thee "the treasure of virginal purity."³

And certainly it required all that in her who was destined for an incomprehensible greatness. "Incorruption bringeth near to God," says the Holy Ghost himself, in the book of Wisdom.⁴ It must, then, have been sufficiently perfect in Mary to render her as worthy as possible of "the closest union with a person of infinite majesty;"⁵ "a union so admirable," says Albertus Magnus, "that Mary could not have been more closely united to the Deity,

* unless she were identified with him!"⁶

But it is not solely on account of this marvellous privilege that all virgins salute Mary, in heaven, as their queen: Was she not for them, on earth, a safeguard, as well as an encouragement and a model? Ah! they felt the value of purity, seeing that for a virgin was reserved the ineffable prerogative of the divine maternity; they understood the prodigious honor done their sex, in Mary's person, and the immense blessing of restoration which the Christian woman has received through her; their hearts yearned to testify their gratitude to the Lord, by devoting themselves "to please *Him*,"⁷ and to love him alone in the world, either contemplating and praising him in solitude, or serving him in the person of the poor and unhappy. And who could enumerate the myriads of admirable acts of virtue which have illustrated these countless generations of virgins, from the beginning of the

¹ S. Augustine, *Serm. 20 de tempore; Tract. 10 in Joan*; S. Gregory of Nyssa, *Orat. de Nativ. Dom.*; Ven. Bede, *in cap. i. Luc.*; S. Anselm, *de excel. Virg.*, c. 4; S. Bern., *Serm. 2, sup. Missus*, etc.

² *Lib. de Institut. Virg.*

³ *Hom. vi., contra Nestor.*

⁴ *Wisdom vi. 20.*

⁵ S. Thomas, *i. p., q. 25.*

⁶ *Super Missus*, c. 180.

⁷ *1 Cor. vii. 32.*

Church! How many times has the astonished world beheld young and timid daughters of Mary fearlessly braving every danger, every obstacle, every plague, every threat, every torment! Every day do we still behold religious communities saying, often at the peril of their life, to all human ills, "Be my father and my brethren;" to all the infirmities, to all the necessities of mind and body, "Be my mother and my sisters!" Sublime spiritual progeny of the divine Virgin, ah! it is she who protects, who sustains you as "chaste virgins," reserved for "Christ,"¹ and against the weakness of your sex, the seductions of the world, the assaults of hell, and, when necessary, against persecutors and all the instruments of their cruelty! The Church puts in her mouth those words of Wisdom: "I love them that love me."² But the greatest proof of love that can be given her, is it not the imitation of the virtue by which she was most distinguished, and which is, to our fallen nature, the most difficult; is it not the vow which you made, like

her, to live "as angels"³ in a mortal body?

It is from this same vow that the spirit of devotion and of sacrifice derives its origin and its strength; for, by disengaging the heart from family ties, it leaves it free to consecrate all its energies to the service of God and good works. She who has no other spouse than Jesus "thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit."⁴ Let us admire that truly celestial spirit which produces, in the true Church, such marvellous fruits as to excite the envy of the numerous sects, sterile because they are separated from her. Let us beg of the divine Jesus that we may each have a share, according to our special vocation, in that zeal for voluntary immolation to his glory, and to practise, also, according to our state, that sublime virtue which, according to St. Ambrose, "makes the heroes of martyrdom, and makes us brethren of the angels,"⁵ which even raises our merit above that of the celestial spirits; "for," says St. Jerome, "to gain angelic glory

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 2.

² Brev. Rom. in Festis B. M. V.; Prov. viii. 17.

³ St. Mark xii. 25.

⁴ 1 Cor. vii. 34.

⁵ Lib. 1 de Virg. circa initium.

in a mortal body, is much more * than to possess it by nature."¹

O divine Queen of Virgins, who come, triumphant, to lay before thee the lily of their purity, the palm of their victory, august Mother of that divine Lamb who is "the guide of virginity,"² how joyfully do we glorify thee for having, by thine example and assistance, called forth and fostered so many wondrous virtues on this earth. Ah! vouchsafe to multiply, more and more, the number of thy beloved daughters, who adorn the Church like blooming flowers, and embalm it with a perfume whose sweetness is not of this world.

Deign to inspire us, O Queen, with love and respect for a virtue which does so much honor to humanity, which "took its rise in heaven,"³ where it enjoys, as its reward, the privilege of forming the train of the Lamb.⁴ O thou under whose auspices so many thousands of virgins have gained everlasting glory, grant that, attracted by the celestial "odor of thy virtues,"⁵ we may be brought to the King of kings,"⁶ following in

the pure way which thou hast marked out for us!

QUEEN OF VIRGINS, PRAY FOR US.

Regina Virginum, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION LIII.

QUEEN OF ALL SAINTS, PRAY FOR US.

THE Saints have illustrated the Church by fair and admirable virtues; they have astonished the world by the heroism of their zeal, their courage, their devotion, the prodigies of their humility, their patience, their charity; they entered this everlasting dwelling with an abundant harvest of merits, which the Lord "weighed," even to the least, "in a just balance,"⁷ and endowed with "a great reward."⁸

O Mary! thou art their queen: if the Saints have been, amongst the faithful, as so many rare flowers adorning the garden of the militant Spouse of Christ, thou didst shine, in that mystical garden, as the queen of all flowers; thou didst show forth, by thine incomparable

¹ Serm. de Assumpt.

³ S. Ambrose, *Ibid.*

² Jerem. iii. 4.

⁴ Apoc. xiv. 4.

⁵ Cant. i. 3.

⁷ Job xxxi. 6.

⁶ Ps. xlv. 15.

⁸ Heb. x. 35.

example, "that immense treasure of grace wherewith thou wert endowed, a treasure incomprehensible to man or angel!"¹

The Saints manifested in themselves, more or less sensibly, some traits of the life of their divine Master; in each of them there shone some particular virtue, and "in the Father's house," where "there are many mansions,"² each receives that share of special glory which he gained during his time of probation.

O Mary! thou art their queen: what each had of particular merit thou hadst whole and entire; every characteristic of Jesus, thine adorable Son, was retraced in thee as clearly as it could be in a creature: all his virtues were practised by thee, and in a degree so high, so perfect, that St. Anselm said of thee, that "after the sanctity of the Holy of holies, there is not, nor cannot be, any like to thine!"³ And now, in the celestial regions, thou art invested with a glory commensurate to thy sublime merit; thy

crown is composed of the united splendor of the crowns of all the Saints; yet that is not enough: thy glory surpasses theirs, even as all their virtues are inferior to thine, and that it is through the merits of Him whom thou didst bring into the world, that they obtained grace to practise those same virtues.

The Saints have wonderful influence with God on our behalf: "The Lord," says St. Leo, "is truly admirable in giving them to us, not only for models, but also for most powerful protectors."⁴ Innumerable facts proclaim to the world that "they reign for ever and ever"⁵ in the city of God,"⁶ and that, from the height of their sublime thrones, they also reign over the earth by a mysterious influence.

O Mary! of all these powerful intercessors, of all these immortal kings, thou art still the Queen. Thou prayest not as they do, but "commandest in some way: for how could it be, O Blessed Virgin! that He who was born of thee, although omnipotent, could resist that

¹ S. Bernardine, Serm. 5, *de Nativ. B. V.*, c. 12.

² St. John xiv. 2.

³ *De excel. Virg.*

⁴ *In Natali S. Laurent.*

⁵ Apoc. xxii. 5.

⁶ *Ibid.* iii. 12.

maternal authority which He himself gave thee."¹ Yes, "thy requests are almost orders," says St. Antoninus,² "and what thou wilt," says St. Anselm, "is sure to be done!"³

Ah! may that admirable Virgin, to whom *all Saints* do homage for their crowns, be one day our Queen! And for that end, what have we to do? To be holy while on earth. Now, to be holy is to live "the life of God,"⁴ according to the magnificent idea of the great Apostle of nations; it is to possess his grace, and to labor constantly to preserve and increase it in one's self; it is to love the Creator sincerely, "with our whole heart, and with our whole soul, and with all our strength:"⁵ for he who loves him so is united to him in an ineffable manner; and "he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved,"⁶ he shall become eternally, in heaven, a "partaker of the divine nature,"⁷ of the glory and beatitude of God. "Oh! let us raise," says St. Augustine, "let us

raise our hopes and *direct* all our desires to that eternal possession of God, who is the sovereign good and the source of all true goods."⁸ Let us beware of incurring the anathema reserved for those who "set at nought the *true* desirable land,"⁹ so worthy of all our most fervent aspirations.

O Mary! who admirably united in thine own person all the merits of all the Saints; O thou who didst surpass them all, in this world, by thy virtues as well as privileges, and who, in heaven, art so superior to them in power and glory—with them, with all the happy inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem, we bow before thee, august Mother of our Redeemer, who "standest on his right hand, in gilded clothing!"¹⁰ Thou rulest all the elect, O living "habitation of God;"¹¹ placed, as it were, "on the top of mountains, and high above the hills!"¹² If we considered only thy marvellous greatness we would not dare to raise our eyes to thee, heavenly Queen; but

¹ S. P. Damian, *Serm. de Nativ. B. V.*

² T. II., in 3 part.

³ *De excellent. Virg.* c. 12.

⁴ Ephes. iv. 18.

⁵ St. Luke x. 27.

⁶ St. Matt. xxiv. 13.

⁷ 2 Peter i. 4.

⁸ *In Psalm.* 102.

⁹ Ps. cv. 24.

¹⁰ Ps. xlv. 10.

¹¹ Ephes. ii. 22.

¹² Mich. iv. 1.

we know all thy charity, all thy goodness, all thy mercy, and our confidence in thee is unbounded; by thine assistance we hope to lead a holy life, and to gain a share of that kingdom of God where we shall ever rejoice for having said to thee, here below, with a piety worthy of thy sweet majesty:

QUEEN OF ALL SAINTS, PRAY FOR US.

Regina Sanctorum omnium, ora pro nobis.

MEDITATION LIV.

QUEEN CONCEIVED WITHOUT SIN, PRAY FOR US.

IF we have now the sweet consolation of being able to salute Mary as *Queen conceived without Sin*, we owe it to the piety of our bishops, who petitioned the Holy See to that effect. The Scripture calls God, in an absolute manner, "the King,"¹ to express the excellence of his supreme Majesty; is it not fitting, then, to honor the sovereignty of her who is "above all, except God,"² by calling her *the*

Queen? And after the invocation which implores her as Queen of All Saints, what other could be more appropriate than that which honors at the same time her regal grandeur and the privilege of her exemption from original sin?—a privilege which would, of itself, distinguish her from all the elect, even though she were not, by so many other titles, superior to them—a privilege constantly proclaimed by the traditions of the Church, the faithful echo of the Apostolic teaching.

In his discourse to the proconsul Egius, St. Andrew himself gives Mary the title of "Immaculate;" he compares her to "that earth whereof the first man was formed, which had not received the malediction of the Lord, the consequence and punishment of the primitive fall."³ Origen, who lived very near the time of the Apostles, speaks of her as "formed in grace, free from the pestilential breath of Satan;"⁴ St. Amphilocus, as "without spot or stain;"⁵ St. Epiphanius, as "fairer by nature than all the angelic host, the immaculate sheep who brought

¹ Ps. xlv.: cxliv. ² S. Bern., Sermon 6, c. 6.

³ Acts of the Martyr St. Andrew.

⁴ Homil. vi. in Luc.

⁵ IV. Disc. in S. Deip.

forth the divine Lamb ;"¹ St. Ephraim, as "Virgin without spot, or stain, or corruption, an absolute stranger to all sin, to all imperfection ;"² St. Cyril, as "preserved from the original stain."³

Is it necessary to quote other organs for the transmission of the primitive belief? Who does not know that St. Jerome,⁴ St. Augustine,⁵ St. Fulgentius,⁶ St. Ildefonso,⁷ St. John Damascene,⁸ St. Peter Damian,⁹ St. Anslem,¹⁰ St. Bonaventure,¹¹ and even St. Thomas,¹² likewise bear witness to this uninterrupted tradition of the Church ; that the testimony of the holy doctors is supported by the monuments of both the Greek and Latin churches, the words of the sacred liturgy, the customs of dioceses, and those of religious orders ; finally, that on the invitation of the illustrious Pius IX.,¹³ the several bishops of the Catholic Church have attested, in an au-

thentic manner, the attachment of the faithful to this belief. So that this truth is recommended by its antiquity, universality, perpetuity, which are the principal foundations for the dogmas of Christianity.

Moreover, who does not understand, that, if the personal union of the divine nature and the human nature in Jesus Christ rendered absolutely necessary the conception of the Man-God in the state of grace, the divine maternity, "the nearest possible approach to that union,"¹⁴ would have been totally incompatible with the conception of Mary in a state of sin? What! she whom God had announced from the beginning of the world as one who was to escape the bite of the infernal serpent, as one destined even "to crush his head,"¹⁵ could she ever have been struck by his dart, or be for one moment "under *his* power?"¹⁶ Could she who was to be

¹ *De Laudib. Virg.*

² *Orat. in S. Dei Gen.*

³ *In Evang. Joan. I., vi. c. 15.*

⁴ *In Ps. 77.*

⁵ *De natura et gratia, c. 36.*

⁶ *Serm. de Laudib. M.*

⁷ *Disput. de V. M.*

⁸ *Orat. de nat. B. V. M.*

⁹ *Or. 12 de nat. M.*

¹⁰ *De concept. V., c. 18.*

¹¹ *Serm. 11 de B. V.*

¹² *In Lib. I. Sent. disc. 44, q. 1, art 3.*

¹³ *Encyc. Let. 2d Febr. 1849.*

¹⁴ *Dionys. Carth. l. 2 de laud. V.*

¹⁵ *Gen. iii. 15.*

¹⁶ *Ibid. 16.*

the repairer of Eve's transgression, be left inferior to Eve, who was created in the state of grace? She, in fine, who was to live for nine months the same corporal life with the Incarnate Word, could she have been, at the first moment of her existence, struck with the divine malediction, odious to the Lord, "a child of wrath?"¹

Oh! no, no; such could never be the case, Virgin so tenderly beloved by God and man! Ah! the latter well understands and feels it, thanks to the ideas of sin, of grace, and of the infinite sanctity of God given us by Christianity; the latter loves to proclaim, in the face of heaven and earth, that it would be neither just nor possible that the Son of God would have to turn away in disgust, even for one moment, from her who was to be his mother. But man also attaches a measureless importance to the shunning of sin; he considers it, as Mary did, the greatest of all happiness to be in favor with God; man "watches and prays"² assiduously, in order to preserve the treasure of divine grace; man

tries, by his good works, daily to strengthen its sacred bonds, daily to increase its inestimable fruits.

O Mary! O blessed Queen! O Queen of queens! *Queen conceived without Sin!* this is the last flight of our hearts to thee; this is the last ray of glory which, on earth, we add to thy crown! What a happiness for us to be able to say to thee, that "the Lord possessed thee in the beginning;"³ that "thou art undefiled, and fair, and without spot or stain!"⁴ Ah! be always the Queen of our hearts, O thou who hast the signal honor of being exempt from the original anathema pronounced on all men; and, that this dominion may be pleasing to thee, grant that we may apply ourselves more and more to serve God with purity, with fervor. Hoping to obtain that grace, we say to thee, with all possible humility, confidence, and love,

QUEEN CONCEIVED WITHOUT SIN,
PRAY FOR US.

Regina sine Labe concepta, ora pro nobis.

¹ Ephes. ii. 3.

² St. Mark xiii. 33.

³ Prov. viii. 22.

⁴ Cant. v. 2; iv. 7

MEDITATION LV.

LAMB OF GOD, WHO TAKEST AWAY THE
SINS OF THE WORLD, SPARE US, O
LORD.

THE Church terminates all her invocations in honor of the Virgin by a passionate appeal to her adorable Son, under the touching emblem of "the Lamb who taketh away the sins of the world."¹ And first, she makes us consider him as the Judge whose mercy we have to implore; the Lamb who sitteth on a lightning throne;² he who is to judge us by his Cross, "the sign of the Son of Man,"³ the sign of "ruin and of resurrection"⁴ to all of us, according as our works have been contrary or conformable to the sacred maxims which proceed from it.

Alas! we do not, as often as we should, consider Jesus in his character of Judge. We love to consider him under the figure of a good Shepherd,⁵ a good Father,⁶ a tender Mother,⁷ and that is only what we are bound to do, since he seems to delight in representing himself un-

* der these similitudes in the holy Gospel, in order to make us sensible of the ineffable treasures of his goodness and his love for us. But we forget that if we do not worthily correspond to so much love and so much goodness, we are but the more criminal for having "detained the truth of God in *our hearts*;"⁸ we forget that, the greater that goodness, the more ardent and the more generous that love, we are the more bound to be sensible of it; we forget, in fine, that, if we are so ungrateful to that "Lamb of God,"⁹ so mild, so amiable, so tender to us, as to violate his absolute right to our will, our affections, the use of all our faculties, we expose ourselves to find only in him, in the other world, "the *terrible* lion of the fold of Juda,"¹⁰ before whom the reprobate shall one day cry out "to the mountains and to the rocks: Fall upon us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."¹¹

But what! is not that Lamb all

¹ St. John i. 29.

⁴ St. Luke ii. 34.

² Apoc. iv. 5; v. 6.

⁵ St. Luke xv.

³ St. Matt. xxiv. 30.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ St. Matt. xxiii. 37.

⁸ St. John i. 29.

⁹ Rom. i. 18.

¹⁰ Apoc. v. 5.

¹¹ Apoc. vi. 16.

goodness, all meekness, all charity?¹ Oh yes! Jesus has well proved it to us; he did for us things that men do not even for those they tenderly love. But then he is as just as he is good, all his perfections being equally infinite; and if we reject the mild reign of his incomparable love, must not his justice reign in its turn at the end of this life, which is given us to choose one or the other? Now, let us *sincerely* "judge ourselves:"² is it not true that we have but little gratitude? What do I say? is it not true that we are ungrateful, that we treat Jesus as though we owed him nothing, and sometimes even as if we were anxious to irritate his justice against us? Is it not true that whosoever it strikes has well deserved eternal punishment? Yes, if, on the subject of the ineffable mystery of the Eucharist, we may truly say, considering the mystery of the Cross, Love explains love! so, regarding on one side the prodigies of the goodness and tenderness of Jesus for men, on the other, the indifference, the odious and obstinate

ingratitude of so many sinners, we may well exclaim, The Incarnation, the Redemption, the Eucharist, Heaven, sufficiently account for Hell! And even Hell itself, is it not, in the adorable designs of Providence, as it were, the last means of forcing men to work out their salvation when all nobler motives have failed to effect it.

But we who have, perhaps, often deserved that Hell, we who have perhaps too long overlooked the claims of the Lamb of God, we who have abused his blessings, outraged his love, ah! let us ask pardon of him for our unworthy conduct; let us excite ourselves to a profound sentiment of sorrow, thinking of the grievous wrongs wherewith he has to reproach us; let us prostrate ourselves before him, with a truly "contrite and humbled heart,"³ saying to him still more by feeling than by word:

"Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,"⁴ spare us, O Lord! Spare us, O sovereign Master of all things, O sovereign "Judge of the living and of the dead,"⁵

¹ 1 John iv. 8.² 1 Cor. xi. 31.³ Ps. l. 19.⁴ St. John i. 29.⁵ Acts x. 42.

spare us! It is true we are but ungrateful sinners, who have slighted thy ineffable love, foolishly despised thy rewards, as though heaven were not worth some exertion, and who have braved thy justice, as though the threat of its chastisements were not serious! . . . O! how culpable we are! . . . But treat us not according to our merits, treat us, rather, according to thine infinite mercy, which we now implore, striking our breast like the humble publican,¹ and crying with all our heart, "Spare, O Lord, spare thy people;"² that, by the intercession of thy divine Mother, thy clemency may be glorified in us;³ that in us may be fulfilled the saying of the Prophet Joel, "The Lord hath spared his people."⁴

LAMB OF GOD, WHO TAKEST AWAY THE SINS OF THE WORLD, SPARE US, O LORD.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, parce nobis, Domine.

¹ St. Luke xviii. 13.

² Joel ii. 17.

³ Isaiah xxx. 18.

⁴ Joel ii. 18.

⁵ Apoc. i. 18.

MEDITATION LVI.

LAMB OF GOD, WHO TAKEST AWAY THE SINS OF THE WORLD. GRACIOUSLY HEAR US, O LORD.

AFTER having asked the divine Lamb to forgive us, we urge and beseech him to vouchsafe to hear our request. The first cry of our heart was one of lively repentance, of profound and bitter sorrow. The second is a cry of humble supplication, imploring Infinite Goodness for a great and signal favor, on which depends our eternal salvation: *Graciously hear us, O Lord!*

The Church makes us here repeat the title of Lord to "the Lamb who taketh away the sins of the world," in order to penetrate us more and more with the infinite greatness and majesty of that incomparable benefactor whom we have had the misfortune to offend, and to render us more and more contrite for our offences. But it is also to remind us that He to whom we pray is the absolute master of all things; that he has "the keys of death and of hell;"⁵ and that, consequently, our prayer cannot be too humble, too fervent! Ah! let it be then with

all our hearts that we ejaculate, *Graciously hear us, O Lord!* For we know too well, alas! that we are very guilty, but we know not, and can never know with certainty, whether God has forgiven us. Wherefore it is that we should every day bewail our sins, every day endeavor to repair them before the Lord, and every day, with new ardor, beseech our good God to forget "our former iniquities."¹ David, though assured of his pardon by the mouth of the prophet Nathan, who said, "the Lord hath taken away thy sin,"² had still his crime constantly before his eyes;³ he besought the Most High to "wash him yet more from his iniquity;"⁴ even in the night he watered his couch with his tears.⁵ Ah! what, then, should we do, we who "have wrought iniquity,"⁶ alas! too often, and have not received from the infallible lips of a prophet the assurance of our reconciliation with God!

St. Paul, that great Apostle, who merited to be taken up to the third

heaven, has not he also said, "I am not conscious to myself in anything; yet in this I am not justified?"⁷ What then? that admirable servant and minister of God, who had received so many marks of his goodness and love; that illustrious saint, who had performed numberless achievements for the glory of his divine Master,⁸ in a word, the incomparable St. Paul dares not believe himself justified! And we whose life has been so far from resembling his, we who, after committing many and grievous sins, have done little or nothing to expiate them, we live as though we were sure of going straight to heaven. Ah! rather, how great should be our humility, how unceasing our contrition! "The nobler the victim," says Bossuet, "the more acceptable the offering: there is no doubt, then, that it is incomparably more meritorious to humble our heart before God than to mortify our body for his sake."⁹ But while humbling our soul before the Lord, let us at the same time bewail

¹ Ps. lxxviii. 8.

² 2 Kings xii. 13.

³ Ps. vi. 7.

⁴ Ps. l. 5.

⁵ Ps. l. 4.

⁶ Ps. cv. 6.

⁷ 2 Cor. xi.

⁸ II. *Panegyric on St. Francis of Paula*, p. 203.

⁹ 1 Cor. iv. 4.

unceasingly our misfortune in having defiled our baptismal robe of innocence, and in some sort "trodden under foot"¹ the adorable blood of that divine Lamb who became our victim. "The more we deplore the misery into which we have fallen, the more do we approach the good we have lost. Let us, then, never cease to pour forth tears so effective, that our sorrow, substituted for an eternal punishment, may, in some measure, imitate that intolerable perpetuity by continuing at least till our last agony."²

O Lamb of God, adorable victim, "slain *in figure* from the beginning of the world,"³ in every oblation offered under the Mosaic law; slain in dread reality on the rock of Calvary, on the very spot where Adam of old was buried,⁴ "so that as all die in Adam, in thee all may receive life;"⁵ immolated, ever since, in a mystical, but not less real manner, on our altars, where thou art always, "as it were, slain;"⁶ when we pray,

entreat thee to be propitious to us, do we not correspond with the desire of the heart which loved us even to excess?⁷ No, no, it belongs not to the designs of thy justice to treat us without mercy, since it is thou who givest us the grace to repent, to implore thee with our whole heart, and to wish to efface the sins of the past by penance. It is, then, thy will that, uniting with the august Pontiffs, and other ministers of the Church, who pray unceasingly for all its members, with the Blessed Virgin ever pleading for us all, we should say to thee, with the deepest sorrow and humiliation, but also with the most firm confidence, that "so having prayed, *we* shall be heard."⁸ O God our Saviour, graciously hear our supplication:

LAMB OF GOD, WHO TAKEST AWAY THE SINS OF THE WORLD, GRACIOUSLY HEAR US, O LORD.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, exaudi nos, Domine.

¹ Heb. x. 29.

² Bos., II. *Panegyric on St. Francis of Paula*, p. 196.

³ Apoc. xiii. 8.

⁴ S. Ambrose, Origen, Tertullian, S. Athana-

sus, S. Epiphanius, S. Cyril of Jerusalem: See Biblioth. Choisie des Peres, par Guillon, t. ix.

⁵ Origen, in *Matth.*

⁷ Ephes. ii. 4.

⁶ Apoc. v. 6.

⁸ Eccles. xxxiii. 4.

MEDITATION LVII.

LAMB OF GOD, WHO TAKEST AWAY THE
SINS OF THE WORLD, HAVE MERCY
ON US.

HERE we still persist in asking pardon for our sins, and beseech the divine Lamb to *have mercy on us*. This time we do not add the title of *Lord*; we wish so to speak that the divine Jesus may forget his greatness and his majesty so outraged by us, to remember only his infinite mercy, that adorable compassion which he himself made so lively and so tender by deigning to be "tempted in all things like as we are."¹ Thus we make a last appeal to the adorable heart of our Saviour—an appeal which cannot fail to be efficacious. Is it not, in fact, as if we said to him, O Thou "who delivered thyself for us,"² who art "the propitiation for our sins,"³ ah! doubtless we do not deserve to be heard when we ask thy forgiveness for those we have had the misfortune to commit, but we appeal to that ineffable pity which thou feelest for us; save us, save us, divine Lamb, save us, at least,

through pure compassion, through pure mercy!

If David formerly said to God with a sublime confidence, based on a sublime sentiment of his infinite mercy, "Thou wilt pardon my sin, for it is great;"⁴ if, before the Incarnation or Redemption (mysteries wherein that same mercy was so fully manifested), he had so high, so enlarged an idea of that abyss of goodness which loves to pour itself forth on the penitent sinner in a dew of grace and pardon; what an idea, what sentiments should we ourselves have when we address ourselves to that infinite goodness manifested to us in the divine nature of a God become our victim! Ah! if we would know how deeply the tender and loving heart of that divine Lamb is moved by any appeal to his compassion, let us open the Gospel. During the whole course of his mortal life, who ever said, *Have mercy on us!* without obtaining his request? Two blind men follow him crying, Son of David, "have mercy on us!"⁵ He touches their eyes, and they are opened to the light. A Chananæan

¹ Heb. iv. 15.² Ephes. v. 2.³ 1 John ii. 2.⁴ Ps. xxiv. 11.⁵ St. Matt. ix. 27.

woman, whose daughter is tormented by the devil, cries out in her turn, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" "Be it done to thee as thou wilt," says Jesus answering,¹ and her daughter is cured that very moment. "Have pity on my son," said an afflicted father to him; "he suffereth much."² Jesus instantly cures him. Near Jericho, a blind man, named Bartimeus, also implores his compassion — "Son of David, have mercy on me!"³ Jesus speaks, and the blind man recovers his sight. Ten lepers cry out from afar off, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"⁴ and they obtain their cure. That admirable sympathy for all human miseries, that tender pity which made St. Peter say of him that he "went about doing good,"⁵ can it be that Jesus, glorified, has ceased to feel it? Ah! see, rather, how he delights to manifest it more and more by the continual prodigy of the adorable Eucharist! Does he not in that mystery place his blood and his merits at our disposal? Does he not offer himself every day and every hour as a vic-

* tim of propitiation for our sins, and of impetration for all the graces of which we stand in need? Does he not therein make a continual sacrifice of his glory, which is, as it were, annihilated under humble species; the sacrifice of his liberty, bound in some way to the will of his ministers; the sacrifice of the operation of his justice, so often provoked by the crimes of sinners, and suspended by the marvellous mildness of his mercy? For nearly two thousand years has this Lamb of God unceasingly manifested in this stupendous miracle his incomparable devotion to our salvation; how then could we doubt the liveliness, the tenderness, the generosity of his compassion for hearts touched with repentance and desirous of his love? Let us, then, wholly give ourselves up to the sweetest confidence, and say to him:

"Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world," have mercy on us, who are much to be pitied, and so utterly unworthy of thy goodness. Ah! if thou didst but consider thine infinite justice, thou wouldst

¹ St. Matt. xv. 22, 28. ² St. Matt. xvii. 14.

³ St. Mark x. 47.

⁴ St. Luke xvii. 13.

⁵ Acts x. 38.

strike the ungrateful wretches who have returned thee evil for good, coldness or insult for the tenderest love. But we implore that pity, that inexhaustible mercy wherewith thy heart overflows for penitent sinners; we implore that adorable blood which quenches the fire of "the wrath of God,"¹ and effects "the remission of sins;"² and that our prayers may be more effectual

¹ Apoc. xv. 7.² Col. i. 14.

* with thee; we unite them with those of the Blessed Virgin, our good and sweet Mother, and by her sacred lips we offer thee this pious supplication which the Church places on those of her children, whatsoever their condition may be—

LAMB OF GOD, WHO TAKEST AWAY THE SINS OF THE WORLD, HAVE MERCY ON US.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.



LITANY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

SUB tuum præsidium confugimus, sancta Dei Genitrix, nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus nostris ; sed a periculis cunctis libera nos semper, Virgo gloriosa et benedicta.

Kyrie eleison.

Kyrie eleison.

Christe eleison.

Christe eleison.

Kyrie eleison.

Kyrie eleison.

Christe audi nos.

Christe exaudi nos.

Pater de cœlis Deus,

Fili Redemptor mundi Deus,

Spiritus Sancte Deus,

Sancta Trinitas, unus Deus,

Sancta Maria, *Ora pro nobis.*

Sancta Dei Genitrix,

Sancta Virgo virginum,

Mater Christi,

Mater divinæ gratiæ,

Mater purissima,

Mater castissima,

Mater inviolata,

Mater intemerata

Mater amabilis,

Mater admirabilis,

Mater Creatoris,

Mater Redemptoris,

Virgo prudentissima,

Virgo veneranda,

Virgo prædicanda,

Virgo potens,

Virgo clemens,

*Miserere
nobis.*

Ora pro nobis.

WE fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God, despise not our petitions in our necessities ; but deliver us always from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father of heaven,

God the Son, Redeemer of the world,

God the Holy Ghost,

Holy Trinity, one God,

Holy Mary, *Pray for us*

Holy Mother of God,

Holy Virgin of virgins,

Mother of Christ,

Mother of divine grace,

Mother most pure,

Mother most chaste,

Mother inviolate,

Mother undefiled,

Mother most amiable,

Mother most admirable,

Mother of our Creator,

Mother of our Redeemer,

Virgin most prudent,

Virgin most venerable,

Virgin most renowned,

Virgin most powerful,

Virgin most merciful,

*Have mercy
on us.*

Pray for us.

Virgo fidelis,
 Speculum justitiæ,
 Sedes sapientiæ,
 Causa nostræ lætitiæ,
 Vas spirituale,
 Vas honorabile,
 Vas insigne devotionis,
 Rosa mystica,
 Turris Davidica,
 Turris eburnea,
 Domus aurea,
 Fœderis arca,
 Janua cœli,
 Stella matutina,
 Salus infirmorum,
 Refugium peccatorum,
 Consolatrix afflictorum,
 Auxilium Christianorum,
 Regina Angelorum,
 Regina Patriarcharum,
 Regina Prophetarum,
 Regina Apostolorum,
 Regina Martyrum,
 Regina Confessorum,
 Regina Virginum,
 Regina Sanctorum omnium,
 Regina sine labe originali concepta,
 Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,

Parce nobis, Domine.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,

Exaudi nos, Domine.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,

Miserere nobis.

