A CROWN FOR OUR QUEEN

by

Rev. Abram J. Ryan

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A CROWN

— FOR —

OUR QUEEN

Ave Maria—gratia plena
Dominus tecum,—
Benedicta tu in mulieribus
Et benedictus fructus ventris tui Jesus.

By REV. ABRAM J. RYAN.

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J.M.J.

TO THE CHILDREN OF MARY,
of
THE CATHEDRAL
of
THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION,
MOBILE, ALABAMA,
IN MEMORY
Of happy Years of their Spiritual Direction,
IN GRATITUDE
For their many kindnesses, known and unknown,
AND AS A PUBLIC TESTIMONY
To the Virtues
Which made their Sodality
The Fairest Flower
Of one of the most edifying Congregations in the South,
THIS BOOK
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
By its Author,
ABRAM J. RYAN.

BILOXI, MISS., Ascension Thursday, 1882.

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PREFACE.

This book was intended as a "Month of Mary." It would have been published a few months ago had it not been for the illness of the author. However, better late than never, and by the clients of Mary it may be made to suit any month in the year.

At the suggestion of a child of Mary, its title is "A Crown for Our Queen," in which the author has tried to intertwine his own humble thoughts and the remembered ideas of others with the holy truths of faith regarding Mary's place in the plans of God. Would that the crown were worthier of our Queen!

The book substantially contains, in enlarged form, a a series of instructions given every Sunday evening, for several years, to the Children of Mary, of the Cathedral of Mobile, Alabama. Indeed, it belongs to them as much as it does to the author. They inspired it—he only wrote it.

The book closes with some simple little legends published in French, with the approbation of the Bishop of Limoges, and kindly translated by a Child of Mary. The book is dogmatic as well as devotional, for what is devotion but the blooming and blossoming and fruitage of dogma? If it leads a single soul, through Mary, to Jesus, the author will feel that his humble work has God's blessing. He asks for nothing more.

In a work on the Grandeurs of Mary written by

Father D'Argentan, a Capuchin monk of the last century, the author of this book found and used many beautiful thoughts. But if there be a single sentence in this work which is not in perfect accord with Faith and Faith's authoritative expressions—that sentence is here and in advance condemned and repudiated by the author.

A. J. RYAN.

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INTRODUCTION.

SHALL we say it? Why not? We might as well, and we must, for it is an alarming fact which, though seen of all, seems to alarm but a few, and these few the watchers on the towers of truth. The humble spirit of Christian faith is on the wane everywhere around us, while the proud spirit of human reason is waxing strong with a giant's strength, gaining the force which faith seems to be losing. Real strength? Not at all. 'Tis only a seeming strength, the effect of falsehood's stimulants, for falsehood is a stimulant, while truth is food. That strength will not last, but the harm it is doing may and will. A servant may don the royal robes of his master, but he is not therefore king.

So falsehood, or if you will, knowledge without faith (they often look and speak alike, as if they were akin), may wear a kingly mantle and crown, and wield a sceptre of authority, and command the fealty which is the right of faith alone; and many may kneel down before the usurper's throne with the tender of their homage; yet none the less, whether they know it or not, are they committing an act of high treason against the majesty of truth, the while they are violating the spiritual laws of their being and betraying the sacred honor of their own reason; for the weakening of faith is a sign of the weakening of reason.

Revelation accepted by faith is the coronation of reason. Revelation rejected for mere human knowledge is reason's enslavement.

Our age possesses (and sooth to say in boastfulness) the gift of pens and of tongues, and of words and of notions, and of guesses and of theories, but it does not possess the gift of true thought. By our age, we mean the children of this generation, "who are wiser in their day than the children of light." It is a talking and not a thinking generation. It has a superficial smartness in its own sphere—intelligent, perhaps, as the word goes, but not intellectual. It chatters—that, and nothing more. To the supernatural it says, "No, begone, I deny and reject you." A few men stand apart from the chatterers who teach them the glory of saying No to anything beyond the limits of their senses and the reach of their comprehension.

These are the philosophers. They are hailed as the liberators of the human mind, and when they die they are buried in Westminsters. They are crowned with laurel, and not with thorns, for their theories. They have no Calvary nor Cross; and it so happens, when they die their graves do not open nor do they rise again. The philosophers are quite different from Christ. They teach, and what? The novel and the uncertain. The uncertain takes with the thoughtless. There is a strange fascination about it. It is a new face with a vague beauty. It charms—so does the serpent.

To the dear old familiar features of truth men grow indifferent. With their knowledge they will "become like God." 'Tis the old temptation of Eden over again. God's word they reject for the serpent's word; divine

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faith for human knowledge, so called. 'Tis a new beauty. It wins recognition, loyalty, love. The olden beauty, truth, must retire. She wears the veil of faith. Knowledge, less modest, wears no veil at all. She has a terribly earthly face, fit for sensuous but not for spiritual eyes. Has faith, veiled truth, lost a single one of her charms? Not at all. She cannot. Her's is the half-seen beauty of God. She is the same as ever she was, with a beauty not of earth.

There is something wrong and wanting elsewhere. Where? In the eyes of men's souls. Why? They are growing blind. Why, again? The planets of false knowledge are crossing the disk of the sun of truth. 'Tis dim up there and it is dark down here. So they grope, and creep and crawl, not man-like nor reason-like, and they no longer walk straight on and upright, with the light of eternity on their lifted brow, for to them the eclipse of truth is total—and they call darkness light. They desire us (how kind and considerate they are!) to give up our faith's certainties for their guesses. They wish us to abandon our truths as the vain dreams of an effete superstition, and to accept their fickle dreams as truths undoubted; and many do. They abandon the truths of revelation, fling away their faith, and they become slaves or dupes of human credulity. They give up Christ for the philosophers. There is no room for Christ in their syllogisms, and so they thrust Him away. Well, there was no room for Him, of old, in Bethlehem. But somehow His stable still remains with the Gloria in Excelsis above it. Thitherward, in ceaseless pilgrimage, go the children of light to pray and to adore. Philosophers! that stable is too much for you. It stands;—your syllogisms pass away.

Nature's and Supernature's God was made visible to the world, in human nature, in that stable. The Supernature you deny. At its wonders you superciliously smile. Yourselves mysteries to your own very selves, you scoff at mysteries. Nature is your temple, you the self-ordained priests. Well, priests! listen. Are there not tabernacles in nature's temple closed against you? You come to the gates, but they are locked and you have not the key. Has not nature's temple a Holy of Holies, where dwell the mysterious powers of creation? And you cannot enter there. Facts and phenomena broider the mysterious veil which hangs before it. The broidery you may show, but you cannot lift the veil.

Your motto is: "We reason and we know." But do you reason right? Where is the reason lying back of your first reasoning? Only in your own brain? Then you only make a rope of sand. And how much do you know? Are not the primary elements in nature beyond the reach of your chemistry? And if this be true, as it is, of mere material nature, then what of human nature?

One of your school writes a work on the "Descent of Man." Unwittingly he uses the proper word, "descent." Yes, we (and we know and feel it) descend from something, some one higher, from God Himself. And the philosopher substitutes for the glorious truth of man's descent from God, his theory of man's ascent from heaven knows where, in the world that lies beneath us. Error is forced to be logical in order to be self-consistent. Put aside God's creative act, and the truth and high honor of it, and necessarily the honor of man's origin suffers detriment. God lost, in false logic, all is lost in reason's life, not only God's but man's honor.

Now God visibly comes before us in human form and

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nature in the Christ—the man—the God, through real birth from a real human mother—Mary. His mother denied, Christ is denied; that is the real, true Christ of God's Scriptures and Man's history. He denied, God is denied. What then? Chaos, darkness, and this life is a horror. Not so cry out the children of light and faith and hope. Christ is the key of every mystery. As man, he touched every human question, and as God he gave to each question full, absolute, infinite answer. Beside Him, as man, stands His mother; beside Him, as God, stands the Eternal Father; beside Him, as Man-God, stand Mary and the Father. Christ is not a philosopher, He is eternal wisdom. He is not a scientist, but He is a Saviour. He is not a mere reasoner, He is a Redeemer, and being that, He is the real reason of all things; and He is the fact which touches with light every fact of human history. And not only that, He is the Truth, away and apart from which all else is false. And not only that, He is the Life, outside of which stretches the land of death.

Philosophers! you give us dead words. The canker worm of hopelessness is within all. The human race is against you. It must believe and hope and love something, and some one above, beyond this earth—God. He stands revealed in Jesus Christ, and Him born of a woman of the race. Jesus Christ is the living answer to all the mysteries of man's nature and man's history.

Scientists need Christ, the Word, the Wisdom, the Alpha and Omega, the Principle and the End, to give true light that enlightens minds to every question connected with nature—else science is a darkness. But what of Christians? Jesus Christ and Mary, His mother, are the living answers to all the questions that touch

human nature in its spiritual history; that is, they begin the answer asked and needed by faith and hope and love, which the Church continues to give forever, to all generations.

Any other answer is false. Christ alone, His mother apart, is not the full answer. He and she, in the Christian order, stand first, and together. After them come the apostles, evangelists, the Church, with all her wondrous prerogatives. One by one apostles and evangelists pass away, leaving successors. Jesus and Mary have no successors. The Church remains forever, and speaks to the world each day two names, first names, Jesus and Mary, and they will be the last names of human history. They give revelation and redemption their full meaning. Revelation's truths are announced to us, and the merits of redemption are applied to us by the Church of Jesus Christ—His Church and no other.

When reason meets the Church and hears her voice she has but one of four acts to make:

First—I believe all truth on the word of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, authoritatively announced by the Church of Christ, which, because His Church, can never err nor lead to error. This act honors reason by honoring God, and honors Christ by honoring His Church with absolute obedience. It is the Catholic act with an infinite trust and courage in it.

Second—"I deny all." It is the dark, defiant act of the infidel. It is the absolute *No* hurled at revelation. It degrades reason by denying Christ. It is worse than satanic, for the demons believe all and tremble. In hell there are no infidel demons. Fallen angels are innocent of the guilt of infidelity to doctrine. The crime and its

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dishonor are found only among fallen images of God on earth.

Third—"I doubt." It is the act of the sceptic, halting, hesitating in the presence of the incomprehensible truth, and is an act of craven cowardice.

Fourth—"I protest." It is an act of reason, consciously or unconsciously compromising, where compromise is secret or overt treason to truth. It is an act of weakness unworthy of reason. The act of the weak compromise "I protest," leads to the act of the coward "I doubt," and the act of the coward leads straight into the darkness of the infidels, "I deny all."

"I believe all that the Church teaches," the Roman Catholic act, is the only act of faith which reason can make without debasement, which the free-will can proclaim, crowning itself thereby with the unspeakable honor of union with God's will, and which the heart can approve, for the peace and the hope and the glory of it. It is the only act of faith commensurate with all revelation, the only act worthy of man and worthy of God, the only act that reaches round all truth, the only act that touches that throne in the heavens, where faith will melt into vision. It is the everlasting act of the Holy Church in which each of her countless children has personal share. It ascends to heaven ceaselessly in a thousand thousand beautiful forms. It goes up from the hearts of the innumerable children of Christ's faithful family. Christ's family? Yes. We are His younger brothers and sisters by the adoption of grace. In that family, His mother by nature is ours by grace, and, therefore, next to Him, she holds and must forever hold highest place.

We have not a motherless Christ, neither have we a

motherless Church. What she was to Him she is to His Church, and to each one a mother by adoption. He gave her to us and us to her on Calvary, and He has never taken her away from us, for He never repents of His gifts.

Hence, in our Holy Church she is the Queen-mother. She has the heart of the mother and she wears the crown of the queen. In other churches she is nothing but a name. She was more than a name to Christ. In our Church she is herself, her very self, with all her powers and privileges. In other churches even her name is seldom mentioned, and then sometimes in tones that are cold and indifferent. In the Church of her Son, her name is one of power, sweetness, hope, tenderness, held in honor next to Christ's own adorable name; the very sound of the name of Mary forever thrills the hearts of the children of the Church with the sweetest truth in all creation—God has a mother. Out of that little sentence, as out of a perennial fountain, flows forever the stream of the precious blood of man's redemption; and out of that sentence floats murmured forever, in every crimson ripple of the saving stream, the beautiful truth —God's mother is ours.

The book here presented to those who may please to read its pages, is an humble attempt to set before their minds these two truths and their necessary mutual relations. It is an age of novels and novel readers. What novel can compare in fascinating interest with the New Testament? What romance is like the romance of God's eternal love revealed in Jesus, born of Mary? What drama like the drama of our redemption consummated on Calvary with Christ dying on His cross and His mother standing beneath it? What poetry so sweet,

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sublime, pathetic and glorious as the poetry of Bethleham, Nazareth, Calvary, the riven Grave and Mount Olivet?

But alas! the divine scriptures yield before mere human writings. God's words, Christ's history, have lost their charm and interest. They are too serious for a thoughtless generation. Tales of human loves have taken the place of the wonderous story of God's eternal love, all of which manifestly proves the weakening of faith. Outside of the Church, where the beautiful Christ is only half-known, we do not wonder if the human supersedes the divine and the natural takes the precedence of the supernatural. But in Christ's Holy Church, alas, we must wonder if such things be; and such things are. 'Tis sad to say it, and sadder still to know that it is but too true. How many Catholics read the word of God? And yet the Church (though it is falsely denied by her enemies) recommends its perusal, not as necessary, but as useful and edifying. How many Catholics read the lives of the saints, the members of their own spiritual family? The stories of the world's heroes attract; the lives of the heroes of grace are too dry and uninteresting. Ah! the priests know this encroachment of this world's unfaith in the realms of Christ's kingdom. They contend against it with all the might of their zeal, sometimes successfully, but often, alas, with little or no success. And is it to be wondered at if children inherit the uncatholic tastes of their Catholic parents?

Dime novels, periodicals of marked immorality, weekly newspapers, with stories wherein crime is justified, romances where passion is apotheosized, poetries which are pagan in conception and sentiment, are not these,

and such like works, found and read in Catholic homes all over the land? Alas, and yes. And the consequence? We know some, God knows more.

Books of piety are too seldom found in Catholic hands. The Church advises, entreats, pleads. The loving children and the loyal listen and obey. The Church goes farther, and puts her ban on books with danger in them to faith and morals, and still too many heed not her prohibitions. 'Tis to their own cost and at their own spiritual peril. Now out of the Church and in the Church, our wild, unruly age needs the strong, true Christ, to restrain its lawless will and to enlighten its darkening mind. The age, like Herod, has banished Christ into exile. No wonder it is in the dark when its light is gone. Ah! if the world would only pray "Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee!" Exiled by this world, His mother exiled from human churches, Jesus and Mary—Mary and Jesus, together in our Holy Church, would hear the prayer of this generation, and from its sanctuary would bless this agitated age with the peace of the perfect and beautiful faith.

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The Immaculate Conception.

Fell the snow on the Festival's vigil
  And surpliced the city in white.
I wonder who wove the pure flakelets?
  Ask the Virgin—or God—or the Night.

It fitted the Feast: 'twas a symbol,
  And earth wore the surplice at morn,
As pure as the vale's stainless lily
  For Mary the sinlessly born,

For Mary, conceived in all sinlessness.
  And the sun, thro' the clouds of the East,
With the brightest and fairest of flashes,
  Fringed the Surplice of White for the Feast.

And round the horizon hung cloudlets,
  Pure Stoles to be worn by the Feast;
While the earth and the heavens were waiting
  For the beautiful Mass of the Priest.

I opened my window, half dreaming.
  My soul went away from my eyes,
And my heart began saying "Hail Marys,"
  Somewhere up in the beautiful skies,

Where the shadows of sin never rested;
  And the angels were waiting to hear
The prayer that ascends with "Our Father,"
  And keeps hearts and the heavens so near.

And all the day long,—can you blame me?
  "Hail Mary," "Our Father," I said,
And I think that the Christ and His Mother
  Were glad of the way that I prayed.

And I think that the great, bright Archangel
  Was listening all the day long
For the echo of every "Hail Mary"
  That soared thro' the skies, like a song,—

From the hearts of the true and the faithful,
  In accents of joy or of woe,
Who kissed in their faith and their fervor
  The Festival's Surplice of snow.

I listened, and each passing minute,
  I heard in the lands far away
"Hail Mary," "Our Father," and near me
  I heard all who knelt down to pray

Pray the same as I prayed, and the angel,
  And the same as the Christ of our love—
"Our Father," "Hail Mary," "Our Father"—
  Winging just the same sweet flight above.

Passed the morning, the noon: came the Even,
  The temple of Christ was aflame
With the halo of lights on three altars,
  And one wore his own Mother's name.

Her statue stood there; and around it
  Shone the symbolic stars. Was their gleam
And the flow'rets that fragranced her altar,
  Were they only the dream of a dream?

Or were they sweet signs to my vision
  Of a Truth far beyond mortal ken,
That the Mother had rights in the temple
  Of Him she had given to men.

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Was it wronging her Christ-son, I wonder,
  For the Christian to honor her so?
Ought her statue pass out of His temple?
  Ask the Feast in its Surplice of snow.

Ah, me! had the pure flakelets voices,
  I know what their white lips would say,
And I know that the lights on her altar
  Would pray with me, if they could pray.

Methinks that the flowers that were fading,
  Sweet virgins that die with the Feast
Like martyrs upon her fair altar,
  If they could, they would pray with the Priest,

And would murmur "Our Father, "Hail Mary,"
  Till they drooped on the altar, in death
And be glad in their dying for giving
  To Mary their last sweetest breath.

Passed the day as a poem that passes
  Through the poet's heart's sweetest of strings;
Moved the minutes from Masses to Masses—
  Did I hear a faint sound as of wings.

Rustling over the aisles and the altars?
  Did they go to her altar and pray?
Or was my heart only a-dreaming
  At the close of the Festival-day?

Quiet throngs came into the temple,
  As still as the flowers at her feet,
And wherever they knelt, they were gazing
  Where the statue looked smiling and sweet.

"Our Fathers," "Hail Mary's" were blended
  In a pure and a perfect accord,
And passed by the beautiful Mother
  To fall at the feet of our Lord.

Low-toned from the hearts of a thousand
  "Our Fathers," "Hail Marys" swept on
  To the star-wreathed statue. I wonder
Did they wrong the great name of Her Son,

Her Son and our Saviour—I wonder
  How He heard our "Hail Marys" that night?
Were the words to Him sweet as the music
  They once were, and did we pray right?

Or was it all wrong?—will He punish
  Our lips if we make them the home
Of the words of the great, high Archange
  That won Him to sinners to come?

Ah, me! does He blame my own mother,
  Who taught me a child at her knee,
To say, with "Our Father," "Hail Mary"?
  If 'tis wrong, my Christ! punish but me.

Let my mother, oh, Jesus! be blameless;
  Let me suffer for her if you blame.
Her pure mother's heart knew no better
  When she taught me to love the pure name.

Oh, Christ! of Thy beautiful Mother
  Must I hide her name down in my heart?
But ah! even there you will see it—
  With Thy Mother's name how can I part?

On thy Name all divine have I rested
  In the days when my heart-trials came—
Sweet Christ, like to Thee I am human,
  And I need Mary's pure human name.

Did I hear a voice? or was I dreaming?
  I heard—or I sure seemed to hear—
"Who blames you for loving my Mother
  Is wronging my heart—do not fear.

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"I am human e'en here in my heavens,
What I was I am still all the same,
And I still love my beautiful Mother,—
And thou, Priest of mine do the same.'

I was happy—because I am human—
And Christ in the silences heard
"Our Father," "Hail Mary," "Our Father"
Murmured faithfully word after word.

* * * * * * * *

Swept the beautiful "O Salutaris"
Down the aisles—did the starred statue stir?
Or was my heart only a-dreaming
When it turned from her statue and her?

The door of a white tabernacle
Felt the touch of the hand of the Priest;
Did he waken the Host from its slumbers
To come forth and crown the high Feast?

To come forth so strangely and silent,
And just for a sweet little while,
And then to go back to its prison.
Thro' the stars did the sweet statue smile?

I knew not, but Mary, the Mother,
I think almost envied the Priest,
He was taking her place at the altar,—
Did she dream of the days in the East?

When her hands, and her's only, held Him
Her Child, in His waking and rest,
Who had strayed in a love that seemed wayward
This eve to this shrine in the West.

Did she dream of the straw of the manger
When she gazed on the altar's pure white?
Did she fear for her Son any danger
In the little Host, helpless that night?

No, no! she is trustful as He is;
What a terrible trust in our race!
The Divine has still faith in the Human—
What a story of infinite grace!

"Tantum Ergo," high hymn of the altar,
That came from the heart of a saint,
Swept triumph-toned all through the temple,
Did my ears hear the sound of a plaint?

'Neath the glorious roll of the singing
To the temple had sorrow crept in?
Or was it the moan of a sinner?
Oh! Beautiful Host, wilt thou win

In thy little half-hour's Benediction
The heart of a sinner again?
And, merciful Christ, Thou wilt comfort
The sorrow that brings Thee its pain.

Came a hush, and the Host was uplifted,
And It made just the sign of the Cross
O'er the low bended brows of the people.
Oh, Host of the Holy, thy loss

To the altar and temple and people
Would make this world darkest of night;
And our hearts would grope blindly on through it,
For our love would have lost all its light.

"Laudate," what thrilling of triumph!
Our souls soared to God on each tone,
And the Host went again to its prison,
For our Christ fears to leave us alone.

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Blessed Priest! strange thou art His jailor,
Thy hand holds the beautiful key
That locks in His prison love's Captive,
And keeps Him in fetters for me.

* * * * * * * *

'Twas over—I gazed on the statue,
"Our Father," "Hail Mary," still came,
And to-night Faith and Love cannot help it,
I must still pray the same, still the same.

—*Written at Loyola College on the night of Dec. 8, 1880.*

FIRST DAY.

The Flower of Mary's Predestination.

FIRST PART.

The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before He made anything, from the beginning. I was set up from eternity, and of old, before the earth was made."—*Prov.*, viii.

HOLY MARY'S month, everywhere with graces blessed, and in our sunny land bright with bloom of countless flowers begins to-day. Let us leave the day of earth whose light is shining like a halo of heaven on her altar, just a little while, to pass across all the days of the Mays of the past, and go back to the unbeginning. Not by reason's light, for, indeed, it is too dim and uncertain, and it is too faint to guide us, for it flickers. Not with the feet of reason, for they too often go astray, nor are they strong enough to climb the slopes that rise to the inaccessible heights where dwelleth in glory the infinite God.

We of the Holy Church, by God's sweet grace in sacraments received and from grand doctrines reflected, have another light, better by far—clear, steady, certain, unfailing—divine Faith.

This light, which "enlightens every man who cometh into this world" (though many there are who will not see its shining), cometh down to us from the bosom of God, and knoweth the way back to its home in the heavens. Let it lead us there to-day. And Faith hath

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Blessed Priest! strange thou art His jailor,
Thy hand holds the beautiful key
That locks in His prison love's Captive,
And keeps Him in fetters for me.

* * * * * * * *

'Twas over—I gazed on the statue,
"Our Father," "Hail Mary," still came,
And to-night Faith and Love cannot help it,
I must still pray the same, still the same.

—*Written at Loyola College on the night of Dec. 8, 1880.*

FIRST DAY.

The Flower of Mary's Predestination.

FIRST PART.

The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before He made anything, from the beginning. I was set up from eternity, and of old, before the earth was made."—*Prov.*, viii.

HOLY MARY'S month, everywhere with graces blessed, and in our sunny land bright with bloom of countless flowers begins to-day. Let us leave the day of earth whose light is shining like a halo of heaven on her altar, just a little while, to pass across all the days of the Mays of the past, and go back to the unbeginning. Not by reason's light, for, indeed, it is too dim and uncertain, and it is too faint to guide us, for it flickers. Not with the feet of reason, for they too often go astray, nor are they strong enough to climb the slopes that rise to the inaccessible heights where dwelleth in glory the infinite God.

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wings to soar to the highest, while reason, left to itself, hath only feet to walk the ways of this valley of shadows and tears; and so on the wings of Faith, and by Faith's pure light guided, we will ascend to the eternities and enter, with worship in our hearts, the very Holy of Holies of God's divine Will, where hidden, until revealed in God's determined days, all the great decrees, vocations and predestinations are shrined waiting for their accomplishment in time.

There, in the very temple of the Trinity, we will find to-day the first flower for the Crown of our Queen —Mary's eternal predestination. And just as by the rays which the sun sends down to earth we lift our eyes aloft to seek the central source of light, but in looking we are dazzled, and but dimly see its splendors; so by the light of Faith which comes to us from heaven, we look up to its divine brightness, and we see surely, but only dimly the mysteries shining in and from it. We see in part but not in whole, with imperfect sight, but if the little that we do see be so wondrous, what must be the wonder of it all when seen by perfect sight?

Here below we apprehend by Faith what reason cannot comprehend. Human philosophy cannot comprehend the mysteries of man, nor can science comprehend the mysteries of this earth, and yet they accept them as facts of knowledge; and that same philosophy mocks the mind which, without comprehending, believes in the mysteries of God, and accepts them as truths of faith. Their motto is "Knowledge"—and that knowledge is but little better than a guess. Our motto is "Faith"—and our faith is a certainty.

Only in the Holy Catholic Church, where Faith is pure and truth is whole and guidance sure, can we rise

to the contemplation of the eternal truths and approach, with reverence and understanding, finite yet certain, the mysteries of God and man in heaven and on earth, as we do now.

Whatever was, is, or ever shall be, existed in a true sense in the mind of God from all eternity. Angels and men, heaven and earth, all creations were always in his thoughts. From the unbeginning, God, by voluntary decree, determined to create. Why? "Who hath been his counsellor?" Himself.

Deepest in the infinite life of God lives the principle of love. "God is love," wrote the evangelist of love, to whose care the dying Christ left his sorrowful mother. Did she tell him, I wonder, how to phrase his inspired thought? The law of love is to give. It governs God's images on earth, and it governs Him (we speak humanly) in His heavens.

The law of the highest love is to give the greatest gifts. The greatest gift is life—and greater still, life with intelligence and immortality. In God's mind all creations existed—not one but many. Who in His mind is the first-born of all creation? Who the first fruits of all creation? Jesus Christ. All creations were to revolve for grace and light around the future Christ, like stars around the sun. There came a day in heaven's history when God's will, moved by the power of infinite love, pronounced the first FIAT; and lo! the great throne was surrounded by spirits innumerable, into nine choirs divided, bright, beautiful and glorious, and God was glad. He crowned them all with the gift of free will, for He would not create slaves, who, by coercion, would be obliged to serve Him. He made them the Princes of His Court, and they were happy.

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But their free will must be tested—and their fidelity. The test was given. What was it? Who knows? How long did it last? Who can tell?

Many, if not most of the writers on the "Angelic Fall," teach that God revealed to the angel world the creation of this world and our race, and manifested to them the future Christ—God and man, and commanded them to adore Him. There came an hour when a dark storm of pride swept by the throne of God. The mystery of the God-man, eternally hidden in divine decree, flashed on their vision from the far off future (for God strengthened and intensified their spiritual sight to behold the truth of the Incarnation), and they were bidden to believe and to worship in the heavens the future Christ of our earth, the Christ-God in a human form, born as man, in a nature lower than theirs, of a human mother. Right on their vision, and with a suddenness that startled their high intelligences, shone the central mystery of all creation, like a sun rising out of clouds, and gilding the very clouds around it and beneath it with the golden glory of the purest light of heaven. It was the miracle of God in eclipse. The light and the shadows fell on and moved over the angel-world. The clouds that hung round and seemed to dim the brightness of the great mystery, were to test the trust of those spiritual intelligences in the wisdom and the works of their Creator.

Lucifer and his followers would not believe—or believing, would not adore the Man-Christ, their future king, nor honor His mother, their predestined queen. They rejected the brightness of the sun of justice and mercy, because of the clouds around its light. They arose in pride. God in the eclipse of humility they would not

have. He was beneath them, and they would not worship. On them fell the awful eclipse of an eternal exile from the light of joy and the joy of light. Thus sin came, the first sin. It rose right beside the Most High. It began—strange mystery—in the spirit of the first and highest of the angels in the aristocracy of creation, who stood nearest to the throne. It was a horror in the heavens only an instant, and the darkness, without a moment's mercy, was swept away out of the sight of God into everlasting darkness. They who stood the trial of their free will and remained faithful were elevated into higher places and confirmed in everlasting grace. Heaven lost not a gleam of its glory. God lost not a joy of His infinite happiness, but the fallen lost all in losing Him.

Will God create again? His first and brightest creatures, the princes of His court, have fallen. Yes, he will. But will he trust the power of free will to the next creation? God will never make creations who would be slaves or machines, and they would be one or the other if bereft of free will.

From the unbeginning he had resolved to create the human race. He would unite together matter immortal and immortal intelligence crowned with the gift of free will. His son was to belong to that race and find a mother in it. It was to be created not only to His image, but to His likeness as well. Adam and Eve were to found the race. He foresaw the race would fall as the angels fell, and yet, notwithstanding this knowledge, he resolved to create the human race. Which resolve, to those who deeply think, instead of being an argument against His goodness, is a wondrous proof in its favor.

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Adam was to be made to the image and likeness of the future Christ. Eve, the mother of the race, was to be formed to the image and likeness of Mary, the mother of the Christ of this race; but Adam and Eve must wait. God, in His own appointed time, shall create their dwelling place. In the history of time and earth they will precede Christ and Mary, but in the divine decrees Christ and Mary precede them. Jesus and Mary were not afterthoughts, owing to the foreseen fall. They were God's first thoughts before and notwithstanding the fall. Their predestinations antedated, if I may use the word, all predestinations angelic, human, or the predestinations of those of any other race which God might create. Thus, as Eve was contained in the first Adam, who fell, being part of the same creation, so Mary was contained in the decree of Christ's, the second Adam's predestination, as having, of all creatures first and highest, part in the redemption.

ASPIRATION.

"THE LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon Him; to all that call upon Him in truth. He will do the will of them that fear Him, and He will hear their prayer and save them."—*Psalm* cxliv.

PRAYER.

OUR FATHER and Hail Mary.

SECOND DAY.

The Flower of Mary's Predestination

SECOND PART.

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, * * * separated unto the Gospel of God, which He had promised before by His prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning the [His] Son, who was made to Him of the seed of David, according to the flesh, who was predestinated the Son of God. * * *."—*Romans*, i.

FROM the unbeginning, Jesus Christ, The Man of the human race, was predestined to be the Son of God. Therefore, Mary, the woman of the human race, was predestined to be the Mother of the Son of God, by becoming the Mother of Jesus Christ. The two predestinations are inseparable. One cannot be without the other in the decrees of eternity, because one has not been manifested and realized without the other in the days of time. There is no equality between these two first predestinations, because one is the predestination of the Man-God, who is infinite, while the other is the predestination of a finite creature; but each in decree eternal, as in earthly fact, is necessary to the other. We cannot put asunder their predestinations in the will of God no more than we can separate their realizations in the worship of earth.

Jesus Christ, as man, was predestined to possess the divine substance, and to be, therefore, God perfect as well as perfect man. Mary was predestined to form,

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out of her flesh and blood, the human nature of the Man-Christ, to which the divine nature is to be personally united, and, therefore, by God's will she is made a necessary element in the predestination of Jesus Christ, to be in God's appointed time the Son of God.

It is impossible for God to elevate a human person higher than Mary, who was to become in time, and on earth, the Mother of Him who in the heavens and from all eternity is the Father's only Son; and, therefore, Mary stands amid all creatures solitary in her grandeur, unapproached in the order of grace, and she cannot be judged by the standards with which we judge other creatures. She must be measured by God's standards, and those standards are found in her eternal predestination to be the Mother of the God-Man, Son of the eternal Father and Saviour of the world. We must not forget that. Human personality was not glorified nor exalted, much less divinized by or in Jesus Christ, for though real man He was not a human person.

He left human personality just where and as it was before, and yet every person, in any creation, has and must have personal relations and degrees of relationship with Jesus Christ. That relationship is the test of the moral position of any and every creature. To break its bonds means sin and condemnation; to preserve them means grace and salvation. To make that relationship nearer, dearer, higher, closer, more intimate, marks the various ascending degrees of Christian sanctities. To weaken the bonds and make them less near and dear, less close and intimate, marks the descending grades of human sinfulness.

"I was God's chosen prophet," Isaias exclaims back in the shadows of the old dispensation, and the other

prophets re-echo the same, for the gift of prophecy was divided among many. There was succession in their office and order.

"I was Christ's Apostle," cries out St. Peter, and the eleven and his and their successors repeat the same; for the dignity was divided among many. "I was His penitent," exclaims Mary Magdalen, and all the sin-wrecked souls in the world that ever drift on mercy's waves to His feet, the calm and beautiful shore of pardon, sigh the same; for the grace of pardon is distributed among many, and countless is the number of penitents. "I am His disciple," exclaims, in the joy of his heart, the true believer, and innumerable are the voices rising out of every age and nation proclaiming the same; for the grace of discipleship is divided, and many as the sands of the sea are the faithful followers of Christ. "I am His angel," cries out the faithful Michael, in the glory of the heavens, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand voices in the eternal courts re-echo the cry; for angelic dignity is divided, and greater in number and in splendor, brighter than all the stars that arch the aisles of space, are the hierarchies on high.

Prophet, apostle, penitent, disciple here below, angels above, how they fill the earth and the heavens with ceaseless hymns of glory to God and His Christ, the accords of which are as innumerable as the singers in creation's countless choir.

But apart and alone—and though amid—above them all, stands one with a tone in her voice none other can ever borrow; and a tone so true, so sweet, so tender, with such a mystery and meaning in its melody—a human SOLO in creation's choir—Mary of Nazareth, who, in the humility of her glory and in the glory of her humility,

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exclaims "I AM HIS MOTHER." It is a human voice with a finite tone.

Out of the eternal silence floats something like an echo, from a voice divine, in an infinite tone—from God Himself—"I am His Eternal Father."

"I am His Eternal Father!" "I am His Mother!" Incommunicable words, these. None other, save God and Mary, can pronounce them, for none other holds such personal and natural relationship to Jesus Christ.

He has prophets, apostles, evangelists, penitents, disciples, ministers in creation, beyond the reckoning of man—but He has only one mother, and can never have another.

Thus it is that personality belonging to our human nature, in Mary of Nazareth, has reached an elevation of glory simply, and forever inaccessible. The eternal paternity of the Infinite Father, which is not shared in by the Son or the Holy Ghost, is the first and greatest (if we may use first and greatest where there is nothing secondary or less great) mystery within the Trinity. The divine maternity of Mary of Nazareth is the first and greatest mystery outside of the Trinity. God's power could go no farther. Personality, angelic or human, could rise no higher. Within the Trinity, even to the Eternal Word and the Eternal Spirit, paternity is incommunicable, it belongs to the Father alone. Outside the Trinity, Mary's divine maternity is incommunicable to any finite creature; and, therefore, the predestination of Mary to be the mother of Jesus Christ was, and is, next to the decree of the Incarnation, and by her consent made inseparable from it, the grandest act of infinite wisdom, power, mercy and love conceived in eternity and consummated in time. Such another act

will never again be made, for such another act can never again be called for; because, though Mary was a finite, and chosen though still free agent in it, the act itself was infinite, and as such, covers every fact of good or evil in all creation—of good, to better, bless, crown and glorify it; of evil, to remedy, pardon, punish or eternally doom it.

"I am God's Mother" is a declaration beyond and above which there can be but one higher announcement to men, Christ's: "I am your God!" Christ's announcement to angels and men, to all creatures of all creations. "I am your God," and Mary's declaration, "I am His mother," define forever their incommunicable relations to one another and to all creation, while, at the same time, they at once, and forever, fully determine the only true, correct, certain and perfect inner acceptance, and the only correct, certain, true and perfect outward profession of faith in the presence of two truths which are inseparably bound together, and meet, without either greatening or lessening the other, or either absorbing the other, in the one great mystery of the redemption.

There is another being that is not a person, a moral yet visible being that alone can and does present to the eyes of faith these two truths, separate, yet united, with all their evidences, meanings and consequences. That moral being is mystically a virgin and a mother, bringing forth Jesus Christ in the minds and hearts and lives of men, and in the full sight of the world. She is the bride of the Lamb, who, as Mary of Nazareth, alone could say "I am the mother of Jesus," has alone the sacred and exclusive right to say "I am Christ's Church." That Church, by the grace of God to each of us given, is our own Holy Roman Catholic Church.

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She, alone, not only realizes, but through all the days of time, livingly perpetuates the Incarnation; and she only by faith can apprehend, and by divinely commissioned infallible authority does and must proclaim, as part of the Incarnation, the mystery of Mary's eternal predestination, with all its everlasting meanings and consequences.

Ah! how the Trinity must have loved her in the act of her predestination. She became daughter of God the Father, mother of God the Son, and spouse of God the Holy Ghost; and through her Son, she, the finite creature, enters into real kinship with each of the divine persons of the Trinity. For Jesus Christ has two origins—one in heaven, as God in the bosom of the Eternal Father, having infinite relations with Father and Holy Ghost—the other on earth, as man in the bosom of His Virgin Mother, who, therefore, becomes lovingly related to the three persons of the Holy Trinity. Take away in fact, or deny in thought, either of these two origins, and Jesus Christ cannot be what he was predestined to be, the Son of God. Mary is to give Him the humanity by which He will become the Saviour of the world, whilst the eternal Father, from all eternity, generates His divinity, which, when united to the humanity received from His mother, will make the world's salvation infinite. Without Mary He would not be man, and could not live, teach, suffer and die for us. Without His eternal Father He would have no divinity, and could He have lived, taught, suffered and died for us, our redemption would be vain.

Jesus Christ is the "first fruit of all creation," as the Scripture says, and He is the sole cause of all predestination and salvation. But Christ is the fruit of

the womb of Mary, and she, by the operations of the Holy Ghost, is the cause of Christ's human existence. And as in the decrees of eternity, so in all the glorious work of Christ in time, she stands not by favor but by holiest right with Him and beside Him. He, as man, is her fruit. All the fruit which ever will be produced by Him, belong primarily to Him, but must secondarily belong to her. By the work of the Holy Ghost she gave to the Son of God a new existence, in which existence Jesus Christ, her son, gave to the Father what else the Father never could have received, infinite worship. She made Him man. The Father generated Him God. The Holy Ghost, who terminates the Trinity and within the Trinity is barren (we speak it in reverence), producing no person, becomes infinitely fruitful, outside of the Trinity, in the womb of Mary, when He does produce Jesus Christ, Man and God.