Christe audi nos.

Christe exaudi nos.

Ant. Sub tuum præsidium confugimus, sancta Dei Genitrix, nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus nostris; sed a periculis cunctis libera nos semper. Virgo gloriosa et benedicta.

V. Ora pro nobis, sancta Dei Genitrix.

R. Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.

Virgin most faithful,
 Mirror of justice,
 Seat of wisdom,
 Cause of our joy,
 Spiritual Vessel,
 Vessel of honor,
 Vessel of Singular devotion,
 Mystical Rose,
 Tower of David,
 Tower of ivory,
 House of gold,
 Ark of the covenant,
 Gate of heaven,
 Morning star,
 Health of the sick,
 Refuge of sinners,
 Comforter of the afflicted,
 Help of Christians,
 Queen of Angels,
 Queen of Patriarchs,
 Queen of Prophets,
 Queen of Apostles,
 Queen of Martyrs,
 Queen of Confessors,
 Queen of Virgins,
 Queen of all Saints,
 Queen conceived without original sin,
 Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,
Spare us, O Lord.
 Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,
Graciously hear us, O Lord.
 Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,
Have mercy on us.
 Christ, hear us.
Christ, graciously hear us.

Ant. We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God, despise not our petitions in our necessities; but deliver us always from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Ora pro nobis.

Pray for us.

Oremus.

Gratiam tuam, quæsumus, Domine, mentibus nostris infunde: ut qui, Angelo nuntiante, Christi Filii tui Incarnationem cognovimus, per Passionem ✠ ejus et Crucem ad Resurrectionis gloriam perducamur. Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum.

R. Amen.

V. Divinum auxilium maneat semper nobiscum.

R. Amen.

Let us pray.

Pour forth, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy grace into our hearts; that we to whom the Incarnation of Christ, thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may, by his Passion ✠ and Cross, be brought to the glory of his resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

V. May the divine assistance remain always with us.

R. Amen.

Salve Regina.

SALVE, Regina, Mater misericordiæ;
Vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.

Ad te clamamus, exules filii Hevæ;
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes in hac
lacrymarum valle.

Eia ergo, Advocata nostra,
Illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte;

Et JESUM, benedictum fructum ventris tui

Nobis post hoc exilium ostende,

O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.

V. Ora pro nobis, sancta Dei Genitrix.

R. Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.

HAIL, holy Queen, Mother of-mercy;
Our life, our sweetness, and our hope, all
hail.

To thee we cry, poor banished sons of Eve;
To thee we sigh, weeping and mourning in
this vale of tears.

Therefore, O our Advocate,
Turn thou on us those merciful eyes of
thine;

And after this our exile, show us

The blessed fruit of thy womb, JESUS,

O merciful, O kind, O sweet Virgin Mary.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Memorare.

MEMORARE, O piissima Virgo Maria, non
esse auditum a sæculo, quemquam ad tua
currentem præsidia, tua implorantem auxilia,
tua petentem suffragia, esse derelictum. Ego,
tali animatus confidentia, ad te, Virgo virginum,

REMEMBER, O most gracious Virgin Mary:
that never was it known, that any one
who fled to thy protection, implored thy help,
and sought thy intercession, was left unaided.
Inspired with this confidence, I fly unto thee, O

Mater, curro. Ad te venio; coram te gemens peccator assisto. Noli, Mater Verbi, verba mea despicere, sed audi propitia et exaudi. Amen.

Virgin of virgins, my Mother. To thee I come; before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful.* O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

* Here you may make your request.

For saying the "Salve Regina" in the morning, and the "Litany of the Blessed Virgin" in the evening, adding to each the following versicle:

V. Dignare me laudare te, Virgo sacrata.

V. Vouchsafe that I may praise thee, O sacred Virgin.

R. Da mihi virtutem contra hostes tuos.

R. Give me strength against thy enemies.

V. Benedictus Deus in Sanctis suis.

V. Blessed be God in his Saints.

R. Amen.

R. Amen.

1st. An indulgence of 100 days every day. 2d. An indulgence of 7 years and 7 *quadrages* every Sunday. 3d. A plenary indulgence on any two Sundays in every month, on all the Feasts of the Blessed Virgin, on the Feast of All Saints, to those who repeat the above-mentioned prayers every day, with the usual conditions; and also at the hour of death.

An indulgence of 300 days every time the three following ejaculatory prayers are said, to obtain a happy death:

JESUS, Joseph, and Mary, I give you my heart and my life.

JESUS, Joseph, and Mary, assist me in my last agony.

JESUS, Joseph, and Mary, may I die in peace in your blessed company.

For saying any one of them, 100 days.

Sixtus V., anxious to propagate more and more the devotion to Mary, and to induce the Faithful to have recourse to her intercession, granted by the Bull "Redditori," of the 11th July, 1587, two hundred days' indulgence to those who should recite, with a contrite heart, the "Litany of the Blessed Virgin," with the versicle "Ora pro nobis," etc., and the prayer "Gratiam tuam," etc. Benedict XIII. confirmed this grant, approving of a decree of the Congregation of Indulgences of the 12th of January, 1728. Pius VII., by his decree "Urbis et Orbis," of the 30th September, 1817, extended the indulgence to 300 days, made it applicable to the souls in purgatory, and added a Plenary Indulgence, which may be gained on the Feasts of the Conception, the Nativity, the Annunciation, the Purification, and the Assumption, by those who say this Litany every day, provided that they go to confession with due contrition, receive the Holy Communion, visit a church or public chapel, and pray there according to the intention of the sovereign pontiff.

MEDITATION UPON THE ANGELICAL SALUTATION.

AFTER the Lord's Prayer, the use of the Angelical Salutation has now become everywhere more general among the pious Faithful; how rightly and justly, has been very often shown, and is proved by the fact itself. Be it that the envious gnash their teeth, that the "Scourge of Mary," and infidels cavil; yet the custom of saluting, and the form of praying to the Virgin cannot be otherwise than strongly approved by us, since it was brought from heaven by a messenger of God; for who is there who can doubt that he came an ambassador taught by God?

So, therefore, will it be just and right, even at this day, to honor the Virgin now, whom it has been the will of God so to honor of old. What, then, we now propose to do is, to point out the use and object of the Angelical Salutation. For terse as it is in expression, yet fruitful in mysteries, its frequent repetition, with the aid of a little attentive reflection, will cause it to be relished the more.

Assuredly, nothing is so becoming and suitable to a Christian, as frequently and devoutly to call to mind his Redemption: but because the Incarnation of the Son of God is its first and chief mystery, and it was ordered by the Divine Wisdom that this should be accomplished by means of an embassy sent from heaven to a Virgin, how can it be denied that it is a pious duty, both becoming and well-pleasing to God, often to reflect upon the very words with which it was his will that the angel should announce so great a mystery, expected during so many ages, and longed for with sighs so many and so great; and so to take delight in the Salutation with which the heaven-sent ambassador first accosted the Virgin who was destined to so great a work? And when this is done with the special object of saluting a Virgin who was so highly beloved and chosen of all by God to be his Mother, we may, with feelings of the utmost gratitude recall the benefit of our Redemption, and the work of our Lord's Incarnation.

Now, when we salute the Virgin, what kind of salutation may we expect from her in return? To those who salute her, undoubtedly she will on her part render her good wishes for, or rather her aid towards, their salvation. For how can it be that a Mother would ever refrain from pouring out a heart so tender, so maternal as hers, upon those who are destined to be co-heirs with her Son, especially when we bear within us the grateful recollection of so great a mystery that of old was accomplished in herself? Surely, then, she will rejoice in addressing her Son with suppliant prayers for the promotion of its beneficial effects upon ourselves.

For what can be more pleasing to so merciful a Mother than to obtain for us the very thing for the sake of which she became the Mother of God, or for which God in herself was made man? But in vain is she God's Mother, and God man, if man become not partaker of the divine nature, and attain salvation. That God may avert this from us, let us beseech him through his Mother, in saluting her from our hearts.

Hail Mary.

HAIL, and rejoice, O most blessed, most pure, and most worthy Virgin Mary! O most illustrious Star of the sea! who shinest more brightly than all the rest over the darkness of this world! who art so honorably saluted by the Archangel sent to thee from heaven, and by thy kinswoman, Elizabeth, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost; and now, too, by all the congregation of the faithful from the desire of thy honor and love! Behold, I praise thee and salute thee, and gratulate thee, O most holy Virgin and Mother! and I praise in thee God the Father, who made his only Son to be thine

also, and to be at the same time the Brother of us all. I praise God the Son, who has chosen thee to be his Mother, that by thee he might show himself our Saviour; I praise God the Holy Ghost, who, by his own wonderful power, has accomplished that unspeakable work in thy womb!

Full of grace.

WRATH and malediction is on all the children of Adam; but thou hast found grace with God; nay, thou art full of grace, free from every fault, and filled with all virtues and endowments of grace. What marvel is it if

thou art full of grace, when the fullness of the Godhead has dwelt corporeally¹ in thee! when the very Fountain of grace and salvation has poured himself entirely into thee alone; and by thee, as by a river or channel, has willed himself to be poured out upon us all! In less measure has grace been given to the rest of the Saints; but the very fullness of grace has poured itself into thee. For even though we do read of some who were full of grace, yet thou art so in a manner exceedingly and pre-eminently different from those. For when vessels are filled, both great and small, all are full; but the vessel which holds the most has the greatest quantity of liquid. How great, then, must be the grace that is in thee, to enable thee to contain God, whom not the whole world is able to contain! to enable thee, I say, to be the Mother of God, the Queen of Heaven, the Mistress of the Angels, the Mediatrix and the Advocate of men!

But to what purpose art thou *full*, if not to overflow to us also? O that thy fountains may be conveyed abroad,² that those sweet odors, those gifts of graces, may flow forth upon us, that we may, all of us, receive of a fullness so great!

Let thy goodness, O Blessed Virgin, diffuse abroad that very grace of which thou art full, that from the overflowing stream of thy bounty the guilty may receive pardon, the sick cure, the faint-hearted strength, the afflicted consolation, the endangered aid and deliverance. O that I may merit to obtain even one small drop out of a fullness so great, to water my dry and thirsty heart!

The Lord is with thee.

HOW rich and blessed must be the possession of her who possesses the Lord her God! What good must there not be there, where is present the Lord, who himself is the

Fountain of all goodness! Doubtless when all things are God's, nothing is lacking to him who possesses God. True, the Lord is with thee, as he is with all just persons; but far more pre-eminently, by special grace, and by a particular providence, is he with thee; with thee in thy heart, with thee in thy womb; *the Power of the Most High (God the Father) shall overshadow thee.* The Holy Ghost has come upon thee. The Word made flesh has come forth of thee. The Lord is with thee and in thee, as a king upon his throne, as a bridegroom in his bridal chamber, as dear, nay, far more dearly and closely than is a friend in a friend. Obtain, O Lady, that my Lord may be with me by grace, who was with thee by the closest union of love and corporal presence! Doubtless all blessings will be with him in whose company is the Lord, neither shall I fear any evils, if the Lord is with me.

Blessed art thou among women.

BLESSED indeed among women, since thou alone of so many thousands hast pleased the King most high. Justly blessed, who hast been the object of so many prayers and sighs, expected for so many ages, foretold by so many oracles! Truly blessed among women, who art exempt from the common curse and condition of women, so as neither to continue barren, nor to lose thy virginity, nor to bring forth with pain!

There lies, moreover, a hard necessity and a heavy burden upon all the other daughters of Eve. If they are fruitful, they suffer pain and defilement;³ if barren, they are cursed.⁴ Thou art at once both fruitful and pure; and, by being devoid of pain, hast turned into a blessing the curse of Eve.

Cursed of old was the earth in the work of the sinner, which, even when cultivated, sprouts forth thorns and briers to the heirs of maledic-

¹ Col. II. 9.

² Prov. v. 16.

³ Gen. iii. 16.

⁴ Exod. xxiii. 26.

tion. But blessed is the earth now in the work of the Redeemer, which brings forth to all men remission of sins, and the fruit of Life, and has destroyed the sentence of the original curse upon the sons of Adam.

O Blessed One, in that thou art the Mother of a Son, in whom all nations shall be blessed! Therefore shall all generations call thee blessed, because he that is mighty has done to thee great things. For thou conceivest, but without concupiscence; thou art heavy with child, but not overburdened. Thou bringest forth, but without travail. Thou knowest not a man, and yet thou bearest a Son. O what a Son is he! Thou becomest the true mother of him, whose true Father is God: thou bearest God, and conceivest of God: a fruitful Virgin, a chaste and inviolate Mother. How can it then be that thou art not blessed among women?

*And blessed is the fruit of thy womb,
Jesus.*

BLESSED, I say, because he in whom all nations are blessed is the Author of grace and the fountain of all blessing. Him do we bless and praise in thee, O Blessed Virgin, whom likewise thy soul praises and magnifies

alone above all, because he has done to thee those great and wonderful things which we admire and venerate in thee, who is mighty over all things, God blessed forever!

Eve ate the fruit of death, and, with herself, brought us to ruin. Thou hast brought forth to the world the Fruit of Life, and, behold! we have lived again. O how blessed is the womb that has borne and produced for us such fruit!

Thou rejoicest, O holy Parent! and featest now, but in another form, upon the Fruit of thy womb. Be satisfied, then, O Mother! with the glory of thy Son, but scatter to thy little ones thy crumbs! Now thou art Mistress at the table; we, the dogs, under the table. As the eyes of the handmaid are on the hands of her mistress, so do our attendant souls expect of thee the Sustenance of life. By thee have we partaken of the Fruit of Life at the Table of the Mysteries that are thereon; by thee let us partake of Jesus, the blessed fruit of thy womb, at the table of everlasting joys! Amen.¹

¹ Thus much more has been written than our purpose required, for the benefit of those who dislike the frequent repetitions of the "Hail Mary."

Pope Paul V. has granted an indulgence of a hundred days to those who recite the "Hail Mary" at the stroke of the clock.







Deschwanden.

R. Dudensting.

THE JUST SHALL BUD LIKE THE LILY, AND
BLOSSOM ETERNALLY BEFORE THE LORD.

THE
ADMIRABLE LIFE
OF THE GLORIOUS
PATRIARCH SAINT JOSEPH :

TO WHICH IS ADDED THE
LIVES OF ST. JOACHIM AND ST. ANNE

TAKEN FROM
THE CITE MYSTIQUE DE DIEU,
(THE MYSTICAL CITY OF GOD.)

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF THE ABBÉ J. A. BOULLAN, DOCTOR IN THEOLOGY,

BY
MRS. J. SADLIER.

*PUBLISHED WITH THE APPROBATION OF THE LATE MOST REV. JOHN HUGHES, D. D.,
AND THE MOST REV. J. McCLOSKEY, D. D., ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK.*

A NEW, ENLARGED AND REVISED EDITION.

New York:
PUBLISHED BY D. & J. SADLIER & CO., 31 BARCLAY STREET.
MONTREAL:—CORNER OF NOTRE DAME AND ST. FRANCIS XAVIER STS.
1873.

TO THE DIVINE HEART OF JESUS, AND TO MARY IMMACULATE.

O JESUS! Son of the Eternal Father! Divine Redeemer of our souls, whom Thou hast redeemed by the effusion of Thy precious blood! Thou hast deigned, during Thy mortal life, to call by the sweet name of father, the glorious St. Joseph, and Thou hast chosen to be named by men the son of Joseph. Word of God! Master of eternal wisdom! to whom, unless it be to Thy Sacred Heart, can I more worthily make the offering of this little book, in honor of the incomparable Patriarch? Deign, I implore Thee, to bless it, and its author. All unworthy and miserable as I am, I beseech thee that this life of Thine adopted father may bear fruits of grace to many souls—that it may become a blessing to the dwellings which receive it—that the sinner may be converted, and the just encouraged to become holy, by meditating upon it. O Sacred Heart of Jesus! vouchsafe to grant that grace, and these favors, in memory of Thy complaisance in the fidelity and love of Thy glorious servant, Saint Joseph!

Mother of Jesus! Immaculate Virgin! Spouse of St. Joseph, thou who hast deigned to communicate to us by means of thy beloved daughter, Mary of Agreda, all that forms the subject of this volume, disdain not, Queen of Mercy, to bless it. I place it in thy hands. Thou knowest, that, overwhelmed by the weight of my miseries, I have had recourse to thy glorious spouse, whom thou hast permitted me to call my father; and that in acknowledgment of his miraculous benefits, I have applied myself, by thy consent, to this work. May this *Life* serve as an instrument to augment the devotion to St. Joseph among the children of the Church. Thou hast warned us, O Mother of Pity, that *the damned shall weep bitterly for not having known this means, so powerful and so efficacious, for their salvation, and for not having availed themselves of it.* (Book V., ch. XVI.) May those who yet live on earth, know and profit by it, to forsake the ways of sin, and to recover the grace of the just.

Worthy father of the Queen of Heaven, St. Joachim, thou whom the blessed Mother, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus, have given me for my patron in the new vocation to which I have been so freely predestined and called, deign to present the humble offering of my book to the great Patriarch St. Joseph, and obtain for me, by your efficacious intercession, that I may be worthy to persevere to the end in the way which his mediation with Jesus and Mary has opened for me.

Jesus! Mary! Joseph! all hail!

THE ABBE J. A. BOULLAN.

PARIS, November, 1856.

THE ADMIRABLE LIFE

OF THE

GLORIOUS PATRIARCH, ST. JOSEPH.

CHAPTER I.

ESPOUSALS OF THE CHASTE ST. JOSEPH
WITH THE BLESSED VIRGIN—VARIOUS
CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH ACCOMPANIED
THIS MYSTERIOUS MARRIAGE.



HE Blessed Virgin Mary, after her entrance into the Temple, had made, in the presence of all the angelic hosts, a vow of chastity.

This most chaste dove had renounced earthly attachments, and the love of all creatures, that she might have no other spouse than God himself; but at the age of thirteen years and a half, it was manifested to our sweet Lady in a vision, that she should enter into the marriage state. "The Lord tempted Abraham," said Moses,—and the Lord also tempted our august Mistress; in which we discover the truth of these words: "The judgments of the Lord

are incomprehensible, and His ways are above our ways." The thoughts of the pure Mary were far removed from those of the Most High, for she had desired and resolved to have no husband, so far as it depended upon her own will.

The Lord spoke in a dream to the high-priest, who was St. Simeon, and commanded him to make preparations for the marriage of Mary, daughter of Joachim and Anne, of Nazareth, and to convoke an assemblage of the other priests to deliberate upon the subject. St. Simeon obeyed the divine behest, and the assembled doctors, inspired by a celestial impulse, resolved, that in an affair upon which the Lord had declared His good pleasure, they ought to consult His holy will by praying, that He would manifest, by a sign, him who should be the husband of Mary, and that he should be of the house and lineage of David, that the law might be fulfilled. They therefore resolved to appoint a day when all the young men of that family, present in Jerusalem,

should be invited to assemble in the Temple. It was precisely the day on which our blessed Lady had attained her fourteenth year.

The priest Simeon summoned the chaste Mary, in order to make known to her this resolution. It was nine days before that on which their designs were to be put into execution. During this time the most blessed Virgin redoubled her prayers, her tears, and sighs, for the accomplishment of the will of God in an event which caused her the greatest pain. The Lord consoled her, saying: "I will give you a spouse who will not oppose your holy desires, but who will rather, by the help of my grace, confirm them. I will choose him for you perfect, and according to my own heart, and I will elect him for you from among my servants." The holy angels also consoled her, saying: "The Most High will guide you in the way which is the best, the most perfect, the most holy."

Joseph was born at Nazareth; nevertheless, by the disposition of the Most High, he had come to dwell in Jerusalem, because of certain reverses of fortune, which resulted so favorably for him that he had the happiness to become the spouse of her whom God had chosen to be His own Mother, under the circumstances that we are about to relate.

The day appointed by the priests arrived. Our blessed Lady had com-

pleted the fourteenth year of her age. The young men of the tribe of Judah, and of the family of David, from whom the august Mary was descended, who were in the city of Jerusalem, were assembled. Joseph, originally of Nazareth, but now an inhabitant of the holy city, was invited to be with them, because he, too, was of that royal race. He was then thirty-three years of age, well-made, and possessed of an agreeable physiognomy, which expressed an incomparable modesty. He was indeed as chaste in his thoughts and deeds, as in his inclinations; and having made a vow of chastity when but twelve years old, his life was pure and irreproachable before God and man. He was related to the Virgin Mary in the third degree.

Inspired by the Most High, the chief-priest placed in the hands of each of these young men a dry rod, in order that by this means the Lord should manifest him whom He had chosen to be the husband of Mary. All united their prayers to those of the priests, for none were ignorant of the virtues and modesty of this holy maiden, nor of the reputation of her beauty, and her possessions, as an only child; and each desired to make her his wife. Joseph alone, the most humble, the most pious among them, deemed himself unworthy of so great a boon; and, calling to mind his vow of chastity, he resolved anew to observe it, resigning himself

to the divine will even to the end of his life. But this did not prevent him from entertaining for the virtuous maiden veneration and esteem beyond any of his compeers.

All were engaged in prayer, when they saw blossoms burst forth from the rod borne by Joseph, and at the same instant a beautiful dove was seen to descend, which alighted on the head of the saint. The Lord, at the same moment, spoke to him interiorly, and said: "Joseph, my servant, Mary shall become your spouse; receive her with assiduity and respect, for she is very agreeable in my eyes; she is good and most pure in body and mind, and you will do all that she will tell you." The priests, upon this sign from heaven, determined to give St. Joseph to Mary for her husband. They then called for her, who was more excellent than the sun, more beautiful than the moon, and she appeared with a majesty more than angelic; with a loveliness, modesty, and grace incomparable; and the priests espoused her to Joseph, the most chaste and the most holy of men. The august Mary, with mingled modesty and tenderness, took leave of the priests and of her mistress,—asking pardon of her companions, and expressing her grateful sense of all the kindness she had received from them; then, accompanied by many of the most distinguished ministers of the Temple, she departed with her saintly spouse for Nazareth, the

* country of the newly married pair, where lay the possessions of the blessed parents of our sweet Lady.

On their arrival they were received and visited by all their relatives and friends, with the rejoicings usual on similar occasions; and having religiously acquitted themselves of all those duties which custom commanded in their intercourse with the world, our holy spouses at length found themselves alone in their house. It was a custom among the Jews, that the newly espoused, during the first days of their union, should study together their natural inclinations, in order to promote their future peace.

On one of these days, St. Joseph said to his spouse Mary: "I give thanks to the Most High God for having granted me the favor to choose me for your husband, when I did not in the least merit this honor, and when I believed myself unworthy to bear you company. But His Divine Majesty, who can, when He will, uplift the poor, has shown His Mercy towards me. I desire that you will aid me with your goodness and your virtues in offering Him my thanksgivings. In all that regards His service, I will be your servant. I pray you to supply my deficiencies in those qualities which I have not, but which, as your husband, I ought to possess. Only make your wishes known to me, that I may fulfil them."

His most holy consort replied to the

saint: "I am well pleased that the Most High, having destined me for marriage, has had the goodness to choose you for my husband and my master, and, with your permission, I will now express the thoughts and intentions which I wish to impart to you on this subject."

The grace of the Most High inflamed anew the heart of St. Joseph with His divine love. "Speak," he said, "for thy servant heareth." The Queen of the universe was attended by her thousand angels; for the most pure Mary comprehended the respect and attention to be observed in conversation with her spouse; and that she might have more abundant grace and merits, the Lord had continued in her the reserve and fear that she had in speaking alone with a man, which had never before happened to her, except it might be in some casual encounter with the chief-priest. The august Virgin then said to St. Joseph: "It is just that we offer thanks, and give glory and praise to our God and Creator, who has made His mercy to shine upon us, in choosing us for His service. In my most tender youth, I consecrated myself to God by a vow which I made, to be, during all my life, chaste in body and mind, and my desire to preserve my faith to Him is unchangeable. I trust that you will help me to fulfil this vow, and in all things else I will be your servant. Accept, my husband, this holy resolution, and confirm it by your own, so

that we may obtain the eternal joys to which we aspire."

The chaste Joseph, filled with joy, replied: "In declaring to me your chaste thoughts and holy resolutions, you have penetrated and opened my heart, which, until you had revealed your own, I was unwilling to uncover. The Lord called me, also, at an early age, that I should love Him with an upright mind. Know, then, that in my twelfth year I, too, made a promise to serve God in perpetual chastity. I now renew this vow, and, with His grace, I will be your faithful servant, and I pray you to receive my chaste affections, and to regard me as your brother."

During this conversation the Most High confirmed anew in the heart of St. Joseph the virtue of chastity, and the pure and holy love which he should bear to the blessed Virgin, his spouse. Thus he was possessed by this love in an eminent degree, and our august Queen augmented it, and enraptured his heart by her conversation. By this divine assistance the holy spouses enjoyed inexpressible consolation. The august Queen promised to second the desires of St. Joseph, and the Most High imbued him with such an exalted purity, and such an absolute control of his passions, that he served his consort without obstacle, and with a grace as admirable as it was extraordinary. In serving her, he followed the will and the good pleasure of the Lord.





Our Lady of the Rosary.

They made a division of the effects which St. Joachim and St. Anne had left to their blessed child. One part was offered to the Temple, where she had been educated; the second was devoted to the service of the poor; and the third was placed at the disposal of St. Joseph. For herself, our Queen reserved only the care to serve and employ herself within the house, for she dispensed herself always from the affairs of buying and selling.

In his youth St. Joseph had learned the carpenter's trade, as being one of the most useful to gain a livelihood, for he was without property. He inquired of his saintly spouse if she would consent that he should practice this trade to gain something for the poor, and also as a means to avoid idleness. The most prudent Virgin consented, and reminded St. Joseph that it was not the will of God they should be rich, but poor, and protectors of the poor, so far as their means permitted. After this, the two holy spouses had an humble dispute, in which each wished to obey the other as superior. But the most humble Mary, who was the humblest of the humble, was victorious in her humility, and the man being the head, she would not permit the order of nature to be reversed. She therefore obtained the consent of her husband to receive her obedience in all things. She asked only permission to give alms to the poor, to which the saint consented.

During these first days, St. Joseph, by a new light from above, had penetrated the character of his spouse. Her rare prudence, her profound humility, her incomparable purity, and her possession of every virtue beyond all that he could have hoped, enraptured him with admiration. With a spirit full of joy, and his heart inflamed with ardent affection, he ceased not to praise the Lord, and to offer Him thanks for having bestowed on him so unmerited a treasure. The Lord had also so ordered, that the Queen of Heaven, by her mien and by her presence, inspired her spouse with such mingled sentiments of reverence and respect, that we find no terms to express them. To the eyes of St. Joseph a radiant splendor shone from the features of our Lady, like that of Moses when he descended from the mount.

Afterwards, in a vision, the Blessed Virgin heard these words: "You perceive how faithful I am in my promises: the companionship of my servant Joseph will aid you to preserve the laws of my spouse; obey him as you ought, and be careful of his happiness." She replied: "With the divine favor and help, I will obey Thy servant Joseph, and serve him."

Their marriage had been celebrated on the 8th of September, and until the 25th of March, when the Word became Incarnate, the two spouses had lived in such wise that the Most High prepared

them for the work for which they had * been chosen.

But let us pause to express our joy on witnessing the fortunate destiny of the happiest among mortals, St. Joseph. Whence comes to thee, O man of God, so eminent a benediction, that among all the children of Adam it can be said of thee alone, that God has been so entirely thine that He was taken for thy Son? The eternal Father gives thee His daughter; the Son places His own Mother in thy charge; the Holy Spirit confides to thee His spouse, and places thee in His stead, and the Holy Trinity gives thee its elect, its only one, for thy lawful spouse. Great saint, dost thou then comprehend all thy dignity? Dost thou fathom all thy greatness? Dost thou know that she whom thou hast just received as thy wife is Queen and Mistress of heaven and earth, and that thou art the depository of the inestimable treasures of God himself? Behold, O man of God, the precious pledge thou hast, and know that if thou dost not render the angels and the seraphim envious, thy happiness, and the wonderful mystery of thine espousals excite their wondering admiration. For such joys and favors receive congratulations in the name of the whole human race. For thou art the spouse of her who has only God above her. Thou shalt be powerful and happy among men and angels. Be mindful of our poverty

and wretchedness, and of me, miserable worm of the earth, for I desire to be thy faithful servant, and to be enriched and favored by thy powerful protection.

CHAPTER II.

THE GLORIOUS ST. JOSEPH, CONSIDERED IN ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT CONCERN THE MYSTERY OF THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN, HIS WIFE.

IT is recorded in the Holy Scriptures (Prov. xxxi. 11), in reference to Mary: "The heart of her husband trusteth in her, and he shall have no need of spoils." Certain it is that the holy Joseph was called the husband of Mary, because she was his lawful wife. It is equally evident that he trusted in her, hoping that through her incomparable virtue, all things to be desired would follow her. But he trusted in her, most of all, a little later, when, still in ignorance of the mystery, he saw her with child; because, then he believed, and trusted in hope against hope, for, from the evidence which appeared, he could find no satisfaction but in his confidence in the holiness of such a woman. And although he resolved to leave her, because he saw the effect before his eyes, knowing nothing of the cause, still he dared not doubt either her modesty or her discretion, neither could he separate himself

from the pure and holy love with which the most chaste heart of such a wife had inspired him.

Thus he neither considered himself deceived nor poor in spoils—for if all be termed spoils which is above what is necessary, all was in superabundance for this happy husband, when he was made acquainted with the dignity of his wife, and of that which was inclosed within her bosom. In fact, the truly chaste and faithful Joseph (who took the utmost care of all that concerned our holy Esther, and who influenced her continually to pray for the freedom of his people, for this was the ordinary occupation of our incomparable saint and his most pure spouse) was elevated by her means to such an extraordinary sanctity and so excellent a dignity, that the Supreme Majesty gave him His seal-ring, so that by this mark of honor he should command the same God made man, who was submitted to him, as it is said by the Evangelist, Luke ii. 51.

Let us not forget to record that the Word made man, as soon as He had been conceived in the chaste womb of the most pure Mary, having first performed His duties towards God, prayed for His Mother and for St. Joseph, supplicating for them eternal blessedness.

The august Mary, aged fourteen years, six months, and seventeen days, had conceived in her blessed womb the Word made man under the miraculous circumstances which may be seen in her

Life. Now she learned from the discourse of the celestial ambassador, St. Gabriel, that her cousin Elizabeth had conceived six months before. The Most High had revealed to her that the son of Elizabeth should be great before the Lord, that he should be a prophet and the precursor of the Incarnate Word. At the same time, our blessed Lady knew that it would be pleasing to the Lord if she should visit her cousin, in order that the son, whom she bore in her womb, might be sanctified by the presence of their Saviour.

The Most High said to her: "I will that you go and visit Elizabeth, because We choose her son for great things, which are of Our good pleasure." The prudent Mary replied: "My heart and my desires are entirely consecrated to Thy divine will, and I will execute with diligence all that Thou shalt command Thy most humble handmaid to perform. Allow me to ask permission of Joseph, my husband, that I may make this journey with his consent."

After this vision, the humble Mary resolved to ask the permission of St. Joseph; and, without revealing to him the command of God, but with rare prudence, she said: "I know, by a divine illumination, that the goodness of the Most High has favored my cousin Elizabeth, wife of Zachariah, in giving her a son, whom she had so greatly desired. I think I am obliged by customary usage to go and visit her, to offer my

sympathy, and to promote her spiritual welfare. If this journey be agreeable to you, I will make it, with your permission, being entirely submissive to your will. Consider what will be for the best, and tell me what I shall do." The discreet silence and humble submission of Mary were pleasing to the Lord. He therefore disposed the heart of Joseph by a divine light to do as she desired. Guided by this celestial light, the holy husband replied: "I confide as I ought in your great virtue, because I know that your well-regulated will would undertake nothing which is not for the greater glory of God, as this journey must be. And that no one may be surprised to see you go without your husband, I will, with the greatest pleasure, accompany and serve you. Determine, then, the day of departure."

The Blessed Virgin thanked her prudent spouse for the affection which he manifested for her, and they decided to set out immediately for the house of Elizabeth. St. Joseph prepared provisions for the journey,—some fruit, bread, and a few small fishes, which he purchased. He had also a little beast of burden, which was lent him to carry his provisions, and his spouse, the Queen of all that is created. With this equipage they set out for Judea. They had scarcely left their house, when our Queen, kneeling before St. Joseph, asked his blessing, in order to

* begin the day in the name of the Lord. The saint hesitated, for, by long experience, he knew the excellence of his spouse, but the holy and sweet opportunities of the august Mary conquered, and he blessed her in the name of the Most High.

"At that time," saith the sacred text, "Mary, rising up, went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judea." Now the chaste spouses, Mary and Joseph, having left their father's house, and forgotten their people, took their way towards the house of Zachariah, among the hills of Judea, distant twenty-seven leagues from Nazareth. The roads were rough, and they possessed no means of transport except such as were afforded by their little animal; nevertheless the most humble and modest of creatures, Mary, prayed St. Joseph to use it for himself. The discreet spouse would not, by any means, consent to this; but in complaisance, he allowed her from time to time to go on foot with him, requesting her with great respect not to refuse him this gratification; and the Queen of heaven obeyed.

They continued their journey in these humble debates, and thus they so well employed their time, that there was not a moment which was not filled by some act of virtue. They walked alone, but the angels assisted them in all things; yet they were visible only to the august Mary. Occasionally she

conversed with these angels, and the most pure heart of our sweet Lady was kindled anew with divine love. St. Joseph contributed to all this by his discreet silence, concentrating his thoughts within, and yielding himself to sublime contemplation. At other times the spouses conversed together upon many things regarding the salvation of their souls, the coming of the Messiah, the prophecies which the ancient fathers had received on this point, and other mysteries and secrets of the Most High.

During this journey there happened to St. Joseph something which excited his wonder. Inspired by a special grace, he bore to his spouse a most tender and holy love, and the saint, being of a noble nature, amiable, agreeable, and obliging, was inclined to an ever watchful care for her. Now, as the Queen of heaven carried in her virginal bosom the Incarnate Word, the saint was sensible that, through the words and conversation of his spouse, new impressions were made upon his soul, but of the cause he was ignorant. He found himself more and more inflamed by divine love, and in a higher knowledge of those mysteries which formed the subjects of their conversation; and the further they advanced on their way and in their discussions, the more these favors were augmented. He felt also that the words of his spouse served as the organ, by means of which these favors were communi-

cated to him. It was not possible that the discreet St. Joseph should not reflect upon this new and wonderful influence. But although it would have afforded him, filled as he was with wonder, the greatest gratification, without curiosity, to have been informed of the cause of it, his modesty was such that he could not venture to ask to be enlightened.

Our blessed Lady penetrated the thought of her spouse, but, ignorant of the way by which God would conduct this mystery, her great prudence and her own discretion taught her, although she had no command from the Lord to conceal it, how good it was to guard the secret of the most sublime of all mysteries. She therefore concealed it, without making it known to her spouse, either on this occasion, or afterwards, during the interior pains which St. Joseph suffered on this account. What admirable prudence! Our sweet Lady prayed to God for the saint, imploring the divine assistance, of which she foresaw he would have need, and of which we shall treat in the following chapter.

This was the first journey which the Incarnate Word made in this world, four days after his entrance into it. Our blessed Lady thus served as a car for the true Solomon (Cant. iii. 9). This journey lasted four days, during which our holy travellers, besides those interior virtues which have God for

their object, performed many acts of charity towards their neighbors. The Blessed Virgin cured, among others, a poor sick girl, in a village through which she passed, on the first day after her departure.

At length the august Mary and her spouse, Joseph, arrived at the city of Judea, where Elizabeth and Zachariah then dwelt. This city was distant, as I have said, twenty-seven leagues from Nazareth, and about two leagues from Jerusalem, near the spot where the torrent of Sorec has its source. It was afterwards entirely ruined, but the Lord does not permit the memory of places so venerable to be altogether lost. The Visitation was made at the same place where these divine mysteries are now honored by the faithful who dwell in Palestine, and by pilgrims who go there to offer their devotions.

St. Joseph went on before to give notice to the inmates of the house, and, having knocked at the door, he saluted them, saying: "May the Lord be with you, and fill your souls with His divine grace." St. Elizabeth had been already warned of their coming, for the same Lord had revealed to her that her cousin Mary of Nazareth was on her way to visit her. Now, having heard of her arrival, she came forth quickly, with others of her family, to receive the holy Virgin, who saluted her first, saying: "The Lord be with you, my dear cousin." "And may the same

Lord," replied Elizabeth, "reward you for having taken the trouble to give me this consolation.

The two cousins having retired together, it was then that the great mystery of the sanctification of John the Baptist was operated; but those facts do not belong to this history. Coming out of their retreat in the dusk of the evening, St. Elizabeth, who was informed of the happiness of the chaste St. Joseph, of which he was himself ignorant, bestowed upon him every mark of esteem and veneration.

After the saint had passed three days in the house of Zachariah, he asked permission of his blessed spouse to return to Nazareth. He took leave, with the promise to come and conduct our sweet Lady home when she wished to return. St. Elizabeth offered him presents, praying him to accept them, but he received only a few things, because this man of God was not only a lover of poverty but he had also a magnanimous and generous heart. He then took the road to Nazareth with the little beast that he had borrowed. Having arrived at his house, he was served there, in the absence of his spouse, by a relative who lived near,—the same who had been accustomed to bring them supplies from without, when the holy Lady was there.

After having passed three months, less two days,* in the house of Zachariah,

* In counting eight days after the Word was incarnate, the holy Virgin and St. Joseph arriv-

in the midst of events and prodigies which do not belong to this history,* the august Mary thought of departure. St. Joseph, having been notified by St. Elizabeth, left Nazareth to re-conduct his spouse to her home. On his arrival at the house of Zachariah, he was received with the highest marks of respect, for the holy priest already knew that the great patriarch was the depository of the mysteries and the treasures of heaven. The Blessed Virgin received him with discreet demonstrations of joy, and having placed herself on her knees before him, according to her custom, she asked his benediction. After he had taken some repose, they fixed on the day of departure. Having taken their leave, the happy patriarch, rejoiced to possess his treasure again, although he knew not as yet its full value, set out for Nazareth. The Blessed Virgin, as usual, asked his blessing, and, pursuing their way, in four days they reached their place of destination. During their route, the same effects attended their divine colloquies as those which have been already indicated.

The discreet Mary perceived that she could not long conceal her condition from her chaste and faithful spouse. But the Lord guided all by means the most conducive to His glory, and to

ed on the 2d of April, towards evening, at the house of Zachariah. If we add three months, less two days, which should commence the 3d of April, we come to the 1st of July inclusively,

* obtain merits for St. Joseph and the Virgin Mother. For this reason He did not make known to them His good pleasure. On their journey, the august Queen met with a woman who had once been virtuous, but who, tempted by the devil, was led into sin, and afterwards possessed by him. As soon as our blessed Lady saw her, she discovered her malady, and, using her queenly power, commanded the evil spirit to depart from the woman, and, having delivered her from the consequences of her sin, she obtained for her the gift of perseverance.

Our holy travellers arrived one day at an hostelry, the master of which was of a vicious disposition, and led a disorderly life. The Lord ordained, as the preparation for his coming happiness, that he should receive the august Mary and St. Joseph with marks of benevolence and consideration. He bestowed attentions and rendered them services beyond those he was accustomed to offer to other strangers. Our Queen, who knew the depraved state of his conscience, offered prayers for her host, and procured the justification of his soul, and the amendment of his life.

At length they reached Nazareth, when the Queen of heaven, assisted by the holy angels, put her house in order.

which is the eighth day after the birth of John the Baptist, and that of his circumcision.

* All these details will be found in the *Cité Mystique* of Maria d'Agreda.

St. Joseph occupied himself, as usual, for the subsistence of our Lady, and she did nothing to damp the hopes of her spouse. After her return home, Lucifer tempted the august Mary in every way, but he was vanquished with all his infernal legions, and precipitated into the depths of hell. While the Lord had permitted Lucifer to show himself, this enemy had contrived to sow discord among the neighbors of St. Joseph. They came together, and, having called for the innocent Mary, they accused her in the presence of her husband, and in the bitterest terms, of troubling the peace of their families. This reproach was keenly felt by our Queen, because of the pain which it caused to her spouse, for he had begun to remark something of her condition; and already suffered anxiety and trouble on this account, as we shall see in the following chapter. Now, the demon, ignorant of the real cause of this trouble, strove to plant the seeds of discontent within the bosom of St. Joseph, so as to make him impatient of his poverty; representing to him at the same time that his spouse Mary remained too long in her retreat and devotions, and that she was idle. But St. Joseph being of an upright and magnanimous heart, and of great perfection, despised these diabolical inventions, and utterly rejected them. Besides, his internal suffering regarding the state of his spouse, occupied him so exclusively, that it obliged him to forget

every other. The Lord delivered him from this temptation by the intercession of the holy Virgin, leaving only that of which we are about to speak in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III.

ST. JOSEPH DISCOVERS THAT MARY IS ABOUT TO BECOME A MOTHER, WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO PENETRATE THE MYSTERY—HE ENDURES GREAT SUFFERINGS ON THIS ACCOUNT.

IT was about five months since the eternal Word had become incarnate in the chaste bosom of the Virgin Mary, when St. Joseph began to observe indications of it, and to entertain suspicions. It was the more apparent, because the proportions of her pure form were so perfect, that the least change was perceptible. Deeply concerned and anxious, St. Joseph, as he one day observed her coming forth from her oratory, perceived that it was no longer possible to doubt the testimony of his own eyes. The heart of the man of God was penetrated with profound sorrow, and he was unable to resist the harrowing reflections that tormented his spirit.

It may not be without utility or interest to notice some of these reflections, which increased the violence of his great affliction. In the first place

he entertained a most chaste and sincere love for his faithful spouse, to whom, since the commencement of their union, he had devoted all the tenderness of his heart. Besides, his desire to serve her was augmented from day to day by the unequalled holiness and attractive manners of our blessed Lady. Our saint, therefore, was impelled, by a desire natural to his love, to find a response to it on her part. The Lord so ordered it, that, from this same desire, the holy Joseph was still more careful to serve and respect our blessed mistress.

Thus St. Joseph fulfilled with great zeal his obligations as a most faithful husband and guardian of the mystery which, as yet, was hidden from him. But the more assiduous he was to serve, to honor his spouse while bearing for her a love, so pure, chaste, holy, and just, the more eager was his desire that she should reciprocate his affection. Nevertheless he did not disclose this internal conflict; either because of the respect produced by the humble majesty of his spouse, or because in witnessing the discreet deportment of Mary—her sweet converse, and her more than angelic purity—the revelation would have been too painful.

At the view of what had become so evident, he was lost in amazement. Still, though convinced, he would not allow his imagination to go beyond appearances. Being a just and holy

man, and seeing the fact, he suspended his judgment without entering into the cause. What an example for us! It is most probable that if he had been convinced of the culpability of his wife, the violence of his grief would have put an end to his existence. In the second place, his reflections reminded him that he had had no agency in this condition which was but too apparent. Dishonor was inevitable when it should become known; and, as St. Joseph was of a generous and noble heart, this apprehension gave him great pain. Besides, he considered, with rare prudence, the affliction which their own infamy would bring upon them if the matter came to be divulged.

But that which caused the greatest grief of all to the holy spouse, was the fear that his wife would be stoned, according to the law which ordered this punishment; for he could not make himself an accomplice to hide the crime, if it existed. All these considerations pierced the heart of St. Joseph with the deepest grief, in which he found no consolation except in the irreproachable conduct of his spouse. Still, on the other hand, though appearances convinced him, he could neither find means of excuse, nor even dare to communicate the subject of his grief to any human being. Our saint was then like one environed by the sorrows of death, and he felt the force of the words, "*Jealousy is as cruel as hell.*"

He would have sought some alleviation for his pains in spiritual consolation, but grief suspended the powers of his soul. If his reason inclined to follow the suspicions suggested by his senses, the reflections that he made on the tried holiness of his most wise and prudent spouse caused them to vanish like ice in the heat of the sun, or smoke before the wind. If he strove to check the affections of his chaste love, it was impossible, since he found his spouse always more worthy of being loved. And although the truth was concealed from him, she had more power to attract, than the seeming deception of her infidelity to repel him. The sacred ties of love could not be rent asunder, because they reposed on the solid foundations of truth, reason, and justice.

Our saint did not then judge it expedient to declare his grief to his blessed spouse: added to this, the gravity, ever equal and divinely humble, which he saw in her, did not permit him to take this liberty; for, although he saw marks so unequivocal, a conduct so pure and holy as hers could ill accord with infidelity. Such a fault could not in any manner be compatible with so much purity, holiness, and discretion; nor with that assemblage of graces whose growth was each day more visible in the august Mary.

In these perplexities the saintly husband addressed himself to God in prayer. Placing himself in His pres-

ence, "Eternal God and my Lord," he said, "my desires and my groanings are not hidden from Thy divine Majesty. I find myself struggling with violent agitations, I have given my heart to the spouse whom I received from Thy hands, I have trusted in her purity, but the strange appearances which I discover in her cast me into the most afflicting perplexity. It would be rash to think that she had been unfaithful and had offended Thee, seeing in her such great purity and so eminent a holiness. It is, nevertheless, impossible to deny the evidence of my senses, and sorrow must destroy me unless there be here some mystery that I have not discovered. Reason exculpates, but the senses condemn her. I see plainly that she conceals from me the cause of her condition. What shall I do? I suspend my judgment, ignorant of the cause of what I see. Receive, O God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, my sighs and my tears, as an acceptable sacrifice. I cannot believe that Mary has offended Thee; but, being her husband, I cannot presume the existence of any mystery of which I can be unworthy."

Saint Joseph persevered in his supplications and united with them many other affections and prayers. He thought there must be in all this some mystery, but his humility hindered him from being assured on this point. All the reasons that presented themselves

in favor of the holiness of our most sweet Lady, contributed only to persuade him that she had committed no fault. At the same time the saint never thought of her being the mother of the Messiah, for he could not have believed himself worthy to be her spouse.

Sometimes he suspended his suspicions; at others appearances augmented them. Sometimes he was overwhelmed by agitation; sometimes in an aching calm, without power to resolve or to believe any thing. He could neither vanquish his doubts nor appease his heart, nor find that certitude of which he had so much need, to regulate his conduct and to calm his mind. And thus it was that the sufferings of the holy Patriarch were so cruel. They serve as evident proofs of his incomparable prudence and sanctity, and they gained him such merits before God as to render him worthy of the favors he was about to receive.

Through the knowledge and infused light which she possessed, our blessed Lady saw all that passed in the breast of St. Joseph. But, though filled with tenderness and compassion for the sufferings of her spouse, she spoke not on the subject of his pain, but contented herself to serve him with submission and exactitude, because it was not proper to disclose the secret of the great King, without an express command from the Lord.

During this period, while he was in ignorance of the mystery of his spouse, St. Joseph thought it his duty to maintain his superiority, yet with great moderation. In this he imitated the ancient Patriarchs, from whom he would not degenerate, whose wives were very submissive. Although just and good, he therefore allowed himself to be served and honored by the Blessed Virgin after their espousals, preserving in all things his authority as chief, which he sweetened by his rare humility and great prudence. And he would have had cause for this if our Lady had been like other women. On her part, the august Mary was most submissive and obedient to her husband, and, although she was above all, none ever equalled her in these qualities. She served her spouse with an incomparable respect and promptitude, and thus she gave opportunities to our saint, while she served him at table, or occupied herself in other domestic affairs, to observe her closely, and, to the great affliction of his soul, assure himself more positively of the truth. It was impossible that in her actions the signs of her condition should not be more evident, but this did not hinder her in her tasks. She desired neither to excuse nor to justify herself, because this would not have accorded with the truth, nor with her angelical candor, nor with the grandeur and generosity of her most noble heart; and

the pains of St. Joseph found no alleviation. The Queen of heaven could easily have alleged the truth of her irreproachable innocence—having exculpated herself, and relieved St. Joseph of his pain by disclosing the mystery, but she would not hazard the justification of so mysterious a truth upon her own testimony, and, with great wisdom, she abandoned herself to the divine Providence. She strove to console and please him in all things, often asking what he would have her to do. Many times she served him on her knees, and although these loving ways might in some sort console the saintly spouse, they gave him, also, additional causes of affliction in considering the many motives to love and esteem her who plunged him in such perplexity.

St. Joseph could not entirely conceal his grief: thus he often found himself pensive, sad, and thoughtful. Preoccupied by his sorrows, he sometimes spoke to his spouse with more harshness than formerly. But this was neither from anger nor revenge, for he had no such thought—it was merely the effect inseparable from a wounded heart. Our most prudent Lady, on her part, changed nothing in her sweet manners; on the contrary, she took greater pains than ever to comfort her spouse. She served him at table, or offered him a seat. Without doubt, this painful season was one of those which most exercised not only St. Joseph but our bless-

ed Lady. Our incomparable Queen offered continual supplications for her spouse to the Most High, that He would vouchsafe to regard and console him. In order better to understand the profound humility and the sublime wisdom of the august Mary in these circumstances, it should be understood that the Lord had not commanded her to keep the secret of the mystery of the incarnation. He did not even disclose His will on this point with as much clearness as in other matters. It seemed that the Lord left all to the wisdom and to the divine virtues of His chosen one.

Thus the divine Providence gave occasion to the most pure Mary, and to her most faithful spouse, to exercise by heroic actions, each according to their capacity, the virtues and gifts which He had allotted them. He was pleased, as one might say, to witness the faith, the hope, the love, the humility of these upright hearts in the midst of so poignant an affliction. The Lord seemed deaf, according to our manner of speaking, for His greater glory, in order to give to the world this example of sanctity and prudence. He waited until the proper time to speak was come. Let us understand from this the designs of God, and His secret ways with the souls whom He cherishes, and whom He would render capable of receiving His favors and His gifts. We ought to use every effort, and employ

all our care to acquire efficaciously a true resignation to this divine Providence. If men only knew the loving care of this Father of mercy, they would be happy to forget themselves, and cease to plunge into cares at once burdensome, useless, and dangerous. It is of the utmost importance to the creature to let himself be guided by the hand of the Lord, because men are ignorant of His operations, and the ends to which they are to be led by them.

If God were susceptible of being touched like men, by pain or jealousy, He would suffer, in perceiving that His own creatures desire to seek the least thing in any other than Himself. The Lord regards the actions of men; He lovingly corrects their faults; He foresees their desires; He protects them in danger; He fortifies them in their trials; He assists them in their afflictions. None can resist Him, or hinder His will. He executes what He can; He can execute all that He wills, and He will give himself entirely to the just who are in His grace and confide in Him alone. Who can conceive the greatness and the nature of the gifts which He pours into hearts disposed to receive them!

Let us leave all to His providence, for the Most High will give us whatever is most sure and necessary for our salvation. Except the pains which the august Mary endured from those which were suffered by her most holy Son, the most severe of all her life were caused

by the afflictions and perplexities of St. Joseph in the circumstances which we have just related.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SUSPICIONS OF ST. JOSEPH INCREASE,
AND HE RESOLVES TO LEAVE HIS SPOUSE
—THE ANGEL OF THE LORD DECLARES
TO HIM THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION.

ST. JOSEPH endeavored to calm the painful agitation of his heart by doing his utmost to remove the conviction of his mind respecting the condition of his wife. But the indications which became every day more visible in her holy person served only to confirm it. The further our Lady advanced, the more amiable, vigorous, active, and beautiful she became; and her invincible charms attracted his chaste love, without entirely allaying these conflicting passions. At length all hesitation was at an end; he could no longer entertain a doubt of the evidence. His heart was conformed to the will of God; nevertheless, through the weakness of the flesh, his spirit was exceedingly sorrowful, and nothing remained to dissipate his sadness. He felt his bodily strength diminish—and, although no particular malady manifested itself, he grew thin, and his countenance bore the marks of deep affliction. And as he preserved

silence, not seeking consolation elsewhere (as men usually do), the sufferings of the saint were naturally more intense.

The heart of the gentle Mary was penetrated by a sorrow not less profound; but she resolved to redouble her cares for the health of her spouse. She continued to conceal the mystery which she had no command to disclose, in order to honor and to preserve the secret of the celestial King. So far as regarded herself, she left nothing undone to promote his comfort—entreating him to remind her of any thing which might contribute to restore his declining health. She besought him to repose himself, and to partake of some little refreshment; for it was but right to supply the wants of the body, in order to obtain strength to labor for the Lord.

St. Joseph, attentive to every movement of his spouse, and sensible of the holy effects of her conversation and presence, said within himself: "Is it possible that a woman so holy, in whom the grace of God is so perceptible, can cast me into such perplexity? Who can I find to equal her, if I leave her? Where find consolation, if she fail me? But all these trouble me even less than the infamy that may result from this unhappy affair; or that I should give cause to believe that I have been the accomplice of a crime. If I make myself the author of her condi-

tion, it will be a falsehood unworthy an honorable man, and opposed to my conscience and my reputation. In such a state of embarrassment, what shall I do? The least evil that can happen is to absent myself—to leave the house."

Our blessed Lady being sincerely afflicted by the resolution, which her spouse had just taken, addressed herself to the angels of her guard: "You," she said, "who obey with promptitude all the commands of the Lord, listen now to my prayers. Prevent my spouse, I conjure you, from executing this intention which he has formed of absenting himself from me." The angels obeyed their Queen, and silently conveyed many holy inspirations to the heart of St. Joseph. They persuaded him anew of the sanctity and perfection of his spouse—that God was incomprehensible in His works, and impetrable in His judgments, and that He is most faithful to those who trust in Him.

The troubled mind of St. Joseph was somewhat soothed by these inspirations, although he knew not from whence they came, nor by what order he received them. Yet as the cause of his grief remained, he always sank again into sadness, and returned to his first resolution to desert his spouse. Then our blessed Lady addressed herself directly to her Son whom she bore in her virginal bosom. "It would not be becoming," said she, "that thy ser-

vant should be without a husband who assists and shelters her from calumny: do not permit him to execute his design of abandoning me." The Most High replied: "I will speedily console my servant Joseph, and after I shall have declared to him, through my angel, the mystery of which he is ignorant, you may speak with him concerning it. I will fill him with my spirit, and enable him to accomplish all that he should do in these mysteries. He shall aid and assist you under all circumstances."

The august Mary comprehended how important it was that St. Joseph should have to endure this affliction, by which his spirit was exercised and prepared for the great charge that was to be confided to him. He had now passed two months of suffering, and, overcome by his apprehensions, he exclaimed: "I find no remedy for my grief but absence. I acknowledge that my spouse is perfect, but it is not possible for me to penetrate the mystery of her condition, and I will not insult her virtue by subjecting her to the penalties of the law. I will depart forthwith." The saint resolved to set out during the night. He therefore prepared a small packet of clothing. Having received a trifling sum of money which was due to him for work, he determined to leave the house after midnight. But as he was accustomed to meditate, he reflected on the importance of the undertaking. "Great God, of

* our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," he exclaimed, "the sorrow which breaks my heart is not hidden from Thy divine clemency. Thou knowest, besides, O Lord (though in other things I am not free from sin), my innocence touching the subject of my grief. I choose the lesser evil in quitting my spouse, and go to end my days in some desert, there to abandon myself entirely to the care of Thy providence. Forsake me not, for I desire only what is for Thy glory."

St. Joseph prostrated himself, and made a vow to offer in the Temple of Jerusalem a part of the small sum which he had reserved for his journey, praying the Lord to defend his spouse from calumny, and preserve her from all evil. Such was the great rectitude of this man of God, and such the esteem which he preserved for our blessed Lady. After this prayer, he took a little repose, intending to depart without seeing her. Our blessed Lady, from her oratory, observed all that St. Joseph did, or proposed to do; for the Most High revealed it to her.

The divine Majesty permitted that the Blessed Virgin and her holy spouse should endure these interior sufferings, in order that, besides the merits which so long a martyrdom would procure for them, the succor of the divine consolations should be to them more admirable and more remarkable. The august Mary practised many virtues

during this period, whereby she teaches us to hope for relief from the Most High in the greatest afflictions. And what an example is not that of St. Joseph! No one had ever stronger grounds of suspicion, nor more of discretion to control his judgment than he.

The passion of jealousy produces sharp wounds in him who is attacked by it, and no one ever felt its effects so sensibly as St. Joseph, though, in fact, there was no foundation for it, if he had but known the truth. He was endowed with a singular intelligence to penetrate the sanctity and the lovely character of his spouse. But this, in augmenting his esteem for her whom he was about to lose, augmented his sorrow to find himself necessitated to abandon her.

St. Joseph was not subject to the disorders of common jealousy, in which the passions of concupiscence are engaged, which neither reason nor prudence can vanquish. The jealousy of the saint arose only from the depth of his love and a conditional suspicion, viz.: whether his chaste spouse reciprocated his affection; for a pledge so dear as the affection of a wife must not be shared by any other. When love is so well founded, the chains that cement it are very strong, and the more so because there are fewer imperfections to weaken them. There was nothing in our sweet Lady which could dimin-

ish the love of her spouse. On the contrary, all that she had received from grace and from nature gave him new subjects every day to strengthen his affection.

After the saint had offered the prayer, of which we have already made mention, he fell asleep in this sadness, which had sunk into despondency. He was sure that he should awake in time to depart at midnight, without being seen, as he thought, by his spouse. Our Lady, on her part, awaited the remedy, and earnestly sought it by her humble prayers. She was consoled by an assurance that the pains of her spouse had now reached their highest degree—the hour of mercy and consolation for that sorrowing heart could not long tarry, and her desires would soon be accomplished. And now the Lord sent the archangel Gabriel, to disclose, by a divine revelation to St. Joseph, while he slept, the mystery which was to be accomplished in his spouse. The archangel acquitted himself this embassy, appeared in a dream, as related by St. Matthew, and declared to him, in the terms quoted by that evangelist, the whole mystery of the incarnation and redemption.

There are various reasons why the archangel spoke to St. Joseph in a dream, and not in his waking hours, although the mystery had been manifested to others when awake. In the first place, St. Joseph was so prudent

and so filled with esteem for the Blessed Virgin, that stronger proofs were unnecessary to convince him of the dignity of Mary, and of the mystery of the incarnation; for the divine inspiration penetrates easily into well-disposed hearts. In the second place, his trouble had begun with his senses, and it was but just that they should be mortified and deprived of the angelic vision, since they had permitted the entrance of illusions and suspicions; therefore the truth ought not to enter by their means. The third reason is, that although St. Joseph committed no sin in these circumstances, yet his senses had undoubtedly contracted a species of stain, and it was proper that the angel should fulfil his embassy at a time when these senses, which had been scandalized, were interdicted by the suspension of their operations. Besides these, there was the reason which should overrule all others, that such was the will of the Lord, who is just and holy, and perfect in all His works.

St. Joseph saw not the angel through any image or form—he heard only the internal voice, and understood the mystery. He heard what St. Gabriel said, “that he should not fear to remain with Mary his wife, because her condition was the work of the Holy Ghost. That she should bring forth a son, whom he should call Jesus; that He should deliver His people from their sins; and that in this mystery would

* be accomplished the prophecy of Isaiah — ‘A Virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son, who shall be called Emmanuel, which means, God with us.’” We perceive from the words of the celestial ambassador, that the saint had separated from the pure Mary in intention, since he was commanded to receive her without fear.

St. Joseph awoke, informed of the mystery which had been revealed to him, and instructed that his spouse was the Mother of God. He found himself divided between the joy of his happiness, and his unhopèd-for dignity, and sorrow for what he had been about to do. He prostrated himself instantly on the ground, and made, with humble fear and inconceivable contentment, heroic acts of humility and gratitude. He gave thanks to God for the mystery which had been disclosed to him, and for having made him the spouse of her whom He had chosen to be His mother—him, who did not deserve to be her servant. The doubts and uncertainty which St. Joseph had suffered, laid in him the foundations of the most profound humility, necessary for him to whom was confided the dispensation of the most holy counsels of the Lord. The remembrance of what had passed served as a lesson for his future life.

Having rendered thanks to the divine Majesty, the holy man began to reproach himself. “O my divine spouse,”

said he, "most sweet dove, chosen by the Most High to be His own mother, how hath thy unworthy servant dared to call in question thy fidelity! How could he, who is only dust and ashes, suffer her who is Queen of heaven to serve him? Why have I not kissed the earth thy steps have trod, and served thee kneeling? How shall I dare to raise my eyes in thy presence, or open my lips to speak with thee? Lord, give me grace, grant me strength to pray for pardon! Inspire her to show me mercy, so that she may not reject her unworthy servant as he deserves. Alas! how clearly she must have penetrated all my thoughts: how can I have the boldness to appear in her presence? I see now the grossness of my conduct, and my stupid mistake; and if Thy justice for my chastisement had permitted me to execute my imprudent intention, what wretchedness would now be mine! Thanks to Thee, my God, throughout eternity, for so great a blessing. I will present myself to my princess, my spouse, confiding in the sweetness of her clemency, and, prostrate at her feet, I will beseech her pardon, so that for her sake, Lord, Thou wilt regard me with pity, and pardon my fault."

St. Joseph went forth from his humble chamber very unlike what he was before his recent slumber. Now he was happy: yet he dared not disturb our blessed Lady, who was still absorb-

ed in the sweets of her contemplation. While awaiting the favorable moment, the man of God, with tearful eyes, unbound the little packet that he had prepared — but with sentiments far different from those which had previously occupied him. Having learned the honor due to our blessed Lady, our saint watered the house with his tears; he swept it and prepared other little household work, which, while ignorant of her dignity, he had intrusted to the care of his blessed spouse.

He now resolved to change his deportment towards her, by appropriating to himself the office of servant, reserving that of mistress for her majesty. Further on we shall relate the loving disputes which he had with our queen to decide which of the two should serve and take the humbler place. At the proper time the saint presented himself at the chamber of our blessed Lady, who awaited his coming with the sweetness and complacency which we shall recount in the following chapter. Let us take an example from St. Joseph, who believed, without delay and without doubting, that which the angel revealed to him, in such wise that he merited to be elevated to a great bard, and to a sublime dignity. And if he abased himself with so much humility, not having committed any sin in what he did, but only in having been greatly troubled under circumstances which seemed to give so much occasion for

anxiety, consider how much we ought to humiliate ourselves—we, who are nothing but miserable worms of the dust—by weeping over our negligence and our sins, so that the Most High may regard us as father and spouse.

CHAPTER V.

ST. JOSEPH ASKS PARDON OF THE HOLY MARY HIS SPOUSE—HE RESOLVES TO SERVE HER IN ALL THINGS WITH PROFOUND RESPECT.

ST. JOSEPH, after the discovery of his error, waited until our blessed Lady should come forth from her retreat. As soon as he thought it was time, he opened the door of the little chamber occupied by the mother of the heavenly King, and, throwing himself at her feet, he exclaimed, with humility and profound veneration: "My spouse, Mother of the Eternal Word, behold your servant prostrate before you. By the same Lord whom you bear in your most chaste bosom, I pray you to pardon my presumption. Sure I am that none of my thoughts can be hidden from your wisdom, nor from the divine light which you have received. Great was my blindness to think of deserting you; but you know that I did it in ignorance, because neither the secret of the great King had been revealed to me, nor the greatness of your

dignity. Forget, I entreat you, the many deficiencies of a vile creature who offers his heart and his life to your service; I will not rise from your feet until you have pardoned my folly—until I have received your forgiveness and your benediction."