In every work of grace that ever was, or ever will be, Father, Son and Holy Ghost have part. But all grace is from and through Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is by Mary; therefore, in every work of grace the mother of the Father's Son Incarnate has also her part; and remember that all these beauties, glories, truths, are contained in the two eternal predestinations of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and of Mary of Nazareth as His mother. All salvation and predestinations come from theirs—and if theirs be inseparable, as inseparable they are, Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, is an ever-living, everlasting element in all predestinations.

Now did we not do well to leave the earth a little while in order to ascend to the eternities, where we have gathered the fairest flower, on Mary's first day, for the crown of our Queen? Let us come back to her altar again, and first think and then pray.

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The greatest writers, men who have sounded the depths of truths, teach that true devotion to the Virgin Mother is a certain sign of predestination. Have we that true devotion? Do we make our lips wings to waft Hail Mary's to heaven? Ah! the Hail Mary came from heaven, but it wants to go back home again. It wants to fly from the sinful world to the sinless heaven, and to bring in its sweet, simple words, our petitions to our King through our Queen. Happy the lips that breathe the Queen's prayer. Blessed the hearts that shrine worship for the Son, love for the mother and homage for the Queen!

ASPIRATION.

O THE depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments and how unsearchable His ways! For of Him and by Him and in Him are all things. To Him be glory forever.—*Romans*, xi.

PRAYER.

I BELIEVE in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

THIRD DAY.

The Flower of the Promise.

FIRST PART.

And the Lord God said to the serpent: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed."—*Gen.*, iii.

WHITHER shall we go to-day to gather another flower for the crown of our Blessed Queen? Yesterday we gathered, in Eternity, the Flower of Mary's Predestination. To-day let us enter the Garden of Eden and find the Flower of the Promise.

Does God ever rest? Never. His Power and Love have ceaseless activities. He is always in action; but His action costs Him no effort.

Does God ever rest? Always. With Him work is rest, and rest is work. He is always creating, and forever resting in His manifold creations. This very hour He is creating souls for this earth; and who knows? mayhap new worlds and other races in the immensity of His Heavens.

Ah, me! men's minds sometimes seem as narrow as their own little horizons. They fain would confine God within the limited circle of their own knowledge. They know the history of the angelic world, dimly and only in part; and they read the story of this world, but only in fragments; and they fain would believe that beyond this and the angel-world God has done nothing. Not a half of what God has done and is doing and will do has

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been revealed. Reason is always at fault in measuring the immeasurable. Revelation tells us only a tithe of the doings of God. What is sufficient for our soul's salvation Revelation teaches. It seldom goes beyond this; but it sometimes does, and when it does it opens to the wondering eyes of Faith vast, luminous horizons, bright with infinite suggestions of God's power and glory.

How long after the creation and fall of the angels did God wait before He created this our world, and the human race? No one knows. And between these two creations, were there other creations of worlds and beings unknown to us? Who can tell? Beyond our horizons extends the Illimitable. Think you that it is a barren and lifeless waste, without creatures to worship, or voices to praise, or intelligences to glorify the beautiful God?

No, no. God is Power, and the passion of power is to act, and God is Love infinite and the law, and the love of Love is to give life and happiness. Examine a drop of water with the microscope. What do you see? A little world teeming with life. Thousands of living creatures are born, grow, live and die in the little world of a drop of water. Does this not show how God loves to give life?

And even matter that is lifeless—does it not manifest something strangely like unto life in the cohesion of its atoms?

Now lift your eyes aloft at night and gaze on the beautiful stars, and remember that beyond your vision's farthest reach there are bright worlds innumerable. Are they all tenantless? Are any of them, or some of them, or many of them inhabited? We know not—but why may it not be? It may be—why should it not be?

that there are in the heavens stars and planets, other than ours, peopled by intelligent beings, different from us in the composition of their natures, and yet like our race, made to know, love, serve and possess God, with us, in eternity. It may be that we belong to the lowest order of intelligent beings, that we are the poor plebians of the universe. And it may be that this is the reason why the Son of God, by whom all worlds were made, wishing to humble Himself to the lowest, descended into this lowest part of all creation, and became one of our race by assuming our nature. If it be so, the blood of the Cross shed on earth's Calvary benefits whatever is above us. Does not the Apostle of the Gentiles coming back to earth from the third heaven, seem to be in accord with our thought in the first chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians? Be this as it may, this is the world in which we are concerned.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Thus begins the story of our world. It is God-made. Let science, without faith, quibble, quarrel, theorize, doubt, deny. Let philosophers attribute the world's creation to chance, to the fortuitous coming together of atoms, or to any other absurd cause. It is a way they have. But the moment they deny its divine creation they fall into puerile absurdities. They destroy the dignity of the material world. For it has a dignity of its own. The mark of the hand of its God is bright and clear and holy on it all. The words of Genesis, written on the gates of this earth's creation, shine with a light that never fades; and the same words are written in the traditions of all nations and peoples. Who made this world? Ask the race that inhabits it. The human race answers God. That is sufficient. If there

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be a few insensate minds, which, discordant among themselves, give other and different answers, why let them rave over their theories. They stand against the race, and the race stands for God as the maker of its dwelling place; and the race is right. Let beliefless science adequately account for the history of a single grain of sand. It cannot, try it never so hard. It is baffled. Science stands on the outside of matter. It never yet has entered into the hidden sanctuary of substance, and it never can. Like the veil which hid the Holy of Holies from the gaze of the people, so around the mysteries of matter hangs a veil which the hand of science can never lift. And yet science would fain have us accept as truths beyond question the mysteries of its philosophies, while it laughs us to scorn for accepting, and with highest reasons, the divine mysteries of the supernatural order. The horizon of knowledge is narrow and bounded by earth. The horizons of faith are as illimitable as the heavens.

"God created the earth:" that makes the mystery of earth's existence beautiful and sublime, and solves the mystery by naming its creator. Slowly, day by day, moved the great Creator in His work. He was building a habitation for the race to which, in the far future, His only begotten Son was to belong. Came the sixth day, and a voice spoke: "Let us make man to our own image and likeness."

Think you that only on the sixth day the voice thus spoke? God had determined the words by voluntary decree of love from all eternity. And the sixth day was Friday. On a future Friday the fallen creation will be redeemed.

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the

earth, and He breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living soul," and He planted a garden in Eden and there placed man, the visible image of the invisible God; and not out of the dust of earth, but out of Adam's side He made the woman for his companion, and He walked with them in the evenings in the garden. He created them immortal and crowned them with supernatural justice. Ah! Eden was then a home of holiest joy and purest happiness. As He had tried the free will and fidelity of the angels, so He gave a test of obedience to our first parents. God tests all His creatures. The angels fell through pride which uprose in disobedience. Man fell through disobedience caused by pride. "You shall be like Gods," said the tempter. In both falls there was high treason against the majesty of God. Of every tree in the garden they might freely eat, except of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; in eating of it lay the penalty of death. How long did the trial last? It is not known.

And God was wont to walk with them at evening time in the garden of their innocence; and in Adam God beheld the image of the future Christ; and in Eve the image of the mother of His Son, and He was glad. Did God walk with them, in Eden, in holy converse in order to lighten the trial of their obedience and to make them strong to meet the tempter who was to come?

He came at last, and he approached the weaker. Eve was alone. He tempted her insidiously. She hesitated. But when the tempter said "if you eat of the tree you shall be as Gods," she yielded and did eat of the fruit, and gave it also to her husband, and he did eat. Thus, as the angels had fallen, they fell. Ah! the great darkness that swept across their fallen souls! Ah! the wild

rush of passions into their hearts! Ah! the awful horror of their guilt! Ah! the unutterable fear to meet the beautiful God! And they hid themselves.

As if, in sooth, to hide would be their crime's concealment! Why the whole universe felt at once the shock of earth's first sin and the crash of the fall. Down crumbled the lofty pillars of the temple of human nature, the glorious pillar of supernatural grace of the soul and the beautiful column of immortality of the body. The temple was in ruins. Adam and Eve were uncrowned and dethroned. The royal, grace-woven, mantle of original justice, the sign of their sovereignty, fell from their souls and bodies; and no wonder, as Scripture says, that they felt themselves naked. Rising, as they did, in rebellion against God's command, material nature threw off its subjection to their sovereignty. Woman, man's equal, was placed under his power, and man became a victim to the strong forces of nature which, by his sin, escaped from his control and scorned his power. Such was the fall of Adam and Eve, and with them, and in them, fell from its high estate the entire human race. So sin entered, and with sin, death. It might have been otherwise. An instant's disobedience darkens forever the history of the race. What will the creator do? Not a moment of mercy nor a sign of hope gave He the angels in their fall. No promise of restoration afar off was theirs. Not a word of love. The high treason was too near the throne; but on them sudden fell a dark, swift, hopeless, everlasting malediction. 'Twas an act of infinite justice. Ah! will mercy come with God when He enters the garden to meet the criminals? Ah, yes! already they are repenting. The first tears have fallen. They are hiding themselves

away from the face of God, and by their very hiding they are acknowledging their guilt and its shame.

Aspiration.

"O how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee; which Thou hath wrought for them that hope in Thee, in the sight of the sons of men! —*Psalm*, xxxi.

Prayer.

Raise up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy power, and come, that by Thy protection we may deserve to be rescued from the threatening dangers of our sins and to be saved by Thy deliverance. Amen.

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FOURTH DAY.

The Flower of the Promise.

SECOND PART.

"Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel."—*Isaias*, vii.

INTO the garden which sin had entered came God, at eventide, seeking the sinners. What will He do? When the angels, the princes of creation and of His court fell, there was no mercy. Right beside the throne they had fallen, and swift and sudden on them fell the everlasting malediction. Not the faintest whisper of a far off hope for them was heard in the dark and terrible sentence. The sinners hiding in the garden, conscious of their own guilt, were unconscious of the fact of the other, and first sin, in the higher places, and of the fearful act of justice which had punished it forever.

God called Adam, but, ah! how earth's first sin had changed the very tone of the Creator's voice! It had lost its tenderness. And God called Eve. He questioned both, and each confessed their guilt. Did they then fall down at His feet and weep? Did they plead with piteous prayers for mercy? Who knows? And then God called the serpent to pass his sentence. "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. She shall crush thy head and thou shalt lay in wait for her heel." Then

to the woman: "I will multiply thy sorrow and conception. In sorrow thou shalt bring forth thy children." Then to the head of our race He spoke: "Cursed is the earth for thy sake. In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread until thou returnest unto earth; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Oh, wondrous mercy! God cursed the serpent and He cursed the earth, but He did not curse our first parents, nor did He utter a curse against our race. Why? Because His only Son was to be born in our race.

He looked away from the garden of guilt down the future years. Afar off He saw the "express image" of Himself in the human face of Christ, the second Adam, and in Mary He beheld the second Eve; and with a love surpassing highest thought, because it was infinite, with the very malediction which He pronounced against Satan He mingled mercy's promise.

"I will put enmities between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed, and she shall crush thy head." Great is the mystery! the woman was conquered by the tempter, and the tempter will be crushed by the woman. Through the woman came sin to the man, and by the woman will come the Man who is to conquer sin, and the children of the race, though fallen, will become like unto God, "made conformable by grace to the image of the Son of God." Thus the flower of the promise of the woman who was to crush the serpent's head bloomed fair and sweet in the very shadows that fell around the garden of the first sin. The woman is promised first, because the woman first fell, and the flower of promise is twined around the prophecy of her seed—the Messiah.

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The history of our race from its fall, begins with the mighty words, "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." What woman? One who will be a mother. Whose mother? The mother of Jesus Christ, who will be her seed, and for all who receive Him the seed of eternal life. And her name? Ask all the generations, they call it blessed, they know, honor and love it—Mary.

Ah! name more beautiful than all names save His, at the sound of which "every knee must bend in heaven and on earth," thou wert a hidden glory in eternity, and thou didst shine like a star in the darkness of the fall of our race, and thy rays, pure and bright, gleamed a halo of mercy and hope on the sorrowful souls of our guilty first parents when they passed out of the gate of Eden by the flaming sword of the cherubim guarded, leaving all their happiness there when all their innocence had been lost.

Oh woman, "blessed among women!" the fallen world lifts up its eyes to thee, and in its weeping hails thee as the harbinger of its redemption!

Oh Mother of the Saviour Christ! make haste and meet those who walk "moaning and weeping in this valley of tears." Tarry not long, for the weary world leans towards the future, and is listening for the sweet sound of thy footsteps; for thou wilt bring to its darkness, Christ, the everlasting light, and to its sorrows, Christ, the everlasting joy, and to its places of death, Christ, the everlasting life, and to its sinfulness, Christ, the infinite salvation.

Oh, Mary of the Promise! Heaven does not need thee, for all is joy and blessedness there! Poor earth sighs for thee! Oh, dove of the new covenant, come

soon, through the gates of the morning, bearing the olive branch of the peace of God to the world.

But she will tarry long before the earth shall see her face. Here below, the Eden of innocence and happiness was closed forever, and no one yet has passed the cherubim who guards its gates, and no one ever shall. There is a brighter Eden above, whose gates are also closed until He comes who holds, by right, the keys. But His mother must come first.

On went the years into the past, on moved the human race, looking towards the future; wickedness grew apace; corruption defiled the whole world, and God was angry. What will He do? He has called on men to repent and to return to Him in the repentance of their hearts. The patriarch Noah is His preacher. The world will not hear. Then came a day, not two thousand years away from man's last day in Eden, when the fountains of the great deep were broken up and the cataracts of heaven rushed down and whelmed the world in universal deluge. All flesh was destroyed from the face of the earth save Noah and his family, and God made a covenant with him. They carried in the ark with them the memories that came down from the gates of Eden, and when they were dispersed all over the world, wherever they went, they bore with them the tradition of hope. They looked towards the future, and the cry of the world's faith was: "We believe that He will come—the Messiah."

But the woman of Genesis, promised in the garden, must come first. Every cry for Him was a sigh for her. David, the royal poet of the old covenant, sang in loftiest strains inspired, of the glories of the Messiah's reign and the mercies of His redemption. Every song for Christ was a song for Mary, for His mother must come first.

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Great prophets arose. They knew the histories of the yesterdays, and with cloudless vision they saw the mysteries of the to-morrows. Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Daniel, the four prophet evangelists of the covenant of figures, cried with a strong voice aloud to the people and the world: "He will come—the Messiah. His day is growing nearer," and the people waited in hope and worshipped Him afar off. But His mother must come first.

The last of the prophets, Malachias, gave the "burden of the word of the Lord to Israel." He predicted, in words that sound impassioned, the glorious, universal and everlasting sacrifice of the coming covenant. But the victim must come first, and before the victim, the victim's mother.

Then there fell a strange hush on Israel. The last of the prophets had spoken and prophecy ceased. Why? The Prophet of Prophets was near at hand. Near at hand? Some hundred years will pass before the Messiah shall appear. Some hundred years seem far enough away from a common event, but hundreds of years are near indeed to the greatest event of earth and the grandest day of time—the coming of the expectation of the nations, Jesus Christ. But Mary must come first.

On went the years. The tread of Roman soldiers had been heard in Judea and Jerusalem. The sceptre of Israel had passed into the hands of strangers, and the banners of Rome had flung their shadows against the holy temple. The east looked towards the west, the west looked towards the east in mysterious expectation. The Messiah is coming. But His mother must come first. The flower of promise that bloomed out of God's words, far back in Eden, will soon blossom in Judea.

Oh, Flower of Promise! thou hast brightened nearly forty centuries. Thou hast filled with thy sweet fragrance the faith and hope of the world. What hand will dare to disentwine thee from the prophecies? Who will dare tear thee away from the history of the Messiah in His coming, or cast thee out of the garden of the Scriptures as if thou wert a worthless weed? And if, Oh, Blessed Queen! I wreathe the flower of promise with the flower of predestination in thy beautiful May-crown, thou knowest that I have done well; while I, O Virgin Queen! do but only, and in humbleness, know that there are ten thousand hands than mine more worthy far to give thy crown a beauty which, alas, mine cannot give.

How blind to the understanding of the supernatural economy of God's grace in this fallen world, are they who do not see the Christ and His Mother walking side by side, step to step together, down the ways of prophecy, their faces towards Bethlehem and Calvary! Is it in some a judicial blindness? Will you fling the flower of the promise of the woman away? Then reject the Messiah and be consistent. The Messiah takes His mother along with Him wheresoever He goeth, wheresoever He manifests Himself. She must be with Him to give him His human meaning. She must be with Him to prove that He is the man with flesh and blood like ours, which flesh shall be bruised and which blood, derived from her, will be shed for this world's redemption. She must be with Him, mysteriously, back of all the figures of the old covenant. She must stand with Him back of the symbols and shadows of the old law, else He is not in figure, nor will He be in reality what His Father predestined Him to be—Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

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But what He was predestined to be He must and shall be. His Father's eternal honor is pledged to it by eternal decree. His Father's eternal love is pledged to it by divine decree. His own voluntary acceptance to become, through Mary, the Saviour of the world He must faithfully meet. The entire Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, will be false to itself, and if so it is the very death of the Deity if the decree be not fulfilled in time, just as it was framed in the eternal counsels. God changeth never His counsels.

And the mother of the Man of Sorrows and God of glory must have her share in both. Her heart will be pierced by the sword as His side will be pierced by the soldier's lance; but her soul, also, must be clothed with the glory of her divine Son. She must drink the chalice with Him, and while He will wear the crown of the Man-God she will wear the mother's crown.

Sweet flower of promise! we have gathered thee from the garden of Eden. Fill our souls again with the fragrance of the innocence we have lost, that so the gates of the Eden of Heaven may be opened by grace unto us to enter in and reign in glory with our queen forever.

ASPIRATION.

"O LORD, our Lord! how wonderful is Thy name in the whole earth!"—*Psalms*, viii.

PRAYER.

O GOD, who didst ordain Thine only begotten Son to be the Saviour of mankind, and didst command that He should be called Jesus, mercifully grant that we may enjoy in heaven the blessed vision of Him, whose holy name we worship on earth. Amen.

FIFTH DAY.

The Flower of the Immaculate Conception.

FIRST PART.

"One is my dove, my perfect one is but one, she is the only one of her mother, the chosen of her that bore her."—*Canticles*, vi.

IN the year 1849, Pius the IX was driven from Rome and went an exile to Gaeta. It seems that in our days the vicars of Christ must be victims for truth. Though he had given to the Roman people a liberal constitution, and had made many reforms in the government of the Papal States, the liberals became revolutionists and clamored for what could not in honor and principle be granted. 1848 was a year of revolutions all over Europe. The waves of the revolution at last reached Rome and swept furiously over the States of the Church; and, as in all Italian revolutions, the cruel knife of assassination found many a hand ready enough to grasp it and many a victim to fall beneath it. In disguise, the Pope fled secretly from Rome and found refuge in the kingdom of Naples. Then forgetting his own wrongs and sufferings, and thinking only of the glory of God and the good of the Church, he addressed an Encyclical to each of the high prelates of the Church, in regard to the definition of the Immaculate Conception of the blessed Virgin Mary. Questions were proposed to them for answer, as to their own belief and the

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faith of their flocks, and the traditions of their churches in regard to the conception of Mary. Meanwhile, the revolution raged and ruined. The world needed some gentle, peaceful truth to calm its agitations. What truth more serene than the sinless conception of the holy Virgin?

On the 12th of April, 1850, Pius the IX returned to Rome. Meanwhile his Encyclical had been read by the Bishops all over the earth, and with a wonderful unanimity they desired the definition of the dogma; but the Church, in the world of dogmas, moves slowly, like unto God in the works of creation. Congregations of theologians, of unquestioned piety and of learning unsurpassed, were appointed to study the subject from every point of view, to examine authorities, to search the Scriptures, to inquire into ancient traditions, and to exhaust every source where reason could find reasons of the truth of the immaculateness of Mary's conception; for in building up the grand temple of Catholic dogmas, only the stones hewn by the hand of God from all eternity, and found where He has placed them in time, can be chosen, stones consecrated with the chrism of His love and power and will; for only such stones have the right to be built up into the temple of faith resting on Jesus Christ, the corner stone; and it is not authority alone, nor is it reason alone, that builds the temple by formulating truths into dogmas; but it is authority infallible, united to highest reason, that does the sacred work. Meantime, while the minds of the learned men were studying, examining and discussing the subject, the hearts of the faithful were praying for the object of their desires.

In our Holy Church, as in each of its members, mind and heart together, not either of them separately, form the principle of every spiritual and catholic act, just as the Father and the Son, are the one principle, whence proceeds the Holy Spirit. Years passed on. The Church did not speak. As at the Council of Ephesus, the faithful were filled with a holy impatience, and all over the world they prayed for the day of the definition of the truth. It came at last. On the eighth of December, in the temple of St. Peter's of the Vatican, the mount which is the Thabor of truth and the Calvary of sorrow, was filled with an immense concourse of the faithful and strangers from many lands. Two hundred Bishops from many nations were there, and priests in thousands. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered with a grandeur of ceremonies unequalled. When the gospel had been sung in Latin and in Greek, a Cardinal, accompanied by Bishop and Archbishop, approached the throne of the Vicar of Christ and thus addressed the Sovereign Pontiff:

"Most Holy Father, the Catholic Church has ardently and long desired that your supreme and infallible judgment will pass upon the Immaculate Conception of the most Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God, a decision which will bring her an increase of praise, of glory and of veneration. In the name of the Sacred College of Cardinals, in the name of the Bishops of the Catholic world, and in the name of all the faithful, we humbly, and with fervent instance, ask that the universal desires of the Church may be granted in this solemnity of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin. Even now, while we are offering the august Sacrifice of the Altar in this temple consecrated to the Prince of the Apostles, and in

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the midst of this solemn reunion of the Sacred College, of the Bishops and of the people, deign, Holy Father, to lift up your apostolic voice and proclaim the dogmatic decree of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, and there will be joy in the heavens and gladness on earth."

Such was the petition of the Cardinals, Patriarchs, Archbishops, Bishops, Priests and two hundred millions and more of the faithful. Were they blind? Who will say so? The deepest learning of the world made the petition. Were they deceived? The greatest wisdom on earth made the petition. Was it a petition of wickedness? Wickedness will surely never ask for a dogma which means sinlessness.

But before the Supreme Pontiff accedes to this universal petition he and the petitioners must pray to heaven. So the hymn of the Holy Ghost, the *Veni Creator*, rose in glorious melody from the hearts and lips of all in the temple, and tears of joy trickled down many a face there, with a soundless music of their own. While the echoes of the hymn, rising heavenward, were still faintly sounding high up in the lofty dome, Pius the IX, with great emotion in his voice, read the decree in which it is proclaimed:

"*That it is a dogma of Faith that the Blessed Virgin Mary, from and in the first instant of her Conception, by special grace and privilege from God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, was preserved and placed beyond the reach and stain of original sin.*"

Ages ago, in a temple at Ephesus, when Mary's relationship towards Christ had been assailed by Nestorius, the Fathers of the Council vindicated the rights of her divine maternity. On that 8th of December, in St.

Peter's, the Pontiff and Bishops defended the honor of Mary's soul and the integrity of her innocence. Faith kept a feast of joy in the hearts of the faithful. The glory of the joy of faith, like a grand *Te Deum*, swept over the world. Ten thousand temples sounded with song, and twice a hundred thousand altars, in lowly chapels and in cathedrals grand, flamed with lights and shone fair with flowers. And the unbelieving world laughed. Let it laugh. And a part of the unbelieving world sneered. Let them sneer. If the faithful were glad, surely God and His angels were filled with joy.

Think you that the Immaculate Conception of Mary was the invention of a truth that day in St. Peter's temple? Truth cannot be invented. Divine truth is even beyond the reach of mere human discovery. But divine truth is no more beyond the reach of infallible human announcement than it is beyond the reach of human certain acceptance. No one save the prophets, the Apostles and the Church of Christ has received truths of the divine order directly and immediately from God. Since the ascension of Christ, God is still. He never himself breaks His silence. The Church has "the mind of Christ," and as Christ, in the days of His life, only gradually gave forth His revelations, so the Church, which is His human organ of speech on earth, only gradually, and in God's appointed time, gives to the world His announcements of the revealed truths in her possession.

The sun holds as much light on the rim of the eastern horizon in its morning rising as when it reaches the hour of its noon, but greater and brighter grows its light as it ascends the skies. So the Church, when it rose on the horizon of Judea eighteen centuries agone,

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held all the light of truth in possessing Christ, the eternal light; but only gradually, like our material sun, did it shine with greater splendors as it rose over the world. Nor will its light ever decrease. It shines on the dial of the day of Christ, telling the hours of truth forever, and so shall it shine till it reaches its noonday here below, and then will come the end. The sun of truth has no west where it will go down in shadows. Its west is in the heavens, into whose everlasting light it will triumphant rise. What then is dogma? A new invention? Is it a new invention of light at nine o'clock in the morning, because there shines more light than just after morning's dawn? Is it not the same sun shining? Is it not the same light coming to the earth? Same sun? Yes. Same light? Truly so, the very same, but to our eyes growing brighter, and covering with its increasing brightness more of the heavens and more of the earth. What then are dogmas? They are the TRUTH whose bright light is shining forever in the Church, growing brighter, as the centuries pass, to the eyes of faith, in varied but not contradictory manifestations, and covering with the same increasing light more of the world of mind.

Look at the rainbow which spans the heavens and arches the earth, a sign of bright peace when the tempest has passed away, and learn a lesson. On the clouds shine rays of light. What else? From each drop of water in the cloud, out of each ray, seven different colors are reflected. The seven colors were hidden in each white ray till the rays touched the drops of water in the cloud, and then each ray reveals its hidden beauties to our eyes. So in the Church, there is but one truth, and that is all truth; but like unto the

ray with its seven colors, in that one truth are hidden countless truths, until they are reflected on our souls through dogmas defined by infallible authority, and like the rainbow after the storm, they come to bless the hearts of the faithful often, and generally after the tempests of sins and heresies have swept over the fold of Christ and filled His flock with uncertainty and fear.

Music is only a sweet sound, but in that sound, like unto the ray of the sun, seven notes lie hidden until revealed to our ears. The eighth note is but a repetition of the first and the beginning of another seven. So truth has but one sound, and that is the sound of the voice of Christ, but in that sound sleep countless songs of truth unheard until the voice of authority wakes them into the sweet words of divine faith.

Study the unit. All numbers and figures are contained in it. What are tens, hundreds, thousands, millions and more rising above the unit, but it itself manifested in higher and fuller forms? And what are all the fractions lying beneath the unit, but it itself broken into fragments? When the unit affirms itself it grows, it puts on greatness and glory; but when the unit denies itself it decreases, it puts off its power and breaks itself into ignominious fragments. In the unit then are countless affirmations. So in the one truth there are hidden innumerable affirmations. And the unit has the power of denial; when it denies itself it descends beneath itself, and gives up its life as unity.

So when reason, and no matter whose, denies truth in its unity, or any of its affirmations of faith, it descends into regions of deformed fragments and of darkness, and it loses the life by losing the light of truth, and then reason ceases to reason right. Mere religious

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opinions are fractions of faith, and once reason begins to work at this sinful sum of fractions, there is no telling when it will stop. Dogmas are affirmations of truths, going to make up the whole sum of faith; and as truth is infinite while we are finite, not in this world shall we ever reach the fullness of the sacred sum; not till in the eternities, when we shall behold truth face to face in the vision of the Trinity.

Alas for those who are blind to the clear light of the divine dogmas which shine out of the heaven of truth, like suns for the days and stars for the nights! Alas for those whose eyes look only on the fitful light that flickers across the changeful clouds blown about by the winds of human opinions! Any church (we use the incommunicable name, which belongs to our Church alone, through mere courtesy) that cannot affirm the ancient truths has gone beyond their reach, and away from the light of Christ. Any church that has said its last word and can say no more, has exhausted its life and must die. Its very silence proves that it possesses only dead fragments. When any church ceases to affirm, it begins to deny. When once it has began to deny, by a force which it cannot resist, it will continue to deny, and will lean on denials for its very existence. When it ceases to say YES before the throne of truth, it will begin to say No behind the throne, and sometimes the first low muttered No leads to the loud, last, blasphemous, absolute No. Then dies the very light of truth and the night of darkness comes.

Oh beautiful Church! Bride of the crucified Christ, bearing the heart as well as the mind of Christ, possessing His divine person as well as His powers, thou didst come down from the upper chamber in Jerusalem, where

Mary was praying with thy Apostles, filled as were they with the Paraclete, and while thou didst preach Christ and Him crucified and risen from the grave, thou never didst forget the mother of the Christmas night, the mother of Good Friday, the mother of the Pentecost.

Oh living Church of the everlasting God! Queen of truth, bearing the sceptre of divine authority, wearing the triple crown of faith and hope and charity, with the mercy-clasped sandals of salvation on thy feet, when thou didst stand in Ephesus of old, and didst speak in honor of the name of Mary, thy voice was strong and sweet, but in the temple of St. Peter's thy voice didst rise to triumphant tones when thou didst defend against unbelievers the honor of Mary's sinless soul.

Ah! the olden words of Genesis, in God's malediction of Satan, "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and between her seed and thy seed," never before received such triumphant confirmation, and the malediction of Satan never before put on such dark and mighty meaning. Out of her glorious Magnificat and into the glorious dogma rang, with their crowning meaning, "All generations will call me blessed." Blessed the lips that announced the great truth, and blessed, in these days, the hearts that hailed with the welcome of faith and joy the glorious dogma. Was it all or only the work of men? No, it was the act of the Son of Mary, through His chosen representatives. Listen!

Had Christ Himself stood in the midst of that assembly, which represented eighteen centuries of doctrine, and had He been asked the question, "Tell us, was the conception of your Mother immaculate?" What would have been His answer? Would He have said *No?* Would He have replied, "Pontiff and Priests, you are

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troubling yourselves too much about my Mother's honor?" No, no, a thousand times No. Listen. He would have said:

"Pontiff and Priests; and let the whole world hear: My mother was conceived as pure and stainless in time as she was conceived in the divine thought and decree of her and My predestination, in the bosom of the Divinity. You have to-day reached back to My mother's eternal predestination, and our divine act in eternity you have accepted by the light of faith, and by your authority, which is mine, you have affirmed our act in the days of time. You have reached back to the promise of My mother and Me in the garden of Eden, and you have given to that promise, this day, its full authentic meaning.

"Pontiff and Priests, was My mother, Mary of Nazareth, conceived in sin? Who here will dare assert it? No, no! I the Son of God, had the right, because I so willed to humble myself. Did I not do so? Did I not bear every humiliation for you and for all. But I, as the Son of God, could not degrade myself. Had My mother been conceived in sin she would have been the slave of him whose empire I came to destroy; and I, as the eternal Son of God, could not become the son of a slave of Satan. My divinity must be inviolate in My humanity, and therefore the mother who was to clothe My divinity with the clothing of humanity must be immaculate in soul and body; for out of her flesh and blood she is to weave the robes which my divinity must wear. The robes must be stainless. If she were stained by sin, could I, as the Son of God, wear robes with sin's stain on them? Pure as the heavens I came from, and purest of the pure to the touch of My divinity and

humanity must she be whose Son I myself predestined myself to be. Did I not, from all eternity, choose Mary of Nazareth to become my mother? Have I not all power? Would I be true to My infinite power if I had not preserved my mother from the contamination of Satan's touch and from the ignominy of his slavery? Am I not infinite love? Have I not proven My love for the world, even unto death? If I gave you a law to love and honor your mothers, must I not myself give you the most perfect example of keeping the law? Must I not love My mother with perfect love, and honor My mother with highest honor, the perfect love and highest honor of God and man? Would I be true to the perfect and infinite love wherewith I must, as God and man, love My mother, and would I not be false to the highest honor of My mother, if, having all power to which nothing is impossible, and an infinite will which nothing can resist, and an infinite love for her, which your thoughts cannot comprehend nor your speech describe, I would permit the fallen angel to glory in My mother's fall? And when I stand before the world with My mother, and with My love for her as her own and only child, proclaim that she is mine, could I leave it in the power of Satan to cry out in defiance: 'Yes, Christ! she is your mother, but she was my slave?' In heaven, that Lucifer would fain become equal to God. Hence he was cast out. No wonder he strives, in hate, to drag My mother down into the mire of sin. No, no, it would be an infamy that would degrade My divinity—it would be an ignominy that would disgrace My humanity—and before the angels in heaven, and men on earth, and demons in hell, it would be the everlasting opprobrium of My mother. And the

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infinite honor of My eternal Father, whose chosen daughter My mother is, would be shamed that I, His Son, would have a sin-stained mother; and the infinite sanctity of Our own Holy Spirit, whose spouse My mother is, would suffer detriment if, for an instant, My mother's purity had been tarnished by guilt.

"Pontiff and Priests, ye have worshipped Me with highest worship to-day, My mother's feast on earth, in that you have crowned her with an honor than which none can be greater—an honor which has been her's from all eternity, and which you proclaim to earth to-day. Pontiff and priests, this day was foreseen from all eternity, and your proclamation on earth was written from the unbeginning in letters as pure as My mother in the mind of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

Thus would Christ give His own divine testimony to the eternal honor of His mother. Thus would the Father and the Holy Spirit testify. And thus the dogma proclaimed that blessed day, in the grandest temple of faith on earth, is based not only on Scripture's inspired words, not only on the teachings of the holy Fathers, not only on the mystical illuminations of countless saints, not only on the traditions handed down from the beginning, not only on the divine proprieties of things, not only on the clearest, unanswerable reasonings of the minds of men; but it rests on the very reason of God, and on the infinite will that decreed it from the beginning, and on the infinite power that guarded the decree, and on the glorious love, which could not be more glorious, that made the eternal decree a reality in time, in the home of Joachim and Anna.

And now listen. Do not they who deny Mary's sin-

less conception deny, consciously or unconsciously, her full blessedness? Do they not, knowingly or unknowingly, lift up their voices against her prophecy: "All generations shall call me blessed?" Do they not, let us hope in ignorance, stand by Satan in the garden, and when they read the curse uttered against Satan: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed" (the words are absolute), do they not think in fact, if not say in words: "No, there will not be absolute and everlasting enmity. There will be an instant, or more, when the enmity will be suspended or cease. She will be conceived in sin and fall under the power of Satan?" The attribution of such power to Satan involves the withdrawal from Christ's mother of her soul's pure honor, and from God the power to prevent or the will to resist such an indignity. Take away the principle of eternal enmity between the Woman and Satan for one instant, how will the enmity be resumed? To honor the power of Satan so as to make it prevail over Mary, is it not a sort of diabolic worship? And to deny the sinlessness of the Mother of Jesus Christ, is it not a sort of diabolic blasphemy?

Oh, Mary! Virgin, Mother, Queen! we are of the generations who rejoice to call thee blessed—blessed in thy predestination, blessed in the promise, and thrice blessed in thy holy and Immaculate Conception. To-day we twine the flower of thy sinless conception in thy crown. But, ah! it is too fair a flower to lend its beauty to but only one day. To-morrow, oh Queen of spotless purity, we will look on the beauty of this spotless flower, that we may fill our hearts with its mystical fragrance. We, who have been conceived in sin and

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brought forth in sorrow, lift up our souls in praise to God for having by His preventing grace, preserved at least one of our race—thee, oh Mary! from stain of sin; and we magnify God, who hath done this thing for thee; and we worship God because He hath placed thee outside of the darkness of sin, and hath established thee in the full sunshine of His infinite grace.

And, oh! though sinless, thou wilt have pity on us sinners. Pray for us sinners "now and at the hour of our death," that we may in our own measure fulfill the prophecy and share thy privilege—that like unto thee, there shall be enmities between our souls and Satan forever and forever.

Aspiration.

Blessed art thou, O Virgin Mary, by the Lord, the most high God, above all women upon the earth. Thou art all fair, O Mary, and there is no stain of sin in thee.

Prayer.

Oh, God! who, by the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, didst prepare a worthy habitation for Thy Son, we beseech Thee that as Thou didst, through the foreseen death of Thy same Son, preserve her from all stain, so Thou wilt also grant that we may reach Thee cleansed through her intercession.

SIXTH DAY.

The Flower of the Immaculate Conception.

SECOND PART.

"Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what great things He hath done for my soul."—*Psalm*, lxv.

To-day let us gaze again upon the spotless purity of this beautiful flower. There are three Edens—the Eden of Genesis, the Eden of grace, and the Eden of glory. The first was an Eden of perfect happiness until innocence was lost; the second is an Eden of perfect grace, in which innocence is regained; the third is an Eden of perfect glory, where innocence, restored by grace, is forever crowned. The first was a material garden, bright with the beauty of all natural beautiful things; the second is the mystical garden of the Church, full of the spiritual beauties of supernatural grace; the third is the Eden of heaven, radiant with the ineffable beauties of everlasting glory.

Before the closed gate of the earthly Eden stands the angel of God's justice, with sword of flame, guarding the gate and barring entrance through it. That first perfect happiness, with innocence lost, never has been and never shall be found again here below. Before the ever-open gate of the mystical Eden of grace, the Holy Church, stands the angel of God's mercy, bidding those who are laden with sorrow and burdened by sin to come and enter. At the narrow gate of the Eden of glory, heaven, as sentinel stands the high Archangel of

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God's sanctity, guarding entrance through it against all souls defiled. In the first Eden, amid the falling ruins of perfect happiness and innocence, God promised the Redeemer and the Woman. In the second Eden of grace, the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the woman, Mary of Nazareth, His mother, appear in fulfillment of the promise; and their relations, each to the other, are as inseparable in the Eden of grace as they were in the garden of the promise. In the third Eden, heaven, Jesus Christ is sitting at the right hand of His Father, in glory, King, as man, over all creations, while with Him, Mary of Nazareth, by right of her royal, divine motherhood, reigns queen over all creatures. And why? Because her Immaculate Conception was, in the divine will, a necessary part of the predestination of Jesus Christ as Son of God, the Redeemer, and therefore King of all creations. It was by God's eternal ordaining, the first preparation for the kingdom of grace, the perfect fulfillment of the promise, the necessary prelude to the foundation of the Church, and to the wonderful history of the Sacraments; and more than that, the very beginning on earth of all man's future glories in heaven.

What then is the Immaculate Conception? It is the restoration, in Mary, of the lost perfect innocence of the earthly paradise; it is the divine dowering of Mary with all the supernatural perfections of Eve in her innocence and before her fall; and still more than that, because sinlessly conceived she is to make true, by conceiving Christ, the very words of Satan to Eve: "Ye shall be as Gods," for Christ, her Son, is our Saviour—God, and by His grace we become partakers of His divinity, and become like unto God.