The august Mary listened with mingled feelings to the humble words of her spouse. She rejoiced in the Lord to learn that St. Joseph was informed of the mysteries of the incarnation, and that he revered them with such profound faith and humility. But she was troubled by the resolution he had taken to change his conduct towards her, and with the respect and submission with which he addressed her. Knowing how much she ought to esteem humility, she was disturbed by the apprehension that St. Joseph, recognizing in her the mother of the Lord, would deport himself in all things as her inferior. Insisting that he should rise, she prostrated herself at his feet, although he made every effort to hinder this, but it was not possible; for in humility she was invincible. Then she said to the saint: "It is I, my spouse, who ought to beseech your pardon for the pain and sorrow that you have had to endure on my account, therefore I beg you will forget them."

Our blessed Lady, for the consolation of her husband, continued: "I could not reveal to you the hidden mystery which the Most High had inclosed

within me, because it was my duty to await the expression of the will of the Lord. Thus my silence should not be considered as arising from any want of esteem for you, for in all things I regard you as my master and my husband. I am, and always will be, your faithful servant; but do not make any change in the demeanor which you have always preserved towards me. The Lord has not elevated me to the dignity of being His own Mother to be served, but to be the servant of all, and of you especially. This is my office: it is but just that you should leave it to me, since the Most High has so ordained in giving me your protection."

St. Joseph, by these reasons and many others, sweetly efficacious, found his spirit enlightened in a singular manner. He received, through this purest of creatures, extraordinary divine influences, and, entirely renewed in heart, he replied: "Thou art blessed among women; thou art blessed among all nations. May the Creator of heaven and earth be glorified by eternal praises, for that He has chosen thee for His dwelling. In thee alone He has accomplished the promises that He made to our fathers and to the prophets. Let all generations bless Him that He has not exalted Himself in any creature as in thee, and that He has chosen me, the vilest of men, to be thy servant." The saint was enlightened by the divine Spirit after the manner of St. Eliza-

beth; but the light and knowledge which St. Joseph received were, in a certain sense, more admirable, because of his dignity and ministry.

The august Mary replied by the Magnificat and other new canticles; and while chanting them, inflamed by the divine fire, she was rapt in a sublime ecstasy, and, lifted up from the earth in a globe of brilliant light which encircled her, she was transformed as in a glory. St. Joseph was filled with admiration and joy inconceivable at this view of his holy spouse, for he had never yet seen her surrounded with such glory and excellence. She appeared to him quite transparent, and, at the same time, he discovered the integrity and virginal purity of our queen and the mystery of her dignity. He saw, also, and recognized in the chaste bosom of Mary the holy humanity of the Infant God and the union of the two natures in the person of the Word. He adored the Infant God with a profound humility, acknowledged his true Redeemer, and offered himself to His service with fervent acts of divine love.

The Lord regarded him with great favor, and distinguished him among all men, for He accepted him as His reputed father, and gave him the title. And to render him conformable to this new and honorable name, He imparted to him all the knowledge and divine gifts to which Christian purity can or ought to aspire.

If it were a proof of the magnanimity of the glorious St. Joseph that he did not die of jealousy, it is also a subject of admiration that he was not overwhelmed by the joy which he felt on this occasion. In the first case his holiness appears, but in the second he received such augmentations of graces and gifts from the Lord, that, if His divine Majesty had not dilated his heart, he could not have been able to receive them. He was entirely renewed and enlightened so as to converse worthily with her who was the Mother of God, and, conjointly with her, to dispense all that concerned the incarnation and the charge of the Word made man. It was also manifested to him, in order that he should recognize the obligation imposed on him to serve his holy spouse, that all the gifts he had received from the Most High were received through her and for her. He knew that the gifts he had received before his espousals were bestowed because the Lord had chosen him for this office, and that those which he now received were because she had merited them for him. And as our blessed Lady had been the instrument by which the Lord had wrought the sanctification of John the Baptist, and his mother, St. Elizabeth, she was the organ, also, by whom St. Joseph received the plenitude of grace. This most happy spouse knew all this, and he responded to it like a faithful and grateful servant.

The holy evangelists make no mention of these great mysteries, nor of many others which were known to our blessed Lady and St. Joseph, because, for many reasons, they were not suitable to be made known to the Gentiles on their first conversion. These things were reserved, by the impenetrable judgments of Providence, for times which the divine wisdom judged more suitable,* or when the Church should have need of the intercession and support of our holy Queen. The faithful St. Joseph, after having been made aware of the dignity of his spouse, and the mystery of the incarnation, conceived so lofty an esteem for her, that, although he had been always pure and perfect in his life, he now became as a new man. He resolved henceforth to change his conduct, and to redouble his veneration towards our blessed Lady. This was in conformity with the wisdom of the saint, and due to the excellence of his spouse, for he was servant, and she mistress of the universe. St. Joseph knew all this by divine illumination. Now, to satisfy the desire he had to honor her in whom he recognized the Mother of God, when he spoke to her, or passed before her, if alone together, he bent the knee. He would not suffer her to wait on him, nor that she should occupy herself in

* Jesus said, "I have yet many things to say to you: but you cannot hear them now."—*St. John*, xvi. 12.

other humble offices, such as sweeping the house, cleansing the vessels, and many other things which he thought derogatory from the dignity of our queen.

But our saintly Lady, who was the humblest of the humble, and whose humility was not to be overcome, prayed St. Joseph not to pay her such honors as to bow the knee to her. This veneration, she said, was doubtless due to the Lord, whom she bore in her bosom; but while He remained there, the person of Christ could not be distinguished from her own. The saint, yielding to her humble desires, rendered this worship to the Lord, who was in the bosom of Mary, and to her as His mother, only when unperceived by her.

They had also humble disputes respecting their servile employments. St. Joseph could not consent to allow our amiable mistress to perform them, and strove to prevent it. On her part, she did what she could, but while she was retired in her oratory the saint found time to do many things, and thus our sweet Lady was frustrated in her desires to be the servant. At these times she addressed her meek complaints to the Lord, and prayed Him to oblige her spouse not to hinder her in the exercise of humility.

This virtue is so agreeable at the tribunal of God, that we ask for no common grace when we pray for it;

for humility imparts a certain greatness to all things, and inclines God to clemency. The divine Majesty hearkened to the request of our blessed Lady, and his guardian angel, said, interiorly, to the blessed St. Joseph, "Do not frustrate the humble desires of her who is above all creatures in heaven or on earth. Permit her to serve you in external things, and preserve for her in your interior the greatest reverence. Render to the Word made man, in all times and in all places, the homage that is due to Him. You can, meanwhile, assist His mother, and honor always the Lord of the universe who is within her."

Having received these orders from the Most High, St. Joseph no longer refused her humble exercises to our sweet Lady. Thus both offered to God the sacrifice of their will. The most pure Mary, in practising her profound humility, and faithful obedience to her spouse; and St. Joseph, by obedience to the Most High, with a holy confusion to see himself served by her whom he recognized as mistress of the universe and mother of the Creator.

Thus our saint was compensated for the humility which he could not exercise; for, to see himself served as he was, humiliated him far more, and obliged him to abase himself still more profoundly in contempt of himself. In these dispositions St. Joseph meditated upon the Lord, whom the august Mary



The Good Shepherd.

bore in her chaste bosom, adoring and rendering to Him honor and glory. Then, in recompense for his sanctity and his respect, mingled with fear, the Infant God, made man, sometimes manifested Himself in an admirable manner. He saw Him in the bosom of His most pure mother, as through a luminous crystal. Afterwards, our incomparable Lady conversed more familiarly with her blessed spouse upon the mysteries of the incarnation, for she knew that he was now informed of the secrets of the hypostatic union of the two natures, divine and human, within her virginal bosom.

No tongue can relate the celestial discourses that were held between the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph. And who can describe the effects produced on the gentle and pious heart of this holy man, on finding himself the spouse of her who was the true mother of his Creator, and to see her performing for him the duties of a simple servant?

If the Almighty enriched the house and the person of Oben-Edom with such plenteous benedictions for having received the ark of the Old Testament, what benedictions would He not bestow upon St. Joseph, to whom He had confided the true Ark, and the Legislator Himself who was inclosed within it?

The happiness and the fidelity of this saint were incomparable, not only because the living Ark of the New

Testament abode in his house, but because he guarded it like a faithful and prudent servant. The Lord placed him over His family, also, that he should provide for it according to its necessities as a faithful administrator. Let all nations acknowledge him, bless him, and publish his praises, since the Most High has never done for any other what He has done for this incomparable saint. In view of mysteries so august, I will glorify this adorable Lord, and confess Him as holy, just, merciful, wise, and admirable in all His wondrous works.

CHAPTER VI.

MODE OF LIFE OF THE AUGUST MARY AND ST. JOSEPH.—CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN THEM, AND OTHER REMARKABLE CIRCUMSTANCES.

THE humble house of Joseph, which our saints made their dwelling-place, consisted of three chambers only. St. Joseph slept in one of these, and used another as a workshop, where the tools were deposited which served for use in his trade of carpenter. The third, which contained a small bed, the work of our saint, was appropriated to the Queen of heaven, who slept there, and made it her ordinary abode. This order was established from the date of their marriage.

Before he was informed of her dignity, the saintly husband rarely, except when some affair obliged him to ask her advice, visited his wife, because he was engaged with his work, and she remained in her retreat. But after his happiness was made known to him, the holy man became more assiduous, and went very often to seek our blessed Lady, to renew the offer of his services. Yet he never approached her but with great humility and reverent respect. Before speaking to her he was careful to observe how she was occupied. Thus, many times he saw her rapt in ecstasy, and surrounded by a radiant light; at others, he found her discoursing with angels. Often she was prostrate, in the form of a cross, and speaking with the Lord. In these circumstances our saint contented himself with the liberty of gazing upon her with the most profound reverence. It was granted to his merits to hear the harmony of the angelic chants, and to inhale a delicious fragrance that strengthened him and filled his whole being with spiritual joy and consolation.

The holy spouses were alone in their house, for they kept no servant—not only because of their great humility, but also that they found it most convenient to have no witnesses of the prodigies that were of such frequent occurrence with them.

Our Lady never left the house, unless

* obliged by some pressing circumstance; but a woman, their neighbor and relative, she who had served St. Joseph during the sojourn of the Blessed Virgin at the house of Zachariah, took charge of their external affairs. She was abundantly recompensed for these services, not only in her own advancement in perfection, but her family also felt the beneficent effects of the protection of the Holy Family. The august Mary many times healed their maladies, and filled them with heavenly benedictions.

Their nourishment was very frugal; but they partook of it every day, and together. St. Joseph sometimes ate flesh meat, but the holy Virgin never, although she prepared it for her spouse. Their ordinary diet consisted of fruits, fish, bread, and cooked vegetables. But this was always taken with great moderation, and only so much as was needful, but the quality varied according to circumstances.

St. Joseph never saw his holy spouse asleep. He did not know, from his own experience, whether she slept at all. Her place of rest was the little bed made by the saint. It had two coverings, between which she was accustomed to place herself to take a brief and light repose. The undergarment of the august Mary was a tunic or chemise, but little softer than woolen stuff. She never left it off, except when it was worn, nor soiled it, and no



W. H. P. pinet

Parker

The Holy Family

one in the world saw it, not even St. Joseph. In all her works, and in whatever she did for St. Joseph, the greatest cleanliness was observed.

Before St. Joseph was informed of the mystery of the incarnation, our blessed Lady, at certain times when he was not occupied, used to read to him from the Holy Scriptures, particularly from David and the Prophets. She explained them like an experienced instructress, and her holy spouse questioned her on many points, her replies to which gave him such cause for admiration, that both united in praising and blessing the Lord. But after the saint had discovered the grand secret, our Lady addressed him as the chosen of God, to be the coadjutor of the works and mysteries of the Redemption. They discoursed then openly together, and with a more clear understanding, of the prophecies which referred to the conception of the Word by a Virgin Mother, His birth, and His most holy life.

Our august Lady explained all; and then they spoke of what they should do when the day, so much desired, should come—when the Child should be born, when He should be in her arms, and she should nourish Him from her virginal breast, and when, alone among mortals, her holy spouse would be the only one who should participate in this inconceivable happiness! But she said little of the death and the

* passion, for she was unwilling to afflict the tender heart of her spouse.

The faithful and happy St. Joseph was all enkindled by divine love in these gracious conversations, and, shedding tears of joy, he cried out: "Is it indeed possible that I shall see my God and Redeemer within thy chaste arms?—that I shall adore Him there?—that I shall hear His sweet voice?—that I shall touch Him?—that my eyes shall see His divine face?—that the sweat of my brow shall be employed in His service, and for His support?—that we shall speak and converse with Him? Whence comes to me such bliss as none could ever have deserved? Why have I not rich treasures, that I may lay them at His feet?"

Our august Lady replied: "The great God comes not into the world to find riches, for He needs them not; for them would He not descend from heaven. He comes on earth only to repair the disorders of the world, and by sure ways to conduct it to eternal life; and these ways are none other than humility and poverty. For this He has chosen our poor habitation. He wills not that we be rich in worldly goods, which are but vanity and vexation of spirit."

The saint often besought the holy Virgin to instruct him in the character of the virtues, especially that of the divine love, in order that he might understand how to conduct himself in a suitable manner towards the God man,

so as not to be rejected as an unprofitable servant. The Mistress of the Virtues condescended to his request, and explained to her spouse the properties of the virtues, and the manner of practising them with all possible perfection. Nevertheless she deported herself in these instructions with such great discretion, that she appeared in no wise the mistress of her spouse, for she interrogated the saint and instructed him by her questions.

They mingled these conversations, or readings from the Scriptures, sometimes with manual labor, when the saint was obliged to continue at his work. Our most amiable Lady added to them the consolations of the celestial doctrines; and thus the happy husband made greater advancement in virtue than with the work of his hands. She showed to him the great fruit that may be drawn from labor. Believing herself unworthy to be maintained by her spouse, she was humbled, in thinking how much she was indebted to him. She felt herself as much obliged as if she had been the most useless of all creatures, and, being unable to assist our saint, she served him whenever it was possible. About this time St. Joseph saw, one day, a great number of birds come to entertain the queen of creatures. They fluttered around her, as if to form a choir, and sang with a delicious melody. St. Joseph had not before witnessed this marvel, and, over-

* flowing with joy and wonder, he exclaimed: "Is it possible that unreasoning creatures acquit themselves of their obligations better than I? It is just that if they recognize, serve, and honor thee, so far as they are capable, that thou shouldst permit me also, to acquit myself of what is justly thy right." But the most prudent Virgin replied: "I am but a simple creature, yet I ought to induce all creatures to praise the Most High."

It often happened that they found themselves in want of necessities, for they were very liberal to the poor, nor were they careful, like worldly people, to provide for their wants beforehand. Now the Lord so ordered it, that the faith and patience of His holy Mother and St. Joseph should not be idle. These privations were an inexpressible consolation to the august Mary, not only because of her love of poverty, but also of her humility, through which she considered herself undeserving of the necessary aliments of life. She prayed the Most High only to supply the wants of St. Joseph.

The All-Powerful forgot not His poor, and, while giving them occasion to augment their merits and to exercise their virtues, He gave them also food in season. Sometimes He inspired their neighbors or acquaintances to assist them by a gift. Oftener St. Elizabeth sent them help from her own house for, since the visit of the Queen of

heaven, she had resolved to assist them, and our sweet Lady sent in return some work of her own hands. Our holy Mistress sometimes exercised the power with which she was endowed over creatures, and the birds brought fruits or bread. Her happy spouse was frequently a witness of these events.

They were also sometimes assisted, in a wonderful manner, by the ministry of angels. But before recounting these, it is well to remark that the nobleness of heart, the faith, and the generosity of the saint were so exalted, that his soul was free from every taint of avarice, or sordid care for the future. And although the holy spouses devoted themselves to labor, they never demanded the price of their work, nor would they enter into bargains, for they did not labor from motives of interest, but to exercise charity towards those who had need of it, leaving the acknowledgment of it to their discretion.

When any payment was made to them, they received it not as a price or recompense, but as an alms. It often happened that no recompense was offered for their work, and that they found themselves entirely destitute of food, and then the Lord provided it. One day, when their usual dinner-hour was passed, and no morsel of food was to be found in the house, they remained a long time in prayer and thanksgiving to the divine Majesty, for this affliction.

* During this time the holy angels prepared a repast. They arranged the table, and placed thereon fruits, bread of a very delicate kind, fish, and a sort of conserve of wonderful sweetness and excellence; and then some of these blessed spirits went to call their Queen — others, St. Joseph. Each of them recognized the heavenly gifts, and, with holy tears of joy, renewed their thanksgiving to the Most High. At length they partook of the repast, which, being finished, they united in chanting praises, truly sublime, to the beneficent giver of every good gift. The august Mary and her spouse often experienced wonders of this character, for there were no witnesses from whom it was necessary they should be concealed. The Lord was very liberal towards them, whom He had appointed administrators of the most wonderful prodigies which had ever been wrought. It is necessary to remark, that when our blessed Lady composed canticles of praise, either alone, or with St. Joseph or the angels, we are to understand that they were always new, like those composed by Anna, mother of Samuel; Moses; Hezekiah, and other prophets. If they had been written, they would form a large volume, which would have been the admiration of all the world.

The providence of the Most High declares Himself protector of the humble who confide in Him, because the divine Majesty regards them with love.

He is pleased with them—He bears them in His bosom—He is attentive to all their desires and all their pains. The august Mary and St. Joseph were very poor, and often found themselves in great want, but never did they allow the poison of avarice or cupidity to enter their hearts. They sought the glory of God alone, abandoning themselves entirely to His most loving care.

We ought to be content with what is necessary, and to be convinced that the providence of our Creator can never fail. If He be slow sometimes to send us His help, we should not be afflicted nor lose hope. He who has abundance ought not to fix his heart upon it. We should attribute to God both abundance and poverty, and make a holy use of both. Let us practise this doctrine, and abandon ourselves to Providence, and nothing that is needful for us can ever be wanting.

CHAPTER VII.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE BIRTH OF THE
INFANT JESUS—EDICT OF AUGUSTUS—
THE BLESSED MARY AND ST. JOSEPH
GO TO BETHLEHEM.

THE Mother of the Eternal Word, the holy Mary, seeing the period of the birth of the Infant God approach, would not undertake to make the necessary preparations for it, without the

command of her husband, and the will of God. Although she was able to decide for herself in whatever concerned the maternal office, she preferred to practise the duties of an obedient and most faithful servant. She therefore consulted her holy spouse, St. Joseph. "It is time," she said, "to begin the preparations for the birth of my most blessed Son. With your permission, I will provide the swaddling-clothes to receive Him. I have some linen, spun by myself, which will serve for a part, if you will seek for the finest and softest that can be found for the rest. And that all may be well done, let us offer a special prayer to His divine Majesty that we may do whatever is most agreeable to Him."

St. Joseph replied: "If it were necessary to give the purest of my blood to testify my readiness to render service to my God, and to do what you request, I should esteem myself happy to pour it out in the cruellest torments. Order all as it seems best, for I desire to obey thee as thy servant." While they were engaged in prayer, the Most High replied to each in particular by the same voice. "I have descended from heaven to earth to elevate humility, and to debase pride—to honor poverty, and to make riches contemptible. For this reason, it is my will that you treat me in the humanity which I have assumed, in all things exterior, as if I were the child of both of you—and interiorly

you will recognize in me the Son of my eternal Father, and true God, with the veneration and love due to me, being man and God at the same time."

The august Mary and St. Joseph were confirmed by this divine voice in the wisdom that should guide their actions in all the services which they were to render to the Infant God. They resolved to practise the most sublime and perfect mode of honoring their true God, and never among mere creatures was He so perfectly honored. But before the eyes of the world they treated Him as if they were conjointly His parents, because it was the Lord's will that men should so believe. The celestial inhabitants were in admiration at the conduct of the holy spouses, as we shall relate further on. They resolved also to devote to the Infant God all the services which their condition admitted, without attracting observation, so that the secret of the great King should be concealed; neither should he want for any thing, for, in ministering to Him, they could manifest their ardent love, so far as it was possible.

St. Joseph, having received payment for some of his work, purchased, according to the wishes of his spouse, two pieces of cloth, one white, and the other nearer violet than gray—the best that could be found. Our lovely Lady made of them swaddling-clothes for her most holy child. She made little shirts of the linen that she had spun during the

* early period of her marriage, with the intention of offering it at the Temple. Happily her intention was changed; nevertheless she made an offering of what was left. The Blessed Virgin had woven this linen on her knees, with tears of inexpressible devotion. St. Joseph also purchased flowers and aromatics, from which the holy Mother composed the most delicious perfume that ever was made. With this she sprinkled the swaddling-clothes consecrated to the Victim, and, folding them, she placed them in a case which she and St. Joseph carried with them to Bethlehem, as we shall see.

It is hardly necessary to remark, that all these works recounted here, ought not to be regarded simply as facts. Their objects, and the intentions which inspired them, redolent of sanctity, and enriched with the highest perfection, must be taken into view. The divine Mother, her heart all glowing with love, offered all the sacrifices which the ancient law contained in figure. She realized, in truth, the ancient figures, by the exercise of virtues and acts both interior and exterior. Her happy spouse, on his part, accompanied her in many of them.

If the smallest portion of grace that a creature, whoever he may be, receives, by means of a virtue that he has practised, is worth more than all the universe, who can estimate its greatness in her who surpassed the merits of the

highest Seraphim! Our holy Lady saw the humanity united to the Divinity in the person of the Word, saw all the interior acts of the most holy soul of her divine Son, and the prayers that He offered for her, for St. Joseph, for the whole human race, and especially for the elect.

The Most High had determined, by His immutable will, that the only Son of the Father should be born at Bethlehem. The ancient prophets had long since announced it. The Lord disposed all things for the accomplishment of His divine decree; and it was by an edict of Cæsar Augustus, who commanded, as it is recorded by St. Luke, a census to be made of the whole world. It consisted in acknowledging the authority of the Emperor of Rome, and paying a certain tribute. To effect this, every one was obliged to inscribe himself on the register of his native city.

This edict being published at Nazareth, St. Joseph was informed of it. Returning home, in much trouble, he related to his blessed spouse what had happened. The most prudent Virgin replied: "The edict of an earthly potentate ought not to disturb you in this manner, since the Sovereign of heaven and earth takes care of all things that belong to us. His Providence will assist us. Let us abandon ourselves with confidence to His guidance."

* The holy Virgin was instructed in all the mysteries of her divine Son, and she knew that He was to be born in Bethlehem, poor, and a stranger; but she said nothing of this to St. Joseph. They conferred together upon what they ought to do, for the period of the birth of the Infant God approached. At length St. Joseph said to his spouse: "It seems to me that I cannot be dispensed from executing this edict of the emperor. And although it would suffice to go alone, I dare not leave you, for I should not have a moment's rest—my heart would be in perpetual alarm. It would be risking too much to propose to you to accompany me to Bethlehem; it would expose you, too evidently, to danger. This apprehension gives me great pain. Present, I entreat you, my supplications to the Most High, that He may not separate me from you."

The humble Mary obeyed the request of St. Joseph, only to prove her obedience, for she was not ignorant of the divine will. She therefore laid the desires of her faithful spouse before the Lord, who replied to her: "Obey my servant Joseph in what he has proposed and desires. Bear him company in this journey. I will be with you, for it is my will that you should go." The Lord ordered nine thousand angels to join the thousand who formed her guard.

Our blessed Lady confided to St.

*

Joseph this response, and declared that it was the will of the Most High that she should accompany him to Bethlehem. The saintly man was full of joy, and expressed his humble gratitude for this favor. He said to his spouse: "I have no other anxiety in this journey except the pain which it will cause to you. But I hope to find relations and friends who will receive us with kindness." The kind heart of the good man induced him to believe this, but the Lord had disposed otherwise. The saint was mistaken in his expectations, and suffered much from the disappointment.

Our sweet Lady forebore to reveal to St. Joseph what was already known to her touching the event to be accomplished. They appointed the day of departure, and St. Joseph went to engage a beast of burden. It was very difficult to find one, because of the great number of persons who were going to their different cities to be enrolled, in obedience to the imperial edict. At length he found a little ass, which, if he could have known it, was the happiest of all his race, since he carried the Queen of the Universe, and the King of kings, and was present at the birth of the Infant God. During five days the august Mary and St. Joseph were engaged in preparations for the journey. Their provisions consisted of bread, fruits, and fish, as in going to the house of Zachariah. And

* as the most prudent Virgin knew that she would be long absent from the house, she secretly arranged her affairs according to the will of God. Finally, they recommended it to a person who was to take charge of it until their return.

The hour of departure arrived. The blessed Joseph, who treated his beloved spouse with renewed respect, sought, like a vigilant and faithful servant, to find reasons to serve and please her. He entreated her, with much affection, to make known to him all that she desired for her comfort, and for the good pleasure of the Lord whom she bore in her virginal bosom. Our Queen meekly accepted the holy affection of her spouse: she even consoled and animated him to endure the fatigue of the road, for His divine Majesty willed that they should accept the inconveniences of the journey with an equable and joyous heart.

Before setting out, our blessed Lady knelt to ask St. Joseph's blessing. The man of God excused himself because of her dignity, but the ever invincible humility of the august Virgin conquered, and obliged him to give it. She then prayed him to offer himself anew to her most holy Son, and to obtain for her His divine grace. After these holy preparations they set out for Bethlehem, in the depth of winter, which made the journey more painful and more inconvenient.

*

The august Mary and the glorious St. Joseph left Nazareth to go to Bethlehem! Poor and humble travellers they were, in the eyes of the world, which had no more esteem for them than it had for humility and poverty. But, oh! wonderful secrets of the Most High! hidden from the proud and impenetrable, from the wisdom of the flesh, our travellers were not alone, nor poor, nor despised. They had a magnificent suite, inestimable riches, and a glory unparalleled. They were the highest objects of the care of the eternal Father, and of His immense love. They bore with them the treasures of heaven, and the Divinity itself.

All the celestial court revered them. The insensible creatures recognized the living ark of the Testament far better than the waters of the Jordan recognized that which was only the type of Her. With them were the ten thousand angels, appointed for His divine Majesty and His holy Mother. The incomparable Mary and her saintly spouse marched with this regal train, unseen by the eyes of mortals. The angels chanted canticles to the Lord, and to His blessed Mother, acknowledging her sometimes as a car, incorruptible and living—sometimes as the fertile ear, which contains the living wheat—sometimes as a richly freighted vessel.

The holy travellers were five days on the way; for the careful husband would not make long journeys. There

* was no night for our Queen during this time, for the angels threw so bright a radiance around her that the light was equal to the most serene day. St. Joseph enjoyed this favor, and also the view of the angels. They formed a celestial choir, in which our august Lady and her spouse responded to the blessed spirits by canticles and hymns of praise.

The Lord united to these favors some sufferings. The great number of persons who thronged the hostelries to obey the imperial edict, were causes of much pain to the modesty of the saintly Mary and her spouse. They were thrust aside as sordid poor, and received less attention than others who seemed richer. Thus our holy travellers, weary and worn, were often received with harsh words at these hostelries. Sometimes they were even sent away as troublesome, and unworthy of consideration; at others, the mistress of heaven and earth was put into a corner of the vestibule,—and even this could not always be secured, and she and St. Joseph retired to places still less proper or decent in the world's estimation.

The troop of angels followed them everywhere, so that the couch of the true Solomon was guarded from the alarms or surprises of the night. The faithful spouse, seeing the mistress of the universe so well cared for, reposed in peace, so as to recover a little from

the fatigues of the day; for it frequently happened that, being in the most rigorous season of the year, and arriving at the hostelries half frozen by the snow and rain, they were obliged to take refuge among the animals, because men gave them nothing more commodious.

The mistress of creatures might easily have commanded the winds and snows, but she forebore, that she might imitate her divine Son in His sufferings. The faithful St. Joseph, nevertheless, took great care to put her under shelter, and also the holy angels; in particular the prince St. Michael, who always assisted on the right of the queen. Knowing that it was the will of the Lord, they sometimes protected her from the rigor of the weather, and rendered other services to our sweet Lady, and to the blessed fruit of her womb, Jesus.

CHAPTER VIII.

ARRIVAL AT BETHLEHEM—BIRTH OF JESUS IN A GROTTA—ST. JOSEPH IS PRESENT AT THIS MYSTERY.

OUR holy travellers, the blessed Mary and St. Joseph, reached Bethlehem on the fifth day of their journey, on Saturday, about four o'clock in the afternoon—the hour when, at the winter solstice, the sun

is near his setting, and the night approaches. They entered the town to seek a shelter, and having made inquiries, not only at the inns, but among their relations and friends, they were refused with rudeness and contempt. Our august Lady followed her spouse, who went from house to house—from door to door, in the midst of the crowds who arrived. And, although she knew that the houses of men, like their hearts, were closed against them, she willingly endured all this mortification in obedience to St. Joseph. At the same time it was more painful to find herself in the midst of such a crowd, than to be disappointed in finding a lodging. In wandering about the city, they found the house where the register was kept, and, to avoid the necessity of returning there, they inserted their names, and paid the tribute. Then, pursuing their way to find a place of refuge, they applied at more than fifty houses, and were everywhere refused. The holy angels admired the wonderful mysteries of the Lord, the patience and sweetness of the Virgin Mother, and the insensibility of men.

It was nearly nine o'clock in the evening when the faithful St. Joseph, deeply grieved, turning towards his prudent spouse: "My courage fails me," he said, "to find not only that I cannot lodge thee according to thy merits, but that I cannot even secure for thee such a shelter as is rarely or never

refused to the poorest and most contemptible applicant. Doubtless some mystery underlies this. I remember to have seen, without the city walls, a grotto where the shepherds are accustomed to fold their flocks. Let us go there, for if the place is not occupied, we shall there receive from heaven the hospitality which men refuse to us."

The most prudent Virgin replied: "Do not afflict thyself, my spouse. The place thou speakest of is quite conformable to my desires. Change thy tears into joy, for we love and we possess poverty, which is the inestimable treasure of my holy Son. He comes from heaven to seek it. Let us go with pleasure whither the Lord conducts us." Immediately the holy angels guided the saintly pair towards this place; they found it unoccupied, and, full of celestial joy, they praised the Lord.

The palace which the King of kings and Lord of lords had prepared in this world to receive His only Son, incarnate for men, was the lowly and humble grotto to which the most pure Mary and St. Joseph had retired, after having been repulsed by all, as has been related. This place was so unpromising, that, in spite of the extraordinary concourse of strangers at Bethlehem, no one had deigned to occupy it. In fact, it was suitable only to the masters of humility and poverty, and the wisdom of the eternal Father had reserved it for them.

The august Mary and Joseph entered the place, and, by the radiance of the angels, they saw that it was as poor and solitary as they could have wished. They then fell upon their knees, praising the Lord with thanksgivings for this blessing. The grotto was formed out of the natural rock, and was so rough and uneven, that it was fitted only for the lodging of animals.

The angelic spirits assumed a corporeal and human form. St. Joseph saw them, for it was proper that, on this occasion, he should enjoy this favor, either to diminish his pain, or to animate his spirit and elevate it for the events which the Lord had prepared for this same night. Our blessed Lady, informed of the mystery which was about to be accomplished, resolved herself to cleanse the grotto. The holy Joseph, attentive to the dignity of his admirable spouse, entreated her to leave that care to him. He therefore began to sweep and purify every part of it, and our humble Lady seconded him to the best of her power. The angels also assisted them, until in a short time the grotto was brought into a decent condition, and they filled it with a delightful perfume.