Mark you, we were made to God's image; the image was not lost by sin, for the image, like the indelible character of baptism, could not be destroyed; but we were also made to His likeness. By the first sin that likeness was destroyed. In the Immaculate Conception of Mary, that lost likeness is restored perfectly to her; if we can so speak (it is against grammar, but in harmony with truth), *more perfectly* in Christ; and in Christ born of her the likeness is restored by grace, but less perfectly to us.

She is the most perfect human person ever made by God (remember her Son, Jesus Christ, is not a human but a divine person); but the perfection of her personality rests on her Immaculate Conception. In what does highest human perfection consist? In the total absence of all sinfulness, and in the presence and possession of all graces.

What said the Angel of the Annunciation to her? "Hail! full of grace!" Therefore, her soul was full of grace, and, therefore, in her soul sin never had a place; but had she been conceived in sin, sin would have had a place in her, and would have emptied her soul of the very grace which is the greatest of all—the absence of the sin original, which is the root of all sinfulness, and the cause of all sins.

These are the proprieties, the reasons and the glories of the Immaculate Conception. All of them? Not half; yet enough. But what is the meaning of the Immaculate Conception? Conception and death are the two terms of every human life. In conception, life begins. In death, life ends. In conception, the soul is united to the substance which is to form the human body, and the moment of that union is the first instant

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of the life of man. Before the actual union of soul and body we cannot properly say that the child has been conceived, or has begun to live, though there is a something, in mystery hidden, disposing itself little by little, and no one knows how long, for the conditions necessary to the receiving of the soul. So, after the actual separation of the soul from the body we cannot say that man lives, or that even he is man, though something of him remains—his corpse, which little by little returns, by its own corruption, unto dust, while the soul has passed into eternity. How is it possible that an infant can be a sinner in its conception, that is to say, in the instant when its soul is united to its body? The infant is incapable of sin, and yet it is infected with the contagion of the sin of our first parents. Why? Because though thousands of years afar from the hour of the first fall,—the moment it is conceived into it flows the sin-stained blood of Adam. For Adam was not only the first; but, because the first, he was the universal man. All humanity was contained in him. When he fell, all humanity fell with him, and this is why every child of his race is born fallen from grace and in sin; so that every child, his in conception, can be called an innocent criminal—innocent, because personally the child has done no wrong, but criminal, because the child is involved originally in the sin of him who, in himself, germinally contained the entire human race. Thousands of oak trees are contained in one single acorn, and if there be a flaw in the acorn, it will be reproduced in every tree that grows from it.

Whence, then, to each person of our fallen race comes the stain of sin? Does it come from the soul, or does it come from the body? Not from the soul; because the

soul is created directly by God and comes pure from His hands. Not from the body; because the body is not capable before animation of having any part in sin. How then comes the stain? The soul is innocent, and the unanimated body is incapable of sin. This is how. The instant soul and body unite, their union produces a child of Adam; and to be a child of Adam is to inherit in person, with his blood, his sin, and with his sin its penalties for soul and body. In Adam we all have sinned, and on account of sin we die.

If the blessed Virgin Mary sinned in Adam, she was certainly conceived in sin. Did she sin in Adam? Was she, like the rest of the race, involved in the fall from grace? There is no better place to answer the question than the very scene of the primal guilt.

Go we now there. Eve fell—Adam fell, Satan conquered. But God came into that garden. What are His words? They breathe malediction against Satan, and promise benediction to the race in some future day. "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." Mark, He says "I will." That means the future. Will God ever do anything, in any future, that He has not decreed to do from all eternity? No; and why? Because if He would, it would be because He would have a new thought. God cannot have new thoughts. His thoughts are as old as Himself—eternal. Therefore, that enmity between the woman and Satan is from all eternity. It is not a new thought, it is an eternal decree. If eternal, the enmity must be always. If she were conceived in sin the enmity would not be always, it would cease awhile. Then God, if He lets the enmity cease for an instant, in time, between the woman, Mary of Nazareth,

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and the evil spirit, would contradict and contravene, here below, His very own eternal decree. Will He do it? No; why? Because He cannot do it. Why? Because an eternal truth would become an eternal lie. With God all things are possible save one; and that is self-contradiction.

No, no, the common laws that rule every person of Adam's race do not govern the person of Mary. All women conceive children by men. She conceives her child by the operation of the Holy Ghost. All women bring forth in sorrow. She brought forth in gladness. All die in pain. She died what could scarcely be called a death. The separation of her soul from her body was a rapture. All bodies return to dust and await the day of resurrection. Her pure body was translated to heaven. As in her conceiving Christ, so in her own conception she stands outside and above the general law, an eternal exception.

Many, in ignorance, imagine that our Holy Church, in proclaiming the truth of Mary's Immaculate Conception, teaches that Mary's body, as well as her soul, was created directly by God. Let us have pity on ignorance, when it cannot help itself. But who can respect that ignorance which, by examining, can correct itself, and will not? If God himself had created her body, as well as her soul, she would not belong to the human race at all. Then her Son, Christ, would not belong to the race. Then, in no real sense, would He be man. Nor could He call himself the Son of Man.

Now, who are they who deny the truth of Mary's Immaculate Conception? What is their character for learning and piety? They are those who imagine (mark you, *imagine*, for they have no settled beliefs; they are

not nourished by the manna of faith divine, and they try to satisfy their soul's hunger—do they ever satisfy it? God help them if they can, with the husks of human opinions) that by covering the conception of Mary with the cloak of original sin, they are placing a crown of greater glory on the head of Jesus Christ. Foolish men, and blind! Christ would tear such crown in twain and trample it under His feet. His glory is her glory, and her ignominy is His ignominy.

Of all the moments of her life, its first instant was its supremest. For that first instant was to tell for her or against her forever. It was to be the criterion of the very character of her soul. If conceived in sin, she would be placed in the position and possibility of never seeing God face to face; and more, if sin touched her, and she was an instant under the power of Satan, God, by His sanctity, was obliged to look upon her with infinite hatred, and to hold her in abomination. Could such a thing be? And the Son of God, who was to be her son sixteen years afterwards, would have been obliged to regard His own future mother with detestation. No, no; a conception in sin of God's Mother would be an infinite horror. It is as abhorrent to the Divinity of the Son as it would be unworthy of the human personality of His Mother Mary. But why say more?

Our Holy Church has defined the dogma as God had decreed its truth. Mary, in her conception and birth, is a living sacrament—she being, on earth, the living outward sign of the greatest grace to creature ever given. God's power could not go farther. In her person, God made the greatest act of divine love for our race that even He could make; the greatest, save the greater one of assuming in her our human nature. And these

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grand acts of eternal love are inseparable from one another.

Not very far from Jerusalem lived Joachim, of the royal tribe of Juda, with Anna, his saintly spouse. They were rich in flocks. They divided their riches into three parts: the first for the temple and the ministers of the altar; the second for the poor; and the third for themselves. They were faithful to the law.

Sacred Scripture does not mention even their names; nor does Scripture say one word about the conception and birth of Mary. A veil of mysterious silence hangs around these two great mysteries. Remember that the inspired writers have not written a single word or omitted to write a single thing without the special direction of the Holy Spirit. Not a word about her conception; not a word about her birth; not a word about her childhood; not a word about her life in the temple; not a single word until in the Gospel of St. Matthew we read: "And Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called the Christ." And then not another word until in the first chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke we read: "The angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, and the name of the virgin was Mary."

What is the meaning of this mysterious silence, for the silences of the Scriptures have meanings as well as its written words?

Around the Eternal Father of the Eternal Son what a silence hangs like a holy veil. He stays in the eternal silences, and in infinite silence He speaks His Eternal Word. So the Mother of that Eternal Word Incarnate wears on earth the mantle of silence until the Angel of

the Annunciation comes. For Mary, as the Mother of the Son of God, is to bear a strange resemblance to His Eternal Father. Hence the silence that veils her birth and first years.

Ah! how many there are, outside our Holy Church, who read the Scriptures and make great boast of their knowledge, and yet read its words divine all in vain and miss their deepest meanings! But since the marriage day of Joachim and Anna years went by; twenty years, says St. Jerome; forty years say others; and they bore the opprobrium of barrenness. No child came to bless their union, and a childless marriage was a humiliation among their people. But they waited and they prayed, and they hoped against hope.

Never is the effect of grace more evident and powerful than when nature is powerless. Was not Isaac, the Patriarch, born of Sara, who was barren? Was not Jacob, his son, born of Rebecca, who was barren? Was not Joseph born of Rachel, who was barren? Was not Samuel, the prophet, born of Anna, who was barren? Was not Sampson, that miracle of strength, born of a barren mother? Was not John the Baptist, than whom, by the testimony of Christ, none greater was ever born of woman, born of Elizabeth when she was aged and barren? Strange mystery! but with God all things are possible, and when nature is powerless, He loves to manifest His own power; and is there not a strange resemblance between barrenness and virginity, since both are equally without fruit?

The prayers of Joachim and Anna were heard at last. St. Jerome says that the angel Gabriel announced to each of them separately that God would answer their prayers· and the glorious answer was the Immaculate

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Conception of Mary in the womb of Anna. It was a natural, and not a supernatural conception. The name Joachim signifies the Preparation of the Lord, and Anna signifies grace. Was the immaculateness of Mary's conception revealed to them? Some writers think so. And now, from the sinless soul of Mary, in her mother's womb, ascended to God acts of worship greater than the angels' adorations; for, remember, her sinless soul had at once the fullness of reason and the illumination of all the graces of the Holy Spirit. All the perfections of the soul of Eve in the instant of her creation were in the soul of Mary in the first moment of her conception. The light of perfect understanding, the strength of perfect love, the perfect union of her will with the Divine Will, all these, and more, were there. In the first instant of her conception her soul was self-conscious, and while she was corporally united to Anna, her mother, her soul at once became intimately united to God, in a union that was never to be broken. The life of her soul reached an almost infinite intensity.

Never had God been praised as she was silently praising Him then. Never had God been so loved as her sinless soul was loving Him. Faith, hope and charity, in perfection, filled her soul; and every instant was a perfect act of each; and as the hours and the days and the months went by, and her mother waited for the moment of the birth of the child she bore, that child was giving more glory to God than all the angels in heaven. Only one was to give to God a greater glory; and He was to be her Son, Jesus Christ.

Did the angels in heaven know of the mystery? Did God reveal it to them in reward for their fidelity in the day of their trial? And if He did, how they must have

longed for the coming of their Queen! Oh! sinless soul, next to the human soul of thy future Son, most beautiful! all pure! most glorious! perfect with all perfections! full of all graces! sweet hope of the hopes of the world! we salute thee in the mystery of thy Immaculate Conception! we bless thee for the blessings thou hast received from on high! And, oh Immaculate, we bless thee more for the blessed Christ whom thou wilt bring to us in the day when thou shalt say from the depths of thy all pure soul: "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord, be it done unto me according to His word."

Is there any need to go back to the past and ask the saints of old to give their testimony? No need indeed; but still it might edify; for the words of saints bear the seal of their sanctities. Read the ancient liturgy containing the Masses of St. James and of St. Mark, the Evangelist. In the first, Mary is saluted as "most holy, most glorious, immaculate, altogether outside the ranks of sinners." In the other, Mary is called "most holy, immaculate and blessed, ever Virgin Mother of God." Listen to St. Hyppolitus, Bishop and Martyr, nigh seventeen hundred years ago. He salutes Mary as Immaculate. And old Origen calls her "the Holy and Immaculate Mother of the Immaculate;" as if he were drawing a parallel between the purity of the Mother and the purity of the Son. Hear the words of Gregory, the wonder worker of Neo-Cæsaria: "An angel without a body was sent to a Virgin pure and Immaculate. He, who had never known sin, was sent to her who was spotless and without the corruption of sin." Let Cyprian, the great Archbishop, speak from his throne in Carthage: "Mary is like the rest of mortals in nature, but not in sin."

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Fifteen hundred years ago, St. Epiphanias, Bishop, not in preaching, but in prayer, exclaims: "Thou art full of grace, Oh thrice Blessed Virgin, and, after God, thou dost excel all creatures! In entering this world thou art more beautiful than the Cherubim and Seraphim." Would she have been more beautiful than those highest of the angels, had she ever been stained with original sin? Listen to the great St. Augustine, the prince of the doctors of the Church, in his discussion with the heretic Pelagius: "When there is question of sin, on account of the honor of the Lord, the Virgin Mary is out of the question." And so, from age to age, saint passes down to saint one grand unbroken testimony to the truth of the mystery of the Immaculate Conception; and in the halls of holy councils echoed the word, Mary's word, "Immaculate." True, here and there, at times, rose a voice of hesitation, of uncertain sound, and sometimes of doubt; but not, all along the line, one single great voice of plain denial. Religious orders, confraternities, universities, cathedrals, kingdoms, all adown the centuries, placed themselves under the protection of Mary of the Immaculate Conception; and all these traditions, of the same universal belief, blended with the words of Scripture, expressed themselves on that eighth of December, eighteen years ago, in the solemn definition of the dogma.

And was it not singularly appropriate that these United States, free from all tyranny, and the home of all the natural rights born with men, should be placed under the special patronage of Mary Immaculate, who was free from all the tyranny of sin, and whose soul, by her Immaculate Conception, became the sanctuary of

all the supernatural rights of grace? Oh, Mary Immaculate! guard with loving care this country dedicated to thee. Let thy purity keep it pure. Watch over its institutions. As thou art the refuge of all sinners, this country is the refuge of the exile and the oppressed; guide it ever in the ways of peace; let it never forget its high vocation to teach the nations of the world, by word and example, the principles of well regulated liberty and reverence for the rights of man! Let not its prosperity be its ruin! Many, alas! of its children, who know not what they do, are walking in uncertain paths, which are dark and lead them away from truth! Mother of all! pray for us and plead for them, that we, thy children, may love and honor thee more and more, and love and adore thy adorable Son with more fervent faith; and that they who are wandering in error's path may, through thy intercession, return to the one fold of the true Shepherd, who is thy only Son forever, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Aspiration.

"Cry with joy to God, all the earth.

"Sing ye a psalm to His name; give glory to His prais

"Say unto God: How terrible, Oh Lord! are Thy works; in the multitude of Thy strength Thy enemies shall lie to Thee!"—*Psalm*, lxv.

Prayer.

Almighty and everlasting God, vouchsafe, we beseech Thee, that as we venerate with festal-solemnity the stainless virginity of the purest of Virgins, Mary; so thro' her intercession we may attain into purity both of mind and body.

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SEVENTH DAY.

The Flower of the Birth.

"I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope. In me is all grace of the way and of the truth; in me is all hope of life and of virtue."—*Eccl.*, xxiv.

LET us go, in the spirit of faith and love, to-day to the thrice blessed home where the Immaculate Queen of the blessed was born.

Tread softly, for we are to enter a new Eden of perfect innocence and highest grace. In reverence let us go in, as if we were passing through the gate of a sanctuary, where a sanctity incomparable is hiding in a holy tabernacle.

Eighty days have passed since the birth of Mary. For a man child, as we read in Leviticus, the law ordained forty days of purification for the mother, and twice forty days for a maid child.

Anna went to the temple and offered two doves on the altar, one a burnt offering and the other a sin offering. She is purified, according to the law; she returns home, praising the God of her fathers, and her soul is filled with the peace of a great gladness.

On the face of the aged Joachim there shines a light as if it were a gleam of joy reflected from the heavens. The old man is thinking of the past. Strangely through

his memory move the words of a hundred prophecies. Dim presentiments about his child fill his soul; and somehow, if he does not know all, he seems to feel the glory of her future. The words of Isaias: "The Lord Himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel," have set him dreaming; and, somehow, while he gazes on the face of his little Mary, he scarcely knows why, the words of Jeremias: "The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man," seem to put on meanings new and very near to him.

In Anna's arms the infant is nestling; and the mother looks, as only mothers can look, with her heart in her eyes, upon her offspring. She, too, was a-dreaming, as she gathered her child to her breast in the clasp of love; and, like all mother's dreams, hopes and fears, desires and doubts, met in her soul, and yet did not destroy its peace.

Ah, yes! this is a holy place. If not the Lord, the Mother of the coming Lord is here, a little infant. How frail it seems! What a far-off look in its eyes! What a fair and beauteous face! How perfect the beauty of its body. No wonder in the soul within it the beauty of perfect grace is reigning. Look how the little hands are clasped, as if in prayer! but the lips move not. Nearly three months old now, with a perfect self-conscious soul from the first instant of conception,—but the body must grow, little by little, like the rest of children. There must be nothing startling, nothing extraordinary in the child's external life. She must be just like any other child; for the secret of her coming into this world, and why she came, must not yet be revealed.

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How hidden everything is about the child! In her veins, even now, is flowing the very blood which Christ will take into His humanity, and which, derived pure from her, the all-pure, and united to His divinity, will become infinite in mercy and in merits when it flows for us in the day of Calvary. God makes no sign. His future mother is a frail little infant. Ah! how the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in infinite love, must have watched over the predestined child! How Gabriel, her guardian angel, must have hovered near her!

How all the angels of heaven (for surely now they know of the mystery of Mary of Nazareth) must have glorified the Eternal in the contemplation of this, the most beautiful creature of all the Creation! And the world went on just the same as ever; the world that was losing the instincts of the supernatural, waiting, it is true, for the coming of the Messiah, but, indeed, little dreaming that His Mother had already come. It was all so still. No one saw, no one heard, no one knew of the mystery hidden in the dwelling of Joachim and Anna. It is God's way. He moves in His great designs strongly but sweetly. He made no noise when He created the heavens and earth, and He was stiller than ever at the cradle of Mary. Do not all grand and beautiful things move towards their purposes and reach their perfections in the silences?

Who hears the flowers growing, or the grasses, or the trees? Who hears the earth moving? Who hears the stars marching, like bannered hosts, through the heavens? Is not nature, when it moves in harmony, always still? Only when its elements are thrown out of order, and their forces clash, comes the din of confusion.

So in the world of supernature, the Spiritual and the Divine move on in a harmony beautiful as a hymn, heard in the heavens clearly, but too sweet to be heard by human sense; praiseful of God and peaceful for man. It is only when the weak will and strong passions of the human heart rise in rebellion against the laws of grace that the tumult comes in which God can never dwell.

But around Mary fell, from the first, the stillness and the peace of God. Why? Because her will was in perfect harmony with God's decrees and designs. Because, from the first moment of her life she was in perfect accord with the eternal will. Indeed, a mystery of silence folded all her life. What great strengths have their homes in the silences! Ask the world's thinkers, and they will tell you that their deepest thoughts, and best, came to them, like stars, in the silences of the nights. Ask the world's singers, and they will tell you that their grandest songs came sounding through their souls in the stillnesses of the dark. Enter the monasteries, back of whose closed gates live men gifted with glorious speech, and they have long hours of silences; and through those hours their feet walk faster towards God. Go into the convents of the virgins of the Church. They, too, have their hours and days of silence, in which the whisper of a word cannot be heard, and their hearts, like the lilies of the valley, are growing and whitening in the silence. Enter a Catholic church, without a single worshipper or with thousands crowded, what a silence?

The spell of the silence of the Tabernacle falls on them all. And that Tabernacle-silence; how mysterious, and yet how mighty? In the half-hour Mass in

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the morning what a silence comes down upon the Altar when the priest reaches the moment of consecration, when infinite love and infinite power hide themselves in the stillness of a little white host? And the church itself, what a silence she keeps about the deposit of Christ's revelations in her possession. How the years pass—she the while listening to human discussions, with the quiet patience of Christ at Pilate's tribunal, before she rises and proclaims her dogmas.

Human churches, like the men who founded them, are noisy. In them is the everlasting chatter of discordant tongues about changeable opinions. They are always talking, and at random. The Church of Christ inherits the stillness as well as the speech of Christ, and she never says an unnecessary word.

How still are the rays of the sun that bring to us the light of heaven. In their coming they make no noise, but when they do come they clothe the world with robes of glory. So Mary was to bring to us the light of the sun of justice. Heard ye ever the snow-flakes falling? Silently they fall, and they weave a virgin-veil for earth. So the Virgin of virgins came silently, to weave out of her pure flesh the veil of Christ's humanity. How silently in the bosom of nature, where poor earth is as a virgin, is she, unknown to us, giving birth, like a fruitful mother, to emeralds, pearls, amethysts, diamonds and a hundred other beautiful children of clay?

Only those elements which are like man's variable will and restless passions make din and discord here below; the sea, with its stormy waves; the air, with its changeful winds; the rivers, with their rise and fall and noisy flow; the clouds, with their lightnings and thunders; fire, with its angry violences; and in the brute

creation, those animals only which, in voice and ferocity, seem to symbolize the destructive power of sin in man.

Have we strayed away from the little Mary in the arms of Anna? Not at all. We have never left the holy chamber. Look! the infant has fallen asleep. Let us not awake her! Speak low, No! pray low. Oh! infant, in whose heart the blood of our Redeemer is even now beating, dream your dreams divine, but dream in pity, too, and in love of us poor sinners! Come now from the sleeping child to the Altar where her Christ, and ours, is sleeping in the Eucharist.

It is the eighth of September, the Feast of the Nativity. This month the sun passes, in the zodiac, out of the sign of the lion into the sign of the virgin. So into her was to pass, and over us was to shine forever, the sun of justice; and the sign of the lion, which is the sign of that evil one, "who goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," would be subjected forever to the sign of the virgin in the zodiac of the heaven of grace.

According to a tradition, from the beginning, Mary was born on the eighth day of September. Listen to St. Ambrose. The eighth day, or octave, is not a day of time. It is a day of eternity. "The octave is the crowning of our hope." Our time is reckoned by weeks, and the week has but seven days. When the week ends we begin one again, and count from the first to the seventh day. Beyond the seventh we do not pass, and thus the eighth day is not in the measurement of time, and the day that passes beyond the calendar of the week of time is of eternity. See you not the mystical reason why the octave should be her birthday, for with her birthday dawned the eternal day of Christ. The dawn

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came first; the sun is coming soon. So, back in the far ages, our Holy Church commemorates Mary's nativity on the eighth day of September. What other church celebrates it? The Greek church; yes. What other? None. If they celebrate the birth of Christ on Christmas day, why not celebrate the nativity of Christ's Mother? Does ever the sun of nature come without the dawn? and, in supernature's heavens, the sun of justice has, necessarily, his Aurora. If you keep the birth of the sun of justice in the noon of Christmas night, why not keep the feast of the dawn of the sun, in Mary's birth, in September? Ah! you want the sun, but you disdain its dawn! Have your way, but it is neither nature's nor supernature's way. We follow the way of both—the Catholic way.

Look! the priest is coming to the Altar, with the chalice and the bread. He is going to sing the Mass. Was it wrong for her to have been born? Is it then wrong to celebrate her birthday? Do you not keep the birthdays of the great and the illustrious, who were often, alas, great sinners? Do you not keep the birthday of your own mothers, and can you let the birthday of the Mother of Christ pass as any other common day, and all unnoticed? Go on! priest of the Son of Mary, and celebrate the sacrifice of Him who was sin's victim, and is our Saviour and Mary's son.

Ah! Holy Church, thou art beautiful in thy mind, for the light of truth is shining ever there; and thou art beautiful in thy heart, for the love of Christ is ever throbbing there; and thou art beautiful in thy memory of the holy ones of God, writing their names on the brows of all thy days; keeping feasts in their honor, but, above all, holding in eternal remembrance, at the Altar of the victim, His Mother's holy name.

Listen to the first words of the Mass in honor of Mary's nativity: "*Thy birth, oh Virgin Mary! Mother of the Son of God, has announced joy to all the world, because thou hast brought forth the Sun of Justice, Jesus Christ, our God, who, taking away malediction, gave benediction, and confounding death, gave unto us eternal life.*"

Are they not true, true as very Scripture? Do they honor or dishonor Christ, her son? From the lips of the priest they ascend to the heavens. Is Christ angry? Are the words a sin against Him? Is He afraid to hear His Mother praised, lest He might, thereby, lose a part of His glory? Why then did He make her so glorious? Why did He make her His Mother? Can He ever be jealous of her who conceived Him, gave Him birth, nursed Him, watched over His childhood, and stood at the foot of His cross? Has she not the right to be forever remembered as His Mother, and, if remembered, forever praised on earth? Priest, sing the *Gloria!* The song belongs to Him, but it was not sung until He had become hers. It belongs to both. Now go to the Gospel side, and sing the Gospel of the day.

Listen! "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Abraham begot Isaac; and Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judas and his brethren," and down a long and glorious ancestry of patriarchs, prophets, princes and kings, from name to name, moves the inspired pen of Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist, until it pauses thus: "And Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called the Christ." The moment her name is written, His, the Christ's, is linked to it. Such was His and her ancestry.

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But she was to have but one descendant, Jesus Christ our Saviour. She closes the "Book of the Generation of Jesus Christ." Take her name away, then take His. But she herself was, and is, the living book of the generation of Christ. How? Listen! In God was infinite and eternal thought. He expressed that thought in His Eternal Word—His only Son. But this thought, eternally conceived in the mind of God and eternally expressed, remained hidden in the Trinity. No one saw it, no one heard, no one knew it, save the three Divine persons. God willed to speak this Word outside of Himself and eternity, in time, and God willed to write this Word in a living book, that it might be heard and read forever. Mary received the secret thought of God and the invisible Word. Through her it was spoken in time and became Incarnate. In her pure flesh it was written and became visible. She does not express the Word as the Father does, but she bears it written in herself, and she makes it visible in the humanity of Jesus Christ, her son, to all the world.

While I am writing these words, the dawn of day is beginning to gild the eastern horizon, and to glimmer over the waves of the Gulf of Mexico. The waves, only a hundred yards away from where I write, are just waking from sleep. Last night they were very still. Not a wave sang or moaned on the pure, white shore, and now they seem glad for the coming of the day. Far out on the waters, the sails of the fishing boats have welcomed the beautiful dawn. I am thinking of Mary, not as the star of the sea, but I am thinking of her birth, as the dawn of the everlasting day of Christ. Perhaps, the sweetest hour of the day is that of the Aurora, *aurea hora,* golden hour, which banishes the

darkness of the night and brings the light of the day. Out there, on the moss-veiled trees, the birds are beginning to sing their morning prayers. Light to the waking waves and joy to the wakened wild birds, the fair Aurora brings. Why? The waves and the birds know why. The sun, in his glory, will soon be born out of the heart of the Aurora. What a virginal light it is! The Aurora is the day's virgin, and, while it is the pure child created by the coming sun, it seems to be the mother that brings forth the sun, which gives to the day its golden hours, to the earth its fairest beauties, and to the heavens its wondrous glory.

So Mary, in her birth, is the virgin created by the Son of God. In a little while the virgin, because she is a virgin, will become His Mother; and as the sun of day, when he rises above the horizon, does not destroy the light of dawn, but gathers its beautiful light into his own splendors and carries it with him up into the heavens; so when the Sun of Justice, clothed with the splendors of His Eternal Father, will rise over the world, He will gather into His glory and blend with His infinite light, as He ascends on high, the fair, sweet light of His Mother Mary.

And as the Aurora came before the sun, and follows the sun wheresoever he shineth, inseparable from his last rays as from his first, so the Virgin Mother, in her pure human light, will follow and be mingled with the light of Him who "enlightens every one that cometh into the world."

Oh fair light! oh sweet light! oh gentle light! shine on our days! Shine o'er our ways forever! and, as thou wert the beautiful dawn of Christ in this world, be the dawn of the day of thy children's blessed eternity.

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Aspiration.

All the glory of the King's daughter is within, in golden borders,—clothed round about with vanities. After her virgins shall be brought to the King. They shall be brought with gladness and rejoicing. They shall be brought into the temple of the King.

Prayer.

Vouchsafe, O Lord, we beg of Thee, to grant us, Thy servants, the gift of heavenly grace; that as in the childbirth of the Blessed Virgin, our salvation began, we may obtain an increase of peace.

EIGHTH DAY.

The Flower of the Name.

"I came out of the mouth of the Most High; the first-born before all creatures. I made, that in the heavens there should rise light that never faileth, and as a cloud I covered all the earth. I dwelt in the highest places, and My throne is in a pillar of a cloud."

There is mystery in names. All objects come to our understanding through their different names. The objects themselves are more than mere names, but they must be named in order to be clearly known, though when named, they may not be fully known. Names distinguish things each from the other. Names are the titles of things. What is nameless is unknown, and has no real existence for us. The nameless is a nothing. Names are symbols that cannot be separated from their objects without producing confusion in speech as well as chaos in the mind. Each object owns, in its own right, its own name, and cannot be robbed of it. The lily is a lily, and the rose is a rose, and each must keep its own exclusive title in order to be known. All speech is based primarily on nouns, which are names of objects. This is the fundamental part of every language, and the other parts of speech have meanings only as they refer to names. But names of intelligent beings are greater than names of mere material things; because the higher the object in the ascending scale of creation, the greater the name. The name of God is supreme and incommunicable. He alone can bear it.

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Angels in heaven have each their particular name, the mark of their individuality in the angelic world. Some of their names, by revelation, we know, and each of their names has a special, exclusive meaning of its own. Michael, the prince of the heavenly hosts, Raphael, Gabriel, are not only named in heaven, but their names are known on earth. In the human race, each child of Adam has his own especial name.

In the Christian order, we each receive our name in baptism, as in the old covenant days the Hebrews received theirs on the day of circumcision. Unlike the angels, we have family names, for we are the offspring of human generation, having fathers and mothers. Not so the angels. They have special names, but the name of the particular choir in the heavenly hierarchy to which they belong corresponds to our family name. Think as you please, we and our names go together, and is it strange? our names will last longer than ourselves. When the souls of men have gone to eternity and their bodies to the resting place of the dead, their names still live; some a little while, some a longer while, some for ages, and a few forever. Our merit or demerit passes into our names, remains there, and lasts after we have passed away

Human history is a necrology. From the days of Adam until yesterday, it is names, and the name of the dead that give life to the record of human events. Mortal men are made immortal by their names; and, ah! fallen from our first estate, though we are, what glorious names have been written in the annals of our race. Beyond the Messiah's day, out of the days of the law of nature, Adam, Abel, Seth, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, then Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Joshua, Esther,

David, Solomon, Isaias, Jeremias, Ezechiel, Daniel, Zacharias, Malachy and others not here named, God's instruments in the order of providence. And in the outer world, lying in the darkness of idolatry, conquerors, poets, philosophers, whose names are living still, and who, in their day and way, unconsciously furthered the designs of God; and all to prepare the world for the coming of Him whose name is above all names, Jesus Christ. But before His name is written on the first page of the New Testament, we read the name of Mary. Her name was the morning star that shone before the sun of His name rose on the horizon of human history.

His earthly name, Jesus Christ, is as incommunicable as His name in eternity, the Eternal Word; and it was His Mother who, giving Him his humanity, gave Him, according to the angel's word, the adorable name, Jesus. "And thou shalt call His name Jesus." His name is the light of the world, but He would not have borne that name had not His Mother borne Him.

In the eclipses of your souls, and, ah! their shadows fall on all, and when you cry for less of dark and more of bright, do you not call on the name of Jesus, the eternal light? His Mother gave Him His name. Can you forget that?

His name is a name of strength, and when you are weak and passion is strong, and you feel yourselves unequal to cope with the power of evil, do you not have recourse to the power of the name of Jesus? Well, His Mother named Him so. Always remember that. And His name is Truth, and Hope, and Love, and Everlasting Life; and His name Jesus has infinite beautiful meanings besides. The evangelists named Him Christ; and asked, before His passion, "Art thou Christ?" He

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answered the High Priest: "Thou hast said it." But His greater name, His Saviour name, is Jesus! and His Mother gave it to Him.

In your sins and in your sorrows, do you fall down before the Saviour Jesus, and plead for the mercy He never refuses? Do you breathe His name as if it were the very breath of the life of your souls? Remember that the mother who bore Him named Him, and love and honor His Mother's name. And His Mother's name is Mary, and, next to His, that name is the highest and the holiest.

Thousands bear the Virgin Mother's name and glorify it by their virtues, but many, alas, are named with her name who are not worthy to bear it. In no Mary on earth, does, or can, the name mean what it means in her. And what does it mean in her? It has depths we cannot fathom. It has heights we cannot touch. It has beauties beyond the reach of words, no matter how beautiful. It has glories beyond the reach of loftiest thought. It has real meanings of relations to Christ, which never have been and never can be told. It has mystical meanings of relations to the Father and the Holy Spirit beyond our comprehension. It has spiritual meanings of relations with the angelic world and with ours, which nor man nor angel can adequately describe. It is, in a sense, an eternal name, for the name was appointed to her in the eternal decree of her predestination. St. Peter Damian says, that the name of Mary came directly out of the treasury of the Divinity.

Father, Son and Holy Ghost decreed the name from all eternity. It was praised and glorified by the angels from the beginning of the world. It is the name of alliance between heaven and earth, and God and man;

not in the infinite sense in which the name of Jesus Christ bears that title, but in the highest and holiest sense which the name of a finite creature can reach. It is a name fragrant with all spiritual sweetnesses. It is a mirror which reflects more of the light of the name of Jesus Christ than all the rest of creation. It is the everlasting accord of the name of Jesus. They have sounded together from all eternity, Jesus and Mary, the divine note and the human note, in the glorious hymn of God's mercy. Sound either apart, and the music is false. Each note is in need of the other in the true song of redemption.

Her name is the pure and sacred vase which contains the chrism of the name of Christ. Her name is the holy lamp of the wisest of virgin of virgins, which burns with the divine oil of the name of Christ. Her name is a crown in which are intertwined all human perfections, all spiritual grace and glories only inferior to God's. Her name is a garden, "a closed garden," full of flowers, which bloom with the beauty of God. Her name is a pure fountain, high up on the loftiest mountains of the sanctities, whence flows to us, and over the world forever, the holy stream of Christ's most precious blood, with salvation in its every crimson drop. Her name is the mysterious tree, with one root in the Trinity and the other on earth, in Joachim and Anna, which has produced the fruit of eternal life, Jesus Christ. Her name is like the "burning bush," which Moses saw, growing on sinless ground and flaming with the light of the name Jesus. Her name is like the ark of the new covenant, with the manna of the name of Christ within it.

Her name is the pure, white, finite shore that girdles the sea of the infinite. Her name is the golden cloud,

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floating in the heavens and over the earth, with not one dark spot on it, and filled with the splendors of the Divinity. Her name is like the pillar of fire that goes before the chosen people, guiding them across the bleak deserts of time, to the land of eternal promise—it, the pillar, and the name of Jesus the fire that flames around it. Her name is like the dove of the deluge, bearing the olive branch of the peace of the name of Christ across the angry waters to all who are in the ark of salvation. Her name is the beautiful gate that opens into the temple of grace. Her name is the holy, mysterious veil that hangs before the Holy of Holies, where dwells the living name of Christ.

Her name is like a valley, where the flowers of the graces of the name of Christ bloom forever in the bright spring-tide and summer-days of Mercy. Her name is the star, with never shadow on it, that shines the highest and the brightest in the heavens of faith and hope and love, to which the magnet of the heart of every storm-tossed mariner on the sea of life is turned, the polar star of heaven, with the light of Jesus in it, to guide their way and lead them to the eternal haven. Her name is the glorious rainbow of peace and hope, spanning all the days of time, from the garden of Eden to the valley of judgment, on which the light of the Sun of Justice shines forever reflected, and beneath which walk the generations who love the name and keep the law of her Divine Son.

From the beginning of the Church, all down the centuries until this very day, true faith has bound together the names of Jesus and Mary, as they were bound together in the great decree of mercy in eternity; as their persons were bound together in the promise in

Eden, and as they were bound together in the bond of the birth in Bethlehem, the bond of blood, and as they were bound together on the hill of Calvary, in the bond of sorrow. Separate one name from the other, and the mystery of the Incarnation is a broken thing. The name of Jesus leans on the name of Mary for its human meaning, as much and as really as the name of Jesus leans on the name of the Eternal Father for its divine meaning.

No wonder that the name of Mary sounds round the altar of her Son in our Holy Church. Say the Apostles Creed. First is named God, the Father; then Jesus Christ, His only Son, "who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." His name is linked to the Father's, the Holy Ghost's name to His, and to the Holy Ghost is linked the name of the Virgin Mary. So the Christian Creed binds the names together. Can that Church be called Christian that will break the holy circle of the four names? No. In the Greek Church, and the others of Eastern rites, they keep, as we, the names forever united in their liturgies as in their creeds. And if the Creed be right, we and they are right. Alas! for the so-called churches who have banished the name of Mary from their services; or who, if they speak her name, do it in halting tone and bated breath. The New Testament is, in highest sense, the everlasting "Religious Service" of man's redemption, and the prelude to it is ever the same, it begins with the name of Mary, of whom was born Christ.

Oh! Holy Church, thou art the living New Testament, not written by human hands, but formed by the Holy Spirit; thou art the speaking New Testament, and wheresoever thou goest, thou art true to all the

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truth of redemption, which is human and divine, and which comes to the world with two inseparable names impressed upon it, names which are the signs of heaven and of earth—Jesus and Mary!

Truths must be revealed to be believed, and beliefs must be taught to be accepted; but faiths must have festivals. In what Church, outside of ours, is feast kept in honor of the Holy Name of Mary? In none. No wonder, then, our Holy Church has feasts besides her Sundays. Must the "communion of saints" lie in the Creed, a mere, cold dogma, to be read with the eyes and accepted by the mind,—only that and nothing more? No, no, the truly, fully Christian heart needs something more. Dogmas must have days of festival, when they clothe themselves with earthly beauty, and thus appeal to faith's high and holy emotions; and holy names, as well, must have their holy-days. The calendar of the Church is spiritual, not secular. The world keeps feasts of great events and of names which it considers great, and it is well; but we, we celebrate events still greater, and commemorate names by sanctity made immortal; and next to the name of the all-holy, Jesus Christ, what reason can forbid feast in honor of His purest Mother Mary? So, scattered through the months of the year, are days set apart to honor the Mother who has honored all the days of time. In each of the feasts in which she receives the homage of our honor, beside her stands Christ, who alone claims our adoration; while in every feast of His in which He demands our supreme worship, she stands beside Him and claims her honors as His Mother.

In the spring-tide, when the sun, greatening in brightness and growing in warmth, announces the coming of

the flowers, we keep the feast of the Angelical Annunciation. When summer, like a queen, assumes all her splendors in the month of August, we celebrate the feast of Mary's glorious assumption and coronation. When autumn comes, and men are gathering the fruits of the year, we commemorate, in September, the festival of the nativity of Mary, who was the purest fruit of prophecy and promise. In the mid of winter, when nature looks like death, we keep, with Mary, in Bethlehem, the great festival of the birth of the Giver of that life that never dies; and strewn between these greater festivals, are other days, blessed and bright in their dedication to the blessed Mary

But days pass—their life is only twenty-four hours; they do not last. But temples last; monuments last; orders of men and women last; hymns last. Go through every country in Europe; look upon those grand temples built in the ages of faith; call them dark, if you will, it is the fashion, and ignorance is imitative, but show us in modern days brighter monuments. Show us grander art. Match by modern skill, if you can, the magnificence of those minsters conceived in the heart and built by the hands of true faith. You cannot do it. Your age is too material. It is the age of factories, not the age of temples. It has lost the instincts of spiritual beauty; it is building the material on the ruins of the spiritual. It is an age of reason; yes, but a reason growing materialized and forgetting how to believe. It worships in the workshop of man, not in the temple of God. These eyes that guide this pen have looked, in a wonder passing all words, upon those monuments whose histories are ages and ages; and how many of them bear the name of the Blessed Virgin Mary? It is beyond

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our reckoning. From the marble stones hidden in humility deep down in the ground; and, like unknown saints, forming the unseen foundation, up to where the cross, on lofty tower, kisses the skies, comes the evidence of the veneration of the people for the name of Mary. Enter the grand aisles leading up to the Christian's Holy of Holies. At either side altars stand, like sleepless sentinels, to guard the sacramental presence in its own special shrine; and sure you are to find an altar dedicated to Mary there, and sometimes her own altar is, like herself, the altar-mother where her Son in the Eucharist rests.

The stories of the joys and sorrows, the triumphs and tears of souls innumerable, seem still to live in the silences of those glorious temples. Every stone you tread on has its memories. If the feast days pass, the temples last. It was a rule of the Cistercians to dedicate all their churches and chapels and monasteries to the Blessed Virgin Mary. In our Holy Church there is nothing dead. Its truths spring into eternal life in dogmas, its devotion makes itself visible in the material structure of glorious temples; but it goes farther, and enshrines its thoughts and love of Christ and Mary in the holy hymns of Christian poesy. Open the Breviary of the priest and the Missal of the Altar; and read. Out of the hearts of her children, some known but most of them unknown, sound songs thrilling with adoration of Christ and honor of Mary. These songs of music, all spiritual, live on the lips of the priests, and ascend to heaven, breathed by faith, all over the world, day and night; for the Church that is forever preaching is forever praying, and the Church that is forever praying is forever singing Christ's and Mary's praises. But songs, after all, are only words. Love of Christ and Mary calls

for living hymns, and has them. Count, if you can, the religious associations of men and women who are living prayers and living songs of praise.

Enter the monasteries, where men of highest faith abide. Go into the cells of those self-made prisoners. They have preferred the slavery of Christ to the freedom of the world. They are aiming at perfection. Ask them how they are striving to reach it, and they will surely tell you this: "Here we love and adore Christ, and here we love and honor His holy mother, Mary." That is the secret, as well as solace, of their lives.

Enter the gates of a hundred thousand convents, where, like "doves in the clefts of the rocks," dwell the virgins of the Church. They lead the life of purity and prayer. Ask them what brought them there. Ask them what keeps them there. Ask them why their faces wear that look, common to them all, of such unworldly peace. They will tell you: LOVE OF GOD. Ask them who is their model. They will tell you, as if the very name were a prayer: the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary is living her olden life over again in them. They are virgins like her, but like her, they are mothers too, spiritual mothers, who, by their sacrifices and prayers, are bringing forth Christians into the Church, as Mary brought forth Christ into the world.

Oh! holy name of Mary, how thou art glorified in our Holy Church! True, thou art crowned queen in the heavens, but still thou art living with us on earth, in the beautiful vows of our virgins. The bishops and priests of the Church, under the Pontiff-chief, are the guard of honor of the names of Jesus and Mary.

Christ had a Virgin Mother. Christ has a virgin Church, and the virgin Church must have priests who

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will be the virgin fathers of souls. From the Pontiff down to the humblest soldier-priest in the ranks of that guard of honor, faith in Christ the Adorable and love of Mary the Immaculate are the only watchword of all the days, and the battle-call and the triumph-cry. That watchword never changes. 'Tis forever ringing down the ranks.

What though sometimes a traitor deserts? Another soldier takes his place, and leaves no break in the line; and high over the ranks float, side by side, the glorious ensign of Jesus Christ and the beautiful banner of Mary. March on, true soldiers of the cross! You never can halt here below. The enmity between Satan and the woman lasts forever, and between her seed and his seed. In battle for Christ, you battle for her. Jesus and Mary watch the everlasting conflict. March on in the bravery of faith, in the confidence of hope, in the enthusiasm of love; and fadeless crowns of victory shall grace your brows, when, stainless as the hour they were placed in your hands, and wreathed with a thousand glories, you enter in triumph the gates of heaven and lay at the feet of the Eternal Father the standard of Jesus Christ and the banner of Mary.

ASPIRATION.

HOLY MARY, Mother of God! pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.

PRAYER.

GRANT, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that Thy faithful, who rejoice beneath the name and protection of the ever Blessed Virgin Mary, may, by her holy intercession, be delivered from all earthly evils, and reach the eternal joys of heaven.

NINTH DAY.

The Flower of the Vow.

"Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear and forget thy people and thy father's house. And the King shall greatly desire thy beauty, for He is the Lord thy God and Him they shall adore."—*Psalm*, xliv.

CALMLY went on the days in the home of Joachim and Anna.

It was the happiest home earth ever had. What cared the holy couple about the great noisy world without them? They never had mingled in it much; and now since Mary had come to bless the evening of their days,—and the mornings and evenings of all days;—and they had a beautiful world of their own, little thought they of the great world lying without. A journey to Jerusalem, a visit to the Temple on the Feast days of the Law,—a brief stay, and a hurried return were the only things to interrupt the quietness of their life.

They had been childless so long that Jerusalem wondered much when it heard of Mary's birth. They would ask Joachim about his little child; but unlike the aged, Joachim was not garrulous. He kept his own counsel. His words were few, and his questioners saw that somehow he seemed shy of speaking about her. Two years passed away. The child had begun to speak. I wonder what was the first word lisped by the child's pure lips? Seldom did the feet of strangers or visitors

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pass the threshold of that secluded home. But, betimes some would come. But whoso came, went away in wonderment of her beauty; and somehow they were moved by a something in her face and ways and words difficult to divine. It was as if they had caught a glimpse of Heaven, or seen an angel in earthly form. They went their way carrying in their hearts the memory of the lovely child. And so Jerusalem heard of her wondrous beauty and began to busy itself about the child's future. Marriage was the dream of the maidens of Judea,—as marriage is the dream of most of their Christian sisters. To be the mother of the Messiah,—to bring forth Him who was to be King of Kings forever and to save their nation,—this was the unspoken thought and intense desire of their hearts. And who could blame the Hebrew maidens whose souls were the shrine of a desire so pure and holy? But ah! how little they and their priests knew of the ways of God! Their idea of the Messiah was carnal. They looked for Him coming in the pomp of secular glory. The clearness of the meanings of prophecy had grown dim. True, they read or heard read the words, but their spiritual significations were hidden from their minds.

Joachim belonged to one of the priestly orders,—so around the temple courts where, after the evening sacrifice had been offered, the priests and their children congregated, there was frequent talk of Joachim's designs about his beautiful child. Is it curious or not, that world-talk seldom touches God's thoughts? Little did those talkers know the future of Joachim's Mary. In her home there was a stillness about her like the silence in the Holy of Holies. She spoke not often; and when she did, her voice was very low as if she were afraid to

let it speak,—lest it might tell some secrets hidden as yet down in her heart,—and its tones were tremulous with a sweetness indefinable. And how she loved her holy parents; nor was child ever loved as she was loved by them. She learned the prayers prescribed by the Law. In morning and evening times she would kneel down beside her mother, with her face lifted like an angel's, towards the heavens, and pray as none had ever prayed before. Did the angels hush their songs in heaven when the breath of her prayer ascended? Did new, strange glories, never by the hosts of heaven seen before, gleam from the face of the All-beautiful God, as He listened to the child-prayers of His future mother? And did the Father feel a divine impatience for the coming of the hour when He was to send Gabriel, the Angel of the Throne, with His prayer to the Virgin?

Sometimes, as quietly as the sunshine, she would steal away into the garden that surrounded the house,—and breathe her prayers where the flowers were blooming and the roses were resting,—but sweeter the breath of her lips than the breath of their leaves. Ah! happy flowers that heard her prayers! Ah! blessed roses that felt the touch of her pure hand!

How mysteriously shy the little child was growing day after day, as if she were hiding a mystery in her soul!

In the long, calm evenings, resting on her mother's breast,—still as a Host upon an altar, she would listen with a rapt attention even in her far-off look to her father's voice while he spoke of the history of their race and explained the prophecies announcing the coming of the Messiah. And when he would speak in tones full of pathos of the growing wickedness of even the chosen

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people and of the fearful, wide-spread idolatries of all the nations, the little child would nestle closer in her mother's arms with such a look of infinite pity in her eyes. And she would ask questions of strangest kind that made them marvel much. And when he would speak of the days of the exile in Egypt; and of Bethlehem, the birth-place of David his oyal ancestor and of Jerusalem where factions were dividing men and almost breaking to fragments the old inherited faith, she would sometimes startle, as if strange presentiments, like clouds across skies, were moving over her soul. Who will ever know how much she knew in those the first days of her life? And who will ever know if what, she did know, was in her soul clear as a ray or dim as a shadow?

They sometimes saw the mist of tears in her eyes,—and they wondered why. In her sleep they heard her sometimes sigh,—and they were sad.

But she often smiled and then the very light of heaven shone upon her face. Only Joachim and Anna and the child Mary in that humble home? No more?

Ah no! The Archangel of the Throne, Gabriel, hovered unseen round his ward, with ceaseless vigilance;—and hosts of other angels were with him there. That home was a very Heaven, for its Queen was there. She had not won her crown as yet,—but she will surely win it. Did she ever see them? If she did, she made no sign. And, meantime, her sinless soul was ascending higher and still higher in the immense sphere of grace.

Those were still days on earth. The mystery kept its hiding place. But those were grand days in Heaven. To the clear vision of the angels, as from the Face of God, come new revelations of glory hour after hour in

the cycles of eternity,—so to them came from the soul of Mary, day after day, new unfoldings of ineffable beauties.

And so went on the days. Did you ever see a golden cloud in the summer sky, full of water by the heavens purified, and all wrapped round with the robes of the sun? And in its waters floats the very life of the flowers of the earth. And the cloud bends low in love for the earth. And it opens its heart and the rain comes down with the warmth and the ight of the sun in its every drop. And they fall on the flowers and on the trees and the humble grasses,—when lo! a new life comes into them all. And though they were nearly a-dying, they brighten again and are filled with joyous, abounding life, by the beautiful baptism of Nature. So, in those days, Mary's soul was the golden cloud that had risen on high from the earth, robed with the rays of the Sun of Justice,—and containing the very waters of life eternal. Wait awhile,—and the golden cloud will open its bosom,—and bend down to earth again, and out of it will come, the pure human-divine drops of the mercy of the blood of Jesus Christ.

It was a long day in the ending of summer. She was never demonstrative,—but all that day she was hovering around her parents. Her very heart seemed to be going out of her to them. A new strange expression shone on her face. And it was a day of many questions too, about God and the Messiah. She looked as if she were going to reveal something. They remarked it wonderingly. But the day passed,—and not a word. When the twilight's shadows fell around their home, Joachim and Anna and Mary entered the garden. She was holding her father's hand. They went into the garden to pray.

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With their faces towards the Temple they said together the evening's prayers;—and ah! how fervent were their blended voices when they besought the God of their fathers to remember the Promise and send the Messiah!

The prayer over,—then spoke the voice of the child in trembling way. Her hand was resting in her father's hand. She asked them to give their consent to her desire to dedicate herself by the vow of virginity forever to the service of God. They did not feel surprised. It was as if they had expected it. Silence fell between them just a little while. Ah! how deep and full of mystery is silence! Did the flowers listen for her father's answer? There was listening in heaven then such as had never been before. At last, Joachim spoke,—and his voice was firm; and he with Anna gave full and glad consent. Like the Eternal Father's: "Let light be made:" was Joachim's words to Mary: "Child! let it be so." But like the Eternal Father in Creation,—though swift to give his glad consent,—he moved slowly to fulfill it. He must wait awhile. He must lay the matter before the High Priest, and the priests of the Temple. Their consent was necessary. And that night a wondrous spiritual happiness filled that home. Joachim fell a-dreaming about the olden words of prophecy. Anna's soul was full of joy. And the second great ecstacy after the Immaculate Conception was filling Mary's soul with rapture. And the expectant world went on just the same as ever,—not knowing that the second step in the Redemption was made, on earth—and by the feet of a little child.

A few days afterwards Joachim turned his face towards the Holy-City. He sought the High Priest and

placed his child's desire before him. He assembled the priests. Zacharias, the father of the future John the Baptist was present,—and so also was the aged Simeon. The High Priest laid the request of Joachim before them. He told them it was the desire of Joachim's child,—and that she was not yet three years old. Some of the priests objected on account of the tenderness of her age. But up rose Simeon,—and he spoke almost like a Christian priest, as if he were inspired. His words moved all in the assembly, and all gave consent to receive the child Mary.

Joachim returned to his home, and brought the glad tidings of a great joy to Mary. And now Anna begins to make preparations for her child's departure. Human sorrow and spiritual joy often live together in the same heart. It is a mystery hard to be understood by worldlings. But God's saints know it. To part with her child was a grief beyond words;—but to give her to God and His service was a joy—the greatest of her life. Joachim was man; and though he could not feel, as the mother felt; still a quiet, deep pain lay on his heart shadowing the gladness that was in it for giving his Mary to God. September passed. They quietly kept the third birth-day of their child. October came and went with falling leaves and fading flowers. Closer and closer grew the bonds of tenderest human love between those three hearts as nearer and nearer drew the hour of separation. A part of our October and November formed the eighth month of the Hebrew year. In November, Joachim and Anna, accompanied, by many of their kinfolks who were in amaze at Joachim's folly, went up to Jerusalem, with Mary.

And no one else? St. Germanus, the Patriarch of

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Constantinople, describing that journey to Jerusalem, says that hosts of unseen angels surrounded and accompanied Mary. The world may laugh at this as a fable. Let it laugh. For us are the testimonies of the saints. They presented her to Zachary the father of John the Baptist.

And before the Altar of Perfumes she silently made the vow of virginity. Did the Royal Prophet, her ancestor sing to her across the ages: *"Hearken O Daughter,—and consider, and incline thine ear, and forget thy people and thy father's house, and the King shall love thee for thy beauty; for He is thy Lord and worship thou Him?"

Did the singer of the song of mystical love, chaunt for her Presentation-Feast when he sings: †"Rise up my Love, my fair one, and come away, for lo! the winter is past, and the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land."

The vow was made. Then the temple sounded with gladsome song. Aged priests, young levites, all the assembled people, Joachim and Anna swelled the canticle with their voices. Mary's lips were moving in silent prayer.

Then came the parting moment. She knelt before her parents for their blessing,—and then arose. She clasped her arms around their neck,—first Joachim's. He was weeping tears of sorrow and of joy. And then she clasped her arms around her mother,—and lingered longer in her embrace; while from the eyes of Mary fell such tears as are seldom shed. They are the most tenderly human who have gone deepest into the divine.

* *Psalm*, xlv. † *Cant.*, ch. 2.

Her parents went away; she remained the little prisoner of divine love in the Holy Temple.

Her vow was the coronation of her Immaculate Conception.

Ah! child of grace! these words I write have set my heart a-dreaming and wakened memories of far-off happy days! And there are eyes, that will read my words unworthy, sure, of thee; and when they read them, they too will look from the page before them back to olden, golden days, of which they formed a part with me. Sweet St. Mary's of the Barrens in Missouri's wilds! thy children never can forget thee! Ah! well do they remember thy Presentation Feast when thou didst dedicate thyself to God. The great High Altar, in that seven Altared Church was radiant every year with lights and fragranced with flowers; and the setting sun shone through the western window, the while thy Litany sounded before the Benediction. And then the names of many who yearned to be priests of Thy only Son were placed in the silver heart hanging from thy statue's neck in promise made to thee that they, like thee, would leave their fathers' house and dedicate themselves to the service of the Temple!

Ah me! how many names were shrined within that silver heart! Many are dead and gone;—but a few are living still; and who would have thought, that long gone evening when my poor name was given into thy keeping, that I, so unworthy, would dare to dream of weaving a crown in thy honor?

Farther from the world—nearer to God. Now began the hidden, unrevealed life of Mary in the Temple. Around it with its courts and surroundings there was a circumference of half-a-mile.

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The High Priest did not live there. He had a dwelling of his own in Jerusalem. But many priests and levites did live within its precincts. The Scriptures and many holy Doctors give us to understand, that near and around the Temple, within the walls, dwelt devout women in cells apart, separated from the men whose duty it was to pray before the gate of the Tabernacle, to assist at the sacrifices of the morning and evening—to meditate on the law of God night and day, and to make the vestments of the priests. According to the testimony of St. Ambrose, St. Cyril of Alexandria, Origen and others, only widows and maidens were admitted and allowed to live within the Temple's precincts. And all this was a shadow of the consecrated cloisters of the virgins of our Holy Church. In those days, the aged widow Anna, was a dweller in the Temple. The High Priest appointed those who were to take charge of and train the young maidens. They were taught to sing the canticles of the Lord. Their every day was regulated as to their duties. Like the nuns of our Holy Church they lived in separate cells. The rules were strict. To be dismissed from the Temple-service was considered an ignominy. It was a world within a world,—a world of peace and prayer and silence and song and gentle labor.

Into that world went Mary. Her cell, according to tradition, was the nearest to the Holy of Holies. And with her went God and His angels. The Temple was her solitude. In the din of the noisy world God's voice is but faintly and vaguely heard. The world is a loud talker but a very poor thinker. It lives on words—very poor food,—and on noises,—very poor music. It does not understand that solitude is the home of great

thoughts and aspirations. It will not see, that even mere human greatness makes a solitude for itself amid the little littlenesses around it in order to achieve future triumphs. But so it is.

But sanctity which is the greatest greatness, even still more, has need of solitude, for growth. Read the lives of the saints. Even while in perpetual action,—and while in conflict with the world around them,—their souls were solitaries. They lived within themselves a wondrous separated life, even when in daily contact with the tumult all about them. Our Holy Church, in inner life, is as much a hermit to-day, as when with cross in hand she began the pilgrimage of time.

Mary spent eleven years in the Temple. Meanwhile Joachim and Anna died and "went to their fathers." She was alone,—an orphan in the world. The Temple was her only home,—and the Eternal her only Father; and the Priests of the Old Covenant became the guardians of the Mother of the Christ of the New Dispensation. Beautiful, by her sinlessness in the supernatural order, her natural beauty went on towards its perfection day by day. She was a living picture of God's beauty on earth.

Her companions loved her,—and in their love there was a strange reverence for her person. When they sang together the canticles of the Lord, her pure voice sounded like an angel's.

And she was the humblest one of them all. She was the mystery of the Temple. Many ancient writers and holy Fathers tell us that in her cell,—she held converse with the angels,—and that they were wont to bring her food. This, will you say, is only a beautiful imagination? And why only that? Ordinary laws,—common

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rules are for all of the children of our race, because we are ordinary. But hers was an uncommon life—and her destiny extraordinary. Canisius says that once she prolonged her prayers to the hour of midnight, when through the Temple's silence sounded the words: "Thou shalt bring forth My Son." And she rose and in wonder, went to her cell.

Christian imagination, glowing with the light of Faith and full of Faith's inspirations, can never conceive the superhuman facts in which her life in the Temple was folded.

In the material world around us what innumerable beauties are lying unrevealed. We see Nature's surface but not her sanctuaries. And if what we do see fill our eyes with rapture, do we not know that all that visible beauty is a veil concealing the invisible beauty beneath it.

Yes,—"in the world of Nature, as in Super-Nature's realms, there is that which no eye can see,—nor heart conceive, nor human mind understand." And of every human life given to God, the same is true. We read the lives of the saints,—but never know but half. And her life, the saint of saints,—the Mother of the life of the Christ of the saints, of it we know only the least little part. And why? Because in her life, the greater part is above and beyond any imitation. It was a life unique, absolutely exceptional,—a life that could not be lived by any one but Mary. And this is why her Temple-life of eleven years has not been revealed to us. It is inimitable,—and therefore gives no outward sign. It is strangely like the life of God before the Creation. God's was a life unknown and of infinite silence until He spoke:—"Fiat Lux:" "Let there be light." And Mary's life before Redemption was a life unknown,—

and silent,—till she broke its silence in answer to the angel: "Fiat mihi:" "Be it done unto me according to thy word."

Ah! Child of Grace! while thou didst pray in all the days of those eleven years for the coming of the Messiah, thou didst also breathe thy all-fervent prayers for the sinners He was coming to save. Pray on,—sweet child; and ah! 'tis joy to know that we too here gathered in thy honor had a place in thy heart and a part in thy prayers;—and who knows? a deeper place and a greater part, because we wreathe to-day in thy queenly crown the beautiful Flower of Thy Vow.

Aspiration.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!"

Prayer.

May the humanity of Thy only begotten Son be our succor, O Lord; that Jesus Christ, our Lord, who, when born of a Virgin, did not diminish, but did consecrate the integrity of His Mother, and may the same humanity adorable, deliver us from our sins and make our petitions acceptable.

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TENTH DAY.

The Flower of the Espousals.

"I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners."—*Psalm*, lxxxiii.

THERE was Feast in the Temple courts. Sweet melodies of many harps were sounding, and voices of holy widows and innocent maidens were chanting canticles of joy. Many lights were glowing on the Altar of Perfumes. And in the Temple and around it gladness was reigning everywhere. What feast? Only a Birthday Feast. The sun of the eighth of September shone in a sky all-cloudless, all day long. Came the High Priest,—the priests of inferior order and the Levites to grace the Feast with their presence, and to bless the day with their blessings. On that day Mary was fourteen years old. It was her Birthday Feast. Zachary and his spouse, holy Elizabeth were there. And Simeon came, and many of the kinfolks of the Child. For eleven years, Simeon had watched Mary, with now and then strange presentiments which he could hardly define.

With a shyness, that puzzled many, she listened to their congratulations. There were holy faces there, and saintly souls and hearts with grace's high consecrations (for we must not think that the grand Old Covenant had no saints in its Vesper time) but amid them all, like a dream of God, moved Mary in her beauty. In that covenant of beautiful shadows how many wonder-

ful women, figures of her, had come and gone, and left to Israel memories of virtues and of grace! Miriam, Ruth, Judith, Esther, the mother of the Machabees and others are the glories of that olden Dispensation. But Mary was its crown.

There was that in her face, that day, which was in none other there,—a something indescribable; and in her eyes an infinite calm; and in her voice the very tones of heaven's music; and in her every movement an unconscious grace, which, somehow, wove a spiritual spell on all who looked upon her. "How like an angel!" they whispered low to one another.

But,—"all the glory of the King's daughter is from within."

Her wondrous, natural beauty was but the transparent veil through which shone the interior, ineffable beauty of her soul, that, for fourteen years, in constant and closest union with God, had far surpassed the transcendent sanctities of all the angels; and was rising, hour by hour, up towards the inaccessible heights of God's supremest grace.

In after days, that Birthday Feast was long remembered, with new and added meanings, by those who had come to celebrate it.

All day long the Feast was kept until the hour of evening-sacrifice. Then to the Temple all repaired: and the evening-song was sung,—and the sacred censor was swung, while the white smoke of the Sacrifice ascended from the altar. Begun in joy and with gladsome song, that day closed in the hush of holy prayer. All had gone, but Mary still knelt and prayed. The Spirit of God was on her. Silence filled the Temple with its own strange holiness. The shadows,—and did

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they tremble? folded her kneeling form. Strange emotions moved through her heart. "Coming events cast their shadows before;"—and, somehow, she felt, as if the gates of her Eden in the Temple were about to open for her to pass through, and to move on to some other act of God in the which she was to take part. In her cell, that night, she held long converse with her angel. He bade her follow the wishes of the priests, revealed to her a secret of Eternity and bade her not to fear.

The priests held council about the child. What to do with her was the question that disturbed them. The last words of Joachim, and the dying pathetic pleadings of Anna lay on their minds.

When she leaves the Temple, in whose charge will they place her? In spite of her vow they decided to give her in marriage.

But to whom? She was of the royal race of David; where find for her in his line a fitting companion? They had not long to think,—nor far to go. There was a man named Joseph who belonged to the royal line and had the same ancestor. "And he was a just man." He was getting on into age; and the priests had often wondered why he had never chosen a bride from among the fair daughters of Sion.

Though his ancestors had been prophets, princes and kings he was only a poor carpenter; but his were the riches, better than those of earth, of great graces. He lived up in Nazareth, loved and respected by all who knew him. A tall, stately man,—very silent, with a singular tranquillity about him, he was wont to be seen in the Temple, on the Feasts of the Law, presenting his humble offerings to the altar, with the mild look of one of the ancient patriarchs; and he was pointed out

to the people as a model of the faithfullest observance of all the sacred ordinances.

He lived alone a life of daily toil. Why he had never married, no one knew. He had his own secret; and he kept his own counsel. He was known of all for his knowledge of the words of the Lord, for his deep faith in the promises; for his love of His chosen race; but above all for his humility. When he came to the Temple,—not into the first seats did he enter,—but down near the Temple's door he might be seen, sometimes standing,—sometimes kneeling and sometimes prostrate in prayer.

Of his ancestry he did not speak. He belonged to none of the various conflicting, noisy sects into which, unfortunately, the Hebrews had become divided. Apart from them all he stood, bewailing their enmities towards one another, and sighing over the olden Faith that was a-breaking into fragments. This was the man,—"the just man" selected by the priests to lead to the Altar of Marriage Mary of the Temple.

The High Priest summoned her to his presence; and after prayer—for those old Hebrews believed—(and some of them with greater faith than many Christians) that prayer brought light from heaven in difficulties and doubts,—Mary was told of the decision of the Priests.

She made no dissent. She simply obeyed, for she, too, had her secret, and kept her own counsel.

And then they sent for Joseph to come to Jerusalem.

Any command that went to him from the Temple was as if it came from God. Down to the Holy-City he came; and they offered him the Virgin Mary for his bride. He heard their proposal,—nor did he seem sur-

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prised; and made the promise to take her into his keeping. Little did the priests of the Temple know what strange mysteries, from them hidden, they were touching. It is always so. Men,—and at times those who seem the most unlikely, work out God's secret designs. And God never had a more secret and mysterious design over any creature, than He had over Mary. Joseph had a part in that design,—though what and how great a part he did not know.

The Hebrew Prophets had foretold the Messiah's coming; and now the last of the Hebrew priests, unknown to themselves, are preparing His way. It was the law that the Hebrew maidens should be married from their father's house. Mary had no home but the House of God,—the Holy Temple. Hence, and is there not a mystery in it? her marriage with Joseph was celebrated in the Temple, the sacred house of the olden promise and later prophecies.

The day came at last. Accompanied by his and Mary's kinfolks Joseph went down to the Temple. The marriage canticles, with the accompaniment of many harps rang gladly through the holy place. Before one of the priests (many think Zachary the father of John the Baptist) stood Joseph and Mary. The priest lifted up his hands towards the heavens, and prayed over them; and then with the beautiful Hebrew ritual he united Joseph and Mary in the holiest marriage earth ever knew,—a marriage which was to veil with secrecy the purest mystery and the deepest of all time,—the conception and birth of Jesus Christ.

How near we sometimes are to God's mysterious works without knowing it! We almost touch Him when He is at His great works;—and we are unconscious of

His presence. He passes right before our eyes and we see Him not. Who, in that Temple, that day dreamed in looking on the face of Mary, of the Woman of Genesis. Yet there stood the Woman of Genesis, forty centuries old by promise, in the form of a maiden a little more than fourteen years of age. There stood the "Virgin" of Isaias' prophecy; there stood the living realization of all the predictions,—a pure, young girl, in the mystery of a human marriage which was to conceal a more mysterious marriage in her womb,—the espousals of human nature to divine nature in Jesus Christ, her Son.

Back in the eternal predestinations lay the strange vocation of Joseph. He was to be the Eternal Father's visible shadow on earth,—and like a shadow, he was to shroud, for a time, the earthly conception and birth of the Son of God; as the eternal generation of the same is hidden forever in the glory of the bosom of the Father. Holy Joseph! sacred shadow of God! "the virtue of the Most High will overshadow" Mary in the time of her Divine Conception; and thou shalt be the shadow to shield her honor and that of her Divine Offspring in the face of the world.

Sorrow is the sister of joy,—and they walk the world closer together than many think. For:

> "Tears are the Vespers of Gladness,—
> Life's Matin-Laudate scarce ends
> Ere a psalm all a-thrilling with sadness
> From the lips of the singer ascends."

The Temple was to lose its angel-child. How lonesome it would look without her! Ah! through all those eleven years, how she had grown to be almost a necessary part of the holy service! In a sense unknown

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to them, she was a necessary part. Somehow the Temple would not be the same. It would be as sad as a sky that loses its brightest star. Far brighter than the lights on the altars was the light in the temple of Mary's soul. Never mind! Temple! your child will come back, and bring before your altar the Light of the World! Tears in the eyes of the saintly widows,—tears in the eyes of the priests,—tears in the eyes of the young maidens,—when with her hand in Joseph's she passed through the gate of the Temple, and wept as many another bride has wept in leaving her father's house. Because she was perfect she was most human. Our nature lost the perfection of its humanity when it lost divine grace. Hence it is hard, rough, ungentle, untender. Its tears fall when they ought not to fall; and it does not weep when it ought to weep. As Christ was most human because He was divine; so His Mother was most human because she was perfect and sinless. So Mary mingled her tears with those of her companions in the Temple when the hour of her departure came.

The Temple's loss was Nazareth's gain. It was a journey of three days to Joseph's humble home. They left Jerusalem and pursued their way by the city of Naim,—along the valleys at the foot of Mount Hermoin, and by Mount Thabor. As was the custom, Joseph and Mary were met on their entrance into Nazareth, by young maidens who sang canticles of joy and praise to God. If the virtues of Joseph had won the reverence of Nazareth,—the singular beauty of Mary, at once, charmed the hearts of all.

And now began her life as St. Joseph's spouse. There is no mere make-believe in any of God's works. He

may hide much back of what He does,—but what He does is always real.

So the marriage of Joseph and Mary was a real, true and valid marriage. The alliance was sincere on the part of both. They each had made a vow of perpetual virginity to God,—and their very marriage was a mutual contract for the preservation of their virginities. Mary knew, by inspiration, that it was not the will of God, and that it would never be the will of Joseph to cause detriment to her virginity. In marriage there are three goods, as theologians say,—Sacrament (a mystery), Fidelity and Offspring. But the last is not essential either to the reality or validity of marriage. How many holy marriages there are—sacramentally and in beautiful fidelities, which are not blessed with children? The absence of the child, by no means, disproves the reality of the marriage,—it simply shows the incompleteness of the alliance.

But in the marriage of Joseph and Mary there was to be, by miracle, not through Joseph, but through the Holy Spirit the most glorious offspring,—Jesus Christ. In the old law when the oldest son of a family died without issue, the second brother espoused the widow and to the first born child the name of his deceased brother was given; and this for the purpose of preserving the direct line of descent of the ancestors of the Messiah. But does it not seem that it was also by a great mystery?

Mark,—this law is accomplished to the very letter.

For St. Joseph espouses Mary,—and we can well say he dies without a child of his own, for the vow of virginity which he had taken was a beautiful, mysterious death, by which of his own will, he laid down the life

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of his body,—and became carnally dead. Then came the Holy Spirit treating Joseph as an elder brother dead, became the spouse of Mary, who else would be humanly childless,—and in her conceived Jesus Christ the Son of God whom Mary brought forth for our redemption.

To whom as His Father will Jesus Christ be attributed?

Not to the Holy Ghost, for He was not His Father, as He did not produce Christ out of His Divine substance. The glorious title will be and must be given to the Eternal Father alone together with Mary the true Mother. But in the world Jesus Christ will be called the Son of Joseph because He will be born of her who was Joseph's spouse. "Is He not the son of the carpenter:"—they said. Did not Mary His Mother, with deep mystery in her word, say to Christ: "Thy Father and I have sought Thee sorrowing?" Oh! glorious mystery, Joseph bears on earth to Christ the incommunicable name—Father!

Origen says that the Holy Spirit rendering Mary fruitful of Christ honored Joseph with the name of Father. Shadow-name!—sweet and beautiful cast on earth by the light of the substantial Name of the Eternal Father, concealing from men and demons the glorious mystery of the Incarnation, how Faith rests, and dreams, and prays and adores in thy presence,—as they of the Old Covenant did before the veil that hid the mysteries of the Holy of Holies.

Ah! the mysterious relations between Christ's reputed Father on earth and His real Father in Heaven! Who can describe or understand them? But between St. Joseph and the Holy Ghost there are also intimate relations. They were both spouses of Mary,—Joseph the visible and the Holy Spirit the invisible spouse. She was to bring forth a son who would be visible and invisible at the same time and always;—as man visible,—as God invisible;—and because her Son was to be visible and corporal, she had a visible and corporal spouse,—"the just man"—Joseph; and because her Son was to be invisible and purely spiritual in His Divine substance, she had an invisible and purely spiritual spouse,—the Holy Ghost.

And thus St. Joseph, like a sacred shadow, hides the Paternity of the Eternal Father,—conceals the Divine action of the Holy Ghost, invests Jesus Christ with a seeming human parentage;—and what else.

He stands before the world as Mary's necessary protector. Had she in the Temple been found with child;—or had she, out of the Temple, remaining in the eyes of the world a virgin, given birth to Jesus Christ,—think you they would take her at her word and believe her testimony? Think you when brought before the tribunal, where mercy hushed, and sternest justice gave decree, they would listen to her piteous cry: "Oh, no! my child is not of man,—it is born of the Holy Ghost! condemn me not to death?" No—no,—there was little of mercy in that law to which the Promise of Mercy gave all its meanings. They would have dragged her out of the gates of the Holy City,—to the great wide plain,—they would have taken up the stones of malediction to hurl them at the outcast; they would have cursed her, in the awful stoning, with the terrible curses of the Law,—until she fell dead before them; they would have branded her child Jesus with the dark ban of illegitimacy; and they would have regarded the

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greatest act of God's love as the darkest crime against the Law.

It was Joseph's vocation to be the shield of her honor, and the defender of her purity,—and to stand between her and the stones of curse. It was a mighty vocation,—but a mournful one. And besides, the Divine Conception of Christ and His miraculous birth needed a human witness, apart from the Mother; a witness of character unimpeachable,—of testimony which, perforce, must be taken and believed; and whose word stood higher, among priests and people, than the word of Joseph "the Just man?"

But he was so mild and gentle and silent. The gentlest are the bravest. What hidden forces are folded in the quiet, still cloud? On Calvary the gentle John was braver than all his co-Apostles. He stood by the cross, whence they fled. No wonder the dying Christ left His Mother in charge of such gentle bravery! Look on the quiet-faced water. What powers it conceals? Fire makes it brave and strong, and clothes it with an almost natural omnipotence; and then the great steamers cleave the waves, and brave the storms and sail across the seas; and then the long trains are borne over continents, by the gentle power of little drops of water, made strong by the furnace-fires in the locomotive. The gentlest Faith is always the most fearless. So Joseph stood between the Old Dispensation and the New Covenant to guard the honor of the Woman of the Promise, and to defend the Divine legitimacy of her Child, by standing before men in the position of His earthly father.

But more still! Listen. And let us pray! Oh adorable Bosom of the Father Eternal! Thou art the first Principle of the Blessing of all Thy creatures! We

adore Thee with all the Faith of our hearts, for having given unto us Thy own, only Son with all His Divinity!

Oh Virginal Bosom of Mary! Purest Breasts of Virgin-Mother! we glorify thee, as the second principle of our Redemption, for having given unto us, the same Eternal Son, in His holy Humanity! And blessed hands of Joseph, we honor you as the third source of our Salvation, for did not thy hands labor and toil, day by day, and year on year to nourish and strengthen and bring to perfection the Humanity of our Saviour!

He is the Word of the Eternal Father, begotten without effort;—but thy toils and labors for thirty years, procuring His earthly food, did give strength to Him and preserve His human life

Only a year did He draw nourishment from Mary's breast;—and all the rest of His years His life while thou didst live, went on nourished by the fruit of thy daily toil!

And in Nazareth there was an earthly Trinity,—as in Heaven a Trinity Divine. In Heaven three invisible persons,—and one God. In Nazareth three visible persons,—and one God,—Jesus Christ.

Through Mary's Espousals with Joseph, he was brought into closer relations with the Trinity and with the history of Redemption than any other saint. He stood nearest to the source of all grace. He was the shadow that hid the source. His was the heart, which, next to Mary the Virgin Mother, drew from the source the deepest stream of grace.

No wonder, that in our day, St. Joseph has been proclaimed by the Church,—her universal Patron. For Mary the Mother of Christ her Son is, by right, the mother of the Church, the mystical Bride of her Son.

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And as Joseph was the foster-father of Jesus Christ, because he was the Spouse of the Mother of Jesus, is, by right, the Foster-father of the universal Church. And thus over the Church St. Joseph is united with the Holy Spirit as they were united in regard to the Blessed Virgin.

Holy Joseph! there are sorrows still before you, but God will give you light and strength! And Virgin Mother! thou wilt bless thy children to-day who weave into thy Crown the mysterious Flower of thy Espousals!

ASPIRATION.

THE just shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow up like the cedar of Libanus, planted in the honor of the Lord,—in the courts of the house of our God. It is good to give praise to the Lord,—and to sing to Thy name O Most High!

PRAYER.

VOUCHSAFE, Oh Lord! that we may be helped by the merits of Thy most Holy Mother's Spouse: that what of ourselves we cannot obtain, may be given unto us through his intercession!

ELEVENTH DAY.

The Flower of the Annunciation.

"Hail, full of grace;—the Lord is with thee."

NAZARETH was a little city in lower Galilee, built on the slope of a rocky hill, faces the southeast and surrounded by mountains. There began the new life of Mary in marriage with Joseph,—a marriage uncarnal, consecrated by two virginities,—a marriage of the sinless soul to the holiest soul in all Judea,—a marriage of purest heart to a heart more pure than any other known of God or man.