St. Joseph kindled a fire, of which there was much need, for the weather was very cold. They afterwards supped from the scraps of food still left; but our sweet Lady ate only on the pressing solicitations of her spouse, whom

she desired to obey in all things. At the close of their repast, they returned thanks to God as was their custom, and afterwards discoursed together concerning the mystery of the incarnate Word.

The most prudent Virgin knew that the hour approached. She entreated St. Joseph to seek repose, for the night was far advanced. The man of God yielded to her solicitations, praying her to follow his example. In order to provide for her the means of rest, he arranged their luggage in such a way as to make up a species of crib, on the floor of the grotto, and, leaving to the august Mary this sort of bed, he withdrew into an angle at the entrance to engage in meditation and prayer. The Holy Spirit came to visit him, and he felt himself drawn by a gentle force that rapt him in ecstasy, during which the events of this night were manifested to him. He remained in this ecstasy until called by his holy spouse. This mysterious slumber of Joseph was more sublime and more fortunate than that of Adam in paradise.

[This would be the place to speak of the wonderful birth of the Infant God, and to admire the prodigies of every kind that accompanied it; but since it is impossible to relate all, we prefer to confine ourselves to what regards St. Joseph exclusively. The reader who desires to be informed of all these circumstances, is referred to the great

work of Maria d'Agreda. It is not without lively regret that we omit here the narration of those facts which have commanded the admiration of heaven and earth.]

The evangelist St. Luke relates that the Virgin Mother, having brought forth her first-born Son, wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger. He does not mention who placed Him in her arms. But the two princes, St. Michael and St. Gabriel, were the ministers on this occasion, and they presented Him to her with as great a reverence as when the priest exposes the holy host. The holy Mother received the Infant God into her arms from these two celestial princes. She served as the altar and sanctuary, which the angels of her guard approached to adore their Creator, and venerate that youthful virgin of fifteen, so worthy to dispense these great mysteries. It was time for the prudent Lady to call her faithful spouse, then in a state of divine ecstasy, in which he knew, by revelation, all the mysteries of the sacred birth of that night. It was but just, that, before any other mortal, he should enjoy the honor of seeing, and the consolation of adoring, by means of his senses, the Word made man, since he had been chosen to be the faithful guardian of this sublime mystery.

The saint returned from his ecstasy,

and, having recovered the use of his senses, the first object that met his view was the Infant God, in the arms of His Virgin Mother, and leaning upon her sacred face and chaste bosom. He adored Him, on this living altar, with the most profound humility, and with warm tears of tenderness. He kissed His feet with new joy, and with such rapturous affection, that, but for the divine assistance, he could not have survived it. Certainly, but for the help of God, he must have lost his senses upon this occasion.

After St. Joseph had adored the Infant, the most discreet Mother asked permission of her Son to seat herself, for she had, until then, remained kneeling. The saint gave her the swaddling-clothes which they had brought, and she wrapt the Infant in them with the highest possible reverence, devotion, and neatness. Afterwards, as it is recorded by St. Luke the evangelist, she laid Him in the manger, carefully placing therein a little straw and hay, to serve for the first bed of the Incarnate Word on earth. It was then that, guided by the Divine will, an ox came from the field, and joining the ass which they had brought with them, they warmed, by their breath, the Infant God whom men had refused to receive. And thus was miraculously accomplished the prophecy of Isaiah: "*The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel hath not known me.*" —Is. i. 3.

The heavenly courtiers, having celebrated, in the grotto of Bethlehem, the birth of their Incarnate God, and our Redeemer, many of them were sent to different places to announce the happy tidings to those who were prepared to hear them. The prince, St. Michael, was directed to the fathers in Limbo, to inform them that the only Son of the Eternal Father, who was made man, had just been born. He bore messages, on the part of the blessed Mother, to St. Joachim and St. Anna. For this numerous assembly of the just it was the day of great consolation.

Another angel was sent to St. Elizabeth and her son John, who adored their Incarnate God. As soon as St. Elizabeth heard of it, she instantly dispatched a messenger to Bethlehem with presents to the Mother of the Infant God, consisting of a small sum of money, linen, and other things, to supply the wants of the poor Mother and her saintly spouse. But the messenger had no orders but to visit her cousin and St. Joseph, to leave her gifts, to inform himself of their necessities, and quickly to bring her news of them. On his return, he recounted to St. Elizabeth the poverty of her relative, of the Child and Joseph, and the strange feelings that he had experienced while with them.

Other angels also went to announce the same glad tidings to Zachariah, to Simeon and to Anna the prophetess,

because the Lord found each prepared to receive them with advantage. All the just then living on the earth, although unacquainted with this mystery, were, nevertheless, sensible of its divine effects when the Saviour was born. To some, indeed, the Lord revealed it, and of this number were the Magi, who were inspired with renewed desires to seek Him.

The neighboring shepherds were blest above all others. They were of those who waited for and desired the coming of the Messiah; and, humble and poor, they were engaged in watching their flocks at the time of the birth. Hence they were in a state of holy preparation: they merited to be the first-called. The archangel St. Gabriel was sent to them. They were troubled at seeing him, but the celestial prince reassured them. Illuminated by the divine wisdom, they set off for Bethlehem, to witness the miracle of which they had just heard. On entering the grotto, they found, as it is said by St. Luke, Mary and Joseph, and the Infant laid in a manger.

The divine Infant looked upon them, and, prostrate, they adored the incarnate Word. The blessed Mother was attentive to all. She spoke with the shepherds, and instructed them. They made, afterwards, several other visits, during the sojourn of the holy family in the grotto, and brought them presents proportioned to their poverty.

They did not speak of what they had seen until after the blessed Mary, the Infant, and St. Joseph had departed from Bethlehem. Their testimony was not believed by all; but Herod believed, only not with a holy faith. They were, nevertheless, saints, and filled with divine science, even to their death.

The coming of the incarnate Word was terrible only for hell. Many things were concealed from Lucifer and his agents, which he might naturally have known; but he considered it an idle fancy to believe that the Word would come and establish His power in so obscure and humble a manner. The Mother of wisdom penetrated all the deceit of Lucifer. She glorified the Lord, and offered prayers for all of the human race, who, by their sins, had made themselves unworthy to recognize the Light, who had just been born to redeem them.

CHAPTER IX.

SENTIMENTS OF THE AUGUST MOTHER AND ST. JOSEPH FOR THE INFANT GOD—THE CIRCUMCISION—THE SPOUSES GIVE HIM THE NAME OF JESUS.

DURING the time that our august Lady abode in the grotto, which was a dreary place, and exposed to the inclemency of the weather, she took the greatest care to protect her tender

and sweet Child. She had brought coverings with her for this purpose, and she held him almost constantly in her arms, except when she left Him in those of St. Joseph. She wished to afford him the gratification to aid her in this service, and that he should serve the Incarnate God in the office of father.

The first time the saint received the Infant God, our blessed Lady said to him, "Receive within your arms, my spouse, the Creator of heaven and earth. Enjoy His sweet companionship, so that my Lord and my God may take delight in thee." And speaking interiorly with the divine Infant she said, "Rest in the arms of thy servant and friend Joseph, my spouse. It pains me to be without thee for a single instant, but I wish to share my blessing with him who is worthy of it." The faithful St. Joseph, conscious of this new happiness, humbled himself profoundly. "Queen of the universe," he replied, "how can I dare, I who am so unworthy, to hold in my arms the same God in whose presence the pillars of heaven tremble. Supply my deficiencies, my baseness, and pray His divine Majesty to regard me with clemency." The holy man, hesitating between his desire to receive the Infant God and the respectful fear that held him back, offered to Him acts of love, faith, humility, and respect. He fell on his knees, and received Him with

* a holy trembling and inconceivable veneration from the hands of His blessed mother, shedding gentle tears of joy. The Infant God regarded him with a caressing air; and at the same time renovated his soul by His divine influence. The faithful Joseph, finding himself enriched by so many and such magnificent favors, gave utterance to new canticles of praise. After enjoying for a time the ineffable delight of folding the Lord in his arms, he restored Him to His blessed mother. They both placed themselves on their knees to give or to receive Him, and at all times with the same veneration. They made three genuflexions before approaching His divine Majesty, kissing the earth with the greatest humility and adoration.

Much more might be said of the veneration observed by the blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and the angelic spirits towards the Infant God. When the saint was occupied, St. Michael or St. Gabriel bore Him in their arms. No tongue can do justice to the canticles of praise and glory which the Queen of heaven chanted with the angels and St. Joseph, who, of all mortals was most happy and most favored in this respect. Besides these favors, he received another, most precious to his soul. His most gentle spouse, in speaking with him of the Infant, called Him often, *thy son*: not that He was really the Son of St. Joseph, for

He was the Son only of the Eternal Father, and of His Virgin Mother. This favor was an unspeakable joy to the Saint, and his spouse often renewed it.

In regard to the circumcision of her Son, the wise Mary had no express order from the Eternal Father. She considered, on the one hand, that her holy Son came to confirm the law in fulfilling it Himself, and more than this, to suffer for mankind: hence He would not refuse the pain of circumcision. But, on the other hand, maternal love and compassion led her to desire the exemption of her beloved Son from the sufferings consequent upon it. She confided her sentiments regarding this mystery to her chaste spouse, who so tenderly sympathized in these mingled feelings, that he was moved to tears.

Before the eight days after His birth were accomplished, the Queen of heaven addressed herself in prayer to the divine Majesty, who thus responded: "Thou knowest well that thou must offer me thy Son and mine to endure this, and other far greater sufferings. Let Him then shed His blood, and give me the first-fruits of the eternal salvation of men."

The august Mary then explained to St. Joseph, with rare prudence, the reasons why he should prepare himself for the circumcision of the Infant God. She reminded him that the time prescribed by the law approached, and

that they must submit to it, having no order to the contrary. Her saintly spouse replied, that "he would conform himself to the divine pleasure in all things made manifest by the common law." He then inquired how the circumcision should be performed.

The blessed Virgin said, that, in fulfilling the law, she would not be separated from the Infant, nor place Him in charge of any other person, but that she would support Him in her own arms. Yet since, from His temperament, His pain would be greater than that of ordinary children, it would be necessary to be prepared with remedies for the wound. The careful mother prayed St. Joseph also to seek a vial of crystal in which to gather the precious blood, which she wished to preserve; and she had linen cloths also ready, so that not a drop should fall on the ground. St. Joseph then went to call a priest, whom he begged to come to the grotto to perform the rite of circumcision, as being the legitimate minister for that office.

The august Mary and St. Joseph discoursed together respecting the name which they should give to the Infant God in the circumcision. "When the angel," said St. Joseph, "declared to me the great mystery of the incarnation, he commanded me to call thy divine Son *Jesus*." The Virgin Mother replied: "He made the same declaration to me when the Word was made

flesh in my bosom. Therefore we will request the priest to give Him this name on the register of circumcised children.

While the Queen of heaven and St. Joseph held this discourse, innumerable troops of angels descended from heaven in human form, and of incomparable beauty. They bore a device, upon which was engraved the name of Jesus. The two archangels, St. Michael and St. Gabriel, each held in their hands a luminous globe of wondrous beauty and splendor, within which was written the most holy name of Jesus. They thus addressed their Queen: "This name which thou seest is that of thy Son. The Most Holy Trinity have given it to thy only Son our lord, with power to save the human race. He will chastise His enemies, and reduce them to serve as His footstool. He will exalt His friends, and place them in glory at His right hand. But all this must be purchased by His sufferings and His blood."

The most happy St. Joseph saw and heard all. He was unable to penetrate the mysteries of the redemption like the mother of wisdom, but he discovered some of them. The holy spouses were filled with joy and admiration: in brief, there passed between them, or in their presence, at various times, so many wonderful things, that it would be impossible to convey any just idea of them

There was at Bethlehem a synagogue, not for offering sacrifices, which could be offered only at Jerusalem, but for the reading of the Law of Moses. The priest, who was minister of the law, was also of the rite of circumcision. Nevertheless, any one could circumcise. Our august Mother desired, because of the dignity of the Infant, that the priest should be the minister, and for this reason it was that the happy St. Joseph summoned him. The priest came to the grotto. At the view of the Mother and the Child his heart was sensibly touched with singular devotion and tenderness. The happiness which he enjoyed in touching the flesh of the Infant God renewed him by a secret power, and rendered him holy and agreeable to the Supreme Lord of the universe.

In order to perform the circumcision with all the respect that was possible in such a place, St. Joseph lighted candles. The priest requested the Virgin Mother to withdraw for a little space, to avoid the pain of witnessing the sacrifice, but she prayed the minister of God to permit her to assist at the sacrament. The priest then consented that she should support the Infant in her arms. Thus she was the consecrated altar upon which the realities represented by the ancient sacrifices began to be accomplished.

The blessed Mother unswathed her divine Child, and, drawing from her

bosom a linen cloth, she placed it under the Infant, so that it should receive the blood and the relics of the circumcision. The priest accomplished his office, and the Infant God offered to the Eternal Father three things of such infinite value, that each would suffice for the redemption of a thousand worlds: the first was the form of a sinner; the second, the pain He suffered as man; the third, His most ardent love, with which He began to shed His blood for the redemption of men. The tender and affectionate Mother gathered the sacred relics and the blood shed upon the linen, and placed the whole in the care of St. Joseph.

The priest inquired of the holy spouses what name they intended to give to the circumcised child. Our sweet Lady, always attentive to the respect which she bore to St. Joseph, requested him to declare it. The saint, turning towards her with veneration, intimated that so sweet a name should be pronounced by her lips—when, by a divine disposition, Mary and Joseph said, at the same moment: "*Jesus is His name.*" The priest replied: "You are of one mind in this, the name you give to the Infant is great." In writing it he was touched by a great interior tenderness, saying to them: "I assure you that I believe this Child will be a great prophet of the Lord." The august spouses replied to the priest, by an humble acknowledgment, and, having

* given him the wax lights, and some other trifles as offerings, he departed.

The holy Virgin and her spouse remained alone with the Infant. They celebrated anew the mystery of the circumcision by canticles, which they composed in honor of the most sweet name of Jesus. The careful Mother dressed the wound of the Infant God with the usual remedies. She invited the angels to sing. The ministers of the Most High obeyed their Queen, and with heavenly melody they chanted the same canticles which she and St. Joseph had composed in praise of the sweet name of Jesus.

CHAPTER X.

THE ROYAL MAGI COME TO ADORE THE INFANT GOD IN THE GROTTO OF THE NATIVITY—ST. JOSEPH IS PRESENT AT THIS MYSTERY.

OUR blessed Lady knew, by infused science from the Holy Scriptures, that the Magi would come from the East, to acknowledge and adore her most holy Son. She had been informed of this approaching mystery by the angel who had been sent to these kings to announce the birth of the incarnate Word. St. Joseph had received no intelligence of this mystery, because it had not been revealed to him: therefore, the circumcision having been cele-

brated, the holy man proposed to our sweet Lady to quit their poor abode, for now they could easily find some hostelry in Bethlehem to which they could retire, until the time should come to present the Infant in the Temple of Jerusalem.

This most faithful and careful spouse was in continual distress at not being able to procure for the Son and His mother the comforts which they had need of, yet he referred all to the wishes of his spouse. The humble Mary replied, without revealing the mystery: "I am ready to do all that you command; do whatever you judge to be best." This virtuous indifference threw St. Joseph into greater perplexity, for he had hoped that his spouse would decide what should be done.

While they conferred together, the Lord answered by the ministry of the princes St. Michael and St. Gabriel: "The Divine will ordains that the three kings who come from the East to seek the King of heaven shall adore in this same place the Word made man. It is ten days since they began their journey, and they will very soon be here." By this new information, St. Joseph was consoled and informed of the will of the Lord. The Blessed Virgin remarked that, "Although this place may be poor and uncomfortable to the eyes of the world, it is, nevertheless, precious, since the Lord is content with it." These words of our prudent Lady afforded a

* sensible joy to St. Joseph, who replied, that "they could, perhaps, remain in that holy place until the day of the presentation in the Temple, without returning first to Nazareth, because of the distance and the severity of the season; and if they should be obliged by stress of weather to leave it, they might easily find a shelter in Jerusalem, since it was only two leagues distant from Bethlehem."

The august Mary conformed in all things to the wishes of her husband. She prepared the grotto for the reception of the Magi, as well as the poverty of the place admitted, and used her power over creatures to protect her Son from the rigor of the winter. Neither the wind, the snow, nor the rain dared to approach Him, but paused at a safe distance. The Mother, nevertheless, suffered from the cold; while St. Joseph enjoyed, with the Infant God, the benign effects of that privilege; but he knew not that this exemption was owing to the command of his blessed spouse.

It often happened that while our sweet Lady held the Infant God in her arms, she knelt to adore Him. She intrusted Him to St. Joseph with the respect which we have already mentioned. She embraced His feet, and when she desired to kiss Him on the face, she requested, in an interior voice, His consent. In all she was most prudent, most perfect, without deficiency

or excess. But there were between the Infant God and His Virgin Mother, other caresses far more sublime. She was made acquainted with the interior acts of the most holy soul of her Son. His humanity was manifested to her as in a luminous crystal, and the Blessed Virgin beheld the hypostatic union, the soul of the divine Child and all its operations. Then our humble Lady imitated Him in His works and in His prayers.

The most happy St. Joseph enjoyed not only the favors and caresses of the Infant God, as an ocular witness of those which passed between the Son and the Mother, but he was found worthy to receive them from Jesus himself. When our blessed Lady was engaged in preparing their food, or in other household occupations, she placed the Infant God in his hands. While St. Joseph held Him, his pious soul thrilled with divine emotions, for the Infant Jesus regarded him with satisfaction; He reclined on his bosom, and bestowed on him marks of infantile affection.

Whenever the august Mary separated herself from the Infant God, she took with her the relics of the circumcision, which St. Joseph usually carried about him for his own consolation. Thus the two spouses were always enriched—the sacred Virgin by her divine Son, and the happy Joseph by the precious blood that had been shed, and the deified flesh. They preserved these holy relics

in the little vial of crystal, which the saint had purchased. Our blessed Lady placed in it the flesh that was removed, and the blood that was shed in the circumcision, for she had cut out all those places of the linen which had received it. She afterwards placed this precious deposit in charge of the Apostles, and left it to them as the property of the holy Church.

The Magi kings, who came to seek the new-born Infant God, were natives of a country east of Palestine. David, and Balaam also, had prophesied their coming. They were very learned in the natural sciences, and in the Scriptures of the people of God. They had some belief in the advent of the Messiah. For the rest, they were men of great probity, loving truth and practising justice. They were neighbors, and lived in intimate friendship and faithful correspondence. They had noble, great, and generous souls, free from the avarice which too frequently degrades the hearts of princes. They were warned, by the ministry of angels, of the birth of the incarnate Word. With clear and abundant instructions, the guardian angel of each declared to them in a dream, and at the same time, the mystery of the Incarnation and the birth of the Redeemer. They knew that this new-born Infant was true God and true man, whom they ought to adore as their Creator and Redeemer, and that the star, which Balaam had predicted,

should be given as their guide to conduct them to the place where He would be found.

The Magi kings awoke, and in spirit they adored the immutable being of God, and glorified His mercy for that the Word had taken human flesh in the womb of a Virgin, to redeem the world, and they prepared to depart, that they might find Him. At the same time, the holy angel formed a star which was suspended in the air, to conduct the kings to the grotto. In leaving their homes they saw it, and followed the route which it indicated. Thus guided, they arrived at Jerusalem, when it disappeared. They then inquired where was the King of the Jews, who had just been born.

Herod, as it is recorded by St. Matthew, assembled the chief priests and scribes, who replied: "According to the prophecy of Micheas, the Messiah is to be born at Bethlehem." Herod called the Magi, and inquired of them the time when they had first observed the appearance of the star. He then said to them: "When you shall have found this Child, inform me of it, so that I, too, may go and adore Him." On passing out of Jerusalem, the Magi again saw the star, which stood over the grotto of the Nativity.

The Lord had made known to the august Mother the coming of the Magi, and when she heard they were near the grotto, she mentioned it to St. Jo-

seph, in order that he might remain at her side, which he did. Although the Evangelists make no mention of it, it is nevertheless certain that St. Joseph was present when the kings adored the Infant Jesus. The Magi already knew that St. Joseph was not His real father, and that His mother was a Virgin. The admirable Mother awaited these pious kings with the Infant God in her arms. An extraordinary splendor shone forth from the Infant, and our sweet Lady was exceedingly beautiful. They were lost in admiration, adoring the Infant, and acknowledging Him as true God and true man. Then rising up, they bent the knee before the Mother in testimony of their veneration, and offered their felicitations on the happiness she enjoyed in being the Mother of the Son of the Eternal Father.

The three kings prostrated themselves anew, and adored the Infant Jesus. Afterwards they addressed themselves to St. Joseph, and congratulated him on his happiness in being the spouse of the Mother of God. Having passed three hours in the grotto, the kings requested permission to go and seek a lodging in the city, to sojourn there. Several persons accompanied the Magi, but they alone participated in the effects of grace and knowledge. The holy Mary and Joseph remained with God, and glorified the divine Majesty in new canticles of





praise, because His holy name began to be known and adored among the nations.

The three kings left the grotto to seek repose in an hostelry of Bethlehem. They passed a great part of the night in discourse, intermingled with many tears and sighs, respecting what they had seen in the Infant God and His holy Mother. They ceased not to admire the splendor that shone from the Infant Jesus, the modesty of the blessed Mother, the holiness of the happy St. Joseph.

During this conference, the Magi were not unmindful of the great destitution of Jesus, Mary, and St. Joseph, in the grotto, and they therefore sent to them, by their servants, liberal supplies of provisions. The august Mary and Joseph received them with gratitude, nor did they reply by empty thanks, but by efficacious benedictions. The Magi disposed themselves to sleep, and the angel warned them of the way in which they should proceed.

As soon as it was day they returned to the grotto of the nativity, to offer the gifts they had brought. They prostrated themselves before the celestial King, and adored Him with profound humility: afterwards, opening their treasures, as it is related in the Gospels, they offered to Him gold and frankincense and myrrh. Our blessed Mother received these gifts of the kings, and presented them to the Infant Jesus in their name. They also offered to the

* sweet Mother their services, their resources, and all that they possessed. Our prudent Lady thanked them for all these offers, but she would accept nothing. The kings then besought her not to forget them, which she promised. They asked the same of St. Joseph. Having received the benediction of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, they took leave, with such an effusion of tenderness and affection, that it seemed as if their hearts would melt. To avoid meeting Herod, they resolved not to pass through Jerusalem. All the remaining lives of these blessed kings were in harmony with their divine vocation.

After their departure, our Lady and St. Joseph chanted new canticles of praise. They compared these wonderful incidents with the Holy Scriptures, and with the prophecies of the Prophets and Patriarchs, and they saw, with unspeakable joy, that their predictions began to be accomplished in the Infant Jesus.

CHAPTER XI.

OUR LADY AND ST. JOSEPH LEAVE THE GROTTA OF THE NATIVITY, AND REMAIN AT BETHLEHEM UNTIL THE PRESENTATION OF THE INFANT JESUS IN THE TEMPLE.

AFTER the adoration of the Infant Jesus by the Magi, our saints resolved to quit the grotto, since nothing

more was expected there. The prudent Mother said to St. Joseph: "My spouse, these presents, which the Magi have left for our God, ought not to be useless. I must not occupy myself with temporalities, therefore I pray thee dispose of all as belonging to my Son and to thee.

The faithful spouse replied, with his accustomed humility and meekness, that "it was but right she should distribute them herself." The Blessed Virgin persisted, saying: "You ought to do it, to exercise charity towards the poor, who claim the part that belongs to them." After this humble contest, the august Mary and St. Joseph decided to divide the gifts into three parts: one for the Temple at Jerusalem, another for the priest who had circumcised the Infant, the remainder for the poor.

The Almighty, to induce them to leave the grotto, inspired a poor woman, who was honest and charitable, to visit our Queen. She lived in a house that stood against the wall of the city, quite near the holy place. Having heard of the coming of the Magi, she inquired of the Blessed Virgin if she knew that certain wise men, who were said to be three kings, were come to seek for the Messiah. Our princess took occasion from this to instruct her, without declaring the mystery of her Son; whereupon this woman offered them her house, pressing her strongly to accept the invitation, seeing the inconvenience

of the grotto for our Lady, her spouse, and the Child.

Our Queen did not refuse the offer. A little time afterwards she spoke of it to St. Joseph, and they determined to make their abode in that house until the time should come for the purification and the presentation in the Temple. That which decided them was, that a crowd of people began to come to the grotto. Our sweet Lady, St. Joseph, and the Infant left it with much regret, because of their veneration for it, and directed their steps to the house of the poor woman, who received them with the greatest cordiality. After they had quitted it, the Lord sent an angel to guard the grotto, and this angel still guards it with a flaming sword, so that no animal has entered it since that time. If he does not hinder the entrance of the enemies of the faith, it is by the secret judgment of the Most High. Christian princes could aid in this miracle if they set themselves with ardor to recover the holy places. It has been declared to me, that veneration for the Holy Land is one of the most powerful and efficacious means to establish and confirm the Catholic monarchies.

The august Mary prepared herself, by fervent desires, to offer in the Temple her adorable Infant to the Eternal Father. She embellished her soul by the practice of the highest virtues. The Infant Jesus conversed with His Mother, but in an intelligible voice only when

she was alone. Her holy spouse did not enjoy this happiness until a year after His birth.

During the time which our august Queen passed at Bethlehem, she was visited by many persons, who were nearly all of the poorest class. They spoke of the arrival of the Magi, and of the coming of the Messiah. By a disposition of divine Providence, the approaching birth was a subject of public conversation among the Jews. The prudent Mother had various occasions to practise great virtues. Those good people held such fabulous discussions upon matters of religion, that the ingenuous St. Joseph smiled at them, but, at the same time, admired the impressive replies of our great Lady, and the divine wisdom with which she instructed them.

The Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph remained with the divine Infant, in their humble dwelling at Bethlehem, until the close of the forty days prescribed for presenting Him in the Temple. This period being fulfilled, our Lady and St. Joseph prepared for the journey. They resolved to offer the only Son of the Eternal Father according to the law, knowing His desire to be submissive to the law, and to be offered to His divine Father. Having fixed the day of departure, they took leave of their pious hostess, whom they left crowned with celestial benedictions.

They went first to visit the grotto of the nativity. The blessed Mother gave

* the Infant to St. Joseph, and, prostrate on the earth, she venerated this holy place. Her holy spouse did the same, with inexpressible devotion. Then the Blessed Virgin requested leave of St. Joseph to make the journey barefooted, and to carry the holy Infant in her arms. Our august Lady usually wore a kind of shoes which covered the feet. The thread was taken from a plant resembling hemp, which was suitable for the poor.

St. Joseph, having requested her to rise, thus replied: "The Son of the Eternal Father, whom I have within my arms, gives you His benediction. I am well pleased that you should go on foot, carrying Him, but not barefooted. Be content with your pious desire, which will be agreeable to the Lord, who has inspired it." St. Joseph sometimes used authority towards the august Mary, but it was always with great respect. He used this authority as head, only that she might not be deprived of the consolation she enjoyed in the practice of humility and obedience; and as the saint obeyed her in so doing, he mortified and humbled himself in commanding her, and thus both were obedient and humble.

St. Joseph refused to allow her to go to Jerusalem barefooted, because he feared the cold might injure her health; but his fears arose from his ignorance of the admirable nature of her virginal constitution. Our blessed Lady, im-

plicitly obedient to her spouse, did not make the journey barefooted. They left the grotto, after having asked the benediction of the Infant God, who bestowed it, perceptibly, upon them. St. Joseph loaded the ass with the package of swaddling-clothes, and that portion of the gifts of the Magi which they had reserved as an offering at the Temple. All the celestial court accompanied them, in visible forms. Our blessed Lady and her spouse enjoyed their vision. These heavenly spirits celebrated the mystery by new and admirable canticles, and, thus disposed, they traversed the two leagues which separated Bethlehem from Jerusalem. The weather was severe—nor did this happen without the particular providence of God. Nothing was to be seen but frost and ice, so that the Creator made man trembled with cold, like one of mere human birth. He wept in the arms of His loving Mother. Our potent Queen addressed herself to the winds and elements, and commanded them, authoritatively, to become milder. They obeyed the order of their legitimate mistress for the Infant, without changing towards her.

During this time, and while our blessed Lady was on the way with the Infant Jesus, the chief priest, Simeon, had a revelation that the incarnate Word was coming to the Temple, in his Mother's arms, to offer Himself to God. The same revelation was made to the holy widow

* Anna, and it was revealed to her, and the high-priest also, that St. Joseph was with his most pure spouse. And having communicated to each other what had just been revealed to them, they agreed to send the steward of the Temple to meet them, after having instructed him how to recognize our holy travellers. The steward executed the order he had received, which proved a great consolation to our august Queen and St. Joseph. The fortunate host left them in his house, and went to give an account of his mission to the high-priest.

The saintly spouses formed their plans the same evening. Our ever-prudent Lady advised St. Joseph to go at once and present the gifts of the kings at the Temple, so as to avoid attracting public attention. She also prayed him to bring, on his return, the turtle doves, which they intended to offer publicly the following day. St. Joseph executed all in such a manner that he seemed only an ordinary stranger, who offered myrrh, incense, and gold to the receiver of the gifts at the Temple. He did not use any portion of them to purchase a lamb, because this would not have accorded with their poor and humble condition. Neither did they depart, in the least particular, from the poverty and humility which they held in such high esteem, even though it might have tended towards good and pious ends.

Simeon was, accorded to St. Luke, a just man, fearing God, and awaiting the

consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he should see Christ the Lord before his death. On that night he was instructed by divine illumination, and discovered, by great clearness, all the mysteries of the incarnation and redemption of the human race. By the knowledge of these sublime revelations he was elevated above himself. The same night St. Anna had also a revelation of many of these mysteries, from which she received unspeakable consolation.

The day having come when the Sun of Justice was to appear, our blessed Lady prepared the turtle-doves and two lights. She then wrapped the Infant Jesus in His swaddling-clothes, and set out, with her saintly spouse, for the Temple. Arrived at the gates, the happy Mother adored the Lord in spirit and in truth, and made an offering to the divine Majesty of herself with her Son whom she held in her arms. The most fortunate of men, St. Joseph, felt at the same moment a new and sweet effusion of the Holy Spirit, which filled him with joy and divine light.

Conducted by the same Spirit, the high-priest Simeon came to the Temple, and, approaching the place where Mary stood with Jesus, he beheld them all radiant with light. Anna approached and saw it, also. Simeon took the Infant in his arms, and offering Him to the Eternal Father, intoned the celebrated canticle: "*Now Thou dost dis-*

miss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace." Afterwards he announced the cruel passion which the heart of Mary must suffer at the sight of the sufferings of Jesus.

The blessed Mary and St. Joseph admired the sublimity of the Spirit which had inspired Simeon. The holy old man gave his benediction to the happy parents and to the Infant. When the holy priest prophesied the passion, the Infant humbly inclined His head, in testimony that He accepted the prophecy, and would fulfil it. The tender mother comprehended all the mysteries included in this prophecy. On his part, the holy St. Joseph also penetrated many things concerning the redemption and the sufferings of Jesus, but his knowledge was less comprehensive than that of his spouse, because he was not to witness their accomplishment on earth.

The Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph took leave of the high-priest, after having received his benediction, and that of St. Anna, and returned to the house which had been prepared for them. Here they resolved to remain nine days longer, to visit the Temple, and to renew there, each day, the offering of the most holy Host, with devout thanksgivings. The number nine had always been dear to the holy family. They began their novena and remained in the Temple from before the hour of tierce to the evening, choosing the most hum

ble and retired quarter. It was at this time the divine Majesty promised that the august Mother should obtain all that she would ask for those who were devoted to her, as long as the world should last, and even for great sinners, if they would avail themselves of her intercession.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LORD PREPARES OUR BLESSED LADY FOR THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT—THE ANGEL REVEALS IT TO ST. JOSEPH—JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH COMMENCE THE JOURNEY.