Nazareth had a poor reputation in and around Jerusalem. Among the people there was a by-word: "Can any good come out of Nazareth?" In that city of the taunting by-word, Mary and Joseph were dwelling. And by and by out of that city was to come the Infinite Goodness Himself.

The Ark of the Covenant was constructed in the desert-solitudes. It was made of the incorruptible wood of the beautiful Acacia tree, and it was covered on all sides with plates of purest gold. Over the Ark stood two Cherubim, with their faces turned towards each other and their wings expanded and joined so as to cover the propitiatory, which was the place of the special presence of Jehova among His people. There was not only the mercy-seat,—but also the place of giving responses.

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Joseph and Mary in their life at Nazareth were like the Cherubim, with their pure faces turned towards each other,—the wings of their virginities expanded,—and joined together to cover the great mystery of the Ark of the New Alliance. The Ark of the Covenant of shadows was no longer in existence. Solomon's grand Temple lasted only thirty-three years, when it was plundered by Sesoc, King of Egypt, who pillaged Jerusalem, and carried away all the treasures of the Temple. The Temple was finally burnt by Nabuchodonosor.

So the old Ark has passed away. Waiting in Nazareth like its Cherubim were Joseph and Mary for the coming of the Living Ark of this world's salvation.

From morning to night Joseph toiled in his shop adjoining his humble home. Patient,—and very silent and shy was he in his work-a-day life. When evening came and closed his labors, how often did he pass from his shop into the house, weary of heart and tired of hand, for the world drove hard bargains with the poor carpenter. For himself he cared not. Little or nothing would suit him;—but rough, poor food did not seem to him fitting nourishment for the young and tender Mary.

She, too, knew no hours of idleness. In the Temple she had been taught all the necessary and ornamental arts of labor peculiar to females. Young maidens and mothers would come to her to assist them in making their garments. Those gentle lips could not say—"No."

She would graciously lend them her labor; and many a mother's face brightened when the garment made by Mary's hands was brought home. She was the Angel of the little city, but no one ever dreamed that poor, little, wicked Nazareth was contained, among its three thousand inhabitants, the very Queen of the Angels.

What prayers of pure hearts blended and holy voices mingled went up from Joseph's home to God! The contact of saints makes each more saintly. The blending of two rays of light, gives each to the other, a greater brightness.

How long, oh! Lord! how long! the nations, by a strange universal instinct, are growing more expectant. Among all the nations,—a tradition is twined through their histories and poetries and religions, that a virgin would bring forth a great Saviour. In Rome, the Sibyls had written in their mystery-books that a God would be born of a spotless virgin.

Far in India it was taught that a pure ray of light would come from heaven, shine on a virgin—and in her produce a God.

In the wild woods of Gaul the Druid priests offered homage to the future virgin that would bring forth. And strange to say, about a hundred years before the birth of Christ, the Pontiff of the Carnati, a celtic tribe inhabiting the country between the river Loire and the Seine, in the presence of the druids, the kings and princes of the place, solemnly erected in a grotto of the sacred forest a statue of a Virgin holding in her lap a divine infant, who was to reign in peace over all the world. Thus the memory of the Woman of the Promise followed the race in all its wanderings from the Gates of Eden.

Gone were the chill winds of February and came the warmer breath of March. The heart of the Spring was beginning to beat under the grasses, and the trees and the flowers and the vines.

Spring is a virgin but soon becomes a mother. Already her new-born children were coming forth in

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their first, fresh beauty all around Nazareth. And the skies became brighter and the birds came back and sang with joy while they made their nests. It had been a hard winter with Joseph,—and he welcomed, with gladness in his heart, the birth of the fair sweet Spring, for it gave him more vigor and brought him more work.

The 25th day of March dawned. Sts. Chrysostom and Augustin tell us that it was a Friday;—in order that, as Adam was created on Friday, the sixth day, so on the same day of the week Mary might conceive the second Adam. St. Bernard says that it was early in the morning so that the Sun of Super-nature might begin to shine in the bosom of Mary together with the material sun in nature's sky. Joseph was working in his shop. In her chamber Mary was kneeling in prayer.

Pray on! thou sinless virgin. The sound of the hammer in Joseph's hand,—for he has much to do to-day, reaches thy ears but does not distract thy heart. It is beating to-day with a strange, new, higher, excessive, ecstatic love. How thy lips pant with the wondrous strength of thy prayer! Pray on, thou purest one;—for nor you, nor earth, nor heaven will ever forget this all-blessed day.

Up in the eternal Heavens there was rapture in the Angel-world. A new look of beauty never before seen had come into the Father's face,—and the Son wore it too and the Holy Spirit: only in the Father it was a look of Power and peace; and in the Son,—the while the angels marvelled,—it was the glorious look of a divine humility,—and in the Holy Ghost a look of preparation.

The angels had not forgotten how the Unchangeable seemed always to put on a look of change before all the

great works He wrought outside of Himself. It was a mystery to them,—that seeming changefulness in the great Unchangeable.

But such a look as shone on them this day they had never seen before. And they fell down before the throne in the holy hush of worship;—for they knew that God was going to speak.

Gabriel, the Archangel of the Throne, whose name signifies the "Strength of God,"—and also as testifies one of the Bishops of the Council of Ephesus,—it means God and man,—the guardian Angel of Mary, is summoned before the Throne, and receives from God a commission which he must bring to Nazareth and deliver to Mary. Gabriel went. "Was there silence then a half-an-hour in Heaven?"

Suddenly a bright light shines around Mary and fills her humble apartment with glory. She lifts her eyes; and lo! Gabriel, her angel, appears before her in human form, radiant with the very light which he brought from the Throne.

One instance of glory's silence,—the while they heard the sound of the Carpenter's hammer in the shop,—and he saluted her:

"Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women." Angels had communed with her before,—but never in words like those. "And she was troubled and wondered in her mind what manner of salutation this might be." What does it mean? rushed the troublous question over her soul.

"And the angel said to her: Fear not Mary; for thou hast found grace with God. And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great and

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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 over the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end." Did a great fear creep into her heart, the while the angel spake these words? Her virgin-vow rose pure and white before her. And she said: "How can this be because I know not man?" Then said the angel: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee; and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; therefore, also, the holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." The very calm of God came down on her soul. Doubts and darknesses faded away. Ineffable light filled her whole being. Her heart was wrapped into highest ecstacy. The waves of God's wondrous love rolled under her feet and bore her out,—out—far and farther across the bright waters of Mercy's infinite sea,—and she walked its glorious waters, in the intense rapture of humility. She only said: "Behold the Handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word." And the angel departed from her. She listened a moment,—only the hammer of Joseph was heard as he still worked on,—unconscious of the great mystery announced to Mary and hidden so near him.

Is it not always so? God passes near us,—almost touches us, working the works of grace,—but in His coming and going He is so still that we know not of His presence till He has passed us by and gone.

Gabriel the ambassador of Mercy returned to the angel-land;—and never had heaven kept Feast of greater joy.

How wonderful are the divine ways. In Eden the

fallen angel of darkness, in serpent form, accosted Eve; and announced to her that if she and her companion would eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree, they would become as Gods. And she fell through pride.

In Nazareth an angel of light appears and announces to Mary that she has been chosen to become the mother of God. She hesitates on account of her vow of virginity. Her doubts removed by the angel's words,—she consents and rises to the highest dignity in all creation on the wings of the humblest words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." And, at once, the Holy Ghost came upon her; and the power of the Most High overshadowed her,—and in the pure substance of her sinless body, she conceived the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ.

"Hail full of Grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women." The words are the salutation of the Eternal Father. And more, they imply a prayer sent by Him to Mary, through the angel, asking her consent to become the Mother of His Son on earth. Absolutely Mary could have refused. There was no coercion of her will. She was never more free than in that annunciation hour,—and no will ever rose to such glory of its freedom than hers when meeting the great, Free will of God, she seemed almost to share in its infinite Freedom when she gave consent to the mystery of Redemption in her person. The law of Promise began with the Woman of Genesis, whose seed was to be in everlasting enmity with the seed of the serpent.

The New Covenant begins historically with that Woman's name,—Mary of whom was to be born the Christ; and when she is fifteen years of age, Heaven salutes her: "Hail full of Grace;"—and she conceives

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the Christ. Hail full of grace! a salutation,—and a prayer given and made by the eternal Father. The eternal Son in human form, in after days will also give to the world a salutation—and a prayer,—"Our Father! who art in Heaven."

"Hail full of grace" preceded; and had to precede the "Our Father who art in Heaven." And why? Beyond the days of Mary and of Christ,—the race had no right to call God,—Father. It was obliged to wait until God's Son became the human brother of every one of the children of Adam. How did he become our brother? Because Mary was His human mother. The Fatherhood of our God, rests in our brotherhood with His Son, Jesus Christ,—and that brotherhood rests on the motherhood of Mary. You cannot separate one from the other. In eternity as in time they are forever and inseparably interlinked.

Who then will dare to blame the children of the eternal Father and the brothers of the eternal Son incarnate, when they salute on earth and from earth Mary who was first so saluted by Heaven. "Hail full of grace" was Heaven's first prayer and salutation to Mary. And who will challenge either our words or our motives, when, from hearts and lips we echo the salutation back to Heaven? Those first words,—the PRINCIPIUM of all the words of the New Covenant,—because they are the first words, will give the tone of their truth and the meaning of their divine melody to every single word that will ever fall from the lips of Christ.

Came the evening of the day. The tired Joseph entered the house. Did he mark the new look that had come into the face of Mary?

They sat side by side at their humble table and partook of their scanty evening meal. Joseph was too weary to hold much converse. Mary was mysteriously shy. She knew all,—and Joseph knew nothing. Down in her throbbing heart slept the great Mystery. What must she do? Speak and tell all? No,—no,—she is going to be the Mother of the Saviour;—and she must be like His Eternal Father. Her lips must be silent, while her heart hides the divine secret. They knelt and prayed together fervently and long. Then Joseph rose up and went to his own apartment and soon was sleeping a peaceful sleep. Mary lingered yet awhile; then retired to her small, humble room, with emotions that cannot be even conceived. For from the hour of the angel's visit,—and her consent, her inner life was ecstacy! And yet, withal, a shadow hung over her soul;—she began to feel a great fear of Joseph.

What would he do when the mystery would come to his knowledge? Would he send her away, by disbelieving her word? Ah! the terror that swept across her ecstacy! But she trusted in the Father of Him she had conceived;—and closed her eyes in holy rest.

O Mary holy Virgin! It was thy consent that brought us the Christ of our Salvation. We praise and glorify thee forever, as the hand maid, whose pure hand opened the gates between time and eternity,—between the finite and Infinite, to let the Redeemer enter the world!

Ah! holy Joseph! there are days of sorrow before thee. 'Tis always so. Wherever God passes a shadow falls. The anguish of doubt will come to thee. But the doubt will pass away;—and then will come long days and nights of sorrow and of suffering; but God will give thee strength, and Mary consolation.

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ASPIRATION.

"GRACE is poured abroad in thy lips. Therefore hath God blessed thee forever. Because of truth and meekness and justice; and thy right hand shall conduct thee wonderfully."—*Psalm*, xliv.

PRAYER.

O GOD, who wast pleased that thy Word, at the message of an angel, should take flesh in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary: grant to us thy suppliants, that we who believe her to be truly the Mother of God may be assisted by her intercessions with thee.

TWELFTH DAY.

The Flower of the Consent.

"Be it done unto me according to thy will."—*Luke*, i.

THERE be those, (nor are they small in numbers, though they are exceeding small in knowledge) who ignorantly think, and as ignorantly teach, that the will of Mary had nothing to do with the great mystery of their salvation. To their mind (how shallow such mind must be?) the Virgin all-pure was only a tool in the hands of God,—a passive instrument to be employed for a great divine purpose,—and then to be flung aside, out of the way of Christ's works. They must have a singular idea of the honor of God's character,—and a low idea of the dignity of God's creatures, and more particularly of the glory of her who is the highest of pure creatures. Let them have their little notions. We have higher thoughts of God and therefore higher thoughts of all His creatures, for in our holy Church, we have "the mind of Christ,"—and we judge all things by the standards of truth divine.

God can say YES; and God can say No,—and either word from His lips is infinite and immutable. We are made in His image and to His likeness. And we like Him can say *Yes;* and like Him can say *No*. Free will is the crown of His creatures.

And we can say *yes* or *no* even to God Himself,—but our *yes* or *no* is finite and changeable. In all God's

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worlds of created intelligences,—there is not,—nor can there be coercion.

Coercion is a chain; it means slavery and slaves. It is beneath God to accept enforced service. Worship forced from slaves would be ignominy to God. He never can belie or undo His creative act. In that act He gives every intelligence free will. Free will is a crown worn by the princes of God.

True,—many of them may desecrate the crown by laying it down at the feet of evil. But God is not going to interfere by coercion. He will never press the weight of His omnipotent will on the crowns we wear and thus force us to wear them whether we will or no. His way is to let us have our own way as well as our own will; and His way is best.

He reveals His will to us in laws; He reveals His love to us in graces,—He reveals His mind to us in truth,—and He reveals Himself to us in Jesus Christ the Son of Mary. His laws we may keep or break; His love we may preserve or lose; His truths we may believe or deny; and Himself we may accept or reject. For "our worship must be reasonable,"—and to be so,—it must be free; for ours is "the freedom of the children of God." Such is our high inheritance. Our will must be guided,—not destroyed; strengthened, not broken; persuaded, not coerced. There are so-called churches that teach and preach a cruel, heartless God; that coolly tell God's creatures that many of them have been made by Him to give Him the exquisite happiness of sending them to hell. They tell us that such are doomed from all eternity. Shame on such teachings!

Does the beautiful God exult in the foreordained horrors of His creatures? Then strike out the word Hope

from religion;—then efface the word Penance from the pages of Scriptures and the hearts of men. Then change the very name of God;—infinite name signifying GOOD; and write on the gates of Heaven in black, merciless letters:—CRUEL, HEARTLESS, WICKED. Let such be the name of such a God. But away with such blasphemies. We will keep our own God,—and His Christ and His Mother, and His lovingness and His mercy and His tenderness and His infinite pity;—the God of the Infinite, beautiful Heart.

Yes,—and the God-Christ with His human heart that can and does compassionate all our miseries. Who gave the Son of God the gift of a human heart? Mary. Was she forced to give it? Will God accept a forced gift? Never,—for it would be no gift at all. Her free and willing consent was the cause of the creation of that heart in her womb, by the Holy Ghost. Without her consent that heart would never have beat or bled here below.

Was the Son of God forced by the Father to become the Son of Man? Who will sustain such blasphemy? Was Mary forced by the Father to become the Mother of His Son on earth, the Christ? He was free and willing to become her Son,—and she was willing and free to become His Mother. God never made an act more grandly free than the decree of the Incarnation;—and never creature made an act of higher freedom than Mary when in the words which are tremulous with humility she answered the angel: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." But listen to the firm and powerful words of her consent: "Be it done unto me according to thy word." Is she borrowing the strength of the olden word of the Eternal? "FIAT"—"Let it be done."

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The consent sounds like a command. The FIAT of God gave being only to creatures. The FIAT of Mary gives human being and life to God Himself who is infinitely above all creatures. The Fiat of God produced His work out of nothing, the lowest origin that can be. The FIAT of Mary brought her work out of the very bosom of God,—the highest source imaginable. The FIAT of God added nothing to His infinite grandeurs and perfections. The FIAT of Mary as soon as pronounced lifted her up to the supreme dignity of the Mother of the Infinite and clothed her round with all the glorious prerogatives of that incomparable position. The FIAT of God gave Him empire only over creatures who are as nothing in His presence. The FIAT of Mary gave Him dominion over His other Self—His Son in human form.

The FIAT of Mary made His Son God's, inferior in His humanity; and caused to be given to God, in creation, what else He never would have received, an infinite worship.

Thus our race, through the Son of Mary, gives infinite glory to God. The consent of Mary to be the Mother of Jesus, freely asked and freely given, crowns the Finite with an infinite crown.

God's omnipotent power can reach forth no farther. The illimitable touches its limit in Mary. No creature can rise higher. The limited has ascended into the Illimitable.

Mary's pure bosom touches the eternal bosom of the Father. It participates in that Infinite fruitfulness out of which the Eternal Son, the Father's other Self in substance, though in person different,—and produces not by human and natural fecundity, but by power

divine, Jesus Christ. Out of the Father's bosom the Son comes the Creator-God.

In Mary's womb the Son is conceived,—the Saviour-God. The Father has but one Son;—and the same becomes Mary's;—and through birth from her He will have innumerable brothers by the adoption of grace,—and the roll of the names of them, who become His brothers, and adopted sons of His Father, will reach down to the end of time.

But who can describe all the other mysteries that rose to reign forever on earth and in heaven, out of the consent of Mary?

Nor man,—nor angel,—nor Mary herself.

What a miracle of loving Power and powerful Love!

The Infinite is compassed by and contained in the finite!

The Eternal is going to lead a new life and reckon its length by days of time. The frail body of a virgin maiden bears up the infinite weight of God. "God chooses the weak to confound the strong."

And above all in Mary we have the truest, clearest, fullest, tenderest revelation of the beautifulness of God.

But how can it be? She herself asked the angel the puzzling question.

He only said: "With God nothing shall be impossible;"—answer clear and plain and convincing enough for Faith.

Last night I walked down on the beach to listen to the songs of the sea. Each wave sang a song of its own. I lifted my gaze to the skies, and thousands of stars shown into my upturned eyes. The immense bright, far-off worlds all—all contracted themselves and came down along the innumerable paths of their silvery rays,—and

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each had its place in my eyes, without losing their brightness or grandeur at all. And I thought again how nature is all the time showing us the ways of the beautiful Supernature. If my eyes can reach and compass and contain in their little circle the bright immensities of the Heavens;—why cannot the grandeurs of the Divinity be contained in the sacred Humanity hidden yet away in the bosom of the Immaculate Mary? The winds had lulled and I looked away over the waves again that were falling asleep; and I wondered how the frail white shore,—only weak sand,—can clasp in its arms the strong and mighty sea and hold it there in its gentle embrace.

And I came to my room where I live with my books; and I began to muse how all the literatures of earth blossom like flowers varied and innumerable out of the few letters of the Alphabet.

And I went over to the piano, to sing a hymn in honor of holy Mary, and I wondered again how all the melodies of music rest on only seven notes. And I thought again, as often before, how in the nature that surrounds and in its works we find so many beautiful types and striking counterparts of the wonders of God's grace in the realms of revelation.

Only greatness can make itself little without losing its dignity. Each drop of water in the sea sleeping out there shrines the light of a thousand stars.

So Mary consenting, shrined in her conception all the uncreated splendors of the Divinity.

Deep as her life had been before it grew deeper day by day.

She was leading, in a far-off way, the life of the Father of Eternity eternally conceiving and begetting His only Son.

After awhile she will bring Him forth. But ah! Pure Virgin! before the Midnight of Christmas, fear will come to you and trouble will encompass you! It is the mystery of this world. It is the law of the Incarnation.

They, who are loved most by God, must suffer most.

But thy soul will rest, like a troubled child on the breast of its mother, in the sweet will of the Eternal Father

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Aspiration.

"The rod of Jesse hath blossomed. A Virgin hath brought forth God and man. God hath given peace, reconciling the lowest with the highest in Himself."—*Missal.*

Prayer.

Strengthen, O Lord, in our minds, we beseech thee, the mysteries of the true faith; that we who confess him was conceived of a virgin to be true God and man, may, by the power of his saving resurrection, deserve to arrive at eternal joy.

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THIRTEENTH DAY.

The Flower of the Visitation.

"Arise my love, my beautiful one: and come: my dove in the clifts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall, show me thy face; let thy voice sound in my ears,—for thy voice is sweet."—*Cant.*, ii.

WHERE the little city of Hebron nestles amid the mountains of Judea there was a holy and a happy home. Zachary an aged priest had long lived there with Elizabeth his holy wife. She was a cousin of Mary of Nazareth. One day Zachary was burning incense in the Temple, while, as was the law, the people were praying without. "And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zachary saw him, he was troubled and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him: Fear not Zachary, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth will bear thee a son and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb." And Zachary said unto the angel: How shall I know this? For I am an old man and my wife is well stricken in years. And the angel answering, said unto him: "I am Gabriel who stand in the presence of God, and am sent to speak unto thee and to show thee these glad tidings. And behold thou shalt be dumb until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou hast not be-

lieved my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season."

The people were waiting and had wondered much why he tarried so long in the Temple.

When he came out he could not speak, but only made a sign and then they knew that he had seen a vision in the temple. "And after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived."

Long had they prayed that God would bless them with offspring; and at last their prayer is granted.

But Zachary is speechless. He has lost his voice. How strange, that his child, when he faces the world thirty years afterwards, and when asked who he is, will answer "I am a voice crying in the wilderness."

To that home in the hill-country went Mary of Nazareth; and Scripture tells us that she went in haste.

From Nazareth to Jerusalem it was a long three days' journey. She passed by the Mount of Transfiguration. She passed by Calvary to reach the Holy City bearing the unborn victim. When she saw in the distance or near (or did she cross them?) its dark gray rocks, did their shadows give to her soul the light of presentiments? Or was it more than mere presentiment? Who knows?

The young virgin mother hastens to meet the aged mother.

The one bears the unborn Christ,—the other, His unborn precursor. The aged Elizabeth is the image of the Old Law passing away, which did not produce grace, but only promised and waited for it. Mary represents the New Law,—young and never to grow old, virginally fruitful of sanctity and abounding in ageless grace. The younger hastens to visit the older that truth may

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meet the Figure 'ere it passes away,—that Substance may face the Shadow, and bless it 'ere it goes. And as Mary's presence, in after days, at the wedding-feast in Cana will be the means of eliciting from Christ the first Manifestation of His glory and the first Miracle of the New Law;—so her going with her unborn Child to Zachary's home brings the last manifestation and the last miracle of the spiritual life of the Old Law in the presanctification of John the Baptist.

She brought Christ into the world (hidden as yet) and now she brings Him to meet (hidden as Himself) and to bless His great Precursor.

What a meeting it must have been between two such mothers of two such children? There will never be such a meeting in this world again.

But let St. Luke describe it.

She entered the house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth. "And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary; the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. And she spoke with a loud voice and said: 'Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb; and whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? For lo! as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, for all these things shall be accomplished which were told thee from the Lord.'"

Listen!—At the sound of the voice of Mary, Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Ghost. Whose voice like her's save Christ's? And that voice is stronger now than ever.

Up in yonder heaven, this peaceful evening, (for there

is a lull in the winds and a holy hush out there on the waves of the gulf.) (I wonder do they know that I am trying to praise the Queen of Heaven and Star of the Sea?) Mary's voice is the sweetest music in the ears of God, and the mighty power of grace for us.

Oh voice above all voices, save the voice of Him who was and is thine forever, plead with the Father for us.

Thy voice has the tones of the voice of His Eternal Son,—and the Father loves to hear them.

Sweeter than all the voices of the angels in melody,—and next to the very voice of God in might!

"Blessed art thou among women" came from the lips of her cousin;—the very words of Gabriel to herself. Zachary stood by the mystery, speechless; as Joseph stood by the greater mystery, silent. Elizabeth, the mother of the Precursor, "filled with the Holy Ghost," is the first after the Archangel Gabriel to give public testimony of an honor above all honors, saving that due to God alone, to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Was she wrong? Was it too much or too great? But,—she was filled with the Holy Ghost. She spoke with His inspiration. It was the Holy Ghost speaking through her aged lips.

Thus Christ and the Precursor met,—and they met through their mothers. Wondrous mystery! too deep in the least of its meanings for any lips to tell, save Mary's.

So let us be still while Mary sings the first and grandest *Te Deum* of Redemption

MAGNIFICAT.

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

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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 empty away.

He hath received Israel His servant; being mindful of His mercy.

As He spoke to our fathers; to Abraham and to his seed forever.

Thus Mary, in the "ecstacy of humility," chants the first Christian psalm. It was her royal right as queen of her Son's Kingdom. There is no song on key as lofty in all Scripture. It lives an everlasting life in the Vespers of Holy Church. No wonder when it is entoned the people rise to honor its every syllable.

No wonder that in Solemn Vespers, the altar is incensed; for the closed tabernacle contains the very Holy One who was then hidden in her womb.

'Tis a song enshrining all the grandeurs of God, for it contains and expresses the greatest things which God has done in time and eternity, in Heaven and on earth, for His own glory and the happiness of His children. It was the grand human echo of the music of divine mercy then silent in her bosom. For the unborn Child in tones unheard sang the *Magnificat* with His Mother.

The first announcement that the Messiah had come was by His Mother's song.

She remained with her cousin until the Child was born. In her own arms she held Him, Who thirty years afterwards will baptize her own Son. And the Precursor of her child nestled on her bosom.

Eight days afterwards they came to circumcise the Child. Then the speechless Zachary opened his long-closed lips in sudden song.

The harmonies of grace broken by the discord of sin are coming back to earth. Zachary sings his BENEDICTUS. But Mary's *Magnificat* had already entoned the first notes of the eternal hymn of divine Mercy.

Ah me! discords still will come to mar the beauty of the holy hymn. But Mary's voice is ever ready, sweet and tender, if only we plead with her, to bring, by its own power, our voices, our hearts and our lives into the harmony of the eternal hymn again.

ASPIRATION.

"BLESSED art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb! And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?"—*Luke* i, 42.

PRAYER.

VOUCHSAFE, Lord, we beseech thee, to us thy servants the gift of thy heavenly grace; that as in the childbirth of the blessed Virgin our salvation began, so from the votive solemnity of her Visitation we may obtain an increase of peace.

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FOURTEENTH DAY.

The Flower of the Fear.

"Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God."—*Luke*, i.

ALL the Feasts of the Old Covenant were historical and memorial. There was not a single day set apart in honor of a divine Truth. The very Sabbath was more a memorial-day of God's rest, than a reminder of His Nature and attributes.

The Pasch, Pentecost, Feast of Tabernacles and others were merely commemorative of the great facts of Hebrew history. But while those festivals borrowed their meanings from the past, they were shadows of a great coming Future. The Feast of Expiation, the only day in the year, when the white-robed High Priest entered the Holy of Holies merely represented the sinfulness of the people, and typically foreshadowed the day of Redemption.

Not so the Feasts of the New Dispensation. The living truth in the beautiful variety and the more beautiful harmony of Dogmas is their primary object,—commemoration is but secondary. What was typical in the Old Law is mystical in the New. For the New Law is an ever present Life,—that of the ever-living Christ. We have, of course, seven signs or symbols called Sacraments; but they are more than signs, they are the supernatural activities of the divine life of Christ in the Church made present and sensible. The

old Hebrew Church was a Shadow-Church. Ours is the Church of the divine Substance. The priests and people of the old Dispensation, generally, kept their Shadow-Feasts with wonderful strictness and fidelity, wherein, they have left an example which many Christians would honor themselves by following.

Joseph, always attentive to the strictest observance of the Law, never failed to go down to Jerusalem and to assist with fervor at the services on the great Feasts.

And, always, poor though he was, would he bring his humble offerings to the Temple. The journey was too long for Mary, and besides, to some of the Festivals the Hebrew women were not obliged, by the law, to go. And, further, in most of the towns of Judea there were synagogues which stood instead of the Temple.

So after that 25th of March Joseph went down to celebrate, at least, the latter days of the Paschal Festival. And Mary was left alone,—with her mysterious secret. Joseph's absence, for a single day, was wont to make her sorrowful; but now a change had come over her soul, and the pain of parting was not so great. Not that her pure love for him had diminished. Contrariwise it had increased; but a love of all loves deepest was filling the Virgin-heart:—a mother's love for an unborn Child,—and it,—her very God. Joseph returned from the Feast of the Pasch. Closer and closer together grew their hearts. Mary prayed,—and Joseph marked it,—more frequently and with a fervor that looked like rapture. And in the long-evenings she would ask him to read the old Scriptures and its strange prophecies about the Messiah.

He was a man learned in the Law; and while his outer life was a life of daily toil that seemed scarcely in

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keeping with much or deep thought:—he, nevertheless, in unknown, inner life, lived more with the great prophets of the past than in the noisy discussions of the present teachers of the Law. How could the Emmanuel be conceived by a Virgin,—and how could a virgin bring Him forth,—as Isaias had predicted;—she would oftimes ask Joseph. She knew the secret. She was hiding it in her heart. Was she trying him by her questions? Was she striving to reach his inner thought? Was she thinking of the day when the mystery, in herself, would be manifested?

Joseph would listen,—and ponder long in silence, as he had done a thousand times before, but he could not solve the mysterious Prophecy.

Did she ever answer him;—or did he ever say to her: "Nothing shall be impossible with God." And, all the while, a great fear like a shadow that folds the hill, was creeping around her heart.

Again Joseph was obliged to go down to the Holy-City for the Feast of Pentecost. Jerusalem, like all other cities, either Hebrew or Christian, when external ordinances are of more importance than interior piety, was gossippy, talkative, curious, questioning. It busied itself about everybody. It had not forgotten the day of the Espousals of the best Hebrew of their race to its most beautiful Maiden. And they would ask Joseph about Mary. His answers were as brief as they were gently given. The High-priest and the priests would express their hopes that God would bless Mary with offspring. No word,—spake he then,—save perhaps: "God's will is best." For none there knew of his vow of virginity. He was the most secret and silent saint that ever lived in this world of vain and useless and

commonplace chatter. Home he came again. Up the long, narrow street that led to his dwelling and his shop he walked;—but Mary met him on the humble threshold,—in sooth more like a child and daughter than a woman and his spouse. Did he mark it? She was becoming more like a child day by day? Or were his eyes veiled yet for awhile. May with its flowers,—the angels of the valley passed. June came with her splendors of earth and sky, and the birds were singing vesper-songs up in the bitter-sweet almond-trees,—when:—

Hush and listen. All-day long Joseph had been working in his shop. He was very tired. All day long Mary had been praying in her humble room.

Had she a presentiment. All day long a great fear was folding darkest shadows around her soul;—and she was heart-tired.

Joseph entered. She rose to meet him. Ah! the look that swept like a cloud across his face! Ah! the storm that rushed over her soul!

It was a minute with infinite sorrow in it for both.

In his face suspicion. In her heart terror. In his eyes an awful doubt. On her face the white pallor of an indescribable pain.

His eyes could not deceive him. The hidden mystery stood manifested before him She was going to be a mother. The signs were there. Has she broken her vow? If not the purest virgin, she must be the vilest outcast. Men are more suspicious than women,—and though he was a saint Joseph was a man,—with a man's temperament.

But to be suspected of sin in that which was the very mystery of sanctity was a blow that fell heavy on her heart;—but to be suspected by him, her husband

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according to the law, almost broke her heart. If he puts her away; if he denounces her, her unborn Child, who is the Blessing of the world, will bear the brand of an eternal curse. The haunting doubt that lurked in the eyes of Joseph;—his voice that hesitated when he spoke to her; his manner so gentle and simple that now put on a strange constraint;—his cold silence; but above all that look that seemed to mar the very sanctity of his face, filled the soul of Mary with all the terrors of a great overmastering fear. If he only asked a question,—but his lips were sealed. If she could only tell the secret,—but she dare not lift the lid of Mystery. Ah! Mary! before your child has appeared, you begin to live his life. His own people will doubt, and deny His divinity, and crucify Him. Joseph has doubts of your virginity, which is to you, what Divinity is to your unborn Child. His own people will lead Him to crucifixion;—your own Spouse crucifies you on the cross of his doubt. His own people will know not what they do. Did he not pray it: "Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do." Your own Joseph knoweth not what he is doing.

Go to rest, if rest you can to-night, virgin of sorrow, but around thy heart the very hand of Joseph has woven, by his suspicion, a crown of thorns. So they, his people, will weave another for the brow of your Son, and they will look upon Him on Calvary as Joseph, not knowing all, looks upon you to-night,—as a malefactor! Oh! the wondrous silences of God! Why does He not speak just one word in Nazareth? Why does not Gabriel come right down to Joseph, and rebuke him for his doubt? Why does he not descend again to Mary and bring her consolation and give her hope? Let God alone.

Let Mary suffer all the anguish of fear. Let Joseph suffer all the pangs of doubt. Sorrow like theirs is the shadow of God coming nearer and nearer.

Wait till its darkest folds encircle them. The shadow over the Holy of Holies betokened God's invisible Presence. Such sorrow as theirs is the Holy of Holies that hides the nearest Presence of God.

Next day came. They prayed apart. A wall of separation divided their souls. Joseph went to his shop and worked on in a weary way. Tears were sleeping in eyes; pain was gnawing at his heart. He was standing beneath a great dark cloud. All day long his thoughts were tortures.

What should he do? Denounce Mary? And his ears began to listen to the awful sounds of the cruel stones that would slay his child-spouse. For what else was she but a child? Would he lay his sorrow before the priests of the Temple? Ah! no! Mary was the child of the Temple,—the very angel of Jerusalem. And how the infamy would spread through Judea.

What should he do? What else but pray,—and perhaps some light would come from Heaven. Or, he thought:—"I will put her away privately."

And Mary? It was her hour of agony. If an angel came to Gethsemane in years long after to comfort her Christ; did an angel come to her that day to brighten the darkness around her?

All day long she prayed;—and sorrow gave swift wings to her prayers.

Her heart was whelmed in a sea of grief dark and deep and stormful, but far over the waters,—walking them as her Son will walk the waves of Galilee here-

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after,—came the beautiful feet of Peace;—not to her, first, but to Joseph in his sleep.

"Yes,—I will put her away privately." "No one will know of it but my own heart." Came the awful rush of sorrow's torrents through his soul. He prayed and wept himself to sleep. "And behold the angel of the Lord" (was it Gabriel?) appeared to him in his sleep, saying: "Joseph, Son of David, 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."

It was in the first watches of the night. Mary was praying for sleep had fled from her eyes. Came a call,—and Joseph's voice: "Mary!" Never had she been called at such a time and in such a tone before. She went out to meet him. His face was her salutation. The glory of honor and the rapture of adoration blended in his looks. Did he kneel at her feet to adore the "Word made Flesh" tabernacled in her? Yes,—and if she was the first, he was the second Christian. No need of words! Did he try to frame his mistaken doubt in words?

Did they kneel down, and with hearts and voices blended, more closely now than ever, adore together the Word Incarnate?

Ah Joseph! you said in your thoughts: "The fruit of her womb is not my child." The world will call him so; and, with the glory of a divine revenge, Mary, whom you doubted, the child of the Temple, will cry aloud in the Temple, with the same gladness, after sorrow, felt by you, in presence of the doctors of the law and the priests: "Son why hast thou done so to us.

Do you not know that thy Father and I have sought thee sorrowing three days?"

Next day came. And now two know the mystery of the Incarnation: Mary the Mother that is to be, the purest of the pure in Judea; and Joseph the foster-father that is to be,—the most just man in Israel.

"In the mouth of two witnesses every word shall stand." In the testimony of Mary and Joseph the eternal Word will stand in the glory of His truth. For the rest of the world was the expectation of the Messiah.

To Mary and Joseph He was already come. They had and hid His Presence. In after days His priests, sharing the power of Mary His Mother, and the prerogatives of Joseph His foster-father, will mystically yet really conceive Him, by the words of Consecration, on the altar;—and like Joseph His foster-father, will keep care for Him in the tabernacle; and when, needs be, will carry Him into the Egyptian darkness of the dying. Oh! Mary! thou art called our sweet Hope and our Peace, but thou hast become so unto us, by the agony of thy great Fear. For Hope wears the sandals of fear.

We praise thee and bless thee in the clouds of thy sorrow as in the brightness of thy glory! In our fears,—and ah! how many they are; send our angels to us, as came the angel to Joseph, and let hope and holy peace dispel the darkness and bring us the light of earthly and eternal rest!

Aspiration.

"I WILL not fear thousands of the people surrounding me. Arise, oh Lord! Save me, oh my God."—*Psalm*, iii.

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PRAYER.

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.

FIFTEENTH DAY.

The Flower of the Midnight of Mercy.

"Glory be to God in the highest and peace on earth to men of good will."—*Luke*, ii.

DOWN in Brazil there is a flower of rarest beauty which blooms only at midnight. It is found far in the heart of the great silent forests. The sun passes over its close-shut leaves in the day;—but when night comes they open and the forests are filled with its sweet perfume.

"The stars were in the middle of their courses:" it was the noon of night. A hush fell around a stable outside of Bethlehem,—like the deep silence that comes over the people in the temple a little while before the moment of the Consecration in the Mass:—For the Holy of Holies was about to enter His creation in visible form. Nine months He had been in it,—but hidden. Joseph and Mary had been obliged to go to Bethlehem to be enrolled, because they belonged to the house and family of David. The order had come from Rome. How many another order will go forth to the world from Christian Rome? So to Bethlehem they came. Up and down the narrow streets they had gone in the closing of the day seeking a shelter for the coming night. But in the city of their royal ancestors there was no place for them in the inn. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not."

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Mary's heart sank within her because she knew that His and her hour was nigh. Out towards the cold, bleak plains they went,—plains which were the property of the Temple where the animals to be used in sacrifices were kept and fed by herdsmen and shepherds.

They reached a rude stable hollowed in the rock. They entered. A few animals were there that gazed in mute wonder at the intruders. He was to be born outside of the city of His ancestors. He was to die outside of the city of the Temple. The night grew on apace. All was still. The world slept while the great Waker was coming. Ah! there was wonder in the hearts of the angels that night. They breathlessly awaited the mystery to become visible. Suddenly as a flower exhales its perfumes;—stilly and painlessly as the ray reflects its light, the Virgin brought forth the Word Incarnate; and wrapped the infant God in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger. Ah! her rapture as she gazed on the little face! A mother's love and a creature's adoration met in her heart and were blended, in her first look upon the infant. The mother's familiarity and the creature's awful reverence met the mystery. And Joseph fell prostrate in worship intense,—overpowered by the awful responsibility placed upon him,—the charge of Mary the mother and the care of God His own creator,—now his foster child. Not a sound on earth;—but listen, the very angels have left the heavens and they are singing "*Gloria in Excelsis*" up in the starry stillness of the sky. "Glory be to God in the highest." And is this glory? Out on the hills the shepherds were watching the sheep destined for the sacrifices of

the Temple. They left the sheep and they found the Shepherd of souls in the stable. For: Lo! the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them and they were very much afraid. And the angel said unto them, "Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for unto you is born in the city of David, a Saviour who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." Was it Gabriel that spoke to them "Fear not," that night of the Lord's coming, the very words that he had said to Mary before she gave her consent to let Him come through her? And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will." And the shepherds said to one another: "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came in haste and found Mary and Joseph and the infant lying in a manger."

Mark:—first came the tidings in angelic song to those who were watching the sheepfolds that belonged to the Temple for sacrificial purposes. They came and they found in the crib "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" in the sweet form of a little babe. But they wondered only. How could they comprehend the mystery of the manger.

Let us go with them. How often we have done so on many a Christmas night! Let us enter. We find as they found Mary and Joseph and the infant;—an earthly Trinity in the stable. Faith still wonders as

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the shepherds did. And Faith still finds what they did find,—Mary and her child. Kneel down now and adore the infant. The Mother has taken it from the cold crib to her warm bosom. You cannot take the child out of those arms; or from that breast. It is the first altar purer than any altar ever to be in all time. And those arms own that child.

Do you adore? Adoration of Him is veneration of her. Do you praise? Praise of Him is honor for her.

Mother and child together,—united indissolubly forever. In the Promise,—in the Conception and now the bond of birthhood unites them visibly.

In that stable, the haunt of animals, all the mysteries of Redemption begin to meet. Strange! Those mysteries were conceived and decreed amid the splendors of the heavens; and now they are fulfilled in the squalor of a stable. Let God alone. He has come to reverse human standards. He has come to revolutionize all the criteria of this world. Omnipotence becomes powerlessness. Riches eternal become Poverty. Immensity circumscribes itself in an infant's little face and form; and God's highest glory on earth begins in a stable! and it will end on a cross!

End?—Ah no,—it will never end.

Who presides over the Mystery's beginning? Mary, the Child's Mother. And she will preside over all Redemption's mysteries with all the right and power of a mother down to the last. In as true a sense as the word means she is co-redemptress of the human race. Christ is ours because He was hers. She is the human mother of the Father's consubstantial eternal Son. By divine decree from all eternity, and by

that decree's accomplishment in time, Mary, Virgin and Mother has become a necessary factor in Christian faith. Therefore she cannot be left out without marring the completeness of Faith.

If the whole wide world keeps Christmas as a day of abounding joy it is because she gave the Christ, who is the joy of Christmas, to the whole world. That stable has multiplied into hundred of thousands of temples. That manger has grown into millions of altars. The Temple means the stable and the altar means the crib. So, in temple and at altar we must find what the shepherds found Mary with her child. Mother and child together. You cannot, dare not part them. The very stable would protest, had it a voice; and the poor, humble straw made consecrate by becoming the first resting place of the Word Incarnate, would protest. And Joseph, and the shepherds and the mother;—but above all the child. Let him stay in His Mother's arms. Next to His Father's bosom, her breast is His place. Wonderful mystery! Who can understand it?

The mother,—a creature, clasps and kisses her creator! Well—is it not a mystery of Love?

Our Holy Church, like the stable, keeps the Mother and Joseph and the child together. In the inn, they were told that there was no room for them. There are so-called churches like the inn. They have no room for Mary and Joseph. They have room only for Christ. His Mother and His foster-father must stay outside the doors, forsooth! Christ and only Him is their cry. There is no such thing as Christ solitary and alone. He is akin to our race on His Mother's side. She is the bond of the kinship,—she, and her

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blood. Thrust her aside, you must thrust Him away. No—no. He will stay with His Mother and she will stay by Him. And both together will stay with us. Mother and child together.

The Catholic temple or humblest chapel on Christmas night and day represent the stable. We have room for them—Jesus, Joseph, Mary. The rest of the churches represent the inn. They have no room for them. Ah! humble crib thou didst not stay in the stable. Thou hast moved down the centuries and across the world,—and not only on Christmas night and day;—but every hour of time thou, transformed into countless altars, art still presenting to the eyes and heart of faith the story of the stable; and Mary the Mother is always there,—in her own place,—and if she had power to give the Christ birth, which is the grandest power of all, she has all other powers which that contains,—and has them forever.

The birth was, by divine operation on the sinless Mary, without throes of sorrow,—but with throbs of rapture. The sinlessness of the Mother sweetened the humiliation of Christ. He came from the sinless heavens through His sinless Mother to save the sinful world. Can the world forget that Mother? Ought not every child of the human race love Mary with a devotion only inferior to love for God?

And remember, because of being His Mother, Mary became, in a sense the superior of Christ. If He obeyed the law that was passing away,—He, with greater reason, obeyed His Mother, because she had more right to His submission than the law.

The story of that Midnight can never pass away. And Holy Church keeps forever on her altars the

echoes of the "*Gloria in Excelsis.*" It was not sung until Mary bent over the babe in the crib,—and now it will be sung forever.

Oh! Holy Mary! thou didst bring forth our Saviour in a poor and squalid stable for all the world. Bring Him forth in our poor souls, by thy prayers and intercessions! As in Holy Church—so in our hearts we will have room for Jesus, Joseph and Mary.

Aspiration.

"A LIGHT shall shine upon us this day: for our Lord is born to us: and he shall be called Wonderful, God, the Prince of peace, the Father of the world to come; of whose reign there shall be no end." —*Is.*, ix.

The Lord hath reigned, he is clothed with beauty: the Lord is clothed with strength, and hath girded himself."—*Psalm*, xcii.

Prayer.

GRANT, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that we who are filled with the new light of thy incarnate Word, may show forth in our works what by faith shineth in our minds.

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SIXTEENTH DAY.

The Star in the East.

"Behold the Lord the Ruler is come; and a kingdom is in his hand, and power and dominion. Give to the king thy judgment, O God; and to the king's son thy justice."—*Mal.*, iii,

To-DAY a star instead of a flower for the crown of the Queen. To simple, humble shepherds near Bethlehem watching the flocks that belonged to the Temple came first the sign of the Messiah's birth. That sign was supernatural and angelic. The angels that sang the *Gloria* in the heavens that night were the first Apostles proclaiming the first visible Mystery of Jesus Christ. And that the gentle, humble and simple first heard the tidings presaged that in the new Kingdom simplicity and humility and poverty would gain the first and highest favors from the King whose palace, that night, was a stable.

But beyond the boundaries of Judea lay in darkness the great Gentile world. They too will have their sign and that in the heavens. Their hearts were hungry for God,—so hungry that they had thousands of gods from the stones beneath them to the stars above them.

The modern monster,—the atheist had not yet made his appearance. Their gods were material things—things to look upon with their eyes;—to kneel down before with their body—and to touch with their hands.

Their very idols,—Gods in material form curiously hinted at the true God's coming in visible form.

Throughout the East men studied the skies more than the earth, while in the West men gave more attention to the soil beneath their feet. Dreamers from the East,—practical people from the West.

Through those nations dim traditions had floated like fragments of a lost beautiful song—and one of those traditions, they knew not whence it came, was a prophecy that a wonderful star would rise in the heavens to herald the coming of the Expectation of the World. It was transmitted from generation to generation and from age to age. Those ancient peoples had marvellous memory. Their world moved slow. To forget is a signal trait of the busy Moderns.

They have no time to remember. They fling the yesterdays away as soon as the to-day dawns.

The predicted star at last rose in splendor in the heavens—a beacon light to guide the wise men to the crib. One from Persia,—one from Arabia and one from far Ethiopia. It must have appeared long before the angels sent the shepherds to the stable. When they approached Jerusalem the star vanished. Were they deceived? Was their long journey but a folly? Surrounded by their servants they entered Jerusalem in all their oriental splendor. The people gazed at them in wonder and admiration. "Where is he, they asked, who is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East and have come to adore him?" Had they beside the sign in the sky to guide their way,—a revelation in their heart that the new-born king was God to be adored? Trouble in the heart of Herod,—and trouble in all Jerusalem. The

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priests are assembled: Herod puts the question—"Where will He be born?" "In Bethlehem"—came the answer.

Leaving Jerusalem the star reappeared and gladness filled their hearts. From Jerusalem to Bethlehem only six miles. Did the three kings,—the shepherds of the people, pass, on their way to the crib, the shepherds of the Temple's flocks.

The star stopped over where the child was.

"And when they were come in they saw the child with Mary his Mother,—and they adored him and offered to him gold, frankincense and myrrh."

Was the child resting on the Mother's breast,—as on an altar?

Again Mother and child together. Through her they offered their symbolical gifts to the child. Were they wrong? Can we not offer our gifts through her to Him?

When a gift to a child passes across the palm of a mother's hand, it becomes more precious.

How Mary must have wondered at these men from the East? First came simplicity and humility in garb of shepherd. Her ancestor David was a shepherd and had fed his flocks nigh unto the very stable. But the Shepherd David became a King. The Kings came next to adore. They came with their riches, their culture, their power. And these three things which rule the world are still outstripped on the path to truth by simplicity and humility. And always shall be.

At both these comings to Christ, Mary prseides. As the mother of the child-king she was queen in His palace-stable to the wise men as well as to the shepherds.

And when that stable shall be multiplied and transformed into countless temples, she still will be queen to the lofty as well as to the lowly. She still will preside as queen and the gold of all human gifts and the frankincense of prayer and the myrrh of all beautiful virtues will be presented through her to her Son. Kings will lay their crowns,—queens their jewels, soldiers their swords, scholars their culture, poets their songs, orators their eloquence for her Son's sake at her feet. And eyes will bring their tears, and lips will bring their sighs and feet will bring their thorns,—and souls will bring their sorrows, and hearts will bring their anxieties, and hope will bring her fears and love will bring her pangs to the feet of the queen for consolation and relief. The poverties and the royalties will walk side by side to her throne. Fame and failure will kneel together there like brothers. Learning and ignorance with interclasped hands will bow before her throne. The aged bishop and the bright young altar-boy will bend before her as equals. The veiled nun and the broken-hearted penitent will mingle their voices in one chord before her. All these varieties there become unity.

All these differences before her throne become a harmony. Ah—it is only at the feet of Jesus Christ and at the feet of His Mother that all this world's inequalities are transformed into a marvellous equality.

Listen in the evening time and you hear the sound of the blessed beads all around the earth as they pass through the fingers that touch them as gently as if every bead was a rose;—and the Rosary in its form of chain is not a symbol of slavery but a most beautiful sign of the perfect equality of all the children of God.

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In the hands of the Supreme Pontiff and in the hands of the aged negro; in the hands of an Empress and in the hands of the poor, unlettered negro girl,—the same sign. Those beads—those Hail Mary's equalize us all and how? Why they lift us up above this world and they place us on the very same lofty plane of prayer. Blessed Beads! beautiful Hail Mary's! Ah the while you crown all the children of thy Son with a beautiful spiritual equality,—you chain us to His throne with better than golden chains.

And better than the gold of the Wise Men is the gold of every bead, and sweeter than the frankincense brought from the East is the precious incense of each Hail Mary.

Let the star of love of Jesus and Mary shine every day in the sky of our souls,—beckoning us to come to the place where the King is resting;—let us bring our beads as our gifts and we shall be sure to find, as the Wise Men did, Him with His Mother. They were told in dream to go back home by another way;—for the cruel and dangerous Herod was plotting against the Child. So from God's temple whither we bring our Rosaries as gifts,—we will always return home another way, with happier souls and more of grace in them and thus escape the spiritual snares which the Herod's of our passions are always planning in our hearts. The star that led the Magi to the Christ-crib has disappeared. But ah! another star hath taken its place,—shining forever in the heavens of Faith; Mary herself, with brightness ever increasing. Star of hope shed thy purest rays on the shadows that oftimes gather around us, and we shall like the Wise Men, but with wisdom higher than theirs, follow thy guidance and

find the sweet Saviour whom they found a few years here below at the altars of Faith—but in heaven on His throne of glory.

ASPIRATION.

"WE have seen His star in the East and have come with gifts to adore Him."—*Missal.*

PRAYER.

O GOD, who on this day by the leading of a star didst reveal thine only-begotten Son to the Gentiles; mercifully grant, that we who know thee now by faith may be brought to contemplate the beauty of thy majesty.

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SEVENTEENTH DAY.

The Flower of the Purification.

"Now dost thou dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word, in peace. Because mine eyes have seen thy salvation. Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples. A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."—*Luke*, ii.

FORTY days after the birth of Jesus, His blessed Mother accompanied by Joseph went up to the Temple for her purification and His presentation.

Sinless as Mary was there was no real need for her compliance with the ceremony of purification as there had been no need of our Lord's subjecting himself to the rite of circumcision. They complied with the requirements of the law in order to leave us an example of obedience. And besides the mystery of her Motherhood and the divinity of the child were in this way to remain unrevealed. Mary the child of the Temple re-enters its gates a Virgin Mother bearing in her arms the everlasting God. Joseph carried the turtle doves as humble offerings. Never had God received such homage in heaven or on earth as when Mary presented her child in the Temple. It was an infinite offering and the little Christ gave to His Father in that hour infinite homage.

Into the Temple, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit came the aged Simeon, a just man and devout, "who had been waiting for the consolation of Israel."

For it had been revealed to him that before death he would see with his own eyes the Lord's Christ. Mary he had known in the days of her childhood. He had been present at her presentation. A great joy filled his aged heart. He took the child in his trembling arms, and blest God. And then his voice arose in song: "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 peoples: A light to the revelation of the gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary the Mother: "Behold this child is set up for the ruin and resurrection of many in Israel and for a sign that shall be contradicted; and thy own soul a sword shall pierce that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed." Simeon read in prophetic vision the whole future history of the child and he tells it to the Mother; for she is to be involved in it,—to be part and portion of it. Anna the prophetess, also entered the Temple and gave thanks to the Lord. There were listeners in the Temple,—but they did not understand Simeon's song and prophecy and Anna's blessing. The wondrous beauty of the young mother, the resemblance between her face and that of the child a-nestling in her arms, the gentleness of Joseph;—all this attracted their attention; but though they were almost touching the mystery of mysteries they knew it not. How often we are face to face with the supernatural and it passes us by unheeded? Are we not surrounded by mysteries, sacraments, facts above nature filling all hours and somehow we seem blind to their presence. Are we not dwelling in the awful every-whereness of God

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from first to last of life half-the-while heedless of the mystery.

So they in the Temple,—the lookers-on in the day of Mary's purification and Christ's presentation stood in the shadow of the supernatural;—but they went their ways merely passing wondering remarks upon Mary and Joseph and the child.

And Mary went her way;—the sharp point of the sword of sorrow entering her heart; but as day follows day it will sink in deeper until her soul shall be transfixed with sorrow.

The Mother of the victim must also be a victim. "The Man of sorrow" must have a mother of sorrow. Few the joys of their lives,—but countless and intense the pangs

She saw, in spirit, every footstep of Christ until the nailing of the feet on Calvary.

No wonder that the sorrowful hasten to the Mother of sorrows! She can compassionate sorrow's every pang because she suffered them all.

And where the Mother of sorrow is with her will be found the Man of Sorrows;—Mother and child together. Seven great mysteries of sorrow divide the days of her life.

The world worships joy,—goes forth to meet it, welcomes it,—walks in its light;—but flies or tries to fly from grief. And yet after all that earth-joy is vain, fleeting and unsatisfying. A ghost of grief haunts the footsteps of every joy.

Only spiritual joys can satisfy the soul,—joys that spring from prayers, graces, sacraments, obediences to God's laws. And these fill the heart with that holy peace which this world can neither give nor take away.

For such souls beside the greatest earthly sorrows the highest spiritual joys can be found interclasping one another. Sorrow was to be one of the most powerful elements in the holiness of the Blessed Virgin. Remember that from the moment of her immaculate conception on up until the moment of her death, her life was ascensional. Every moment she rose higher in sanctity. Her graces and merits were constantly a-multiplying; until she reached heights to no other creature accessible and though finite manifested, more than all other beings combined, the awful sanctity of God himself.

As towards all other creatures her holiness was and is incommunicable. No being ever bore the image and likeness of God as Mary did and does now in heaven. We are His images but imperfect. But in Mary the divine image is perfectly mirrored. Omnipotence cannot create a more perfect spiritual work. And the sign of that spiritual work is sorrow. Her life before Calvary was a martyrdom of suspense and fear and expectation. Her martyrdom on Calvary is only surpassed by that of her Saviour-son. And after Calvary she suffered the martyrdom of waiting. And always in perfect conformity to the will of God.

Sweet is the spiritual fragrance of the flower of the purification. It is a mingling of obedience to the law—of joy in presenting such a child, God's own equal, to God himself and of sorrow for His foretold sufferings.

On the second day of February, Holy Church who is also a virgin mother, keeps the feast of Mary's purification. But all the days of all the years our beautiful Church holds festivals of Purification. The Bride

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of the Lamb forever, her mission is to purify the world of error and sin. The gates of her temples are ever open that those who may need to be purified may enter and be cleansed. The ceremony of purification never ceases. At the baptismal font,—from the pulpit, in the confessional, on the altar the purifying power is always active.

Blessed are they who needing to be purified come in imitation of Mary, who, though not in need of it went up to the Temple in obedience to the law. And then to each of us the Saviour with the gentleness of a child and the mercy of a God will be presented. Once she presented Him to the Father;—but now her love is to present Him to sinners in the hours of their purification.

ASPIRATION.

"WE have received thy mercy, O God, in the midst of thy temple: according to thy name, O God, so also is thy praise, unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of justice."—*Psalm*, xlvii.

"Great is the Lord, and exceedingly to be praised: in the city of our God, in his holy mountain."—*Ibid.*

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY everliving God, we humbly beseech thy Majesty, that as thine only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple in the substance of our flesh; so we also may, with purified hearts, be presented unto thee.

EIGHTEENTH DAY.

The Flower of the Flight.

"Arise, and take the child and His mother and fly into Egpyt, and be there until I shall tell thee."—*Math.*, ii.

IN Jerusalem Herod had heard from the wise men of the birth of the new-born King. He feared a rival. He had waited for the return of the men who had come from the East,—but he waited in vain. They had been admonished to return by a different way to their own countries. Jealousy is always cruel,—sometimes savage. Many children had been born in and around Bethlehem about the time of the birth of Christ. Baffled in his desire to discover the new-born King he would not be baulked in his design to destroy him. Jealousy like his has patience to wait. He kept his secret. "I will slay all the children in Bethlehem and the coasts thereof, from two years of age and under," he said in his wicked heart. He bided his time. "I will send my soldiers to do the work," he said to himself. The day had not yet come; but an angel had come to Joseph in sleep and bade him to take the child and his mother and to go down into Egypt. In the night time he rose and took the child and his mother,—and hurried out towards the deserts.

The day of massacre came. Brutal soldiers tore the little children from their mothers' arms and heedless of their wild wailings and hardened against the innocent,

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pleading faces of the poor infants put them mercilessly to death.

The law of sacrifice the shedding of the blood of Innocence began thus in the New Kingdom. The little King of Sacrifice is hurrying out to the great, bleak deserts,—driven from his home into exile. Joseph bears the frail burden, and carries his God. Mary, her heart overwhelmed with fear, startled by every sound, walks beside the foster father of her child. They are going to Egypt. The way is long and lone and drear. But God gives strength to all who fulfill His great designs. Day by day they traveled on. Across those same deserts from Egypt to Judea had come the Hebrews. In these deserts the Covenant had been made with them by the Lord. In those same deserts, in the first ages of the Church will live anchorites and monks without number,—exiles from the world where the child Christ passed an exile from His own Judea.

Full of memories of the old dispensation and full of memories of the new dispensation are those bleak deserts.

Amid those wildernesses will live men of loftiest lives. No wonder. Christ passed over them; and where He passes grace blossoms into beautiful virtues. In the night the sands of the deserts was their resting-place. Dangers lurked along all their way,—but there are no guardians like the angels. Day followed day and night followed night,—and still on traveled the three exiles to the land of Idolatry. In Egypt they worshipped the sun; and now the Sun of Justice in the wondrous eclipse of a Child's form is about to rise above the horizon of that land.

Hunger and thirst they often suffered. Did angels bring them manna? Their passage across the desert is

as silent as the desert itself. Tradition tells us of lofty trees that bent down to give them shade and shelter; and that when they entered Egypt many idols fell in the temples. At last they reached the "land of bondage;—and dwelt in or near Heliopolis. How long they remained in exile we do not know. Joseph the Carpenter worked at his trade procuring daily bread for the Child-God and His Mother.

Meanwhile the Child grew apace and Mary and Joseph rose higher and higher in Sanctity. What sufferings and privations they must have endured? What sorrow was theirs to live under the dark shadow of heathenism! He came unto His own and His own drove Him away. And now He hides in the home of idols. How strangely the first years of Christ are passing! But His Mother is with Him. Mother and Child together,—you cannot separate them without contradicting the closeness of their lives. What mighty adorations of the true God in Child-form came out of the hearts of Mary and Joseph in the land where the very memory and name of the true God had been lost! How the Flower of the Flight bloomed into wonderful spiritual beauties; and all in shadow and in sorrow.

Poor Egypt knew not the glory hidden near the banks of the Nile. How God does hide Himself, and for so long before He makes a sign of His presence and His power! Men are forward whose God is shy. Men are loud and proud whose God is still and humble.

Far away in Jerusalem, if Simeon were still living what must have been his thoughts?

Did he miss the Mother and the Child? Was he waiting for another glimpse of them to bless his eyes? In the Temple regular was the course and order of

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sacrifice and ceremony. Daily on the altars came and went the shadows typical of the Messias; while the shadow of the Child-Christ, already come and gone for awhile away was reflected on the waters of the Nile.

What spiritual work unknown to the Egyptians was the Christ doing in their land? From the first instant of His birth He was working His Father's will though not in a manifest way. And Mary!—did not virtue go out from her silently yet none the less really in that strange land?

Stars that are never seen are doing silent work all the while in this world of ours. The trees and flowers and fruits and seas know it and feel it. So in Egypt, Jesus, Mary and Joseph were, though hidden, doing wondrous work that will never be known.

Herod died and to Joseph came from heaven thro' an angel a message to return to Judea.

Obscure persons,—the Holy Family was not noticed when they entered Egypt, nor were they missed when they left the place of their exile. Baronius thinks that the flight into Egypt took place in Christ's first year and that He returned when He was nine years of age. Back across the deserts they came again,—enduring privations of hunger and hardship, of weary travel and thirst and of dangers of every kind. The tender feet of Christ are blistered by the scorching sands and for Him to suffer so was a part of the Martyrdom of His Mother; and Joseph suffered, as shall never be known in the charge which was his burden as well as his glory. How few ever travel in spirit those dreary wildernesses! Ah! blessed sands consecrated by the feet of Mary and Jesus and Joseph;—made holy by the passage of Holiness—cry out to the world the mystery of hate that

banished them from home, and the mystery of love that brought them back to Nazareth, where Joseph was to sink to rest after a little while, and where Mary was to watch over her child and our Saviour until the day of His manifestation when again human hate would face Divine Law and pursue and persecute the Christ until He would reach the cross on Calvary,—where He would be found with His Mother standing beside Him!

Hate exiled Him. Love brought Him back. Sin, which is hate, exiles us from God. Love brings us back to the Nazareth of grace where, side by side, we find Jesus and His Mother. Mary brought Him back; and ah! is she not forever and ever bringing us back to Him. Let us then fly to her protection and call on her name,—exiles as we are in this valley of tears and she, who brought Him to Nazareth for us, will bring us to His house of grace and to His home of glory in heaven.

ASPIRATION.

"FROM Egypt have I called thee."

PRAYER.

O GOD, who wast pleased that thy Word, at the message of an angel, should take flesh in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary: grant to us thy suppliants, that we who believe her to be truly the Mother of God may be assisted by her intercessions with thee.

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NINETEENTH DAY.

The Flower of Sorrow and Joy.

"And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his wisdom and his answers. And seeing *him* they wondered. And his mother said to him: Son, why hast thou done so to us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing."—*Luke*, ii.

JESUS was twelve years of age. The Paschal feast was approaching. With Mary and Joseph,—and tradition says on foot,—Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Though God and not bound by law, He was a Hebrew and strictly observed the law. What a lesson this to Christians.

They reached the Holy City and performed all things according to the ordinances.

Between Joseph and Mary in His own Temple Jesus knelt down to pray. God on earth in the form of a beautiful boy prays to God in heaven. What a mystery! Too deep for words. The feast closed. And not one in all those multitudes that thronged the Temple knew that in their midst moved the feet of Him who had come to bring salvation. The Feast closed. In the afternoon the worshipers left the city. The men passed out through one gate and the women through another to meet again at night-fall. During this afternoon's journey Joseph and Mary were separated. When they met at the closing of the day where was the child Jesus? With neither.

And a great fear came on Joseph and Mary's heart was filled with a strange terror. Jesus was gone. Whither? The Boy was lost. How and why? How the mystery of His sudden disappearance filled their souls with darkness. Just this morning beside them in the Temple,—so fair, so beauteous, with the very light of heaven in His face to their eyes,—and now gone. He had given no sign. He had said no word. He had let them leave the Temple and the city without Him and without a warning. It was so unlike Him. They turned their faces towards the Holy City. Night came on; but a darker night fell on their souls. Fear and love gave strength to their weary feet. It was very dark. Did Mary think of the Christmas night and its angels when He came to the world? No angels to-night and no *Gloria* of joy. Only a dumb, desolate sorrow. It was the first time she was without Him. How they hurried back! Her heart was crying out for her lost child. On the still night air trembled the mother's prayers. The stars shone on the tears that flowed from her grief-filled eyes.

For the waves of a starless sea of sorrow swept stormily over her soul. Ah! mothers with lost children have known griefs similar but never equal to her's. For never a mother had a son like her's. In the dark they reach the city and in the dark they enter it. Where did they spend the rest of that desolate night? Did they go straight to the vestibule of the Temple to wait till the morning would open its gates? Or did they wander up and down the narrow streets seeking in the dark for Him who was their only light?

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Dawn in the East and the Temple doors were opened. He was not there. Where had He gone? Had He gone out to Calvary and spent the night amid its gray rocks? The weary search went on. They made inquiries of those they met. And how Mary could describe her child? But no one had seen Him. Another day's search but all in vain. Dawned the third day. Was it an inspiration or was it only the presentiment of a mother's heart that turned their steps towards the Temple?

* * * * That day the teachers of the law were assembled. The Scriptures were in their hands. They were reading and expounding the Law and the Prophets. Suddenly into their midst came a boy fair to look upon with something of more than human beauty in His face. It was unusual for a child thus to come amid their deliberations. But somehow His coming did not seem an intrusion. It was as if He had a right to be there. In their midst He stood listening to them and asking them questions. They wondered at His wisdom and His answers. The promised Messiah of forty centuries,—twelve years of age,—looked into their faces,—with His questions and His answers stirred their souls;—and they, with the Scriptures in their hands, did not recognize Him. The Boy to them was only a wonder. An old Prophet had written His name would be called Wonderful.

Will He now reveal Himself and show unto them that the Wonder in their midst is their very God? No,—He must bide His time.

A silence fell on the Assembly—one of those strange hushes that follow one mystery and precede another. Footsteps were heard approaching.

Swiftly to where the fair boy stood came Mary and Joseph. It was a second wonder. And the Teachers heard a voice with a mother's pathos in it while the light of joy shone on her face: "Son why hast thou done so to us: behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing?" The teachers knew the aged carpenter and they had not forgotten the face of Mary. The Boy and the Mother looked strangely alike. And the Boy spoke: "How is it that you sought Me: do you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" Did the teachers think that the Boy was about Joseph's business,—for had not Mary said: "your Father and I sought thee?" Yes the mystery is not yet to be revealed. Mary took the Boy's fair hand in hers and led Him from the Temple. Her sorrow had blossomed into joy.

"And He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them. And Jesus increased in wisdom, age and grace before God and man." The sorrow of the three days brightened into the joys of eighteen years. Eighteen years more must the world wait for the Teacher. Why let the world wait? Why give thirty years of His life to His Mother and only three years to the world?

Why this seclusion in Nazareth? Why the silence unbroken by a word to the world resting on those eighteen years? The communings of mother and child are not for the world. They are sacred and secret. Thrice only in public and in the hearing of others He addressed His Mother,—in the Temple where she found Him,—at the wedding feast in Cana and on Mount Calvary.

But the words that passed between them at home

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have been buried in a silence which not one inspired writer has invaded.

But ah! the constant interchange of thought between Jesus and Mary during those eighteen years must be full of the mysteries of human and divine love! How her soul must have been filled with the light of those mysteries which we see only in shadow! It is again for years and years mother and child. Nazareth is more than a city,—it is an argument. Of what? Of the indissoluble bond between Jesus and Mary. And of what else? He was subject to her. He obeyed her. He acknowledged all her rights and powers as His Mother and fulfilled all His duties towards her as her son.

Has He ever annulled His Mother's rights? When?—Once a mother,—a mother forever. He must break the birth-bond,—He must sunder the blood tie before He can compel His Mother to abdicate her rights. He must go against the face of the eternal decree by which He elected to become Mary's child.

Has He ever taken away her power? Why and how? Did He ever reach an hour in His life here below,—or has He reached an hour in His glorified life in heaven when to her, who said: "Be it done unto me according to thy word:" He has said or could say: "What you my Mother ask will not be done according to thy word?" No—no,—the rights, the powers, the privileges of her who is the Mother of the Eternal King will last as long as He reigns. He has never emancipated Himself from the sceptre of His Mother's love. He was subject to her in the earthly Nazareth,—and because her will is perfectly united to the divine will, He is still subject to her in the heavenly Nazareth. * * * *

So sweetly—peacefully and silence-veiled went on the days at Nazareth. In the city there was a synagogue. There on every Sabbath day knelt the Holy Family in prayer. The Christ in silence listened to the readings of the Scriptures; and never did human soul feel such reverence for the divine word as did His. He was in their midst and they knew Him only as the aged carpenter's son. On other days He worked for Joseph was growing feeble. Came a day when Joseph was missed in the synagogue. Only Jesus and Mary came. And so for Sabbath after Sabbath. It was in the order of Providence that the Foster-father should pass away from earth before his Foster-son would face the world. It came at last. Did the Foster-Son anticipate the time and baptize with Christian Baptism the last and greatest Hebrew patriarch?

In the arms of Jesus and Mary he calmly died.

Ah! what a death! They laid him away with his fathers,—and now Jesus and Mary were alone. Their hearts grew closer together. Every day He entered the little shop to toil for His Mother's support. Once she fed Him. Now He feeds her. Often a great fear crept into her heart and whitened her all pure face;—for she knew the day of separation was coming fast.

It came a day of deepest human sorrow to Jesus as well as to Mary. Ah! love wants the face of the loved one to look on. It is so in the glorious heavens where the face of God will be an eternal need eternally gratified. It is so in this sorrowful world where hearts, though they know and are happy to know that they love one another, still want one another's face, and still want to hear the tones of one another's voice. Their loves are not going to part,—that she knows,—

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but He is going to take His face away—the face that has been her heaven of human joy for thirty long years. Did Mary's Son kneel down to get His Mother's blessing before He went out alone into the world? For alone He must go to do His mighty work. Or did He ask her consent to go forth and die for the world? Asked or not asked she gave it.

Three years,—awful years for Him with Calvary at the close. The moment came. Mother and Son embraced. They were human and they wept. He turned away from peaceful Nazareth with His face towards the Jordan. Mary entered her humble home. What passed there only angels knew. It was like an agony that separation. Ah Mary! your Jesus is truly lost to you now,—but it must be so because He is going to save the lost. Did angels come to comfort her?

When after a while He will preach to the people,—to His Father in heaven will be ascending from Mary in far off Nazareth the mightiest prayers that ever heaven heard. For her prayers had part in His three years ministry.

Jesus preaching,—Mary, praying—ah me! how could men resist? Oh! Mary crowned in heaven! pray for us with the heart of a Mother and the power of a Queen that we may never resist the graces sent us by thy Son.

ASPIRATION.

"SEND forth thy light and thy truth: they have conducted me, and brought me unto thy holy hill, and into thy tabernacles. And I will go in to the altar of God: to God who giveth joy to my youth."—*Psalm*, xlii.

PRAYER.

GRANT, we beseech thee, O Lord, that both the course of the world may be peaceably ordered for us by thy governance, and that thy Church may rejoice in tranquil devotion.

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TWENTIETH DAY.

The Flower of the Wedding-feast.

"His Mother said to the waiters: Whatsoever he shall say to you,—do ye."—*Luke* ii, 5.

JESUS went down to the Jordan and was baptized by His cousin John the Baptist. Then He went into the desert; fasted forty days, was tempted by the devil; bade him begone,—and he went; returned from the desert; called a few disciples who followed Him; began to teach in the synagogues and was followed by many; and at last came to Nazareth. What a meeting it must have been when He entered His Mother's home. How soon He returns to her! He had a reason. There is nothing accidental in His life. His mother has a work to do before He separates Himself from her only to meet again on Calvary. Three days after the calling of His first disciples "there was a marriage in Cana" (not far from Nazareth) "and," writes St. John, "the mother of Jesus was there." And Jesus was invited with His disciples to the marriage. Mary, who perhaps presided at the feast, saw, with a woman's quick intuition, that wine was wanting; and said to Jesus: "They have no wine." Simple words,—but strange. Had she ever seen Him exercise His omnipotent power? In the flight to Egypt and return had He procured, out in the bleak desert, food and drink for her and Joseph, by the use

of divine power? Her request almost implies as much. And if not, she knew her Son was God. Just as strange was His reply: "Woman, what have I to do with thee: My hour is not yet come." It seemed like a harsh refusal softened only by the reason He gave. His hour had not yet come. But the mother knew her Son better than the guests. Mayhap some said: "He has refused her." She said to the servants: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do ye." There were six water-pots of stone; and Jesus said to the servants: "Fill the water-pots with water." And they did so. And He said: "Draw out now and bring to the ruler of the feast." And they obeyed. The ruler of the feast tasted the water made wine;—so did the guests;—and a great wonder filled the room. St. John writes: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory and His disciples believed in Him." They had listened to the glory of His words,—for no man spake as He; and had followed Him. Now manifest to them is the glory of His power—and they believe in Him. Yes,—there was a reason why His mother should be present at the feast. She had brought Him into this world by miracle. She had given Him that body which enshrined omnipotence and it was but right and fitting that the first exercise of His power should be at her request. Through her the humility of the God-man was first manifested in Bethlehem; and through her the glory of the Man-God, in the beginning of His ministry, is first made manifest at the wedding feast of Cana. But said He not: "My time is not yet come?" And at His mother's simple words: "They have no wine" He anticipates His time, works His

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first miracle,—shows His power,—displays His glory—and now His disciples believe in Him. To be the cause of the manifestation of His glory is glorious enough:—Oh Mary! but most glorious is it to have been the cause of that first faith which began that day in Cana in the souls of the first few disciples and which will last strong and unshaken as long as this world shall exist! Yes—Mary the Mother of Christ is the mother of the first faith in Him;—and that faith like Mary—will be always a virgin pure from any stain of error;—and always a mother bringing forth in every age innumerable children, down to the consummation of the world. Yes indeed there was a reason,—and more than one, why Jesus should meet His mother at the feast. It was a marriage feast. Marriage is the appointed means whereby our race is perpetuated. Marriage must be holy, and to be so,—must have God's blessing,—and to have it, husband and wife must love one another and have reverence for one another's body. Else marriage loses its purity. That lost,—marriage sinks into degradation. Mary the great Mother of Christ and of His posterity was there as a model for all mothers. Mary the Virgin was there in all the glory of her purity to signify that purity should guard motherhood. The laws of human generation are sacred. Mary is present at the feast held in honor of those laws to attest their sacredness. Ah! how those laws are dishonored! And then? Unhappiness. And then? How often infidelity? And then? How often divorce? Why dishonored? Jesus and His mother were not at the wedding feast. The world was there with its congratulations. Fashion was there with its finery. But grace was absent. No wonder there are

so many miserable marriages! No wonder that fretful husbands and complaining wives are met with everywhere and every day! They have missed their wedding-blessing or they have lost it and are not willing to strive by prayer and sacraments to win it back again. Nor need we marvel that this tells on the children, disturbs society, sometimes dishonors the Church and leads to ills temporal and spiritual beyond all reckoning. In the pastorals of nearly all the Bishops the question of marriage holds a prominent place. They are not only teachers of truth but they are the guardians of the sacraments. Faith without the sacraments is a sky without the sun. The Bishops of the Church see that as the world is drifting farther and farther away from the safe moorings of Christ's teachings,—no sacrament is in greater peril of losing its sanctities by moral shipwreck in society than that of matrimony. Entered into too hastily,—a matter of mere human love and sometimes alas! human passion, without the preparation of prayer and the presence of supernatural grace,—marriage is losing its sacredness among the married.

The honor of the faith is often yielded and the laws of Holy Church transgressed in mixed marriages. The children of the same faith should marry together without seeking, and then only for gravest reasons, outside connections.

Over the order of human generation Jesus and Mary must preside that it may have heaven's blessing.

But let us ascend to the order of regeneration where grace reigns over souls.

In that order the feast is everlasting and Jesus with His mother presides. Every holy thought,—every pious

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desire, every fervent prayer,—every act done for eternity,—every sacrament received and all the other countless things that go to make up the supernatural life have relations to Jesus and His Mother. Where He is,—she is as well; He with His saving mercy, she with her mother-love. In every feast of grace in our souls Jesus and Mary meet.

Oh Mary Queen of heaven pray that sin may never enter our souls to cast a shadow on those sweet interior feasts we keep when Jesus comes in all His love to sanctify them more; and we know He will bring a mother's blessing with Him.

ASPIRATION.

"SON! they have no wine."

PRAYER.

FAVORABLY hear our supplications, O Lord, and graciously protect thy institution which thou hast ordained for the propagation of mankind: that the union made by thy appointment may be preserved by thy aid.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY.

The Flower of Mary's Martyrdom.

FIRST PART.

"And thy own heart a sword shall pierce that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed."—*Luke* ii, 35.

AMID the splendors of the Transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Thabor, Peter loth to leave the place, cried out in the rapture of his heart: "Oh Lord! it is good for us to be here!" Thabor was a Calvary in the Light. Calvary is a Thabor in the Dark. And loth to leave the mount of mercy,—as He hung on the cross three long hours, let us linger three days amid its mysteries that we may learn more (we never can learn all) of the relations of the Mother of Jesus with His Passion and our Redemption. Two souls were never more united than theirs on Calvary. Two sorrows were never more as one. That union lasted not only during those three hours that passed on Calvary. It lasts forever; for the Passion, at which Mary was not only a spectator but in which as His Mother she was an actor,—is eternal. She had given Him that sacred flesh which was bruised,—that blood which was shed,—that form which was nailed to the cross. The drops of His precious blood that redden the rocks had their far-off sinless fount in the heart of Mary. They began to flow from her heart on the day of the Annuncia-

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tion,—nine months invisibly till Christmas night came and the Child was born. Then for months He was nursed on her sinless breast and drew the nourishment of His life from her sinless body. The blood was hers no longer. It was His only each drop of it united to Divinity. But still in the beginning it had been hers—and what she gave Him, He gave us for our Redemption. He was her's before He became ours. He became our Saviour as her son as man as really in the temporal order as he was in the eternal order Son of the Father.