ON the fifth day of the novena, after the Presentation, the Blessed Virgin had a vision of the Divinity, in which she was warned to fly into Egypt, because Herod sought to destroy the new-born Messiah. The Lord referred her to St. Joseph, to be guided by him in all things relating to this journey. But the exceeding affection of our Lady for her most holy Son grieved her heart, on considering the pain which so young a child must suffer in executing this command. She was touched with compassion, and could not restrain her tears.

The faithful St. Joseph observed the affliction of his spouse, and supposed it to be the effect of the prophecy of St. Simeon. But as he had a tender affec-

tion for our Queen, and was also of a most compassionate temper, he was troubled at the affliction of his spouse; and it was for this reason that the angel appeared to him in a dream. During this same night, as it is related by St. Matthew, the angel of the Lord said to him, "Arise, and take the Child and His Mother, and fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass, that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him."

Filled with zeal and anxiety, St. Joseph arose on the instant, and, approaching the place whither his beloved spouse had retired, he said to her: "It is the will of the Most High, that we shall be afflicted, for His angel has declared to me the command of His Majesty, that we shall fly with the Infant into Egypt, because Herod designs to destroy His life. Prepare, then, for the fatigues of this journey, and tell me what I can do for your comfort, and for the service of our most sweet Infant." "My spouse," replied our Queen, "If we receive so much good at the liberal hands of the Most High, it is but just that we should receive from Him temporal pains and afflictions."

The blessed Mother and St. Joseph approached the cradle where the Infant Jesus slept; nor was this slumber without mystery. The holy Mother thus addressed Him: "Flee away, O my beloved, and be like to the roe, and to the young hart; come, let us go to the

fields." St. Joseph added: "Thy power cannot be limited by that of the kings of the earth, but Thine exalted wisdom would conceal it. Who can fathom the impenetrable secrets of Thy Providence?" Our august Lady then awakened the Infant. Our loving Saviour, willing to show, by certain marks, that He was of true human nature, and to affect His parents, wept a little, but soon He became quiet.

The holy Virgin and St. Joseph asked a benediction of the divine Infant, which He bestowed in a manner not to be mistaken. Then gathering their humble garments, they departed, without further delay, a little after midnight, making use of the same beast of burden which they had brought from Nazareth to Bethlehem. They travelled with all diligence towards Egypt, quitting Jerusalem to go to another country, concealed by the silence and obscurity of the night.

It is not possible to find faith and hope more firm than that of our Queen and her faithful spouse, but they were pained because of the Infant Jesus. They knew not what might happen to them on this long journey, nor where it was to terminate, nor how they would be received in Egypt, nor how they could educate the Child. But the angels strengthened them in such wise, that, issuing from Jerusalem by the gate towards Nazareth, they began their journey with great ardor.

The Blessed Virgin could have wished to pass through Hebron, where St. Elizabeth then tarried, and because it was but little out of their way; but the prudent St. Joseph, who was in great apprehension of Herod, could not consent to the least delay. "I think," said he, "that it is of the greatest importance not to retard our journey for even a moment, but to hasten it as much as possible, so as to be removed from danger. For this reason we ought not to pause at Hebron, where we should, perhaps, be sought after sooner than elsewhere." The Blessed Virgin obeyed St. Joseph, not only in that which he commanded, but she would not even send an angel to her cousin without his consent. What an admirable example to teach us to renounce our own will, which is often so prejudicial to us!

The angel having instructed St. Elizabeth, she desired to come and adore the Infant Jesus, but the celestial ambassador prevented her. She then sent a person to convey, in all haste, food and money to the holy family, with clothing for the Child. This messenger found them at the city of Gaza, distant twenty hours from Jerusalem, by the road that leads from Palestine to Egypt.

Our holy travellers remained two days in this town, on account of the fatigue of St. Joseph, and to give rest to the ass, which carried our Queen. They dismissed the servant of Elizabeth,

and St. Joseph charged him to reveal to no one the place where he had found them. The Lord appointed a better means of securing this silence. He destroyed his memory of the fact.

The charitable Mary shared the presents of Elizabeth with the poor, whom she never forgot. Of the cloth she made a covering for the Infant, and a mantle for St. Joseph, capable of protecting them from the severity of the weather. She also prepared such of the provisions as could be preserved, to provide for the necessities of her Son and St. Joseph, without having recourse to miraculous assistance.

The happy St. Joseph was a witness of the mysteries which passed between the blessed Mother and the Infant Jesus. The holy Mary understood, through intellectual visions, the unity of the divine Essence with the Trinity of persons; the eternal generation of the Word, and the procession of the Holy Ghost without priority or posteriority. Finally, the august Mother contemplated all the interior acts of her only Son, and imitated them. The happy Joseph was often a witness of these divine mysteries, and received illumination from them which smoothed the difficulties of the road.

From time to time our saint took care to inquire of his spouse how she found herself, and if she had need of any thing for the Infant or herself. He approached Him and adored: he kissed His feet

and asked His benediction. Sometimes he took Him in his arms. Thus our great patriarch overcame gently all the fatigues of the journey. His holy spouse encouraged him; yet external things never interfered with her sublime thoughts and affections.

Three days after their arrival at Gaza, our saintly travellers set out for Egypt. They then entered the sandy desert called Beersheba, which has an extent of sixty leagues before reaching Heliopolis, near Cairo. They made short journeys, because of the sand. Many events happened to the holy family. The Most High allowed them to suffer from the hardships of the desert. Our blessed Lady was much distressed, but she supported them with patience for the sake of her Son and husband. St. Joseph, on his part, suffered greatly from his inability to protect the Infant and Mother, notwithstanding all his cares.

In traversing the desert, it was absolutely necessary that they should pass the nights in the open air, and without shelter; and it was in winter, and the month of February. The first night which overtook them, obliged them to stop at the foot of a hill. The Queen of heaven seated herself on the sand with her Son in her arms, and they supped on what they had brought from Gaza. The Blessed Virgin gave milk to her Infant Jesus, and His Majesty consoled them in many pleasing and caressing ways. The saint raised a sort of little tent,

with his mantle and some sticks, so that the Incarnate Word and His holy Mother should not be exposed to the night air. Our great Lady knew that her most holy Son offered this affliction to the Eternal Father, together with His sufferings, and those of herself and St. Joseph. She united with Him in prayer. St. Joseph slept on the ground, his head supported by the little box of swaddling-clothes and their other poor apparel. The following day they continued their route, and then their provision of bread and fruits failed them, so that the Mistress of the universe and her holy spouse, feeling the pressure of hunger, found themselves in the direst distress, and, although that of the saint was the most severe, both were in the greatest affliction. Thus they passed one of the first days of their journey, until nine in the evening, without nourishment. Our blessed Lady then addressed herself to the Most High. "Eternal and Almighty God," said she, "I offer Thee thanks, and I bless Thee. How, being only a poor useless creature, how shall I dare to ask any thing for myself. But have regard to Thine only Son, and grant the means to sustain His natural life, and to preserve that of my spouse!" The Most High permitted that to the rigors of the elements should be joined those of hunger, exhaustion, and this sort of abandonment — and then came a tempest of wind and rain, which wearied them extremely.

The careful Mother, exercising her power as Queen of creatures, commanded the elements not to offend their Creator, and to reserve for her their rude attacks. The Infant Jesus, to recompense this loving care, gave commands to His angels, and they formed a luminous globe, impenetrable to the weather, which inclosed their God made man, the Blessed Virgin, and her spouse. This protection was bestowed on other occasions, also, while crossing the desert.

But food was wanting, and this want, which could not be supplied by any human industry, was most pressing. The Lord then helped them by the ministry of angels, who furnished them with bread and excellent fruits, and brought them, besides, a beverage of delicious flavor. Upon this, they sang canticles of praise to the Lord, who feeds all flesh, at a convenient season. Such was the repast which the Lord made for His three travellers in the same desert, where Elias, flying from Jezabel, was strengthened by bread baked in the ashes which the angel of the Lord brought him.

None of the miracles wrought in favor of the Jewish people are worthy to be compared with those which the Lord wrought during this journey for His Son made man, and the august Mary and St. Joseph, to preserve the natural life on which depended the salvation of the human race. But the Lord always

waited until the necessity was most urgent. Let the poor rejoice in this example—let not the hungry be cast down—let those who suffer persecution expect help in season, and let none complain of divine Providence! When was it ever that the Lord failed to help those who put their trust in Him? Come! come to Him with humility and confidence! The eyes of your Father regard you with fixed attention.

The Most High not only took care to nourish our pilgrims, but He also offered them sensible recreations, to soothe the weariness of the way. It often happened that the blessed Mother, pausing with the Infant God, was speedily surrounded by large numbers of birds. The blessed Queen received them, and commanded them to praise their Creator: the birds obeyed, and the devoted Mother amused the Infant Jesus by the sweetest canticles. The holy angels joined their voices to that of our lovely Lady.

The Son and the Mother sometimes held interior communications, so sublime, that words are inadequate to express them. The holy St. Joseph participated in some of these mysteries, and their divine consolations made him forget his fatigue while he enjoyed the delights of such society; but he knew not that the Infant conversed with His Mother.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HOLY FAMILY ARRIVE AT HELIOPOLIS
—THEY FIX THEIR RESIDENCE IN THAT CITY.

THE flight of the Incarnate Word had other mysteries, and other ends, besides that of withdrawing from the effects of Herod's anger. It was rather the means employed by the Lord to visit Egypt, and there to operate the wonders of which the Prophets had spoken—Isaiah, in particular, ch. xix. 1: "*The Lord will enter into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence,*" etc. But we will not here pursue this point.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, continuing their journey, arrived at the inhabited portion of Egypt, and before reaching Heliopolis, where they were to sojourn, the angels led them through many other places. From this cause they employed more than fifty days in the journey, passing over two hundred leagues, although they might have arrived much sooner at Heliopolis if they had followed the direct road.

The Egyptians were strongly inclined to idolatry and superstition, and idols were placed everywhere. There were many temples where devils made their abode, and they were so given to the worship of demons, and so blinded by their delusions, that nothing short of the omnipotent arm of the Lord had power to reform this misguided country.

Now, the Infant Jesus, with His Mother and St. Joseph, entered the habitations of the Egyptians. And when He entered, in the arms of the august Mary, raising His eyes towards heaven, and joining His hands, He prayed for the salvation of the poor people enslaved by the devil. Then exercising His power over these evil spirits, He precipitated them into the abyss. The idols fell at the same moment with a loud noise, the temples sank into ruins, and the altars were overthrown.

The cause of these prodigies was known to our Lady, who united her prayers to those of her divine Son. St. Joseph also discovered that all these wonders proceeded from the Incarnate Word, and filled with holy admiration, he praised and blessed Him. The demons failed to discover the cause. The Egyptians were amazed, although the most learned still preserved certain traditions of prophecies of Jeremiah, when he was in Egypt, that a King of the Jews should come into their kingdom, and the temples of their idols should be destroyed.

In their trouble, some of the people came to visit our blessed Lady and St. Joseph, and discoursed with them on the ruin of their temples. The Queen of wisdom availed herself of the occasion to instruct them. Her words were so sweet and so forcible, that the rumor of the arrival of our holy travellers was spread abroad. Jesus and Mary passed

through many towns of Egypt, chasing the demons not only from the temples, but from the bodies of the people. Our Princess and St. Joseph instructed many persons in the path to virtue and to eternal life.

They arrived at Heliopolis. Many idols were possessed by demons of great power, particularly one which dwelt in a tree at the entrance of the city. When the Word made man passed it, the demon was cast into the depths of the abyss, and the tree bowed itself to the earth. Several authors have recorded this miracle, for the leaves and fruits of this same tree, afterwards, cured many maladies.

Various writers have recorded this sojourn of the Holy Family in Egypt. Some mention their residence in one city, some in another. All may be true in referring to different epochs, for the Holy Family were at Hermopolis, Memphis, Mataria, and other towns, but they fixed their abode at Heliopolis, because the angels had said to our blessed Lady and St. Joseph, that they were to stop at this place. Thus this city of the sun, according to its name, saw the Sun of justice and of grace.

Immediately upon their arrival, St. Joseph sought a lodging, offering a fair price. The Lord guided him to a poor habitation, a little out of the town, as the Queen of heaven had wished, and they took possession of it at once. On entering it with her Son and St. Joseph,

our blessed Lady prostrated herself and kissed the earth with profound humility. She then began the lowly task of cleansing her humble abode, and, so indigent were their circumstances, that she was obliged to borrow the broom with which she swept the house.

Although our holy strangers were content to be lodged within the bare walls of this poor tenement, food and furniture were still wanting. The miraculous succor, which they had been accustomed to receive by the ministry of angels, had ceased since they had entered inhabited regions. The Lord placed them at the table of the poorest poor, which is to have recourse to alms; and, while suffering from hunger, St. Joseph went to ask for food for the Son of God. By this example he teaches the poor never to complain of their wants, nor to be ashamed to beg, when all other legitimate means have failed, since it was necessary to beg at so early a period to support the life of the Lord of all created things. During the three first days, after their arrival at Heliopolis, our blessed Lady had no other food for herself and her adorable Son than that which St. Joseph received as alms, nor until he began to gain something by his labor. (The same thing happened in divers places of Egypt.) Having received payment for certain work, he made a little bedstead, entirely of wood for the Mother, and a cradle for the Infant. For himself he prepared

* no other bed than the earth. Nor was there any furniture in the house, until, by the sweat of his brow, he acquired money to purchase some indispensable articles.

In this extreme poverty, Mary and Joseph never spoke of their house at Nazareth, nor of their parents and friends, nor of the presents of the wise men. They regretted none of these things, and supported their indigence without uttering the least complaint, or without dwelling on the past, without fear of the future. On the contrary, they were always joyous—abandoning themselves entirely to divine Providence in the hour of their greatest need.

Oh, the baseness of our infidel hearts! With how many troubles, cares, and pains are they not possessed, at the smallest inconveniences! The example of our blessed strangers should serve as a grave rebuke for our pusillanimity in times of trial and affliction. Our prudent Lady and her spouse, deprived of all temporal goods, lodged, with joy, in their destitute habitation. Of the three chambers it contained, one was consecrated as a sanctuary for the Infant Jesus and His most holy Mother. In it were placed the cradle and her little bed. The second was appropriated to St. Joseph for prayer and repose, and the third served as a shop, where he worked at his trade. Our august Lady, seeing their extreme indigence, and that her spouse was obliged to increase his

ordinary toil to enable them to live, resolved to aid him by her own labor. She judged it best to employ the day in work, so as to gain what was necessary for their food, for the clothing of St. Joseph, and to furnish their house, reserving only the night for her spiritual exercises. The Infant God approved this prudent decision of His Mother, and regulated the order of her life and her manual labor. But when the holy Mother saw that it was time to relieve St. Joseph, by procuring for him the society of her Son, she said to Him: "My Son and my Lord, regard your faithful servant with the love of a son for his father." And, addressing the saint: "Receive, my spouse, within your arms, the Lord, who holds within His hands the heavens and earth, and who will sweeten the fatigues of your toil."

The saint was accustomed to receive this favor with great humility and gratitude, asking his holy spouse if he might take the liberty to caress the Infant. Reassured by the prudent Lady, the consolation he received in these caresses made him forget all his pains, so that they seemed easy and most sweet. When the holy spouses took their repast, the Blessed Virgin held the Infant. Having placed whatever was necessary on the table, she took Him again from the arms of St. Joseph. All that I can say of any thing that our saints did, is, that they were the admiration of the angels, and that they were according to the

* good pleasure of the Lord. When Isaiah prophesied that the Lord would enter Egypt on a light cloud, to make His wonders shine there—by this cloud he meant His most holy Mother. After the Sun of Justice had enlightened Egypt, and the cloud, free from every taint of sin, the august Mary, had fertilized it, this land brought forth abundant fruits during many ages, as we have seen in the great number of saints and anchorites whom, in the sequel, it produced.

The Lord sojourned at Heliopolis, and when He entered the temples, the idols and altars were overthrown, with a frightful noise. The whole city was in the greatest terror, and many persons of both sexes went to visit the strangers, and spoke of it to our blessed Lady and St. Joseph. Our blessed Mother conversed with them with much prudence, wisdom, and sweetness. She withdrew them from their errors, and at the same time healed some diseased persons. The rumor of these miracles spread abroad to such a degree that our blessed Lady, seeing herself approached by multitudes of people, inquired of her divine Son what He would have her to do. The Infant God replied, that she should impart to them the knowledge of the true God, and instruct them in His worship and of the means to wipe away their sins.

The blessings which these souls thus obtained, were so abundant, that it would require many volumes to record

the wonders that were manifested during these seven years. Two years later, St. Joseph also began to heal the sick. Our blessed Lady devoted herself chiefly to the cure of women; she herself dressed their wounds; but for men, she healed them by her words only.

During the period of their sojourn, Heliopolis was infected by the plague. This misfortune, and the report of the wonders which they wrought, brought them great numbers of sick people, who went away healed in body and soul. But the Lord wishing to extend His grace, determined, at the request of our blessed Lady, that St. Joseph should instruct and cure the sick. And she obtained for him a new interior light, and a singular grace of holiness for the exercise of this ministry, so that, in the third year after their arrival, St. Joseph began the exercise of these gifts from heaven. He usually instructed and cured the men, and our blessed Lady the women. We can easily conceive the good they wrought, but it is impossible to give the details of it.

King Herod was much disappointed when he heard that the Magi had visited Bethlehem—had seen the august Mary and St. Joseph, and had already left Palestine. He was also informed of what had passed in the Temple. He then gave orders to make a strict search for our Queen, her Infant, and St. Joseph. But the Lord, who had commanded their departure from Jerusalem

by night, concealed their journey. And now it was that the demon inspired Herod to murder all the children of that region who were under two years old.

Herod promulgated this diabolical command in the sixth month after the birth of our Redeemer. Her most sweet Son, and the august Mother, prayed to the Almighty for the holy innocents. The divine Providence was most gracious towards these infant martyrs, and they all received, some more, some less, the use of reason, and a sublime knowledge of the being of God. They exercised heroic acts of faith, adoration, respect, and love of God. They willingly received martyrdom, and the angels who assisted them bore their souls to Limbo.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE INFANT JESUS SPEAKS TO ST. JOSEPH
A YEAR AFTER HIS BIRTH—ACCORDING
TO THE WILL OF THE MOST HIGH, THE
HOLY FAMILY RETURN FROM EGYPT TO
NAZARETH.

ONE day, while the blessed Mary and St. Joseph discoursed together upon the mysteries of the Lord, the Infant Jesus, having completed His first year, desired to break silence, and to speak, in a distinct voice, with His faithful foster-father. The two spouses

spoke of the Infinite Being of God, and His goodness in sending His only Son to be the Master and Redeemer of men—to converse with them, and suffer the pains which their depraved nature had deserved.

St. Joseph, in this meditation, admired the works of the Lord, and redoubled his grateful thanksgivings for His love. The Infant God, who was in the arms of His Mother, used them as a pulpit, from which He thus addressed the saint: "MY FATHER, I am come from heaven to be the light of the world, and as a good shepherd, to seek and to know my sheep, and to give them the food of eternal life. I desire that you may both become children of the light, since you are so near to its source." These words of the Infant Jesus, full of life and force, poured into the heart of the holy patriarch a new love—a profound respect—an inexpressible joy. He cast himself at the feet of the Infant God and offered devout thanks that the first word which he had heard Him pronounce was *father*. With many tears, he prayed His divine Majesty to illuminate him with celestial light, to enable him to do whatsoever should be most agreeable to Him, and to thank Him for the manifold blessings he had received from His liberal hand.

Fathers, who naturally love their children, feel great consolation when they perceive that they give promise of becoming wise and distinguished in the

world; and even when they are not so, their natural affection induces them to praise whatever their children may say or do. Now, although St. Joseph was not the real father of the Infant, but only His foster-father, the love which he bore Him surpassed, beyond comparison, all that fathers have ever had for their children; because grace, and even nature, were more powerful in him than in others, or in all fathers united. It is, therefore, by this love, and by the delight he felt in being the reputed father of the Infant Jesus, that we are to measure the joy of his pure soul, when he heard the Son of the Eternal Father call him *father*, in beginning to speak with him so graciously.

This first year having been passed in swaddling-clothes, the prudent Mother judged the time had come when He should be put upon His feet. The Infant Jesus said to her: "My Mother, you will clothe me in a tunic, of a plain color. I will wear none but this. It shall grow with me, and it shall be for this that they will cast lots after my death. I ought to have only one coat in this world, in order to instruct men to esteem and to love poverty. I consent that you give me some common sandals, which I will wear until the time comes for my public preaching, when I must go barefooted." The Queen of heaven employed herself immediately to accomplish the will of her most holy Son. She provided wool of

the natural color, of which she spun and made a little tunic, all of one piece. She wove it on a frame. There was a mystery in making this tunic without seam. On the prayer of our blessed Lady, it changed its natural hue into another, which was between violet and silver color, very perfect, so that the shade could not be distinguished. Besides this, she made a half tunic of linen, for an under garment, in which He was crucified. The holy Mother, having thus clothed the Infant Jesus, put sandals upon Him, and set Him on His feet. The tunic proved to be exactly fitted to Him, and He never quitted it until the executioners despoiled Him of His clothing, to flagellate and crucify Him, because it grew with His sacred body as much as was necessary. The same thing happened with the sandals, and the other garment, which served as drawers. The Infant Jesus found Himself afoot. There appeared in Him a grace quite wonderful, for He surpassed, in beauty, all the children of men. The angels were surprised that He had chosen so humble a vesture.

Our blessed Lady and her holy spouse were filled with joy on seeing their Infant walk with so much grace, and possessing such rare beauty. When He had reached eighteen months, He was weaned: afterwards He ate meat, but always very sparingly. When He was grown up, He took His food at the same hour with our blessed spouses, and noth-

ing more; and when at the table with His parents, they waited always for Him to give the benediction at the beginning, and to return thanks at the end of the repast.

The Infant Jesus grew in the admiration of all who knew Him. Having attained His sixth year, He began, sometimes, to go out to visit the sick in the hospitals. From every quarter they came to felicitate and bless the parents for having such a Child. Many children of Heliopolis, as is usual, accompanied our amiable Jesus. He instructed them in the knowledge of the Divinity and of the virtues, and taught them the way to eternal life.

This sweet, beautiful Child, in proportion as He advanced in age, assumed a graver demeanor towards His parents; and some time after the swaddling-clothes were laid aside, the most tender caresses, which had always been made with a certain reserve, ceased. The circumspection of His parents in this regard, arose from their perception in Him of so much of the majesty of the hidden Divinity, which, if He had not tempered it, would often have produced a fear so full of respect, that they could not have dared even to speak to Him. But His presence never ceased to inspire them with sentiments altogether divine and ineffable.

In this majestic grandeur, He was dutiful towards His most holy Mother, and treated St. Joseph as the one who

held the name and office of His father, obeying both as their humble Child. It is impossible to enumerate the souls who were converted and saved in Heliopolis, and in all Egypt — the sick whom they cured, and the wonders they wrought, in the seven years of their abode there. During this time the Infant Jesus attained the age of seven years, and this was the term of that mysterious exile which the Eternal Wisdom had fixed. To fulfil the prophecies, it was necessary that He should return to Nazareth. The Eternal Father, one day, declared His will to the humanity of His divine Son, in the presence of His holy Mother. The Son and the Mother disclosed nothing of the new order from heaven to St. Joseph, but the angel of the Lord appeared to him the same night in a dream, as it is related by St. Matthew, and instructed him "to take the Child and His Mother, and return into the land of Israel." The Most High so eminently esteems good order, that the Infant Jesus being God, and His Mother so superior in sanctity to St. Joseph, nevertheless, he would not that the undertaking of the return to Galilee should depend either upon the Son or the Mother, but that it should be conducted by St. Joseph, who filled the office of head to that divine family. This example teaches all mortals how agreeable it is to God, that they who are inferiors in the mystical body, although more worthy by other qualities,

should obey and submit themselves to those who, by their office, are their superiors.

St. Joseph went instantly to communicate the commandment of the Lord to the Infant Jesus and His Mother, who replied, that "the will of the heavenly Father should be fulfilled. Upon which they prepared with all possible diligence for their departure. They distributed among the poor the little furniture they possessed, and this was done by the agency of the Infant God.

They left Heliopolis for Palestine, with the same angels who had accompanied them to Egypt. Our Queen rode a little ass, with the Infant God in her lap, and St. Joseph walked near them. All their acquaintances sensibly felt their departure, and took leave of them with many tears. They passed several of the inhabited places of Egypt before arriving at the desert, and left marks of their charity everywhere. They cured many sick persons, and drove away a multitude of demons, who knew not by what power they were cast into the abyss.

I will not pause to record the various circumstances that attended the Infant Jesus and His blessed Mother in their departure from Egypt. It may suffice to say, that they who approached them with any pious affection were enlightened in the truth, assisted by grace, and penetrated by divine love. At length, our holy travellers left behind them the inhabited country, and entered the

desert by which they had come. There they again suffered hardships similar to those they had endured after leaving Palestine. In these extremities the Lord himself provided for them by the ministry of the angels. Sometimes the Infant Jesus ordered these spirits to bring food for His holy Mother and her spouse.

This consoled the holy Patriarch, seeing that he was altogether unable of himself to find support for the King and Queen of heaven. On other occasions the Infant God exercised His divine power in multiplying some morsel of bread into as much as they had need of. For the rest, this journey passed off as the preceding one. But when, on approaching Palestine, the cautious St. Joseph heard that Archelaus reigned in Judea, in the place of Herod, his father, he took another road, without entering Judea, and they came to Nazareth, their country, because the Infant was to be called a *Nazarene*. There they found their old abode, under the guardianship of that pious woman, the relative of St. Joseph, to whom he had written on their departure for Egypt, requesting her to take charge of it and whatever it contained; and they found all in good condition.

When our blessed Lady entered it with her divine Son and holy spouse, she prostrated herself to return thanks. The happy Mother then regulated her affairs according to the intentions of the

Infant God, and St. Joseph did the same, in whatever regarded his employment for the support of the Infant, the Mother and himself. The happiness of the holy Patriarch was immense; for it was a favor and an unutterable joy to have been chosen to gain by the labor of his hands wherewithal to sustain the Infant God and His Mother, to whom belonged heaven, earth, and all that they contain.

The Queen of heaven desired to requite the labors of the saint. She served him and prepared his simple food with the most affectionate gratitude, and obeying him in all things, she regarded herself more as his servant than his spouse. She considered herself unworthy that even the earth should sustain her, and she established her rare humility on such solid foundations, that she was always plunged in an abyss of annihilation, and still lower in her own esteem.

CHAPTER XV.

SOJOURN AT NAZARETH — THE BLESSED MARY AND ST. JOSEPH GO EVERY YEAR TO JERUSALEM — AT THE AGE OF TWELVE, JESUS REMAINS AT THE TEMPLE, WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS PARENTS.

JESUS, Mary, and Joseph had finally reached Nazareth, and their poor dwelling was changed into a new heaven. If it were necessary to relate all the wonders that happened there before the

Infant God had reached His twelfth year, many volumes would be required.

Soon after their return to Nazareth, the Lord tried His most blessed Mother. The Most High determined that our holy Lady should be the first disciple of her Son. The Incarnate Word and His blessed Mother occupied themselves in these profound mysteries during the twenty-three years of their abode at Nazareth. The Lord caused her to feel His absence internally. Besides this, the Infant God, without making known any cause for it, was more grave than usual. We omit here many admirable things, that we may not withdraw ourselves too much from the life of our holy Patriarch. The prudent Mother never neglected any thing that regarded the corporeal service of her Son, taking great care of His diet as well as that of St. Joseph. She also obtained that the Infant Jesus consoled His foster-father by His presence, as much as if he had been His natural father.

The Infant God obeyed His Mother, and was often with St. Joseph while at the work in which he was continually occupied, so that thus, by the sweat of his brow, he might maintain those so dear to him. In proportion as He grew in stature, He assisted the holy Patriarch, as far as it was possible at His age, and sometimes He wrought miracles to produce results which surpassed His natural strength, thereby to relieve the saint of his labor; but these marvels

occurred only in the presence of the three.

Some time after the return of our saints to Nazareth, the period arrived when the precept of the law of Moses obliged the Israelites to appear before the Lord at Jerusalem. This commandment was obligatory three times a-year, but it was binding only on the men—women might present themselves for devotion, if they pleased. Our blessed Lady conferred with her spouse as to what they should do on this occasion. The saint wished to conduct thither the Queen of heaven and her holy Child, to offer them anew to the Eternal Father. The holy Mother was inclined to go from devotion, but she undertook nothing without the consent of her Master, the Incarnate Word. Having consulted Him, it was resolved that St. Joseph should present himself there alone, twice in the year, and the third time they should all go together. It was at the festival of the Passover that the sweet Jesus and His blessed Mother accompanied St. Joseph. When he went alone, the saint made the journey on behalf of all, and, as deputy for the Son and the Mother (who prayed for him at Nazareth), he made mysterious prayers in the Temple at Jerusalem, offering the sacrifice of his lips. And as he offered Jesus and Mary there, this offering was more agreeable to the Eternal Father than any which all the rest of the people of Israel could offer.

When the Incarnate Word and the Virgin Mary accompanied St. Joseph to the festival of the Passover, this pilgrimage was more admirable for him, because the ten thousand angels accompanied our divine travellers. They made short journeys on these occasions, because, after the return from Egypt, the Infant Jesus desired to go on foot, which obliged them to move slowly. The first time they travelled in this manner, our blessed Lady and St. Joseph were careful to assist Him, by taking Him sometimes in their arms, but afterwards He went entirely on foot. The prudent Mother offered no opposition, but led Him by the hand, and the glorious Patriarch sometimes enjoyed that consolation.

Every time the Son and the Mother made this journey, they operated wonders for the good of souls. When they stopped for the night, in some hostelry, the Infant God and His Mother were never separated. She often saw Him engaged in prayer for the whole human race, and united her prayers to His. Many times, as in a mirror, she beheld all the affronts, all the ignominy, and all the sufferings which her most sweet Child was to suffer in the city of Jerusalem, and she was transpierced by the sword of grief which Simeon had predicted. But the Infant God, to alleviate her sorrow, prayed her to offer these pains, which regarded them mutually, for the salvation of men.

Our holy family, as I have said, continued to go every year to the Temple, to celebrate the Passover. The Infant God had attained His twelfth year, the epoch at which he was to make manifest the splendors of His inaccessible light. Our holy pilgrims remained an entire week at Jerusalem. The happy Mother and St. Joseph received, each in proportion to their dispositions, such great favors from the liberal hand of the Lord, that the human understanding is not able to conceive them.

The seventh day past, they took the road towards Nazareth. But as they issued forth from the city of Jerusalem, the Infant God left His parents unperceived, and remained behind, while they pursued their journey, not knowing what had happened. The Lord availed himself of the customs of the people; for the troops of strangers divided themselves, and for the better observance of propriety, the women went together. The children accompanied, indifferently, their father or their mother. St. Joseph had reason to believe that the Child Jesus went with His blessed Mother, nor could he imagine that she would have set out without Him. Our blessed Lady had less strong reasons to persuade herself that our adorable Saviour was with the Patriarch St. Joseph, but the Lord diverted her mind by other divine thoughts at the beginning, so that when she found herself alone without her best beloved, she believed that the glorious

St. Joseph had taken Him with him, and that the supreme Lord had willed to give him that consolation.