From His Mother He received that human life in human body, which He laid down for our salvation. That body, in the eternal decrees, was necessary for our Redemption. From the Eternal Father, by eternal generation, He received (if we can use that word for lack of another) His divinity which made the reparation, wrought through His body, of infinite value. So in the decrees of God Mary was as necessary to the human part of the Passion as was the Father to the divine part. Now the divine and human elements of the Passion are eternal in their effects; and therefore Mary His Mother has part in every effect that flows from the Passion. The history of Christianity is the continuation of the Passion. Christian life finds its roots in His death;—two roots,—one in the human soul and body—the other in His Divinity. The body to His human soul united comes from Mary,—His Divinity, from the Father. Therefore as His Father has,—as He has,—so Mary His Mother has part in every single effect of His Passion. Out of the Passion came the Church and the sacraments; and therefore His mother stands in everlasting relationship with the

sacraments and the Church. Every sanctification of soul,—every salvation of sinner,—every sanctity of saint flows from the Passion, and therefore intimately, inseparably, everlastingly related to the Passion, Mary is intimately, indissolubly, and forever connected with the work of the Passion in the soul of every saint and sinner.

The action of the Church is the perpetuation of Christ's Passion. Therefore as in His Passion so in the action of the Church Mary holds by mother's right a necessary place,—and that place highest, next to His. She stands forever by the Cross and she stands forever within the Church. You can no more thrust her out of His Church than you could have thrust her away from the cross. You cannot take the cross and Him without taking her. They go together. They stay together. They do the grand work of this world's salvation together. "What God has placed together you cannot put asunder."

Jesus alone is the Mediator. His Redemption of us is infinite. Mary, sinless as she was, with all her merits could not have atoned for a single sin; could not have saved a single sinner. Christ's Infinite Redemption of sinners is as incommunicable as His Divinity.

But do not the elect co-operate with Jesus in the Redemption of the world? Do they not, as St. Paul writes: "fill up in their bodies that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ, for His body's sake, which is the Church?" And this co-operation is real and substantial. By His merits have they not acquired the power of meriting? Do not their works satisfy for sins not only for their own sins but for the lesser

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sins of others, by their union with His? But the co-operation of all the saints together does not and cannot equal the co-operation of Mary.

Their co-operation is but a shadow compared to her's. For her co-operation is based upon her Divine Maternity; and that, in God's decrees, was indispensable. The consent which she gave to the Incarnation involved her consent to the Passion. Her will was in it all as well as God's will. Her will is in it still and will be in it forever. So that in a limited, finite sense we may well and accurately call Mary, His Mother Co-Redemptress. For without her we would not have had Him as our Redeemer. It could have been otherwise if God had willed it otherwise in eternity. He did not so will it. Therefore it is as it is and can never be otherwise than as it is. It was God's free decree. It was realized. Mary is an essential part of that realization;—and remains so forever.—Why,—did He not say it: "My words shall never pass away?" And they have not and never shall. Is not Mary mother of the Word made flesh greater than the words that fell from His lips? Can she ever pass away out of the sight of Faith? Does not Faith demand her everlasting presence as mother to believe and prove that God was man,—man, because, her own son? Is not His mother greater than His words? Why,—she gave Him the very lips that spoke the words? "Never man spake as He"—His very enemies said. And that man was her own and only Son. His words will go down the ages full of grace and truth and light and spiritual life;—and tell me! must the mother who gave Him the lips to speak salvation to all ages retire into the background of history,—to

become a mere beautiful memory,—nothing but a name? No—no,—as she stood by the cross for three hours the mother of the Crucified she must stand by His words forever the mother of the Teacher of men. His words are human as His form on the cross was human. His mother proves the humanity of that crucified form and His Mother proves the humanity (if I can so write) of His undying words. His human words are like His human body. It shrined a divine person. They shrine divine thoughts. The body, with its human soul and human lips to speak human words enshrining divine thoughts, came from Mary His Mother. Wherever His words go,—she goes. She is more than a memory,—more than a name. She is the mother of His words as well as of Himself. For their human tone they lean on her, for their divine teachings they lean solely on Him.

The words of the Word-made-Flesh need His mother in person to prove that they are human words as well as they need Himself in person to prove that they are words divine. So therefore, the invisible presences of Jesus and His Mother are justly demanded by the eyes of Faith, as witnesses of His human-divine words wherever they are preached. She witnessed the crucifixion; and she must witness forever the preaching of "Jesus Christ and Him Crucified."

Now listen! all ye who preach His name and words!

Do you give His Mother her rightful and necessary place? Do you take His words into your pulpits and bid His Mother stay outside the doors of your churches? Do you preach "Christ and Him Crucified" without saying a word of her, the witness of His Passion? Do you preach the words of the Word-made-flesh and put the

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Mother of that Word Incarnate aside? Then surely is your preaching false,—false to Him because false to her,—false to both, because false to the very Scriptures in your pulpits. It is a wonder that the calm, sweet words of Holy-writ on Scripture's pages do not frown upon you in wrath! Have you not read in the closing of God's Revelations: "And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life and out of the holy city?"

And if you take away any of the words of the Book —by thrusting aside His Mother,—it is more than taking away words,—it is an offence against Christ Himself personally,—it is a crime against the Word-made-flesh who came to dwell forever amongst us as God—Son of the Eternal Father,—as Man,—Son of Mary, His Mother,—for wheresoever He, through His representatives witnesseth to the Truth she must witness to the Truth of truths that He is man because He is her Son.

Representatives did I say? His true representatives must represent Him and His Mother forever and ever working together for man's salvation.

Alas! there are Maryless, Motherless Churches (so-called.) They will have nothing to do with her,—though from her they receive their Christ. Christ was not Motherless. His true Church—made to His likeness, cannot be Motherless. His Mother is her Mother, for her Son is the head of the Church. Oh! holy Church! re-living the life of Jesus;—clothed with His sanctities,—enshrining His everlasting Presence,—possessing His powers,—infallible witness of His truths,—executor of His will; thou hast not forgotten His last

legacy on Calvary to His well-beloved disciples: "Behold thy Mother!" Wherever thou goest and wherever thou preachest "Christ and Him Crucified," thou dost keep forever in the sight of true Faith the Mother who "stood beside the Cross." Thou dost frame the Name of Jesus in the name of Mary as he was fashioned in her sinless womb. Thou art true to Calvary and its Passion;—thou art true to the Son and true to the Mother;—and wherever thou goest—"Jesus and Mary,"—"Mary and Jesus," are sounded by thy lips together and forever,—an everlasting hymn of only two notes of only two names—telling the true and full story of Man's redemption.

Aspiration.

"Be it done unto me according to thy will."

Prayer.

O God, in whose passion, according to the prophecy of Simeon, a sword of grief pierced through the most sweet soul of thy glorious virgin mother Mary: mercifully grant that we who celebrate the memory of her dolors may obtain the happy effect of thy passion.

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TWENTY-SECOND DAY.

The Flower of Mary's Martyrdom.

SECOND PART.

"When Jesus saw his Mother and the disciple standing, whom he loved,—he saith to his Mother: Woman,—behold thy Son."—*John* xix, 26.

THE Three Years, on which all the years of human history lean and will forever lean for the light of truth, for grace divine and for salvation were coming to a close. The words that fell from the lips of Christ during those years shine still like heavenly stars above all the horizons of time.

Palm Sunday came and passed with its Hosannas. Monday and Tuesday he taught in the temple, returning to Bethany every evening. His Mother was there. Wednesday night he spent amid the hills alone in prayer. Thursday morning he returned to Bethany. He had asked her consent to His Incarnation. He comes to ask her consent to His Passion,—and to bid her farewell. He knelt to His Mother and begged her blessing. She refused to bless her God and fell on her knees to adore His Divinity. They both remained kneeling and at last each blessed the other. She had given her consent to the crucifixion. She had given her child away to the world. Unutterable human anguish filled her heart,—for by supernatural light she saw every single detail of the awful drama in which Christ

was to be the victim. But above all the dark anguish, like the far calm sky above the storm-swept sea and angry clouds, her will was tranquil and her soul was full of such graces as she had never known before. She needed them all to meet her coming desolation.

On Thursday night she was in Jerusalem. It was the Eucharistic night. Did she, in some way, receive her Son's body and blood to give her strength to bear the woes of Good Friday?—Many think she did. Next morning came. Accused, tried, not convicted yet condemned, scourged, crowned with thorns, accompanied by two malefactors, preceded by Roman soldiers, surrounded by a savage crowd whose blasphemies rent and desecrated the air, followed by an immense multitude, some wondering,—some pitying, some weeping but the most clamoring for His death,—Jesus went on His way through the streets to Calvary. John the Virgin and Magdalen the outcast stood by the Mother of the Son of God. The Apostles had fled. Jostled by the crowd Mary stood at the corner of a street by which her Son would pass. He saw her blue mantle. Their eyes met. Ah! what a meeting! One moment,—but it was equal to an age of grief. Higher, darker surged the waves of sorrow in the Mother's soul. Grace held her up. The next moment Jesus fell under the weight of His cross and His Mother's sorrow. He rose again. More savage rose the clamors for His blood. They echoed and re-echoed through the streets of Jerusalem,—but ah! they rang through Mary's heart and filled it with an agony like to His in Gethsemane. And she? She was praying for them all. John, Magdalen, Mary followed the multitudes. They crept up the slopes of Calvary. She saw it all, every detail of the awful cruci-

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fixion. Her ears heard every stroke of the hammer driving in the nails. Christ was lifted up on the cross. No wonder the earth was shaken from centre to circumference,—appalled by the murder of its God by men,—and these,—men of His chosen race. But not only the sin-stained earth gave signs of terror;—in the sinless heavens there were portents of sorrow,—as if they knew and felt the infinite horror on Golgotha. Darkness came creeping over the hill;—growing deeper and deeper;—hushing the blasphemies on the lips of the rabble, who now filled with fear rushed away from the cross back to Jerusalem when they heard that strange and awful sounds had issued from the temple and that the veil in the temple had been rent in twain.

In the darkness Mary and Magdalen and John came together to the cross. Mary and John stood. Magdalen crept to her old place,—crouched on the ground;—kissed and kissed the nailed feet;—and mystery of mysteries! the tears of the forgiven outcast mingled with the blood of the Son of God.

Silence came. Seven times was it broken by the dying Saviour. In a tone of infinite pathos rose from his lips: "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Mary stood beside the cross calm in her illimitable woe;—making in her breaking heart an almost infinite act of almost infinite contrition for the murderers of her Son and for all sinners. Her silent act of contrition ascended to the Father blessed with the prayer of Jesus. But ah! if sinners need a divine Saviour,—do they not need a human, sinless Mother?—Wait awhile. There is silence again. When she became His mother in Bethlehem thirty-three years ago,—it was in joy—in rapture, in ecstasy. His human nature

was sinless. But now she is to be made the Mother of all sinners on Calvary; she must suffer the penalty of such motherhood. She will be made their Mother when her soul and body are suffering agonizing throes beyond the reach of thought. When she has reached her closest union with her dying Son in the pangs of her compassion;—when His Passion and her compassion become almost as one, then shall her second motherhood be proclaimed to the world by the dying lips of the world's Redeemer. Silence still. Poor Magdalen is weeping her very heart away—kissing now the nails as if to make them less cruel. The moment of the second maternity came.

"When Jesus therefore saw His Mother and the disciple standing by whom He loved, He saith unto His Mother: 'Woman, behold thy Son.' Then to the disciple: 'Behold thy Mother.'"

Ah! what a transfer from Jesus to John! Has He given His Mother away? Yes. Has He abandoned Her? No. He has given her away to those for whom He is giving away His life. He gives her away and still keeps her. How? The soul that takes Him must take her. The sinner that calls Him Saviour must call the Saviour's Mother his Mother. He gives Himself to sinners as their Saviour;—He gives her to sinners as their Mother. So Jesus and Mary are still together. From Bethlehem to Calvary together. From Calvary's Cross to heaven's crown together. The Mother of the Redeemer is proclaimed by Christ,—Mother of the Redeemed. The Mother of Christ is the Mother of Christians. John the Apostle, on Calvary, becomes the representative of all the posterity of Jesus Christ. Mark the Scripture words: "He said to the

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beloved disciple: 'Behold thy Mother.'" On Calvary John represented all the beloved disciples of Jesus Christ in the Kingdom that was to last to the end of time. And therefore Mary, by Christ's appointment is made forever the Mother of His disciples.

Ah! Cross of mercy eternal! wherever you are preached;—wherever you are planted,—wherever the sunshine of your salvation is cast;—you are not true to the great Good Friday;—you are not true to Calvary—unless who so preaches or plants you still keeps Mary His Mother standing beside you.

The scene on Calvary on that Good Friday is framed in every day and hour of time. On the Mount, the Cross,—on the cross Jesus Christ; beside the Cross; Mary His Mother. She must be there as part of the picture. If not there,—the picture is false. No—no—if I go in in my sins and sorrows for pardon or comfort to the foot of the Cross of Christ, I find kneeling there a sinner like myself the Magdalen; and I find standing there Mary His Mother. Can I thrust her aside? No—no. It is her place to stand there not only for the three hours in visible form,—but to the eyes of faith forever.

To the eyes of Faith, Magdalen the sinner has her arms around the foot of the Cross forever.

To the eyes of Faith the well-beloved of Christ, representative of His disciples, stands beside his and our Mother. For Good Friday lasts forever. No after day has gone back to it; but it has come to every day of time bringing the Cross and the Christ and the Mother, and the penitent sinner. Will you take the Cross and Him—and reject her? Do not the deepest meanings of God's eternal decrees gather around

the Cross on Calvary? Did Mary stand there for nothing? Were her presence and even her posture there meaningless? Who will dare to say so? Were His words to her and John without meaning? John would care for her anyhow,—and the Apostles. When He said to His Mother: "Behold thy son:" could He have meant it literally? No. A literal meaning is nonsense. John was not her son. What else could He mean? Why: His words on Calvary are as wide and deep as His work of mercy on Calvary. They reach beyond that hill and that day,—and the spiritual meaning of the words He spoke will last as long as the work of mercy He accomplished. When to John He said: "Behold thy Mother:" what did He mean? Only John? She was not John's mother. Taken in literal sense His last dying words would be false. Who will dare say so? What then did He mean? He meant it in a spiritual or mystical sense. As He is mystical Head of the Church,—she is the mystical Mother of all the members of the Church. Why?—We are brothers of Christ;—He was her Son; and therefore we are her spiritual children.

In Bethlehem in joy she became the Mother of the Redeemer. On Calvary in the throes of sorrow she became the Mother of the Redeemed.

Oh! Mother of our Redeemer! look down upon us from thy throne in heaven; and as thou didst follow thy own adorable Son from His birth even unto His death; guide us thy children through every day of our lives; and as thou didst stand at the foot of thy Son's Cross, in the hour of His death, be with us in our last hour when we shall commend our spirit into the hands of our eternal Father.

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ASPIRATION.

"GREAT as the sea is my sorrow."

PRAYER.

O GOD, at whose passion, according to the prophecy of Simeon, a sword of sorrow did pierce through the most sweet soul of the glorious Virgin and Mother Mary; mercifully grant that we, who devoutly celebrate her transfixion and suffering, may, through the mediation of the glorious merits and prayers of all the saints who faithfully stand beneath the cross, obtain the blessed fruit of thy passion.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY.

The Flower of Mary's Martyrdom.

THIRD PART.

"After that he saith to his disciple: Behold thy Mother. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own."—*Luke* xix, 27.

THE dead who had come out of their graves, awakened to life by the death of Christ, were walking through the streets of Jerusalem, seen of many, who awe-struck rushed away to hide themselves from the appalling sight. There was terror in the city,—and a horror indescribable fell over the hearts of all. Jesus still hung on the Cross. The centurion rode down the slopes of Calvary crying out in the darkness through which light had entered his soul: "Truly this was the Son of God."

"When the evening was come there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also himself one of the disciples of Jesus: he went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus." "And there came also Nicodemus (who at the first came to Jesus by night) and brought a mixture of myrrh about an hundred pound in weight," —to embalm the body of the dead Christ. They and their servants found Mary still standing beside the Cross. She as Mother had watched o'er the crib—and she as Mother is guarding the Cross. That body is hers. She had given it its life out of her own life. He

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has given it away for the sins of the world. She stands there the sinless watcher and the sorrowful weeper over her Son's death.

She saw them coming,—and she waited. They neared the Cross. White as a lily was the face of the Dead; and white as the lily of the Valley was the face of the Mother of the Dead. Poor Magdalen was in her chosen place at the foot of the Cross bathing the dead feet with her tears. John was calm and still beside Mary. His vocation was a high one. Peter was to have charge of the Church; but John was to take care of Mary the Mother of all the disciples of her divine Son.

Against the Cross a ladder was fixed. Joseph and Nicodemus mounted. The crown of thorns is gently loosened from the head and passed down to Mary.

Ah! such a crown and so cruel and for such a King! His blood is on it. That crown can never wither. It never has;—nor shall.

Better thorns than flowers;—for flowers fade. Never mind! the thorns will bloom into immortelles of mercy and love and joy. The nails were loosened in the hands and feet. They are gently letting the body down.

Now Sorrowful Mother! you may kneel down and take Him in your arms again and nestle the poor sacred head upon your breast. He is coming back to you. To whom else would He first come dead who living first came to you? And to you for us? The hands of poor Magdalen are the home of His feet. They seem to be thirsty for her tears. And they rest so sweetly in her hands.

But ah! around that scene hovered unseen hosts of angels. Gabriel of the Annunciation was there strengthening the soul of the Mother in her sorrows,—strengthening her arms to bear the dead Burden.

Not a word was heard;—only Magdalen could not help but wail;—for she could not understand it all. Jesus was dead and her heart was breaking. The Mother's heart was already broken.

What woe was like His Mother's woe? She would have died holding the dead Christ had not God's strong grace held her up. She smoothened the tangled and blood-clotted hair as calmly as she smoothened His hair long ago when He was a child. 'Twas deep joy then. It is deepest sorrow now.

She sits down on the grass,—and the dead Christ is resting in her lap. "He had no place to rest His weary head" in life,—He said it Himself long ago. In death as in birth He rests on His mother. Wait awhile! She is gazing in unutterable grief on the wan, white face. What a long, intense, searching look. Does she read there the names of all the elect? Her grief is brightened. Does she read there the names of all lost souls?

Ah! how her sorrow puts on a darker darkness:

Let her alone. 'Tis the saddest picture this world shall ever look upon. Somehow the outstretched arms will not be closed. Even dead they want to stay wide open with mercy's welcome for all the world.

The mingled myrrh and aloes she, with the others, applies to the wounds. Magdalen embalms the Feet. Poor thing! and did she not know that if His feet were her's, His heart was her's as well? One last look of absolute agony at the dead Face;—the winding sheet is wrapped around the body;—and then Joseph and Nicodemus gently raise the sacred corpse, assisted by John, and wend their way down the slopes of the mount to the tomb in the garden below. Mary and Magdalen

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walk together,—the sinless and the sinner. Is it not ever so?

It was Joseph's Garden. In it he had built a tomb for himself. It was hewn out of the solid rock. In it no dead had as yet lain. Slowly,—silently they came down from the mount. They reached the sepulchre. It was almost night. The heavens and the earth, awhile ago so stirred with terror, were now as calm and peaceful as the Face of the dead Christ.

In the tomb they laid their burden down. They adored It with profoundest adoration. The Mother looked her last on the shrouded form of her dead Son;—calm with an almost infinite calmness,—sorrowful with an almost infinite sorrow. Her grief was an icy, frozen grief that could not melt into the tears that relieve. Magdalen sobbed as sinners sob after pardon has come;—wept as those do weep who have lost all they love. The great stone was rolled against the door of the sepulchre. The restless Christ had found a place of rest at last. He will not rest even there long. Away from the closed tomb went the mother with a Christ-like calm covering the inner sea of sorrow that was whelming her soul down into depths too deep to fathom, where all was dark as all was deep, for the light of her life was hidden away in the sepulchre. Mary Magdalen could scarcely tear herself away from the grave of Him who had shown such loving mercy to her. But the Mother of the dead Christ was now her Mother also, and when called away by the voice of the sinless Mary,—the Magdalen, like a little child, obeyed. They passed across Calvary on their way to the city. The Paschal moon was shining on the Cross. At its feet again fell Magdalen. She fain would linger there all

night long. Ah! it had been a cruel bed of death for her beautiful Christ! The bed was empty;—but though empty she would watch it still.

The Mother kissed the Cross, and bade Magdalen rise and come. They entered the city away in the night. Roman soldiers were already guarding the grave of Christ. And what a night for Mary the Mother!

Every moment,—and every moment was one of intense painful wakefulness,—for her sorrow would not go to sleep,—filled the Mother's heart with desolation.

What if the Roman soldiers would desecrate her Son's grave? What if they would roll away the stone and drag the body forth and maltreat the dead as they had maltreated the living? The light in Mary's soul has gone out. Down in her heart where all was now so dark,—like to Christ's cry upon the Cross,—she cried in agony: "My Son! my Son! why hast thou forsaken me?"—And yet, like Him, she was resigned.

And the night passed on and away. The Sabbath dawned. One by one the scattered Apostles gathered around her. She was their Mother now. Surely Magdalen stole away that day to go up to Calvary. If He was not there, His Cross was there. Did Mary the Mother try to approach the grave that day? Or did she go to the Temple to pray for the crucifiers of her Son? The day wore on. The awful gloom of yesterday hung like a pall 'round that Sabbath. Night came again. "In three days I shall rise again;" the Mother knew the words and knew they would be realized. All that night the words were singing in the heart of Magdalen. * * * Let us pause and think. The Mother stood by the Cross to the last. The Mother received into her own arms the dead Christ taken down from the Cross.

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It was her right. The birth-right gave her the death-right. To hold Him in her arms living and dead was her right and her's only. To see that He was fittingly buried was her duty,—a mother's. No doubt,—Joseph of Aramathea asked her consent to accept his sepulchre for her divine Son. From first to last,—from the Annunciation to the burial of her Son her will had its place and her consent its part.

For Mary was not a tool to be used by God for awhile and for a purpose, and then to be flung away as useless. Men work with tools. God works with wills. And as never Creature was more perfect,—or could be, than Mary,—chosen from all eternity to be the Mother of Christ;—so never creature had will as full and free and perfect in its workings as the will of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In the perfect freedom of her will she is more like God in the infinite freedom of His will than all other created beings. The Father did not force her to become the Mother of His Son. A forced divine motherhood would have been an infinite sacrilege. He chose her one out of all. She could reject or accept the choice, with full, free will,—yet not without asking and knowing the conditions and consequences of such maternity, she accepted it. And from the moment Mary said: "Be it done unto me according to thy will,"—until the last moment of her sinless life, her will was as free as a creature in her finite sphere as God's will is free as a Creator in His infinite sphere. It is the perfect freedom of her will united to the will of God,—more than her perfect intelligence,—that crowns her with her glories. Eve's will yielded to Satan. Hence the Fall. Mary's will yielded to God's,—hence the Redemption.

Her giving her will to God's will gave us our Redeemer. That act of Mary's will last as long as the days of Redemption, and has something to do with every grace of Redemption. It was a finite act with infinite consequences. It was done in a moment,—and it is eternalized.

So two wills govern the Kingdom of the Redeemed;—the will of God and the will of His Mother Mary.

You cannot break the union of these two wills,—the divine and infinite,—God's;—the human and finite,—Mary's. Their accord is eternal. And, therefore, in a finite way but everlastingly, the will of Mary given, for our sakes, to God, in a real, though finite way bears on every day and deed of our Redeemer and Redemption; as in an infinite way on every detail of Redemption bears the will of God who accepted her will and made it His own. You cannot divide the two wills,—God's and Mary's. They began Redemption's work; and the two wills are working together still. If the wills;—the persons who own the wills. Therefore the will of Jesus and the will of Mary,—and therefore the Person of Jesus and the person of Mary can never be separated in any single work of this world's salvation.

And that Saturday night when she was waiting and watching for the Resurrection (for her grace-enlightened intelligence knew it all beforehand) her will was as passive and patient as the dead Christ in His grave.

She would not hasten that glory for even one instant.

Her will was resting in God as peacefully as the dead Christ was resting in His grave.

Though her mother-heart hungered to see His face again; though once long ago she knew that He had worked a miracle, as He Himself said, before His time,

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for her sake; her prayer before the Resurrection was just like her prayer at the Annunciation: "Let it be done according to Thy will." For her perfect will had risen from height to height until it touched,—transfigured without losing its freedom,—the infinite will of God. And the free "Fiat" of God and the free "Fiat" of Mary met and mingled in free and perfect union.

Ah Mother of the free and perfect will! thy children's wills are weak and wayward,—and their consents to heavenly calls, slow and uncertain;—pray for us, oh holy Mother! that our wills may be as thine, united to God's will always; and that our consent to calls of grace may be as thine prompt and full and fervent and always faithful,—so that we, like thy divine Son, Our Saviour may live only and always "to do the will of our Father who is in heaven."

ASPIRATION.

"SON! behold thy Mother."

PRAYER.

O GOD! from whom Judas received the punishment of his sin, and the thief the reward of his confession: grant us the effects of thy mercy; that as our Lord Jesus Christ at the time of his passion bestowed on each a different recompense of his merits, so having destroyed the old man in us, he may give us the grace of his resurrection. Who liveth.

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.

The Flower of the Glory of the Resurrection.

"Peace be to you."—*John* xx, 21.

ROMAN soldiers were guarding the closed grave. The stone was sealed with Pilate's seal. No doubt that with the soldiers were some of the Jews who had assisted at the Crucifixion. The Sabbath night wore on. The dawn was breaking. Suddenly there was a great earthquake; the stone was rolled away; the Keepers of the tomb were struck with terror and rushed away from the garden to the city. Jesus had risen. Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James, and Salome had hurried early in the morning to the sepulchre bringing sweet spices to anoint the Dead. In the garden He first appeared to the Magdalen, and sent her the sinner to be the Apostle of His Resurrection to Peter and the others, bidding them meet Him in Galilee. But already because she had the first right to see Him, in His glory, He had appeared to His blessed Mother. She had not gone forth to the grave because He had come to her. And oh! what a meeting between the Risen Christ and Mary! How the soul that on Calvary was overwhelmed with sorrow, was now filled with joy unspeakable! How she worshipped Him in His glory with all a creature's adoration and with all a Mother's love! His glory shone around her as the darkness of

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Calvary had gathered about her. She was the first to make the grand act of Faith in His Resurrection. No more sorrow now. Her soul is lifted up into ecstacy. His Face has come back to her again radiant and triumphant. She holds the shining hands in her own. Yes,—this is her own Jesus. And how all the memories of His life from Bethlehem to Calvary melted into that one golden vision before her! No more darkness for her now. The vision of Light she gazed upon flashed its splendors o'er her soul; and new graces without number as without measure filled her heart;—and as Christ had risen from the grave, Mary rose, higher and higher into brightest spiritual spheres beyond the touch of human thought. That body now glorified and risen He had received from her. Those hands, feet, face, heart had been fashioned out of her flesh and blood. The Crucified was her own and the Risen one is her's as well. He is the same Christ. He has not lost His human identity and that human identity springs from her motherhood. Yes,—He has come back changed in appearance,—but not in body. And Risen He is still her's and because her's, our's. The body, which she gave Him,—dying and dead, proved His humanity. And the self-same body rising and risen attests His divinity. The same body received from her proves that Christ was the Son of Man and proves that He is the Son of God. His body is the argument. She who gave the body is necessary to the argument. There is no one living on that Easter Sunday morning to prove that the Risen Saviour was the babe of Bethlehem, except Mary. The Mother of Jesus is the single solitary personal eye-witness to testify that He of whom the Angel says to-day: "He is risen He is not here:"—is the self-same one over

whom the Angels sang the *Gloria* thirty-three years ago. Over the lowly crib she bent and claimed the babe as her own. Beside the Cross she stood "the Mother of Jesus" claiming Him as her own. And now beside the open grave she stands—Mother still;—and testifies: "Yes,—He is the same: The Risen Christ was the babe of Bethlehem. I know it;—for I am His Mother."

She has a real and rightful (and for us a necessary) place in the glory of the Resurrection as she had in the mystery of the Crucifixion. She cannot be done without.

Christmas needs her presence not only as a part of the scene and a factor in the Mystery but as a necessity to the argument of Christ's birth. Calvary needs her not only as a figure in the awful scene, and an actor in the mystery but as an argument for the real physical death of the Body Christ received from her. Easter Sunday needs her presence not only as a part of its mystery of glory but as a living witness that the same human body which she brought forth has risen again. It is still in logic as well as in life Jesus and Mary together. And the logic as well as the life of Faith, that rise triumphant with Christ's body out of the open tomb last forever; and the Mother who stood in the shadows of Calvary that passed away, stands and must of right stand for all days before the eyes of believers as an essential element of that Christian Truth which for its divinity rests upon the mystery of the Resurrection. As Good Friday with the shadows that gathered about the death of Jesus comes to every day of time with its Cross and Mary standing beside it;—a Mystery of infinite love and Mercy; so Easter Sunday with its open grave and Risen Saviour comes with its splendors to

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light up, a mystery of infinite power and glory with Faith and Hope, every day of this world's history;—and we see and must see the Mother standing in the glory of its light that shall never pass away.

For Mary gives the human meaning to every divine mystery. She stands amid them all;—she moves along with them; she places them within our reach. Without her they are not humanly real. Without her they are vague, incomplete, far-off and unapproachable. With her they are definite, complete, near unto us and accessible.

Where any mystery of Christ's life presents itself,—she must present herself as Mother, as witness, and as argument. When Christ rose from the dead He did not cease to be man. He was man transfigured, glorified, victorious, never to die again. As man thus risen, in the which He proved His divinity, Mary did not cease to be His Mother. Nor did her rights as Mother cease.

The mysteries of the life of Jesus are the irrefragable arguments attesting that He is the eternal Truth and as such has the right to the faith of every man. You give your faith to Him as Truth and to the truths He taught. But He,—as The Truth as well as the truths which He announced have their reason in His life's mysteries. All those mysteries are human and divine,—physical and spiritual. And Mary alone is the ever-living—everlasting,—and to the eyes of true Faith,—the ever-essential element giving earthly reality to the human and physical side of every one of the mysteries of Christ's life.

The mystery of Christ's human priesthood; (for He was not a priest as God) the mystery of Christ's human

Kingship over all men (for only as man is He King of all men); the mystery of Christ's absolute infallible authority as teacher of all men (for it is by the right of His Divine Manhood that He teaches the world),—need Mary and her motherhood as their human reason. Those mysteries lose half their meaning,—or are meaningless; and the truths based on them lose half their evidence—or are evidenceless—if Mary be thrust aside. In the order of Providence she is as necessary to Jesus as He is necessary to us. It is ever and always Jesus and Mary together.

The hand of the human race must rest in the hand of Mary to find beside her and with her, her Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

So His glorified Hands and Feet and Face belonged to her as His Mother in the glory of Easter-morn, as truly as they did, when the weak little Hands and Feet and Face of the Babe belonged to her far back in the Christmas midnight at Bethlehem. And the glorified body,—ah! 'tis the same wondrous truth;—her's,—then His;—then our's. Oh Mary, Mother of the Risen Christ! we hail thee in the triumph of thy divine Son, as we bowed in sorrowing love before thee in thy desolation on Calvary! Thou dost stand forever in His glory as thou did'st stand beside Him in the gloom of the Cross. At the crib, at the cross, at the grave thou art His Mother still,—and because His, our ever-blessed Mother. In the heavens where thou art throned Queen Mother of the Victor of death, pray that we, rising from the grave of sin triumphant by penance victorious in hope, may never lose again the eternal life of His holy grace!

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ASPIRATION.

"HE is risen,—he is not here."

PRAYER.

O GOD, who on this day, through thine only begotten Son, didst overcome death, and open unto us the gate of everlasting life; as by thy prompting grace thou dost breathe on the desires of our hearts, so do thou ever accompany them with thy help.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.

The Flower of the Glory of the Ascension.

"And Jesus coming spoke to them, saying: All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."—*Matthew* xxviii. 18, 19, 20.

WHEN Jesus died on the cross His human soul still united to the Divinity (as was His body in the grave) true to its mission of mercy for all, descended into Limbo. There all the souls of the dead from the beginning (that had been saved before the day of Redemption as we are saved after it by faith and by participating in the merits of Christ) were waiting, in hope, as the world had waited for "the glad tidings of the great joy." Our Good Friday was their Christmas. Adam and Eve, Abel and Seth, Noah and Abraham, Moses and Aaron and generations of the saved from every race and land dwelt there in Rest and Expectation.

Perhaps by angelic revelation they knew, in part, the work of salvation already accomplished by Christ on earth.

Perhaps Joseph the Foster-father had told them the story of Bethlehem and the Messiah and the Mother.

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TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.

The Flower of the Glory of the Ascension.

"And Jesus coming spoke to them, saying: All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."—*Matthew* xxviii. 18, 19, 20.

WHEN Jesus died on the cross His human soul still united to the Divinity (as was His body in the grave) true to its mission of mercy for all, descended into Limbo. There all the souls of the dead from the beginning (that had been saved before the day of Redemption as we are saved after it by faith and by participating in the merits of Christ) were waiting, in hope, as the world had waited for "the glad tidings of the great joy." Our Good Friday was their Christmas. Adam and Eve, Abel and Seth, Noah and Abraham, Moses and Aaron and generations of the saved from every race and land dwelt there in Rest and Expectation.

Perhaps by angelic revelation they knew, in part, the work of salvation already accomplished by Christ on earth.

Perhaps Joseph the Foster-father had told them the story of Bethlehem and the Messiah and the Mother.

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Limbo was a place of life. It was an abode of souls. And if in our world soul seeks soul and mind communicates with mind in interchange of thought; how much more intimate must that interchange be when the senses that help and yet hinder the union of our souls, have been laid aside. When one by one they reached that place of Rest would not each soul there ask each new-coming one tidings of the earth? Our world forgets. The next world remembers. The supernatural world, the Church has the memory as well as the mind of Christ.

And when the soul of the penitent thief, who died before Christ, went straight from its pardon and its cross to their Paradise, did it not Apostle-like announce to them the Mystery of Calvary? The three o'clock of Good Friday filled the earth with darkness but to Limbo brought eternal Light.

How long had they been waiting there and how marvellous must have been the life they led in those realms of Rest!

What activities of hope must have filled that quiet place? What a strange all-spiritual ritual must have ruled their worship?

They knew that Heaven's gates would not be opened until He would come who held the keys.

So they lived on, age after age, a strange, mysterious life, with a hidden history of its own,—beautiful, peaceful, hopeful; for they knew that the God of their fathers remembered, and would surely in His own time, keep His promises.

While the earth, which their spirits had departed from and where their bodies were buried, was full of tumult and iniquity,—their abode was as still as a

sacred temple waiting for its Lord to enter its beautiful gates.

He came at last from the dark Friday,—the feast of His death, bringing them a feast of life and Redemption's joy. They were the first to see the soul of Christ,—for the earth had only seen the body that veiled His soul.

The shepherds saw it first. And now His soul goes down to meet the souls of the great shepherds of His people. There was surely a *Gloria in Excelsis* sounding through the beautiful Limbo;—while they worshipped the soul of the Messiah.

What a meeting between the soul of Adam and the soul of the second Adam. Did the soul of Eve sing a *Magnificat* for the glory of her pardon and the fulfillment of the Promise, as the second Eve had sung hers on earth for the glory of her Divine Maternity? And the spirits of the Patriarchs and the Prophets waiting, resting, hoping so long hailed the human soul of Jesus Christ in the joy of profoundest adoration.

The soul of John the Baptist was there. Had he been Christ's precursor there as he had been on earth?

Christ announced to them the accomplishment of the promises in His person, words and works. His preaching to them has not been written. It was soul to soul,—thought to thought,—no word. But if the words that veil his thoughts are so beautiful, how glorious must be the thoughts unveiled?

Three days His body in the tomb by Roman soldiers guarded,—three days His soul in the under-world of Rest surrounded by the souls pre-ransomed by His merits.

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What a beautiful Feast those three days must have been!

On Easter morn His soul re-ascended to earth, was united to the body—and Christ rose from the dead.

Forty days He remained on earth.

Scripture tells us of ten or more apparitions to His Apostles and disciples. He taught them the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. He gave them the details of the constitution of our Holy Church and the essential laws of the Sacraments. What else was the work of Christ in His risen life?

Are there other worlds inhabited by intelligent creatures, creatures fallen in their trial,—or unfallen? Did Christ ascend to them to announce the work of Mercy and of love wide enough for all the worlds? Did He pass round the earth, to bless beforehand every spot where an altar of Redemption would be raised? His works are always greater than Scripture tells us. St. John says so. May not His Church,—does not His Church fill all creation wherever a creature fallen or unfallen is found? May not the Militant Church on earth be only, as it were, a little diocese of the glorious Church which reaches from end to end of creation? If all creation did not need Redemption,—all creation needed Glorification to complete and perfect it. There are mysteries hidden and secrets unknown in that strange life of the forty days after the Resurrection, which we may dream of (for Faith does not forbid such dreamings) but which, unrevealed, lie far away beyond our narrow, earthly knowledge. And during those days whose history is hidden in silence from us,—somewhat like the days of Nazareth,—what of Mary His Mother? How many times did He appear to

her? I wonder did He stay days and nights beside her who had so faithfully stood beside His Cross! Scripture is silent, but there can be no doubt that she had more privileges of His appearance and presence than all or anyone else. Magdalen still clung to her;—but after Easter Morn the name of Mary Magdalen disappears from the sacred record.