Our holy spouses travelled on with this idea throughout the day, as St. Luke informs us, and, having left the city by different gates, rejoined each other afterwards. The holy Mary and her spouse met at the place where they were to pass the first night after their departure from Jerusalem. But our blessed Lady, seeing that the Infant God was not with St. Joseph, as she supposed, and the holy Patriarch not finding Him with His Mother, both were thrown into such consternation that they nearly lost the power of speech, and remained some time without uttering a word. Both, from humility, attributed the fault to themselves, of allowing the divine Infant to be separated from them. Recovering a little from their amazement, they conferred together, in extreme grief, respecting what was to be done. The tender Mother spoke first: "My spouse, my heart can find no repose, unless we go at once to seek my holy Child." They instantly commenced their researches, by inquiries among their relatives and acquaintances, but none could give them tidings of Him, nor mitigate their sorrow; on the contrary, it was augmented, for no one had seen Him since they had come out of Jerusalem.

The Mother of wisdom formed various conjectures in her mind, and the first thought was, that Archelaus, having had

* some knowledge of the Infant Jesus, might have caused Him to be apprehended. She feared that He had been cast into prison and maltreated. Her deep humility induced her, also, to fear that, unhappily, her services might not have been pleasing to Him. This innocent dove passed the three days, during which she sought the Saviour, in tears and groanings, without repose—without food or sleep. The celestial spirits of her guard were not ignorant of where He was, but she was so reserved and so humble, that she did not inquire of them where she could find Him.

The grief of our blessed Lady on this occasion surpassed all that all the martyrs united have suffered; and in it she exercised a patience and resignation unparalleled. For oh! prodigy of holiness—of prudence—of perfection! in such an unheard-of affliction, and in such absorbing sorrow, she was neither troubled, nor lost her interior nor exterior peace—she gave way to no movement of impatience, nor of inordinate tenderness. She sought her Child with a divine wisdom, inquiring of many persons if they had not seen Him, and giving marks by which He might be recognized. Among others, a woman replied to her inquiries: "A child having the same features that you describe, presented himself yesterday at my door, asking alms, which I gave him. His charming manners and exceeding beauty won my heart." These were the first tidings the afflicted Mother

had obtained of her Son in Jerusalem, and she forthwith proceeded to the hospital of the city, hoping to find the Master of poverty among the poor; there she was informed that the child she described had visited them during three days, bringing them alms, and had left them much consoled in their afflictions. Having failed to find Him among the poor, she doubted not that He would be in the Temple. The holy angels now said to her: "Queen of the universe, you will soon behold the light of your eyes. Hasten to the Temple." The glorious patriarch St. Joseph advanced towards her at this moment, for, to gain time, he had sought the Infant God in another direction, and he also had been directed, by an angel, to the Temple.

He suffered extremely from fatigue during these three days, going sometimes in one direction, sometimes in another, occasionally with his blessed spouse, oftener alone, and always with inconceivable care and solicitude; for his life would have been endangered if the hand of the Lord had not sustained him, and if our precious Lady had not taken care to alleviate his extreme affliction, besides obliging him to take some little food and rest. The tender and devoted love which he cherished for the Infant God imparted such an exceeding desire to find Him, that he forgot all besides. Following the counsel of the celestial princes, our holy

spouses hastened to the Temple. In the next chapter we shall relate what happened there.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE AUGUST MARY AND ST. JOSEPH DISCOVER THE INFANT IN THE TEMPLE AMONG THE DOCTORS—RETURN TO NAZARETH.

OUR blessed Lady, ever so assiduous in the service of her divine Son, had, nevertheless, lost sight of Him, and left Him to wander away from her at Jerusalem. Although it might suffice to say that the same Lord so ordained it, we may also perceive how this separation was effected. It is certain that, besides taking advantage of the multitudes of people, the Infant God used, also, supernatural means, and while the men and women were separating from each other, the Omnipotent Lord gave to His blessed Mother an intellectual vision, which so possessed all her faculties, and so elevated her above all things of sense, that she was unable to do more than mechanically to follow the path she travelled. St. Joseph had the reasons we have already adverted to, but he, also, was elevated to a most sublime contemplation, which induced a more ready acquiescence in the idea that the Infant had accompanied His Mother, and by this means the adorable Child

separated himself from His parents and remained at Jerusalem. He withdrew himself when near the gates of the city, and, returning, He traversed the streets, meditating, by His divine science, on the events of the future, and offering himself to His Father for the salvation of souls.

In order to inaugurate the honor of humble mendicity, as the eldest son of holy poverty, He employed three days in asking alms. He visited the hospitals, consoled all the poor whom He found there, and shared with them the alms He had received. He secretly restored to several sick persons health of body, and to many that of the soul. He wrought these miracles in favor of some who had showed Him kindness, wishing to accomplish, in advance, the promise that He would afterwards make to His Church.

Having occupied himself with these and many other works, according to the will of God, He went to the Temple, where, on the day mentioned by St. Luke, the Rabbis, or doctors of the law, were assembled in an apartment, where they disputed whether the Messiah was not already born. They were installed in their seats with that authority which usually accompanies those who pass for learned men. The Infant Jesus approached the assembly. The opinions of the doctors upon this subject were widely different, for some asserted the fact, while others denied it; and those

who supported the negative, alleged the testimony of the Scriptures and the prophecies, understood by them in the gross manner which the Apostle mentions.

Now, these sages, as they deemed themselves, advanced the opinion that the Messiah was to come with all the majesty and pomp of a monarch, but, as yet, they saw no indications of this power and freedom.

The Master of Truth, Jesus, perceived that the discussion was about to terminate in this error, for, although there were men who held the contrary opinion, their number was small. His immense charity could not endure this ignorance of His works, and their sublime ends, in these interpreters of the law. The Infant God drew nearer. He entered into the midst of the assembly with admirable beauty and majesty, and excited in these doctors the desire to hear Him with attention.

He opened His discourse, saying: "I have heard all that has been said touching the coming of the Messiah, and the conclusion respecting it. In offering an objection to this decision, I presuppose what the prophets have said, viz.: That His coming should be with great power, and with glorious majesty; for Isaiah declares that He shall be our legislator, our king, who shall save His people. Daniel assures us that all tribes and all people shall serve Him. The Scriptures are filled with similar promises. But

my doubt is founded on these passages and divers others. The same Isaiah says that He shall be satiated with opprobrium, and led like a sheep to the slaughter. Jeremiah tells us that His enemies should assemble to erase His name from the land of the living; and David, that He would be the refuse of the people. How will it be possible to harmonize these prophecies? We cannot deny that the Messiah must come twice—the first time, to redeem the world; the second, to judge it. The prophecies should, then, be applied to these two events, giving to each what belongs to it. Following these observations, if we conclude that the first advent will be with power and majesty, this must not be understood in a material sense, but of a new spiritual kingdom. And with this just interpretation, all the Scriptures, which cannot be harmonized in any other sense, will be found uniform."

To these the Infant God joined many other reasons. The scribes and doctors, who had listened to Him, remained silent. At length, "What wonder is this?" said they. "Whence comes this marvellous child?" The august Mary and St. Joseph arrived in time to hear the conclusion of the discourse. The doctors of the law arose, and our blessed Lady, overwhelmed with joy to have found her treasure, approached her divine Child, and said, as it is related by St. Luke: "Son, why hast Thou done

* so to us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee, sorrowing." His Majesty replied to her: "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

The Evangelist relates that the blessed Mary and St. Joseph did not understand the mystery of these words. It was because of their interior joy, which they had sowed in tears. The prudent Mother said to her divine Son: "Do not separate me from thy presence. Receive me for thy servant, and if through my own fault I have lost thee, I entreat thy pardon." The Infant God received her with affection, and they again set out for Nazareth. After they had gone a short distance from Jerusalem, our blessed Lady prostrating herself, adored her holy Son, and asked His benediction. The divine Jesus raised her from the ground, and spoke to her with great sweetness. Afterwards He lifted the veil, and, with greater clearness than ever before, revealed to her His most holy soul and its operations.

The blessed Mother conversed with her most sweet Child respecting the mysteries that He had opened to her. The celestial Master informed her that these doctors and scribes knew not that His majesty was the Messiah, because of their presumption and confidence in their own wisdom. Our Redeemer converted many souls during this journey, and, as His holy Mother was present,

He made her the instrument of these miracles. He restored many sick persons to health, He comforted the afflicted, and wrought other wonders which I do not pause to recount.

They arrived at Nazareth. The Evangelist St. Luke includes, in a few brief words, the mysteries of their history: "The Infant Jesus was subject to His parents," i. e., to His holy Mother and St. Joseph. "His Mother kept all these words in her heart, and Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and man." We shall speak of this further on, adding, only, at this time, that the humility and obedience of our Lord towards His parents offered new subjects of admiration to the angels, as did also the dignity of His pure Mother, to whom the God Incarnate was confided, in order that, by the help of St. Joseph, she might minister to His wants.

Although the obedience of the Son was only a consequence of the natural maternity, still, to exercise the rights of a Mother over her Son, a different grace was necessary from that which she had received to conceive and bring Him forth. The august Mary possessed all these needful graces, proportioned to this ministry and office, and with such abundance, that they were reflected upon her happy spouse, so that he was also the worthy foster-father of Jesus Christ, and head of this most holy family.

CHAPTER XVII.

ST. JOSEPH IS NO LONGER ABLE TO WORK
—CONDUCT OF THE AUGUST MARY AND
THE DIVINE JESUS, DURING MORE THAN
EIGHT YEARS THAT THE HOLY PATRI-
ARCH LIVED IN SICKNESS AND INFIRMI-
TIES.

THE Queen of heaven completed her thirty-third year, and her chaste form retained all its natural perfections so beautifully and well proportioned, that it was the admiration of the angelic choirs. Her sacred body had reached its full development, so that this august Princess resembled the holy humanity of her Son. The pure Mary preserved this admirable complexion at thirty-three, without the least change, and at the age of seventy, she had lost nothing of her strength and beauty. Our blessed Lady understood this privilege. She knew that the resemblance of the humanity of her divine Son was to be always preserved in her. St. Joseph was not aged when this lovely Queen had attained her thirty-third year, nevertheless his strength was much exhausted, because the cares, travels, and continued pains he had taken for the support of his spouse and the Lord of the universe, had worn away his health more than his years. The Lord, who desired to advance him in the exercise of patience and the other virtues, permitted him to suffer from certain maladies, that hindered him much from application to manual

labor. His prudent spouse, who had always appreciated, loved, and served him beyond all that other women have done in regard to their husbands, perceiving his indisposition, said to him, "My spouse, I am under extreme obligations for your fidelity, and the increasing care and fatigue you have imposed upon yourself, in order, by the sweat of your brow, to maintain me, your servant, and my adorable Son. You will receive from the liberal hand of the Most High the reward of your pains, and the precious benedictions which you have merited. I beg you to cease from this incessant labor, and repose yourself. I will now labor for you, in testimony of my gratitude, as long as the Lord shall give us life."

The saint listened to the reasonings of his sweet spouse with many tears; and, although he assured her that he desired to continue his toil, he yielded to her solicitations, believing it his duty to obey her, and discontinued his labors. In order to have nothing superfluous in this holy family, they gave away his tools in alms.

St. Joseph being thus relieved from labor, gave himself entirely for the rest of his days to the contemplation of the mysteries which he had nourished in his breast, and to the practice of virtue. He was happy in these occupations to find himself in the presence and enjoyment of the conversation of the Incarnate Wisdom and of her who was His

* Mother. With such helps, he arrived at so high a degree of sanctity, that next to his blessed spouse, who was always unique among mere creatures, *he surpassed all men, and will never be surpassed by any.**

Our august Queen and her divine Son assisted, served, and consoled him in his maladies with the most assiduous care. It is impossible to describe the humility, respect, and love which these charitable cares produced in the sincere and grateful heart of the servant of God. The Blessed Virgin charged herself with the support of her most holy Son and her spouse, by her own work. The Eternal Wisdom so disposed it, in order that her merits and virtues might reach the highest degree, and serve as an example to put the children of Adam to shame.

The Lord offers this *strong woman* to us as an example. The heart of her husband trusted in her, and not only that of her spouse Joseph, but also that of her Son, at once true God and man, as Solomon declares in the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs. Means were not wanting to the Lord to support the corporeal life of His blessed Mother and St. Joseph, since man lives not by bread alone. He could have miraculously provided for them every day, but the world would have been deprived of the privilege of witnessing the industry of the most pure Mother of God, and if our blessed Lady

* Suarez maintains this same doctrine *expresso*.

had not acquired these merits, she would have failed to obtain much of her reward.

With prudent diligence she provided for all. Neither our adorable Saviour nor His Mother, ate flesh-meat—their food consisted of fish, fruits, and herbs, and they partook of these with great moderation. Our august Lady, nevertheless, prepared meat for St. Joseph, and served it in the manner most agreeable to him. It happened sometimes, that her labor was insufficient, because St. Joseph had need of more than heretofore. On these occasions, our Lord exercised His power. He often so ordered that His blessed Mother accomplished much in a short time, so that her work multiplied itself in her hands.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OF THE CARE WHICH THE AUGUST MARY
AND THE DIVINE JESUS BESTOWED UPON
ST. JOSEPH IN THE INFIRMITIES OF HIS
LATTER DAYS.

IT is a common mistake to regard the Lord Jesus only as Redeemer, and not as a master, who by His example instructs us to suffer afflictions. And, although Catholics do not fall into the insensate errors of the heretics, for they all admit that without good works, and without afflictions, there is neither recompense nor crown; yet we find many children of the Holy Church who are

scarcely to be distinguished from those who are in darkness, since they avoid works which are painful to them:

Let us reject this manifest error, and be assured that sufferings were not for our Lord Jesus Christ alone, but for us also. The most beloved of our divine Master have received the greatest share of the cross. Let us not be so bold as to say, that if the Saviour suffered as man, He is, at the same time, God, and hence He is, to human weakness, rather a subject for admiration than of imitation. The Saviour of our souls overturns this excuse by the example of His most innocent Mother and St. Joseph, and that of many men and feeble women also.

The Lord conducted by this royal road of suffering the spouse of his blessed Mother, St. Joseph, whom His majesty loved above all the children of men. To increase his merits and his crown, before his power of gaining merits had ceased, the Lord bestowed on him, in the last years of his life, certain exceedingly acute maladies, which caused excessive pain throughout his body, and great debility. Besides these, there was another mode of suffering, more gentle, yet very distinct, which resulted from the force of his burning love. This love was so vehement, and at times his transports were so impetuous, that his pure spirit must have broken the chains that bound it to the body, if the same Lord had not given him the power of

resisting it. His majesty made him suffer this sweet violence, because, from the natural feebleness of a body so attenuated this painful exercise was a great merit for the saint, not only from the effects of the pain that he suffered, but from the cause, which was love; hence he acquired incomparable merits. Our blessed Lady had knowledge of all these mysteries. She penetrated the interior of the saint, so that she might not be deprived of the joy she derived from the conviction of having a spouse so holy and so beloved of the Lord. She observed the candor and purity of his soul—his ardent affection, his lofty and divine thoughts, his patience and sweetness in his maladies, the great sufferings which he bore without a complaint or sigh, or asking any solace. Our great patriarch supported all his pains with an incomparable patience and magnanimity. All this his faithful spouse remarked, as well as the value and the merits of the many virtues which the saint practised, and she conceived so high a reverence for him that we will not attempt to express it. She applied herself, with the greatest joy, to sustain and console him. As she had little esteem for what she did herself to relieve the great sufferings of her spouse, and because of the love she bore him, she commanded the viands that she prepared for her holy patient to give him strength and re-establish his appetite, since this was to preserve the life

* of the saint—the just—the elect of the Most High.

When St. Joseph partook of this food, he was sensible of the sweet benedictions and the genial effects of the viands, and inquired of his spouse: "What aliments of life are these which vivify me, restoring my appetite and my strength, and filling me with new consolation?" The Queen of heaven served him on her knees, and, when his pains were violent, she removed his sandals, and supported and assisted him with the tenderest affection. Although the humble saint made every effort to hinder his spouse from taking such unwearied pains, it was always in vain, for our sweet Lady understood the maladies of her patient, and when he most needed help, and she therefore hastened to assist him, in all his wants, with the greatest affection. She often said things which exceedingly consoled him. During the three last years of his life, which were those of his greatest suffering, she never quitted him, day or night. If for a moment she withdrew, it was only to serve her divine Son, who united with His Mother to assist the holy patriarch, except when He was necessarily occupied in other works; so we may say that never was patient so well served. From hence we may learn how great were the happiness and the merits of St. Joseph, for he alone has merited to have her for his spouse, who was also the spouse of the Holy Spirit.

The charity of our blessed Lady towards St. Joseph was not satisfied by these services of which we have spoken. She strove to console him by still other means. Sometimes she prayed the Lord, with the most ardent charity, to deliver her spouse from his sufferings, and to inflict them upon herself. In making this request, she believed herself to deserve the pains of all creatures, regarding herself as the least of all. She alleged, also, the holiness of St. Joseph, and the delight which the Lord took in that heart, so conformed to that of His majesty. She witnessed the sufferings of her blessed spouse, and had compassion for them; she knew his merits, and the pleasure which her adorable Son had in him. She rejoiced in the patience of the saint, and magnified the Lord. Sometimes, the Queen of pity, touched by the excruciating pains of her spouse, and melted by tenderest sympathy, having obtained permission from her divine Son commanded his sufferings, and their natural causes, to suspend their activity, and cease so cruelly to afflict the just and the well-beloved of the Lord.

At other times, she prayed the saints and angels to console her spouse, and to strengthen him in his troubles, when the weakness of the fragile flesh demanded it. By this species of commandment, the blessed spirits appeared to the holy patient in the human form, all radiant with beauty and splendor,

and conversing with each other of God and His infinite perfections. Occasionally they chanted celestial music, with a sweetness that suspended his bodily pains, and inflamed his pure soul with divine love. The man of God had, besides, for his greater consolation, a particular knowledge, not only of all these favors, but also of the holiness of his most holy spouse, of the love she bore to him, of the interior charity with which she served him, and others of the excellences of this great Queen of the Universe. All these united produced such effects upon St. Joseph, and enabled him to acquire so many merits, that, in this life, it is not possible to conceive them.*

CHAPTER XIX.

PRECIOUS DEATH OF THE GLORIOUS ST. JOSEPH, CAUSED PRINCIPALLY BY DIVINE LOVE—HE EXPIRES IN THE ARMS OF THE DIVINE JESUS, ASSISTED BY HIS BLESSED SPOUSE, THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

DURING eight years St. Joseph had been exercised by pains and sufferings, and his generous spirit was ever more and more purified in the cru-

* M. Olier, who has written such sublime pages on St. Joseph, affirms that we cannot know, here below, the merits of the glorious St. Joseph, and that we are incapable of conceiving them. What a eulogy!—*Manuscripts of M. Olier.*

cible of patience and divine love. With years his tortures increased, his strength diminished. The inevitable term of life, at which we pay the universal tribute of death, approached. His blessed spouse increased her devotion and her cares to serve him with inviolable fidelity.

This most holy Lady, knowing, through her infused science that the last hour of her chaste spouse in this place of exile was very near, went to find her adorable Son, and said to Him: "My Lord and my God, the time for the death of your servant Joseph, which you have determined by an eternal will, approaches. I beseech, you, Lord, by your infinite goodness, to assist him in this hour, so that his death may be as precious to you, as his life has been agreeable. Remember, my Son, the love and humility of your servant—his merits—his virtues, and the pains he has taken to preserve your life and mine."

Our Saviour replied to her: "My Mother, your requests are pleasing to me, and the merits of Joseph are in my thoughts. I will now assist him, and I will give him so eminent a place among the princes of my people, that it will be a subject of admiration for the angels, and a motive for praise to them and to men. I will not do for any nation that which I will do for your spouse." Our august Lady returned thanks to her most sweet Son for this promise.

During the nine days that preceded

the death of St. Joseph, the Son and the Mother watched by him day and night. They so arranged it that one or the other was always with him. During these nine days, the angels chanted, three times each day, by the commandment of the Lord, celestial music for the holy patient. It was composed of canticles of praise to the Most High, and of benedictions for the saint himself; and, besides, so delicious a fragrance pervaded all this poor habitation, that not only the man of God was fortified and cheered by it, but many persons on the outside.

A day before his death, all inflamed with divine love for so many benefits, he was elevated into a sublime ecstasy which continued twenty-four hours, the Lord preserving his strength and life by a miraculous interposition. In this ecstatic state he clearly beheld the divine Essence, and discovered in it, without a veil, that which he had believed by faith, either in the incomprehensible Divinity, or in the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption—the Church Militant and the sacraments with which she is enriched. The Holy Trinity destined him to be the precursor of our Saviour Jesus Christ to the saints who were in Limbo, and commanded him to announce to them anew their redemption, and to prepare them for the visit which the same Lord was to make them to conduct them to eternal felicity. St. Joseph returned from this ecstasy radiant

in beauty, his soul divinized from the view of the being of God. He addressed himself to his spouse, and requested her benediction; but she prayed her most holy Son to give it, which His divine Majesty was pleased to do. Our blessed Lady, having knelt, besought St. Joseph to bless her as her spouse and head. The man of God, not without a divine impulse, gave his benediction to his beloved spouse before their separation. She afterwards kissed the hand with which he had blessed her, and requested him to salute for her the saints in Limbo.

The most humble Joseph, wishing to close his life by the seal of humility, asked pardon of his holy spouse for the faults which he might have committed in her service as a feeble man of earthly mould. He entreated her to assist him in this last hour, and to intercede for him. He testified, above all, his gratitude to our adorable Saviour, for the benefits which he had received from His most liberal hand during all his life, and particularly in this sickness. Then taking leave of his blessed spouse, he said to her: "Thou art blessed among all women, and chosen above all creatures. Let angels and men praise thee. Let all nations know and exalt thy dignity. Let the name of the Most High through thee be known, adored, and glorified in all future ages, and eternally praised by all the blessed spirits, for having created thee so pleasing in His eyes. I trust to meet thee in the heavenly land."

After this, the man of God addressed our Lord Jesus Christ, and, wishing to speak to His Majesty with profound respect, he made every effort to kneel on the ground. But the sweet Jesus approaching, received him in His arms, and the saint, supporting his head upon His bosom, said: "My Lord and my God, Son of the Eternal Father, Creator and Redeemer of the world, give Thine eternal benediction to Thy servant, who is the work of Thy hands. Pardon the faults I have committed in Thy service and in Thy company. I confess Thee, I glorify Thee, I render to Thee, with a contrite and humble heart, eternal thanks for having chosen me, by Thine ineffable goodness, from among men to be the spouse of Thine own Mother. Grant, Lord, that Thine own glory may be the theme of my gratitude through all eternity."

The Redeemer of the world gave him His benediction: "Rest in peace," He said: "the grace of my heavenly Father, and mine, be with thee. Proclaim the good tidings to my prophets and saints, who await thee in Paradise, and tell them that their redemption is nigh." As our beloved Redeemer pronounced these words, the most happy Joseph expired in His arms, and His divine Majesty closed his eyes. The angels chanted the sweetest hymns of praise, and, by order of the supreme King, they conducted this most holy soul into Paradise, where the saints recognized him as

the reputed father of the Redeemer of the world, and His greatly beloved one, who merited singular veneration. He imparted a new joy to this innumerable assembly, by announcing to them, according to the commandment of the Lord, that their redemption should not long be delayed. We must not omit to mention, that although the precious death of St. Joseph was preceded by so long a sickness, and such severe sufferings, these were not the chief causes of it. He might have lived longer, notwithstanding these maladies, if the effects of the ardent love that burned in his chaste bosom had not been superadded; for this happy death was rather a triumph of love than the penalty of sin. The Lord suspended the supernatural aid by which He had preserved the strength of His servant, and hindered the violence of his love from destroying him; and this help failing, nature was vanquished. This victory severed the ties that detained his holy soul in the prison of the body, in which consists our death. Thus, love was the last of his maladies, and it was also the greatest and most glorious, since, by it, death is the sleep of the body, and the principle of life.

Our blessed Lady, seeing that her spouse had ceased to live, prepared his body for sepulture, according to the customary usages. No other hands than hers, and those of the angels who assisted her, touched him. In order that all

should be conformable to the incomparable modesty of the Virgin Mother, the Lord clothed the body of St. Joseph in a celestial splendor, which covered it in such a manner that the face only was visible, and thus the pure spouse saw not the rest of the body which she prepared for interment. Several persons were attracted to the house by the sweet fragrance that exhaled from the holy corpse, and, seeing it so beautiful, and as flexible as if it had been living, they were greatly astonished.

The body of St. Joseph was carried to the common cemetery, followed by relatives, friends, and others, and by the Redeemer of the world and His holy Mother, and a great multitude of angels. Our prudent Lady preserved an unalterable dignity, nor did she permit her interior affliction to hinder her in ordering all things necessary for the interment of her spouse, or the service of her Son. She acquitted herself in all with a regal magnanimity, and, at the close, she gave thanks to her adorable Son for the favors He had bestowed on St. Joseph. Our august saint was one of those who enjoyed the privilege of exemption from the sight of the demons at his death, because these spirits of darkness, wishing to approach him, were sensible that a powerful force restrained them, and the angels hurled them into hell.

CHAPTER XX.

PRIVILEGES GRANTED TO ST. JOSEPH—HIS BIRTH ACCOMPANIED BY MIRACLES—HIS ADMIRABLE VIRTUES—THE VIRTUES WHICH THE MOST HIGH HAS PROMISED TO THOSE DEVOTED TO HIM—JESUS RESUSCITATES ST. JOSEPH AFTER HIS PASSION—OUR BLESSED LADY CELEBRATES THE FESTIVAL OF HER ESPOUSALS.

THE duration of the life of this happiest of men, St. Joseph, was sixty years and some days. He espoused the Blessed Mary in his thirty-third year, and he lived a little more than twenty-seven years in her society. At the death of her holy spouse, our Lady was nearly forty-one years and six months old. She felt a natural grief at his death, because she had loved him as her spouse, as a very great saint, and her protector and benefactor; and, although the well-regulated mind of our admirable Lady controlled her sorrow, it was not the less profound. The more she knew of the high degree of sanctity which her spouse had attained among the great saints; whose names are inscribed in the Book of Life, the greater was her affection for him. And, since we cannot lose without sorrow that which we tenderly love, we cannot doubt that the grief of the Blessed Virgin was very great, when we measure it by the love she bore to the holy patriarch.

This is not the place to treat, particularly, of the excellence of the holiness of

* St. Joseph, for I have no order to impart, more than what will serve generally to make manifest the dignity of his spouse, to whose merits (after those of her divine Son) we must attribute the gifts and graces with which the Most High favored the glorious patriarch. And, even if our blessed Lady had not been the meritorious cause, or the instrument of the sanctity of her spouse, she was, at least, the immediate end to which that sanctity referred. The virtues and graces which the Lord communicated to His servant Joseph, were conferred to render him more worthy of her whom he had chosen to be His Mother. It is by this rule, and by the esteem and love which this adorable Lord bore to His most pure Mother, that the sanctity of St. Joseph is to be measured. Doubtless, if there had been found in the world another man more perfect and more excellent, His Majesty would have made him the spouse of His own Mother; and since He conferred this dignity upon St. Joseph, it must be granted, without contradiction, that he was the greatest saint of God on earth. As he had been created for such an exalted purpose, it is certain that it was with the design to render him worthy of the august Mary, and to proportion him, by her powerful right, to these same ends. This proportion was to be found in the holiness, the virtues, the gifts and graces, natural or infused, which he so eminently possessed.

I observe a difference between this

great saint and the other saints, in the gifts of grace which they received. There have been many saints who have been gifted with privileges, all of which were not connected with their own sanctification, but had regard to other objects for the service of the Most High. They were gratuitous gifts, or apart from sanctity. But for those of our holy Patriarch, all the gifts that he received, augmented in him the virtues, and his interior sanctification. The ministry with which they were connected was a consequence of his holiness and his good works, for the more holy he was, the more worthy was he to be the spouse of the august Mary, and the depositary of the treasure and the mystery of heaven. He ought to have been, as he was, in reality, a prodigy of holiness, and, by the special providence of God, he was sanctified at his birth. His nature was in just proportions—his qualities excellent—his complexion perfect, and to these were superadded purity of soul and right inclinations. In him the concupiscence of the flesh found itself enchained, so that no ordinate inclinations could gain the mastery. Although he had not the use of reason at his first sanctification, in which he was justified only from original sin, his Mother was sensible of a new joy in the Holy Spirit, and, without fully penetrating the mystery, she performed great acts of virtue, and believed that her child would become great before God and man.

* St. Joseph, as we have said, was born beautiful and most perfect by nature. He brought to his parents an extraordinary joy, like that at the birth of the little Baptist, although the cause of it was less manifest. The Lord advanced him in the use of reason, and gave it to him in all its perfection, in the third year of his age. He communicated to him, also, an infused science, and a new augmentation of grace and virtue. The holy child began, henceforth, to know God by faith; he knew Him also by natural reason, as the primal cause and author of all creatures, and he comprehended, with a most sublime conception, all that was said of God and His works.

He had, at the same time, the power of elevated contemplation, and he practised the virtues admirably, in proportion to his tender years. The use of reason dates with children usually about or after their seventh year. St. Joseph, in his third year, was already in his reasoning faculty, a perfect man, and in holiness also. He was of a sweet disposition, charitable, kind, and sincere. In all things he gave evidence of holy and angelic inclinations, and, growing in age and in perfection, he attained, by a most holy life, the age at which he espoused the most Blessed Mary.

Then to augment for him the gifts of grace, and to confirm him in these gifts, our blessed Lady aided him by her prayers. She earnestly supplicated the Most High, that if He commanded her

to enter the marriage state, He would sanctify her spouse Joseph, so that he should conform himself to her chaste desires. This august Lady knew that God would be gracious to her prayers, and that He would operate in the soul of the holy Patriarch effects divine and beyond expression. He imbued him with the perfect fulness of all the virtues and all the gifts.

His divine Majesty perfected anew all his faculties. In the virtue of chastity he was more elevated than the highest seraphim, because, inhabiting a body, mortal and earthly, he possessed a purity equal to theirs—they being disengaged from matter. There never even entered into his thoughts any image in the slightest degree impure, or of an animal or sensual nature. By this perfection, and by his angelic integrity, he was prepared to be the spouse of the purest of creatures, and to live in her society. Without this privilege he could not have been capable of arriving at so great and excellent a dignity.

Equally admirable in the other virtues, especially in divine love, he was like one who finds himself at the fountain, and replenishes himself with that living water which conducts to eternal life, or as an inflammable substance near the sphere of the sacred fire, that kindles without resistance. All that can be said in the most exalted praise of this loving spouse, has been already expressed, when it was recorded that

the love of God was the cause of his sickness, and the instrument of his death. The sweet pains of love surpassed those of nature, and these were less active than the first. As the objects of his love, our Lord Jesus Christ and His Mother, were present, and since the saint possessed them in a closer union than any other mortal could approach, it was inevitable that this most faithful and candid heart must exhale itself in the affections of a love so constituted.

Blessed be the author of such great wonders, and blessed be the happiest of men, St. Joseph, in whom they were all most worthily wrought! He merits that all nations should know and bless him, since the Lord has not honored any other among mortals, nor ever manifested so much love for any as for him.

In the course of this history, I have said something of the visions and revelations with which our saint was favored. It is certain that he had many more than we can relate; but we may imagine great things if we consider that he was made acquainted with the mysteries of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His most holy Mother—that he lived so long in close association with them, that he was regarded as the Father of this divine Saviour, and was truly the spouse of our blessed Lady.

Besides all this, I have discovered that the Most High accorded to him, because of his great sanctity, certain privileges in favor of those who choose

him for their intercessor, and who invoke him with devotion. The first is, to obtain the virtue of chastity, and to be withdrawn from the danger of losing it; the second, to receive powerful assistance to be freed from sin and to recover the grace of God; the third, to acquire, by his means, devotion for our blessed Lady, and dispositions to receive her favors; the fourth, to obtain a happy death and a special protection against the demons at that last hour; the fifth, to intimidate the enemies of our salvation by pronouncing the name of St. Joseph; the sixth, to obtain health of body and consolation in affliction; the seventh privilege, to have, by his intercession, successors in families.

God grants all these favors, and many more, to those who ask for them as they ought, in the name of St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin; and I entreat all the faithful children of the Holy Church to have a great devotion for this great saint, and to be persuaded that they will become sensible of the favorable effects of his protection, if they will dispose themselves worthily to merit and to receive them.

Our Lord arose from the sepulchre after His passion and death, invested with beauty and glory, as the prophets had announced. Finding himself with the saints and prophets whom He had

relieved from prison, He promised to all the human race, the universal resurrection of the dead as a consequence of His own glorious resurrection, in the same flesh and in the same body, each in his own; and, as a pledge of this promise, His divine Majesty commanded the souls of many saints to reunite with their bodies, and be raised to an immortal life. These bodies arose, as Saint Matthew records in his Gospel, and among them were those of *St. Anne*, *St. Joseph*, and *St. Joachim*: the others were ancient Fathers and Patriarchs.

Our blessed Lady was careful every year on the festival of her most holy and chaste spouse St. Joseph, to celebrate the espousals, through which the Lord had given him to be her faithful companion, in order to conceal the mysteries of the Incarnation of the Word, and to execute with the highest wisdom the secrets and the works of the redemption of the human race. And as all these works of the Most High were as a deposit in the most prudent heart of Mary, and as she kept this festival as a mark of her high esteem for him, the joy and gratitude with which she celebrated his memory were ineffable.

Her most holy spouse Joseph descended at the festival all radiant with glory, accompanied by innumerable angels, who solemnized it with great joy, chanting new hymns, which were composed by our most blessed Lady, in gratitude for the benefits which her

spouse and herself had received from the hand of the Most High.

After having thus employed several hours, she discoursed a part of the day with her glorious spouse, on the divine attributes and perfections; for, in the absence of the Lord, these were the occupations that best pleased His gentle Mother. A little before taking leave of the holy spouse, she entreated him to pray for her, in the presence of God, *

and to praise Him in her name; she also requested him to offer prayers for the Holy Church and the Apostles. She asked his benediction, and the glorious saint returned to heaven.

GLORY

TO THE DIVINE HEART OF JESUS,

TO MARY IMMACULATE,

AND

TO ST. JOSEPH. *



LIVES OF ST. JOACHIM AND ST. ANNE.



UT little is known in this age of the world concerning the parents of Mary, the Mother of God. It has pleased Almighty God to leave the lives of those illustrious persons shrouded in an impenetrable veil of mystery. Nor is this to be wondered at, when we remember that the same silence, or nearly so, is observed in the Sacred Scriptures with regard to their immaculate daughter, the Mother of the God-man. All of Mary's life that the inspired writers have left on record only serves to indicate rather than describe the miraculous character which distinguished it from all other biographies of the children of men. So it is with the lives of her holy parents, St. Joachim and St. Anne. Little more is found in Scripture concerning them than the mention of their names in the genealogy of our divine Saviour, and the simple record of the eminent dignity to which they were called. And yet how clearly they stand before us, enshrouded as they are in the sublime mystery of their exalted state! How

* clearly do they stand out from all the other sons and daughters of the patriarchs, illumined with the reflected light of the divine maternity that was to form their daughter's crown in time and in eternity!

The posterity of Adam spread abroad in great numbers, and, going out, the just and the unjust multiplied exceedingly; and the saints redoubled their cries and supplications for the coming of the Redeemer, while the wicked, by their crimes, rendered themselves unfit for receiving such a favor. The people of God, and the triumph of the Word who was to become incarnate, had already reached the term decreed by the divine will for the coming of the Messiah; the reign of sin had so enslaved the children of wrath that their wickedness knew no bounds, and hence it was that the fitting time for the remedy had come. The just by increasing their merits had increased the glory of their crowns; the prophets and patriarchs knew, by the extraordinary joy arising from the divine light, that the salvation of their Deliverer and His awful presence were at hand; and redoubling the fervor of their prayers, begged of God that the prophecies, and the promises He

had made to His people, might be accomplished. And they represented before the throne of divine mercy the long and heavy night of sin in which they had lived from the fall of our first parents, and the darkness of idolatry in which all the rest of mankind lay buried.*

When the old serpent had infected all the universe by his poisonous breath, and seemed to enjoy undisputed possession of mortals; when themselves, departing from the natural light of reason, and that which the old law had written on their hearts,† instead of seeking the true Divinity, set up many false ones, without reflecting that the confusion arising from so many gods was contrary to perfection, good order, and tranquility of soul; when by these errors, malice, ignorance, and forgetfulness of the true God had already prevailed, and that mortal languor or lethargy which benumbed the world was so much neglected, that the blind and miserable victims did not even open their mouth to ask for a remedy; when pride sat enthroned, and the number of fools was infinite,‡ and the proud Lucifer would fain drink up the purest waters of the Jordan;§ when God was most offended by all these insults and least honored by men, and when the attribute of His justice had most cause to reduce all created things to their original nothing:

Such was the moment when the Most

* High (according to our ideas) turned His eyes on the attribute of His mercy, and made the law of clemency weigh down the balance of His incomprehensible justice, choosing to be more softened by His own goodness, and by the cries and the faithful service of the just and the prophets of His people, than exasperated by the manifold offences and perverse ways of all sinners. He determined then to give, even in that dreary night of the old law, some assured pledges of the day of grace, sending into the world two radiant lights, to announce the coming dawn of the Sun of Justice, Christ our Saviour. These two lights were St. Joachim and St. Anne, whom the divine will had prepared and created that they might be according to His own heart. St. Joachim had his house, his family, and his parents, at Nazareth, a small town of Galilee. He was always just and holy, guided by a special grace and a heavenly light. He penetrated several mysteries of Holy Writ and predictions of the ancient prophets, and by fervent and unceasing prayer begged of God the fulfilment of his promises; and his faith and his charity penetrated the heavens. He was very humble in himself, pure, and of great candor and simplicity, and holy in all his ways; a grave and serious man, of incomparable meekness and modesty.

St. Anne had her home in Bethlehem. She was a maiden fair, chaste, and humble; and from her childhood, holy, mod-

* Wisdom, xvii. 20.

† Eccles. i. 15.

‡ Rom i. 20.

§ Job, xi. 18.

est, and endowed with every virtue. She was also favored with frequent inspirations from on high; she was ever occupied in the contemplation of things divine, without neglecting her household affairs, in which she was most assiduous. By these holy occupations she attained the highest perfection of both the active and contemplative life. She had an infused knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and a profound understanding of their hidden mysteries; she was incomparable in the infused virtues of faith, hope, and charity. Filled with these gifts, she prayed continually for the speedy coming of the Messiah; and her prayers were so agreeable to the Lord, that, like the spouse in the Cantic, she merited the response of having wounded His heart,* and hastened that happy time; for without doubt, the merits of St. Anne contributed no little to anticipate the advent of the Word, holding, as she did, the highest place among the saints of the Old Testament.

This strong woman also prayed fervently that the Most High would vouchsafe to give her in marriage a spouse who would assist her to keep the divine law and become more perfect in the observance of its precepts. While St. Anne was thus supplicating the Lord, His divine providence decreed that St. Joachim prayed in like manner, to the end that both petitions might be pre-

* sented together before the tribunal of the Holy Trinity, where they were heard and accepted. It was forthwith appointed by a divine ordinance, that Joachim and Anne should be united in marriage, and become the parents of her who was to be the Mother of the Incarnate God. For the execution of this decree the holy archangel Gabriel was sent to make it known to each. He appeared in corporal form to St. Anne when she was in fervent prayer, petitioning for the coming of the world's Redeemer, the Salvation of mankind. She saw this celestial prince so radiant in glory and in beauty that she was troubled with a holy fear, accompanied, however, by an interior joy which his presence caused her by reason of the lights which he communicated to her soul. The saint prostrated herself with profound humility to honor the ambassador of heaven; but he prevented her from so humbling herself, and encouraged her as one who was to be the ark of the true manna, the thrice-blessed Mary, Mother of the Eternal Word; for the Lord had revealed that hidden mystery to the holy archangel, when he sent Him on this embassy; although the other angels of heaven did not yet penetrate it, because this revelation or illumination was made immediately by the Lord himself to the archangel Gabriel only, and neither did the archangel reveal it then to St. Anne; but having demanded her attention, he said to her: "Handmaid of the Lord,

* Cantic of Canticles, iv. 9.

may the Most High bless you and be your salvation. His divine Majesty hath heard your prayers, it is His will that you should persevere in asking the coming of the Redeemer, and He decrees that you should receive Joachim for your spouse; he is a just man, and hath found favor before God, and you may go on with him in the observance of His divine law and His holy service. Continue your prayers and supplications, and have no other care, for the same Lord will decree the accomplishment of your desire. Walk in the narrow way of justice, raise your heart and mind to the things of heaven, pray always for the coming of the Messiah, and rejoice in the Lord, who is thy salvation." Thereupon, the angel disappeared, having left St. Anne much inward light for the penetration of various mysteries of the Sacred Scriptures, filled her soul with consolation, and renewed the fervor of her spirit.

The archangel neither appeared nor spoke to St. Joachim in corporal form as he did to St. Anne; but the man of God heard himself thus addressed in a dream: "Joachim, blessed be thou among men; persevere in thy desires, and practise justice and perfection. It is the will of God that thou receive Anne for thy spouse, for the Almighty hath filled her soul with benedictions. Have care of her, and regard her as a precious gift from His bountiful hand, and thank His divine Majesty for hav-

ing confided her to thee." In virtue of this divine embassy, Joachim demanded the most chaste Anne for a wife, and the marriage was celebrated, in accordance with the will of God, but yet without either party disclosing their secret to the other, until some years had passed, as will be seen in its own place. The holy spouses dwelt at Nazareth, and there walked in the ways of God. They rendered themselves pleasing to the Most High, and were irreproachable in His sight, because of the plenitude of grace that made all their works perfect. They, every year, divided their revenue into three parts. The first they offered in the Temple of Jerusalem, for the worship of the Lord; the second they distributed to the poor, reserving the third for the proper maintenance of their family. God increased their temporal goods, because they employed them with much charity and liberality.

Peace was inviolable between them; they lived in perfect conformity one with the other, without noise or disturbance of any kind. The most humble Anne was submissive in all things to the will of Joachim; and the man of God was ever eager to anticipate the wishes of St. Anne, nor was it in vain that he trusted himself entirely to her guidance.* In such perfect charity did they live, that all their life long they had but one and the same will. Being united in the name of the Lord,† His

* Prov. xxi. 11.

† Matt. xviii. 20.

holy fear never abandoned them: St. Joachim never failing to obey the command of the angel to honor and cherish his wife.

The Lord prevented the venerable St. Anne with blessings of sweetness,* communicating to her the most sublime gifts of grace and of infused science, to prepare her for the great happiness she was to enjoy, in being the mother of her who was to bring forth that same Lord. And as the works of the Most High are perfect and complete, He, consequently, made her the worthy mother of the most perfect of creatures, who was to be inferior to God alone in sanctity, and superior to all pure creatures.

These holy spouses passed twenty years without having a child, which at that time, and among that people, was considered a great shame; thence it happened that they were often assailed by the taunts and reproaches of their neighbors; for it was thought that those who had no children had no part in the coming of the expected Messiah. But the Most High chose to afflict them in this way in order to dispose them by so great a humiliation for the extraordinary grace he meant to bestow upon them, and gave them the patience necessary to conform implicitly to His divine will to the end, that they might sow in tears and in prayers the blessed fruit they were one day to reap.† They

* begged it from the depths of their hearts, agreeably to the express command of Heaven; and they made a particular vow to the Lord, that, if He gave them a child, they would offer it in the Temple, and consecrate it to His service as the fruit of His benediction.

This vow was made by the particular inspiration of the Holy Ghost, who ordained it so that she who was to serve as a dwelling for the only Son of the Father, should be offered, and as it were, made over by her own parents, to the same Lord before she received being. For if they had not bound themselves by a special vow to offer her in the Temple before they had yet known her, they would afterwards have suffered inexpressible pain in separating from a child so sweet and so lovely, and would have offered her perhaps with reluctance, because of the great love they bore to her. By this offering, the Lord not only satisfied, according to our ideas, that species of jealousy which He already had, that none other but He should have any claim on His blessed Mother; but His love was also in some sort compensated for the delay in His coming.

Having persevered for a whole year in these earnest supplications, according to the order they had received from the Lord, it came to pass that St. Joachim went to the Temple of Jerusalem by a divine inspiration and an express command, there to offer prayers and sacri

* Psalm xx. 4.

† Psalm cxxv. 5.

fices for the coming of the Messiah, and to obtain the desired fruit. Being come with others from his own neighborhood, to offer, in presence of the high-priest, the customary gifts, a priest called Issachar sharply rebuked the venerable old man for offering his gifts with the others, being barren. Among other things, he told him: "Joachim, why dost thou present thyself to offer sacrifice, being a useless man? Separate thyself from the others, and go thy way hence; anger not the Lord by thy offerings and thy sacrifices, for they are not pleasing in his eyes." The holy old man, confused and ashamed, humbly and lovingly besought the Lord, saying: "My sovereign Lord and my eternal God, Thy command and Thy will brought me to the Temple; he who holds Thy place therein hath despised me; my sins have merited this affront; I receive it then for Thy sake; despise not, O Lord, the work of Thy hands."* Thereupon the afflicted Joachim going forth from the Temple (to outward appearance calm and tranquil), went to a country house which he had; and for some days, which he passed in solitude, addressed his sighs to the Lord, and prayed to Him as follows:

"God of eternal majesty, from whom is all being, and the entire reparation of the human race, prostrate in Thy divine presence, I beseech Thine infinite goodness to look with pity on the afflic-

* tion of my soul, and hear my prayers and those of Thy servant Anne. Thine eyes penetrate all our wishes; but if I deserve not to be heard, reject not my humble spouse, Lord God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; turn not away Thy clemency from us, and permit not, since Thou art Father, that I be numbered with the reprobate and the outcast in my offerings, as being useless, because Thou givest me no progeny. Remember, O Lord, the sacrifices and oblations of Thy servants and Thy prophets the fathers of my race;† and be mindful of those works of theirs which found favor in Thy sight. And since Thou commandest me, Lord, to supplicate Thee with confidence, as the almighty and all-bountiful God, grant me what according to Thy good pleasure I desire; for in beseeching Thee I obey Thy holy will, in that Thou hast promised to hear my prayer. But if my sins impede Thy mercy, remove from me whatever is displeasing to Thee. Mighty art thou, O Lord God of Israel, and canst do whatsoever Thou wilt.‡ Hear my prayers, poor and miserable as I am, for Thou art infinite and wont to have compassion on the humble. Where shall I find a refuge, if not in Thee, who art the King of kings, the Lord of lords, and the great Omnipotent! Thou hast loaded Thy children and Thy servants with blessings in their generations, and Thou ledest me to

* Psalm, cxxxvii. 8.

† Deut. ix. 27.

‡ Esth. xiii. 9.

desire and to hope from Thy bounty that which Thou hast done for my brethren. If it be Thy gracious will to grant my petition, I will offer in Thy holy Temple, and consecrate to Thy service, the fruit of succession that I may receive from Thy bountiful hand. I give up my heart and soul to Thy divine will, and I have always desired to turn mine eyes away from vanity. Do with me whatsoever Thou wilt, and comfort our souls, O Lord, by the fulfilment of our hope. From the throne of Thy Majesty regard this miserable dust, and deign to raise it up, that it may adore and glorify Thee, and may Thy holy will, not mine, be done in all things."

Thus did Joachim pray in his solitude. Meanwhile the holy ambassador declared to St. Anne that it would be pleasing to the divine Majesty for her to ask a succession of children with that pious intention and that fervent desire to obtain it. And the holy lady, finding that it was the will of God, and of Joachim her husband, prostrated herself before God in humble submission and confidence, and prayed in this manner: "Most high Majesty, Lord, creator and preserver of all things, whom my soul honors and adores as the true God, infinite, holy, and bountiful, I will speak and make manifest in Thy royal presence my necessity and my affliction, although I am but dust and ashes.* Lord God eternal, make us worthy of Thy

* benediction, giving us a pure and holy offspring whom we may present in Thy Temple. Remember, Lord, that Thy servant Anna, mother of Samuel, was barren, yet, through Thine infinite bounty she received the fruition of her desires.† I feel an inward motion which incites me to ask a like favor at Thy hands. Hear then, most sweet Lord, mine humble prayer, being mindful of the service, the oblations, and the sacrifices of my fathers, and the favors wrought in and for them by the might of Thy omnipotent arm. I would present Thee, O Lord, with an oblation that would be pleasing in Thy sight; but the best I can offer Thee is my soul, my powers, my senses, and the being Thou hast given me. And if, vouchsafing to regard me from Thy eternal throne, Thou givest me a child, I consecrate it to Thy service from the first moment of its existence. Cast Thine eyes, O Lord God of Israel, on this vile and poor creature, comfort Thy servant, Joachim, hear our humble supplication, and be Thy holy will in all things accomplished."

These were the prayers offered up by St. Joachim and St. Anne, but it is not possible for me to describe the exalted idea which I have of the sanctity of these blessed parents; neither is it necessary, for what I have said will give some conception of it. If we would rightly estimate the perfect holiness of those great

* Genesis, xviii. 27.

† 1 Kings, i.

saints, we must consider the high destiny and the sublime ministry for which God designed them, who were to be the immediate progenitors of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the parents of His most holy Mother.

The prayers of St. Joachim and St. Anne reached the throne of the Most Blessed Trinity, where, being heard and accepted, the divine will was manifested to the holy angels, and these celestial spirits having learned the decree of the Most High, the archangel Gabriel, adoring and honoring the divine Majesty after the manner of those pure and spiritual substances, bowed down before the throne of the Most Holy Trinity, whence came forth a voice intelligible to him, and it said: "Gabriel, illuminate, vivify, and console Joachim and Anne, our servants, and tell them that their prayers have reached our presence, and our clemency hath heard them. Promise them that they shall receive a fruit of benediction by favor of our right hand, and that Anne shall conceive and bring forth a daughter, to whom we give the name of MARY."

Several mysteries and secrets which belonged to this embassy were revealed to the archangel St. Gabriel, receiving the commands of the Most High, pursuant to which he descended from the empyrean sky to perform his mission. He appeared to St. Joachim while the latter was at prayer, and told him, that his prayers and his alms and sacrifices hav-

ing found favor with God, his wife should conceive and bring forth a child of benediction, whose name was to be MARY; that she was to be from her infancy consecrated to God in His holy Temple. "Thou wilt go up to Jerusalem," said the heavenly messenger, "and in testimony of the truth of these good tidings that I now bring to thee, thou wilt meet thy sister Anne at the Golden Gate, as she will go to the Temple for a purpose similar to thine."

St. Anne was in like manner apprised by the archangel of the great favor that was to be bestowed upon her. Filled with a holy joy, she went by divine inspiration to the Temple to return thanks, and at the Golden Gate she met her holy spouse, St. Joachim, as the angel had foretold. They both returned thanks to the Author of all grace, and offered gifts and particular sacrifices with that intention. They then returned to their home full of heavenly consolation, discoursing, on the way, of the miraculous favors they had received, and the great things foretold by the angel of the daughter that was to be born to them. It was on that occasion that they revealed one to the other the order they had separately received from the same angel to espouse each other for the greater glory of God. For twenty years they had kept this secret one from the other, and only revealed it when the angel promised them the succession of such a daughter. They afterwards renewed

their offerings in the Temple, whither they went up every year on a certain day, with special offerings, further sanctifying the day by prayer, by alms-deeds, and by thanksgivings.

St. Anne's prudence made her keep the secret, even from St. Joachim, that her daughter was to be the Mother of the Messiah. And the holy father knew nothing more about her all his life, except that she was to be a great and mysterious woman; but the Most High failed not to make the great mystery known to him a few moments before his death.

The divine Wisdom had prepared all things to separate from the corrupt mass of human nature the Mother of all grace. The allotted number of the patriarchs and prophets was already complete, and the mountains raised whereon that mystical City of God was to be placed.* His right hand had prepared the incomparable treasures of His divinity, to portion and endow her. A thousand angels were ready to guard and protect her, and to serve her as their lady and royal mistress. He prepared for her a royal line of ancestors; He gave her parents holy and perfect beyond all the men and women of that age, for had there been any greater saints or more fit to be the parents of her whom He chose for his own Mother, there is no doubt but the divine Majesty would have chosen them.

* Psalm, lxxxvi. 2.

He disposed them for their office by numberless graces and blessings, enriched them with all virtues, and illumined their minds by divine wisdom and the various gifts of the Holy Ghost. They having been apprised of the admirable daughter who was to be given them, the work of the first conception, which was that of the pure body of Mary, was executed. The age, of her parents, when they were married, was, that of St. Joachim forty-six, and that of St. Anne twenty-four. Twenty years had passed since their marriage without their having any children, so that the mother was forty-four at the time of her daughter's conception, and the father sixty-six. The conception was according to the common order, but owing to St. Anne's sterility, might be considered miraculous, being also free from every species of imperfection.

At the moment when the soul was infused into the body of our divine Lady, it was so appointed that St. Anne, made suddenly sensible of the presence of the Holy Ghost, was moved with such an interior joy, that she fell into a sublime ecstacy, during which she received a knowledge of the highest mysteries, and praised the Lord by new canticles of joy. These blessed effects remained all her lifetime, but they were greater during the nine months of her holy pregnancy, when she bore in her womb the treasure of heaven.

The auspicious day at length arrived

when St. Anne was to rejoice the world with the birth of her who was sanctified and consecrated to be the Mother of God. This delivery took place on the eighth day of September, the nine months after the conception of the most holy soul of our queen and mistress having been accomplished. She was born pure, fair, and full of grace, clearly indicating her entire exemption from the law of sin. St. Anne received her divinely-endowed daughter into her arms, and offered her to the Lord with tears of joy and fervent thanksgivings. And the angels of our Lady's guard, with myriads of others, adored their queen, and paid their homage to her as she lay in her mother's arms, and chanted a celestial hymn, which St. Anne heard in part. At the same moment the archangel Gabriel was sent by the Most High to announce the glad tidings to the holy fathers in Limbo.

It was a precept of the Law in the twelfth chapter of Leviticus, that if a woman brought forth a daughter, she was considered unclean for two weeks, and remained sixty-six days in a state of purification (but only thirty-three if she had given birth to a male child); which having accomplished, she was to offer as a holocaust, at the door of the tabernacle, a yearling lamb for males or females, and a pigeon or a dove for sin, consigning the same to the priest, that he might offer it to the Lord and pray for her; by which offering she was purified. The delivery of the blessed Anne was as

privileged as became the dignity of her divine daughter, whose purity was reflected on her mother. Hence she had no need of conforming to the law of purification, yet she obeyed it to the letter.

The sixty-six days of the purification being passed, St. Anne went to the Temple inflamed with divine ardor, and bearing her beloved daughter in her arms; she presented her at the door of the tabernacle with the offering which the Law required, being accompanied by an innumerable multitude of angels, and had some discourse with the high-priest, the venerable Simeon, who, being always most assiduous in the Temple, enjoyed the singular privilege of receiving the Blessed Mary as often as she was presented there; although the holy pontiff did not always perceive the dignity of that divine queen, still he felt inwardly convinced that the child was to be great before God.

St. Anne offered the lamb and the dove, with some other gifts, with great humility, beseeching the high-priest to pray for her and for her daughter. His divine Majesty had nothing to forgive either mother or daughter, in whom grace was so abundant; but He rather saw new merits in their profound humility, since, being both holy, they believed themselves sinners, and as such presented themselves before Him. And thus the holy St. Anne entered the Temple with her daughter in her arms, and offered her to the Most High

with tears of joy and tenderness, being the only one in all the world that knew the value of the treasure deposited in her care.

The three years that the Blessed Mary was to remain with her holy parents having elapsed, St. Anne was admonished in a vision that the time appointed for her being taken to the Temple was now at hand, and that Joachim and she were to conduct her thither. Tender mother as she was, this news filled her pure soul with joyful emotion, and she thanked God with all the fervor of her heart.

On the day appointed, the holy parents, Joachim and Anne, accompanied by some of their relatives, departed from Nazareth, bearing with them the true ark of the covenant, the most pure Mary, to consecrate her in the holy Temple of Jerusalem. They arrived at the Temple, and going in, St. Anne and St. Joachim took their daughter and mistress by the hand, and after praying, all three, with great fervor and devotion, the pious parents presented their beloved daughter, who also made an offering of herself at the same time. Before ascending the steps which conducted to the apartment where the royal daughters of Juda dwelt in the shadow of the altar, Mary asked permission to take leave of her parents; which having obtained, she turned to St. Joachim and St. Anne, and kneeling down asked their blessing, kissing their hands and

* requesting the favor of their prayers. The two saints blessed her with many tears, and she walked all alone up the steps without turning her head or giving any further indication of sorrow on parting from her parents.

St. Joachim and St. Anne returned to Nazareth much poorer than they came, and penetrated with sorrow for being deprived of their treasure; but the Lord indemnified them for her absence by many signal consolations.

Little more is known with certainty concerning the illustrious parents of our blessed Lady. Some writers affirm that they were still in the flesh at the time of her betrothal to St. Joseph, but others of as great celebrity and as great authority in the Church hold the contrary opinion. Those who maintain that the blessed Joachim and Anne lived till after the birth of the Messiah, base their opinion on the fact that the Church, according to St. Bernard, celebrated the feast of no saint (with the single exception of the Machabees) who had departed this life before the commencement of the Christian Era. St. Joachim died on the 9th of March, it is generally supposed, and St. Anne on the 26th of July. But even these dates are by no means certain.

It so happened, that, by the mysterious decrees of God, the feast of the blessed St. Anne was celebrated in the Church many years before that of St. Joachim her holy spouse. In fact, the

primitive Christians cherished a special devotion to the mother of Mary, which devotion has ever since been perpetuated and greatly encouraged among the children of the Church who love and honor her august daughter. Various cities and countries glory in possessing portions of her sacred body. The ring with which St. Joachim espoused her is preserved in a church in the Eternal City dedicated to the blessed mother of Mary. Innumerable miracles have been wrought by the intercession of St. Anne in every part of Christendom, and shrines and pilgrimages established in her honor both in Eastern and Western countries. In all the Christianized countries of America, the name of St. Anne is held in honor, not by Catholics alone, but even by some sects of Protestants. The Episcopalians have churches bearing her name in many of

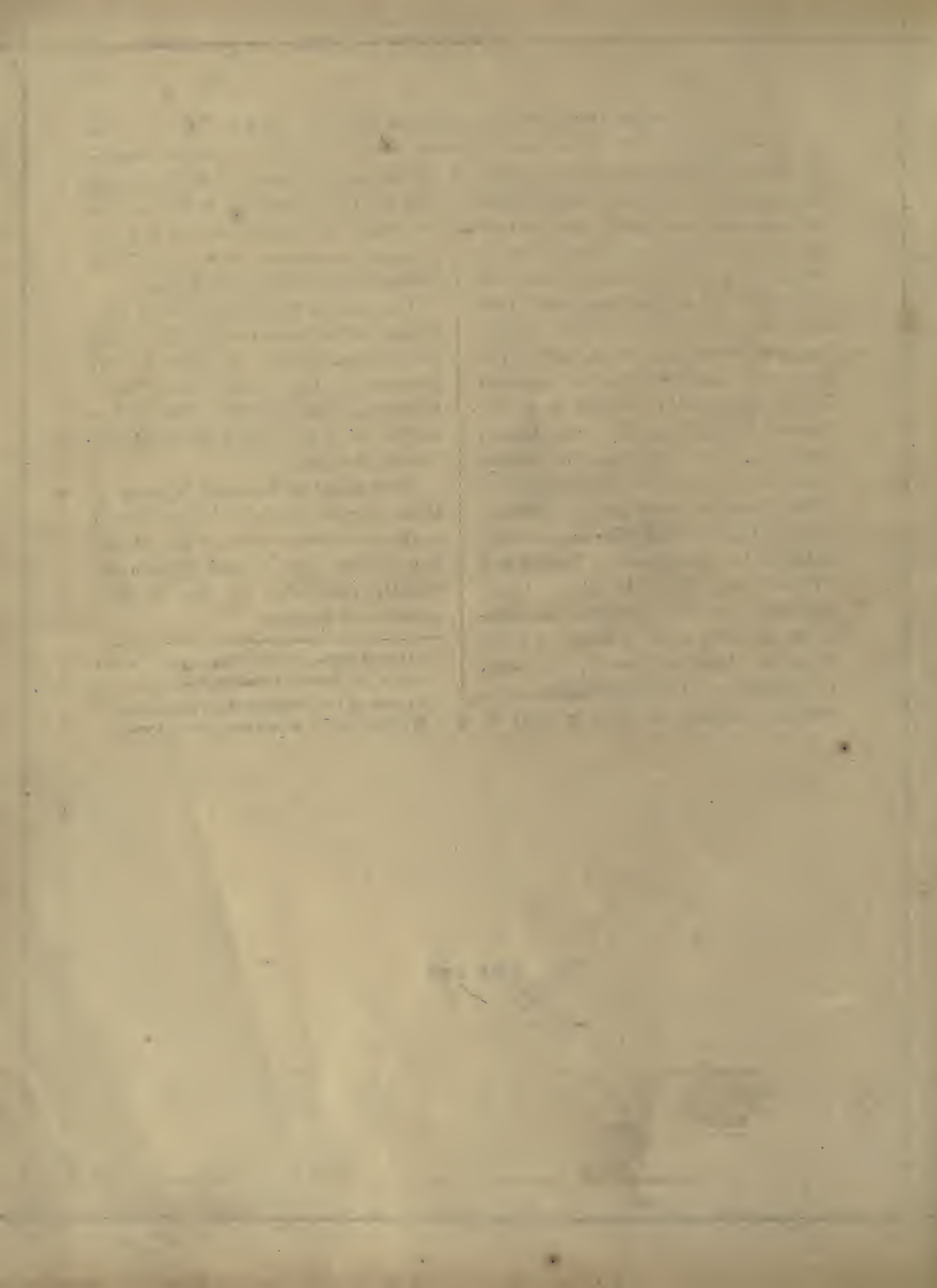
* the principal cities of British America and the United States. In Lower Canada there are several shrines and pilgrimages consecrated to St. Anne,* and societies established in her honor.

The feast of St. Joachim is now celebrated on the Sunday within the Octave of the Assumption. His relics are still preserved in the Church, most of them in various cities of Italy. His head is said to be in the church of the Machabees at Cologne.

Much might be here said in praise of these glorious saints, so highly favored in the mysterious decrees of Providence, but what we have related of them sufficiently establishes the fact of their pre-eminent holiness.

* One of these, on the Ottawa river, is the "Anne's" of Moore's *Canadian Boat Song*:

"As soon as the woods on shore grow dim,
We'll sing at *St. Anne's* our parting hymn."





RETURN
TO →

CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT
202 Main Library

642-3403

LOAN PERIOD 1

HOME USE

2

3

4

5

6

ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS

1-month loans may be renewed by calling 642-3405

6-month loans may be recharged by bringing books to Circulation Desk

Renewals and recharges may be made 4 days prior to due date

DUE AS STAMPED BELOW

REC. CIR.

FEB 4

77

NOV 20 2005

FORM NO. DD 6, 40m, 6'76

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY
BERKELEY, CA 94720

©1