The Forty days passed with their known and unknown words and works. He was about to ascend to His Father. There was a Mount called the Mount of Olives, near Jerusalem. Thither went His Apostles with His Mother and many disciples. Jesus approached and they adored Him,—"but some still doubted." "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth: Go ye therefore and teach all nations,—baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost;—teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days even unto the consummation of the world." His last words these,—and to last forever. They were the commission given to men from Him as Son of Man to whom the Father had given all power, to perpetuate the Kingdom of Truth which He by His life, Crucifixion and Resurrection had founded. Then a bright cloud hid Him from sight. His visible presence disappeared from the world not to reappear until the Day of Judgment. He had come to the world in the noon of night—secretly and silently. He leaves the world in the noon of day publicly and with words of power on His lips. His Mother was there. She was the Mother of the Man to whom all power had been given and who delegated this power to the Apostles. She has her place on Mount Olivet. She

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is not only a joyous spectator of Christ's Ascension,—she is the Mother of the Ascending One,—and a living part of the Mystery. She is the Mother of Him who had all Power. She is the Mother of Him who gave all Power. Wherever that Power goes,—wherever that Power works; wherever that Power triumphs down to the end of time,—she has her place in its history,—with this difference, that whereas the Apostles were; and their successors were to be only representatives of Christ, Mary was His real Mother,—and as such had a royal right to the Queen's place in His Kingdom.

Who ascended? The Son of Mary who is the Son of God. Who gave the Power for the world's conversion? The Son of Mary who is the Son of the Eternal Father. Can they preach Christ's humanity without preaching Mary's Maternity? No,—no. It is still and still forever, as in the mysteries of Judea, so in the histories of the everlasting kingdom,—Jesus and Mary,—Son and Mother together. Whatever church (so-called through courtesy) keeps her back keeps Him back from the reach of the race redeemed. Their faces, their names, their lives, in time's days as in Eternity's decrees, appear together side by side. If Christianity be the frame out of which the merciful face of Jesus, suffering, risen, ascending and triumphant in heaven looks down forever, livingly, divinely, humanly, on the worshiping world of believers,—the face of Mary must be framed with it to make and keep it human, earthly and of real likeness to ourselves.

If the human heart of Jesus beats back of every grace, law, truth and sacrament for the world's redemption;—the heart of Mary must be felt beating with it in everlasting accord. The heart of the Mother throbs forever in the heart of the Son. Had Christ had an earthly father He would not have been divine,—could not have been true and real God, and His redemption would not and could not have been infinite in power and eternal in effects.

He has but one Father,—the Eternal. But without earthly father He is as truly and really,—and forever, the Son of Mary as He is the Son of God consubstantial with His Father. And therefore as her Son and corporally consubstantial with His Mother,—Mary, in finite degree, as the Father in degree infinite has part and place and power and share down all His reign as King in the endless Kingdom. His Mother must come with Him to prove that He is man,—and of kith and kin to the human race;—as the Eternal Father must go with Him to attest His divine Personality in the Godhead. The Eternal Father and the earthly Mother stand together back of Christ,—spiritually ever present (and Christian logic demands it) back of every word He speaks personally or representatively;—back of every work He does, of Himself or through His plenipotentiaries. The Divine of Christ teaches us through the Human;—the Human of Christ teaches us and can teach us only through Mary, His Mother.

Nor is this mere sentiment. It is clear Christian human reason. And that human reason is founded on the very reason of God Himself foreordaining from all eternity and accomplishing in time, the economy of man's Redemption.

Writing of the Church, St. Paul says: "We have the mind of Christ." And so we have. Christ's body

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shrined and gave forth Christian life. Christ's mind contains and reflects Christian logic,—not lifeless arguments,—but living reasons. We have His mind and with it we have the living reasons which lie back of, and inform the work of Redemption in all its wonderful outline of love and in its every single detail of mercy.

Into those reasons (man the object of salvation apart) enter four persons,—three Divine,—Father, Son and Holy Ghost;—one human,—Mary, a creature and Christ's Mother. She is necessary to the life of Redemption and she is equally, and just for that reason, necessary to the logic of Christianity. Oh Holy Church! Bride sinless of Him who was and is and will be forever the human-divine Son of the sinless Mary,—thou hast the mind of Christ,—thou dost perpetuate the life of Christ,—and wherever thy voice is lifted thou dost magnify her whom God magnified and whose soul did magnify God,—and thou dost know and thou dost preach to all generations and to all ages the Eternal Fatherhood,—the Eternal Son's Brotherhood,—the over-shadowing of the Holy Spirit,—and Mary's Motherhood,—and thus thou alone dost give to the world the perfect reason of that Faith without which it is impossible to serve God and save our souls.

ASPIRATION.

"I go to Him who sent me."

PRAYER.

GRANT, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that we who believe thy only-begotten Son our Redeemer to have this day ascended into the heavens, may ourselves also in mind dwell amid heavenly things.

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.

The Flower of the Glory of Mary on Pentecost.

"All these were persevering with one mind, in prayer, with the women and Mary the Mother of Jesus."—*Acts* i, 14.

JESUS had promised to send the Holy-Spirit, the Paraclete, to abide with the Apostles and to carry on to its completion the great work of Redemption.

As the Spirit of God had "moved over the face of the waters" in Creation's beginning to infuse into them the principle and germs of creature-life;—as the same Holy Spirit had overshadowed Mary, in the day of the Annunciation, with the vivifying power by and through which she conceived Jesus—creature,—yet also Creator;—so the same Holy Spirit was to overshadow the Virgin Church, with mighty power, to make her truly the spiritual mother of innumerable children.

Ten days passed. The Apostles were gathered together in an upper room in Jerusalem,—and "Mary, the Mother of Jesus" was with them. "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind rushing; and there appeared unto them cloven tongues as of fire and it sat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."

The Virgin Mother Church had been conceived in the heart of Christ immaculate as His Virgin Mother had been conceived immaculate.

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On Pentecost by the coming of the Holy Ghost the Church was born in her divine perfection.

And Mary who had watched over the new-born Christ in Bethlehem, watched over the new-born Church;—and, for fifteen years longer she was still to remain on earth to watch the infant Church in its growth.

Was it merely accidental? Hush! with God in His ways and works there is nothing accidental. Let ignorance be welcome to the false and meaningless word.

Faith says—no. Her stay on earth after the Ascension was not, 'tis true, necessary; but it was providential. God had a reason why she should remain yet awhile longer in the world.

The Mother of Christ was to be to the Church,—not a Teacher,—not an apostle,—but something higher, nearer, dearer, tenderer,—the Mother of the Faithful.

Her very face recalled to their eyes the face of Jesus. Her very presence implied that where and with whom she was her divine Son would be. Her grand graces hung around the cradle of the Church as they had hung around the crib of the Infant Christ. What we reason about from afar off the Apostles and the faithful beheld before them. What was clear sight to them is clear, true syllogism to us. She is a living part of Pentecost's mystery. The mysterious day of Pentecost lasts forever. With it begins,—never to end until the last day of time, the reign of the Holy Ghost with all the rights and royalties of the graces of Sanctification.

And so henceforth it is and it will be always not only Jesus and Mary together,—but Jesus and Mary and the Holy Ghost together;—and where they are the Eternal Father must be. Down from the upper chamber came Peter with the eleven. Peter, the commander-in-chief,

by right of rank, stood up and spoke for the rest and gave to the multitudes around him the first battle-cry of Christian faith: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know,—Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." The battle-cry is Christ's humanity. And amid the hearers stood Mary His Mother; living, present, visible proof that Christ was Man.

Then rising in his argument to the triumph of Christ's resurrection and to the glory of His Ascension Peter concluded: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom you have crucified both LORD and CHRIST."

The Mother was just as necessary to his argument as was God Himself. "Jesus of Nazareth a MAN." Mary is necessary. Jesus of Nazareth,—LORD and CHRIST. The eternal Father is necessary. "Jesus of Nazareth" is the subject of the first sermon of Christianity,—as He will be the subject of Christianity's last sermon;—and the subject of every sermon between the first and the last. Essential to the subject are His eternal Father and His earthly Mother. Either thrust aside, He is not the Christ of Bethlehem—or of Nazareth, or of Calvary, or of the Resurrection, or of the Ascension,—nor is He the Christ preached to the world on Pentecost Sunday. His manhood and her womanhood,—His human sonship and her motherhood stand or fall together.

Where goes the Man goes the Mother. Where the Mother is not there is not, nor can be the true and real

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Christ. As long as He lives she lives. Where He works, her Son works,—where He wins, her Son wins; and she, as Mother, has a Mother's incommunicable share in His works and in His triumphs. The Apostles will have successors. His Mother has no successor. Their preaching will give testimony to the Word made flesh. But their testimony needs Mary's sinless body to confirm it and to make it full, clear, true, real and comprehensible.

And above all things, that Sacrament of Sacraments which is the "Mystery of Faith," the blessed Eucharist in which we receive the very body and blood of Christ rests fundamentally on the fact of Christ's humanity which itself rests on the fact of Mary's maternity.

Pentecost was the Birth-day of the Church of Christ. Our Holy Church alone has the right to keep it.

The Peter of Pentecost is preaching still and will preach and teach the world forever. Pope Leo holds his place and his prerogatives. And the sermon is the same as the subject is the same,—the "Man Jesus of Nazareth." His humanity springs from Mary's maternity. The Sermon must lean on the Mother as a star must lean upon a sky. And—"The CHRIST and LORD." The teaching must lean upon the Eternal Father,—as the sun leans against the Heavens.

Peter's Pentecostal argument is Faith's eternal argument. Any thing less is false. Any thing more is wrong. And it is the full and perfect and unanswerable argument. He was brief, terse, brave, pointed. He said it all in a few sentences. He gave to the world the plan of Christian preaching. He had the right to give the plan, for he was the Prince of the Apostles. First point,—the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth. Christ's

Mother proves it. Second point,—the Divinity of Jesus; —the Eternal Father proves it. Oh beautiful Christ!—and Thy Kingdom shall be as wide as the world,—and everlasting shall be Thy reign;—and Thou shalt win victories,—and Thou shalt have triumphs;—and Thou shalt wear crowns of infinite glories. When Thou dost now every day lay them down in heaven at Thy Father's feet;—and when in the end Thou shalt lay down all the trophies of Thy Precious blood at the footstool of Thy Father's throne,—will not the Mother who gave Thee Thy Precious Blood participate, with Thy Eternal Father, in Thy infinite glory? Thou Son of Man and King of men! wilt Thou forget her who made Thee such? Will she not have ever and forever the sacred rights of Thy Mother,—and the royal prerogatives of Queen in Thy Kingdom?

Yes,—yes,—they are her's given to her and never to be taken away.

Let us enter the gates of all the churches.

Ah me! there are many churches differing each from the other, though they each among all assume the glory of being the Church of Christ. Did Christ ever differ from Himself? Is His name a name of contradictions which Faith, violating the protests of truth, must accept? Can He Himself, or through His Church, say one thing to one and contradict it to another? No—no. One Christ,—one Church. But let us enter the doors of the churches which claim to be His.

There are many tests. Let us take but one.

Only one question,—ever so simple. How do you stand towards the Mother of Christ? What is your attitude? Is it one of love and veneration;—or one of indifference, or else one of hostility? That tests your

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title as Church of Christ. Do you keep the Mother and Son together—Him to adore as your Saviour-God,—her to honor and venerate as the Mother of the God-Saviour. Answer—Yes—or No. And your answer, in the court of human reason as well as before the tribunal of true Christian Faith settles at once and forever the question whether you are of God's divine design or of mere man's false dreaming.

Alas! and yet alas! in the so-called Christian churches we seek but find not Mary, the Mother, of Jesus with her rights and powers. Logically a Maryless church is a Christless church. A church, that does not take the Mother and throne her in her exclusive place has no right to take the Christ whom the world received through her. Mother and Son,—Jesus and Mary together! 'Tis the ceaseless refrain of Redemption's glorious and endless hymn.

ASPIRATION.

"HE is risen,—he is not here."

PRAYER.

O GOD, who on this day, through thine only begotten Son, didst overcome death, and open unto us the gate of everlasting life; as by thy prompting grace thou dost breathe on the desires of our hearts, so do thou ever accompany them with thy help.

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.

The Flower of the Joy of Mary's Death.

"My memory is unto everlasting generations."—*Eccl.* xxiv, 28.

PETER, the Chief of the Apostles preached the first sermon; and Peter celebrated the first Mass. At that Mass Mary received the Holy Eucharist; and as many think, the sacred species remained in her incorruptible, with the sacred Presence, from one Communion to another;—so that her heart was all the while the ciborium and the Tabernacle where Jesus mystically dwelt. Her Communions, like her Conception of Jesus, in intensity of love and in unapproachable graces, are simply beyond measure of thought and description of word. Meanwhile,—just as Christ had said: "The disciple is not above the Master;—if they persecuted Me—they will persecute you:"—the Jews rose up in wrath against the new doctrines. The cry of His enemies on Good Friday: "Away with Him; away with Him"—rang out in fierce hatred against His followers. Stephen, a disciple of Gamaliel, was the first to shed his blood and give up his life for Christ. His body fell beneath, but his soul soared above their brutal argument of stones. Peter was put into prison. Chain the chief and his followers will retreat or surrender. Such their thought. They were soon undeceived. An angel came,—as Mary of Agreda writes, sent by the Blessed Virgin,—unbound

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him, opened the prison doors and set him free. Mary was not teaching,—but she was guarding the Teachers. Had Jesus not said it: "I will not leave you orphans?" As He,—so the Church has a Mother;—and her name is Mary. How she watched its first sufferings,—its sudden growth,—and the beginnings of its glory! The Apostles preached. Mary, the Mother prayed.

And who can measure the power of those prayers? All looked so dark around the young Church. So few against so many. But nothing now was dark to her. She saw it all,—the growing Light around her. She rejoiced with an exceeding joy. Down in her heart she was singing over again with the same music but with new meanings her soul's MAGNIFICAT. For she saw the future,—all,—all,—all,—and the endless glories of the Kingdom of her Son. The Apostles and disciples separated. When soldiers separate,—they are defeated. The soldiers of the Cross separated to conquer. Each went to his own mission and his appointed country to preach, to testify, to die,—and to triumph. They were workers,—and they had no time to write. Human lips—and not a pen were to bring salvation to the nations. Paul was not converted by preaching. Did Mary's prayers convert him? With the Apostle John she went down to Ephesus among the gentiles. So says tradition. After the day of Pentecost Scripture does not mention her name. The olden law of silence gathers around her life again. Yet none the less was she there with all her rights and powers and privileges just as she had lived in the silences of Nazareth. Her marvellous graces could not help but manifest their activities wherever she went. She had never lost the beauty of her maidenhood. The years had come and gone

but in appearance she did not grow old. The charm of perpetual youth enhanced her incomparable beauty. The inner beauty of her soul dazzled the eyes of the very angels. It was moving and mounting, every minute, from sphere to higher sphere of grace. It was gaining merits that will forever help to save the souls of sinners and increase the sanctities of the just. The Church in her soul and inner life was perfect from the first; and now she begins to adorn her visible body with that external beauty which never will be lost and never can be borrowed. How much had Mary to do with the external adornment of the Church? Much surely,—though how much none can say.

Will Mary die? Sinless,—can death touch her? Is not death the penalty of sin? She had no sin. Or,—is not death like that of Christ the chosen, vicarious expiation of sin. Mary cannot expiate even a venial sin by her life or death. But she can die to imitate her Son in His vicarious death. And like Jesus she will, though not under the ban of sin bear the burden of death which belongs to the human race.

She went up to Jerusalem. The Mother's eyes craved to behold once more the scenes hallowed by her Son in His life and death. She would fain make the way of the Cross before she went to receive her crown. Her faithful children in the faithful Church will, in after times, imitate her. In lowly chapel and in grand Cathedral pictured forever are the fourteen stations of the Way of the Cross. She knelt at each and prayed at each of them not for herself but for us. The day of her death came,—and the hour. It was a Friday. Even as to the day she will be like unto Jesus. Had the Archangel Gabriel come again to announce the joyful tidings of her death?

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For death was a joy to her,—and such a joy—to go and meet her Beloved in the Kingdom of His glory!

St. John of Damascus writes: "By the command of her Son, the Apostles assembled around her, and they had come for this purpose to the city of Jerusalem from the most distant parts of the world."

She strengthens and comforts them. She speaks her last words to them—so strangely like the words of Jesus. He was looking at them through His Mother's eyes. St. Thomas of Villanova writes: "Her eyes turned heavenward,—and with boundless joy and jubilation she resigned to her Son her most blessed spirit." Her life went out in the ecstacy of a Mother's love. And Mary was dead. Thomas alone of the eleven living Apostles (for James had suffered martyrdom) was not present at Mary's death. They bore the dead sinless body to the grave and gently and reverently laid it there. Denis the Areopagite writes that he was present at her death and burial. John of Damascus writes that heaven and earth were filled with joy when Mary's spirit passed away. The Apostle Thomas came at last. They went to her tomb on Sunday,—but her body was not there.

Sinless her body was incorruptible. Being the Mother of the Risen Christ, Mary by special grace and by the power of God with her body, to her sinless soul reunited, anticipated the general resurrection; Christ raised her from the dead and she was assumed into heaven. The law of sin in its consequences never attainted her soul. Why should the law of death in its consequences attaint her body with corruption? She died, it is true, in imitation of her Divine Son,—and like Him she was laid away in a grave. But a sinless body cannot corrupt. It

is beyond the reach of that which is death's last and lowest humiliation—the worm of the sepulchre,—and the return to dust. St. Epiphanius treating the question of Mary's death employs these remarkable words: "I do not say that she remained immortal;—nor am I certain that she died."

The Church, however, believes that Mary did undergo the law of death,—not because she was a sinner,—but because her body was human and therefore mortal. Yet none the less was her body endowed with the grace of incorruption. Immaculate soul implies incorruptible flesh. So our holy Church with a true and a perfect and a brave Faith (for the honor of the Son of God Incarnate is involved in the honor of the body that conceived and brought Him forth) holds up to our veneration not only the pure soul of Mary,—but her virgin, human form, as well, that was on earth the first and sacred tabernacle of the Emmanuel. The Truths of Faith flower into beautiful Festivals that their sweet fragrance may fill our hearts as they fill our holy Church. Every Saturday, since the Saturday when the Christ was lying dead in the sepulchre, and only His Mother stood amid the disciples,—her face recalling to their eyes the Face that had disappeared, is devoted to Mary. It is her day in every week of time.

And all through the year there are feast-days in the Church celebrating, in Christ's honor, her privileges, and commemorating, in His honor, the mysteries of His Mother's blessed life. Midway in August we meet the Feast of her Assumption. The whole Catholic world meets, in the spirit of the one Faith, beside her death-bed, watches her passing away, beholds her dead, follows the Apostles whose consecrated hands bore the conse-

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crated Burden,—and kneels down at the grave of the Mother of God; while in tones of joy triumphant floats from the altar the voice of the Priest: "Let us all rejoice in the Lord keeping holy Feast in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary;"—while across the ages realized in the festival and illustrating its glories come to us the words of old St. Jerome in his sermon on the Assumption: "To all others grace is given in parts;—but to Mary comes the plenitude, of all the graces, that is in Christ." Oh! blessed Mother dying! Pray for all the dying! "Pray for us now and at the hour of our death!" And pray that our bodies like thine may rise in incorruption to be crowned with glory forever in the heavens!

ASPIRATION.

"MY Beloved to me and I to him."—*Canticles.*

PRAYER.

PARDON, Lord, we beseech thee, the transgressions of thy servants: that we, who by our own deeds are unable to please thee, may be saved by the intercession of the Mother of thy Son our Lord.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.

Flower of the Glory of Mary's Coronation in Heaven.

"For her thoughts are more vast than the sea and her counsels more deep than the great ocean."—*Eccl.* xxiv, 39.

IT was Sunday on earth. The light of the sun, whose stillness and whose brightness are so strangely like the stillness and the brightness of God, was shining over the grave of Mary. Thither,—and early,—with others went Peter and John as erst they had gone together to the tomb of Christ. For the grave of the sinless one was a holy place. They entered,—they looked,—they wondered and knelt them down to worship the Power of God;—for Mary was not there. Only a moment their wonder lasted. Their quick, intense Faith met the mystery and grasped its reason and its meaning. Heaven had claimed that sinless body for its own. It was too pure to stay. Up there in heaven it had wondrous rights.

The glorified human form of Christ was seated at the right hand of the Most High. In heaven the angels wanted what earth had needed,—Mother and Son together,—for if Mother of men she is Queen of Angels. They have seen her soul, but they want her sinless body; for without soul and body reunited, she is not the Mary of Bethlehem for whom and her babe they had sung that long-gone "*Gloria in Excelsis.*"

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PRAYER.

PARDON, Lord, we beseech thee, the transgressions of thy servants: that we, who by our own deeds are unable to please thee, may be saved by the intercession of the Mother of thy Son our Lord.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.

Flower of the Glory of Mary's Coronation in Heaven.

"For her thoughts are more vast than the sea and her counsels more deep than the great ocean."—*Eccl.* xxiv, 39.

IT was Sunday on earth. The light of the sun, whose stillness and whose brightness are so strangely like the stillness and the brightness of God, was shining over the grave of Mary. Thither,—and early,—with others went Peter and John as erst they had gone together to the tomb of Christ. For the grave of the sinless one was a holy place. They entered,—they looked,—they wondered and knelt them down to worship the Power of God;—for Mary was not there. Only a moment their wonder lasted. Their quick, intense Faith met the mystery and grasped its reason and its meaning. Heaven had claimed that sinless body for its own. It was too pure to stay. Up there in heaven it had wondrous rights.

The glorified human form of Christ was seated at the right hand of the Most High. In heaven the angels wanted what earth had needed,—Mother and Son together,—for if Mother of men she is Queen of Angels. They have seen her soul, but they want her sinless body; for without soul and body reunited, she is not the Mary of Bethlehem for whom and her babe they had sung that long-gone "*Gloria in Excelsis.*"

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Heaven wants her in the perfection of her person. That means body as well as soul. Heaven's prayer is God's will.

It was Sunday on earth. Are there days in Heaven's Eternal Day reflecting the light of their glory on our little Earth-days and catching from our days the light of our Faith? Has the Church Triumphant a calendar of Festivals of glory,—the beautiful counterparts of the Feasts of grace in the militant church? Is there a communion of days as well as a communion of saints between heaven and earth? We speak a human thought,—and only speak it half;—for out of human words, alas! we can never weave a perfect royal robe rich and grand and glorious enough to clothe one single divine truth.

Faith's eyes are better than Faith's fingers.

Open ye gates that hide the everlasting Vision!

Ye rest on hinges of mercy. At the breath of a saint's prayer or a sinner's sigh for pardon ye are, every instant, opened. When the soul of the innocent cometh,—when the soul of the penitent cometh ye open and let them enter in.

Oh! beautiful gates! hung on the pillars of God's infinite Love! "Lift ye up your heads! oh ye gates! and be ye lifted up ye everlasting gates!" Who hath come in through you? The King of glory? Who is this King of glory? "The Lord strong and mighty,—the Lord mighty in battle?" Yea,—He hath entered in and is seated at the right hand of His Father.

But again: "Lift up your heads oh ye gates! yea—lift them up ye everlasting gates,"—the "King of glory,—the Lord strong and mighty" will pass through your opening to-day,—and with Him all the angels;—for His

Mother is coming from afar off—is coming "fair as the moon and bright as a sun" to heaven and to earth and to heaven's enemies "terrible as an army set in array!" And the King goes forth surrounded by angels,—followed by the glorified souls of Patriarchs and Prophets to meet the sinless Mary. Ah! once He went forth to become her child and to make her His Mother; but now He goeth forth to meet her on her heavenward way, to bring her through the beautiful gates to her throne and her crown and her glory. Amid such splendors as heaven had never seen,—save at His Ascension; amid such songs of joy triumphant as heaven had never heard, He leads His Mother into the Eternal Courts and presents her to His Eternal Father who crowns her Queen of all Creation, by right of her being Mother of Christ its King. Her place in Heaven corresponded to her place on earth,—the highest. Her privileges and powers and glories in heaven are like her's on earth,—God's Mother's;—and therefore unshared and incommunicable.

She is crowned and throned above all the heavenly hierarchy. The angelic world honors her with profoundest veneration. She is a part of the religion of Glory (if I may so speak) as she is a part of the religion of grace. Her relations to the Trinity are so real and so intimate that she sees deepest into the eternal Beatific Vision; and from its depths draws into her one own heart more raptures of joy ineffable than all the angels together. Religion here below is union with God in grace. Heaven's happiness is union with God in the vision of His glory. Mary, highest in grace here is highest in glory there. She has reached heights so lofty, where union with the Divinity is closest, that they are simply inaccessible to any other created being.

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Do the angels adore the Divine Humanity of Jesus Christ? Do they not gaze with joys ever new upon the glorified Face of Him who sits at the Father's right hand? Can they adore that Divine Humanity,—or gaze upon its Face without a thought of Mary the Mother?

No—no. What we reason about,—the angels see clearly, fully and at once. The angels belong to the triumphant church of Christ Triumphant, as we here below and now belong to the militant church of Christ Crucified. Before their sight in the Vision of Glory as before our eyes with their light of Faith Jesus Christ and Mary His Mother are together inseparably and eternally united. What is truth believed on earth is truth seen in heaven. What is fact of Faith in time is flash of glory in eternity. Heaven and earth, like God and man, are alike. But the likeness is dim and marred. Sin's shadow still hangs over the world. But beneath the shadow there is a realm of grace and truth and light and priesthood and sacraments. That realm is inhabited by men and women and children all the world over. It is the realm of Sanctification. The invisible Holy Spirit of God the Father and of God the Son rules it through visible rulers. It is the Holy Church;—herself sinless, yet the Church of sinners; and she is like unto the church in the heavens,—essentially like and can never be otherwise. What is the cause of the likeness, which if removed the likeness will be dim and marred?—Jesus and Mary,—neither from the other apart,—but both together.

Mary, by the power of the Holy Ghost,—her human will uniting with the divine will, made Christ, in all reality and substantially, to the image and likeness of

Man; and by Him and through her, the Holy Spirit still operating, the Church on earth is, in all inner reality and substantially made unto the image and likeness of the Church in heaven.

The "Hail full of Grace" with its mystery sounds through every day of Redemption. We hear the words and believe the mystery. The "Hail full of Grace" with its mystery is a part of heaven's eternal hymn. Up there they sing the words and see the mystery in the fulness of its glory. Here and There the words are the same,—and the mystery. There and Here the names shining out of the words are the same,—Mary and Jesus,—giving perfect meaning to the Mystery seen in Glory as they give complete meaning to the mystery believed here below in the days of grace.

If this be a dream,—it was the dream of God from all eternity,—and was made true. If this be poetry,—it is the poetry of eternal love wordless in the heart of God from the unbeginning,—but sung in time and in words of human speech by the Archangel Gabriel in the hour of the Annunciation. That was an eternal hour,—eternal in the song itself which came from eternity and eternal in its echo.

That echo rings true and clear from every pulpit of our Holy Church when the words of the Christ are preached to men. Its mystical music is heard at every altar where the Christ the Word made flesh comes eucharistically to dwell among us. That echo is sounding back of all dogmas—as they come one by one rays out of the sun of Truth, to guide the feet of the Faithful.

That echo is sounding,—a human undertone to the divine music of the Sacraments. That echo can be

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heard by the grace-quickened ears of Faith wherever grace is a-working,—or battling with evil or winning triumphs.

That echo is heard on the lips of the young and the old and the high and the lowly, who become Gabriel-like in re-announcing from earth to Mary in heaven, in faith and love and trust, the words of the Annunciation.

When that echo dies, Faith in its fullness dies.

When that echo is lost Mary is lost,—and when she is lost the beauty of Jesus is lost,—and the perfect meaning of His mercy.

Mary's coronation in the heavens in highest place and first next to Christ's is but the simple recognition by the Trinity and the angel-world of the privileged position which she held among and above all creatures of every creation.

Around her throne there the angels gather with homages of honor, in the very sight of God,—as we gather around her altars here below in veneration of her blessed name. They adore Christ the King as God-man crowned with the diadem of the Mercy that redeemed the world,—as do we in the Kingdom of Redemption on earth,—which is the Church. And they honor with highest angelic honor Mary the King's Mother and their Queen,—as a part of their eternal worship and of their eternal beatitude. The visible presence of their blessed Queen has added another to their countless glories;—and has added another duty (if so we may speak of duty in heaven) to their other duties.

For they are at her call,—and gloriously imitating in the heavens their King's subjection to her on earth, they obey her behests. She has work for them to do in all creation. And it is new joy for them to do it, for to work for Mary is to work for Jesus.

Ah! in the day of her Coronation she was crowned with a glory next to that of Christ,—but though crowned, her power does not rest, her work does not end;—for her love for her Son the Redeemer throbs in her heart for all the redeemed!

She gave the Saviour to Creation and she must help to sanctify the saved. Infinite Mercy is not hers. That is the attribute of God alone. But Mary possesses that which is next to infinite Mercy,—the power of the Prayer of the Mother of the Infinite.

Over the eternal Church on high she rules as Queen, for she is not the Mother of the angels;—but amid the glories of her Queendom she does not forget our far-off earthly Kingdom of grace of which on Calvary's day she was appointed Mother forever.

ASPIRATION.

"MARY hath chosen the better part."

PRAYER.

PARDON, Lord, we beseech thee, the transgressions of thy servants: that we, who by our own deeds are unable to please thee, may be saved by the intercession of the Mother of thy Son our Lord.

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TWENTY-NINTH DAY.

The Flower of Mary's Intercession.

"And all mine are thine,—and thine are mine: and I am glorified in them."—*John* xvii. 10.

HEAVEN is a place of rest,—but heaven is also a place of work. Its rest does not mean idleness. God rests but not in the sense of doing nothing. He is always at work and always in rest. His grand Omnipotence, in this very minute, is governing and preserving worlds already made;—and who knows?—perhaps creating new worlds. But His work is effortless. He wills because He wills and it is done. The angels are in the rapture of the rest. And yet are they not "ministering spirits?" Does not ministering mean working? The souls of the just are at rest; but in heaven do they not make constant supplication for us? Is not supplication work? Jesus Christ throned at His Father's right hand is in the glory of rest;—and yet this very moment is He not governing His Holy Church and through her applying to the children of men the merits of Redemption. And is not that everlasting work? While every day in heaven is a day of rest, heaven has no workless days. Just as the sun and the stars, by laws appointed unto them, work down through the great distances, on our earth with their influences;—so the heavens of Glory, where all

is rest, are forever shedding their influences on the Church of Christ. There is a law of communion of suns and stars by which each affects the other. So there is a higher, spiritual law of which nature's law is but a type;—"the communion of saints." What does it mean? Is it only a pretty poetic phrase? It is written in the Apostles' Creed. It is a living dogma; and every dogma is a poem of God's infinite love.

But what does it mean? "There is but one Mediator,—Jesus Christ." Is not His mediatorship sufficient? Yes indeed—and over-sufficient. Is not His infinite love, which is the heart of His infinite omnipotent power which is the hand to make His work of grace full and perfect, sufficient of itself?

Verily yes,—and more than sufficient. Does He need helpers to assist Him down here in the Kingdom of Sanctification?

Verily no. He alone of Himself is sufficient for His work. And yet nevertheless He does not do the work by Himself alone. That work is the work of His own Will. But He has willed that the activities of all the Redeemed in Heaven and on earth should have part and force and power (finite of course) in the great Act of Redemption. And more than that. He brings into His service and to His assistance in the accomplishment of His work the material creation itself. He summons the element of water not only to be a mere sign,—but to be the essential matter of the Sacrament of Baptism,—Chrism for Confirmation; wheat and wine for the Eucharist,—oil for Extreme Unction.

Words of numan speech by Himself chosen are to constitute the forms of His sacraments. And

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words of human speech written in the Scriptures, or spoken by Authority, are His earthly auxiliaries in the battles and victories of Faith. He might have done without such alliance with powers so weak and things so lowly,—but He did not. He did as He willed; and His will was and is that creatures and creation should help Him in the consummation of His work of Mercy. Thus creation helps to redeem itself. Thus creatures of a sinful race assist in repairing and rebuilding the fallen Temple of original grace. Thus Priests, Bishops, Popes are intermediaries between man and man's Mediator. Thus outside of our Holy Church the Bible as read by each, or preached even by self-appointed and commissionless teachers is an intermediary between the human mind and the Mediator. The priests form the House of Christ's Representatives chosen by God and by Holy Church ordained,—and they stand nearest to the People of Christ. The Bishops form the Senate in the Commonwealth of the Faithful. The Roman Pontiff is Supreme Head of the Church, possessing sovereign power in the realms of revealed truth,—a power guarded from every danger of abuse by the prerogative of official Infallibility.

Christ Himself, visibly and personally has done His last work and said His last word in this world. He works through others on earth. So in Heaven the kingdom of glory where He makes infinite mediation for us, Christ also works through others. He works through the choirs of the angels. He works through the souls of the saints. Through their prayers and supplications in the home of glory He worketh in the kingdom of grace here below.

But above them all reigns Mary,—Heaven's Queen

and earth's Mother. If Christ gave to His Apostles "all power in heaven and on earth,"—is not His Mother greater? Are not her prerogatives higher? Has she not power next to the very Omnipotence of God? Did she lose that power on the day of her coronation? Was it not made greater the hour she was crowned Heaven's Queen? Has God taken away her rights? When He crowned her did He not confirm them? Next to her Divine Motherhood is it not her greatest glory to be the mediatrix of sinners? While on earth did she not love God more than all created beings ever did or will or could love Him? And now in heaven has not her love for Him immeasurably increased? Did she not love man, while on earth, more than man could ever be loved except by God Himself? Is not her power equal to her love? And who will draw,—and where,—the line that limits her love?

It cannot be drawn save to say only that it is not infinite. Love and Power,—Power and Love superior to all Loves and Powers,—inferior only to God's. Let the pens of glorious saints and not my pen,—a poor sinner's write of her power.

St Peter Damian writes that all power is given to Mary in heaven and upon earth as even Christ the Almighty is subject to her since she herself gave unto Him a Power which He had not received from God the Father,—the power to die and redeem sinners with His precious blood. St. Bernard, whose devotion to the Blessed Virgin is one of the most striking traits of his wonderful life, preaching on the Feast of her Nativity, says that God has placed expressly in Mary the plenitude of every good, that we may be obliged to receive

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every gift from the abundance of her's; and that if for us there be any hope of salvation, any grace of Redemption, any right to eternal glory we must recognize that all these things come to us from the Saviour through her.

St. Bernardine of Sienna writes: "From the time in which the Virgin Mary conceived in her chaste womb God's own Son, she obtained a certain jurisdiction or a special authority over the temporal mission of the Holy Ghost, so that no creature has obtained from God either grace or merit save by the dispensation of this holy Mother." Stronger thoughts come out of the heart of the great St. Bernard when he says that not a single grace descends from heaven to earth that does not come through the hands of Mary.

St. Thomas of Aquin, the Angel of the Schools, says: "As the Son intercedes for us with the Father, so the Mother intercedes for us with the Son."

These were saints who thus wrote and spoke,—men of profound learning only equalled by their piety. They were men of lofty reason, of deep, life-long study of God's holy word,—of highest virtues. They manifested the mind as well as the heart of revelation.

They were not the babblers of an hour whose words were only mere sounds, and like sounds pass away. They were the representatives of truth in the past and teachers of faith for the future.

Their words still ring in truth's own clear and certain tone; but heresy has made too many ears deaf to the "Faith which comes by hearing." And so the words of the saints share the fate of the words of the Saint of saints. They are heard or read but they are not understood;—not because the words are not true-

toned or clearly written;—but because inherited error flings a film over the eyes that read; and dulls and deafens the ears that hear, the words of divine Truth.

The minister of error, only a day old in his ministry, who has had a call to preach the Gospel, with no virtues, except perhaps honesty and gentlemanliness; with no study worth the waste of words to measure it, will rise in his pulpit; and one of his first subjects of discourse, if not the very first, is what? An attack against Christ's Church. Against what? The honor we pay to Mary, Christ's Mother.

And he will ring the changes on a word coined by falsehood and accepted by prejudice. And the word? You know it—MARIOLATRY. Gentlemen! take care. It is Christ-like and therefore Christian-like and therefore Catholic,—to honor Christ's Mother. Not to honor her is to dishonor her,—and to dishonor her is surely to dishonor her Son, and to dishonor Him is to dishonor His Father.

And pray, who are ye who dare give the lie to nineteen centuries? Are you saints? Are you learned men? If saints, show us your virtues. If learned men, prove to us your wisdom.

Why! the great centuries are choristers singing around the altar of changeless Faith hymns of adoration of Jesus and songs of honor and veneration of Mary.

We in Holy Church are of "the generations (regenerated) who call Mary blessed." And who can be more blessed than the Mother of the infinitely blessed God? False to her is false to Him. Indifferent to her is indifferent to Him. Hostile to her is hostile to Him. Enmity of mind or speech, or of so-called doctrine to

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her settles the side to be taken by her enemies. The words of Genesis are exceedingly plain. They were spoken to Satan: "I will place enmities between thee and the Woman and between thy seed and her seed." The posterity of Christ is the posterity of Mary the Mother of Christ. He is of the seed of Mary—and like Him so are we. With knowledge or without knowledge they who are against us are against Christ and His Mother, and are on the side of Satan.

Are these words hard? Yes! hard to a faith as flimsy as it is soft (though we ought to call it human fancy rather than divine Faith);—but they are God's words and not ours;—and so we let them stand in all hardness. Catholic Truth in its entirety is a rock that will not be splintered. It braves the blow of the boldest hand; and it defies the rush of the wildest waves; and it smiles, if a rock can smile, at the fury of the darkest storm. Who is the truth that is the Rock? Jesus Christ. And who is the shore on which it leans? Mary—the Mother of God. The Rock and its Shore are ours and ours alone forever.

ASPIRATION.

"PRAY for us now and at the hour of our death."

PRAYER.

HAIL MARY! full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of death. *Amen.*

THIRTIETH DAY.

The Flower of Mary's Glory in the Church.

"And in all these I sought rest and I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord."—*Eccl.* xxiv. 11

THE Incarnation of Jesus Christ through Mary is the rehabilitation in grace of the human race. The Church of Christ is the perpetuation of the Incarnation. By the first Man Adam, at the word of the Woman Eve, sin entered into the world. Sin's reparation was to be made by the Man Christ who, at the word of Mary: "Be it done unto me according to thy word," entered into this world. Man and Woman,—Adam and Eve were the causes of our spiritual ruin. Man and Woman,—Christ and Mary,—second Adam and second Eve are the causes of our Redemption. Everywhere on earth and until the end of time the act of the disobedience of our first parents reaches in its consequences of sin for souls and death for bodies. And so everywhere in the world and down to its last day reaches the act of Mary's obedience to the divine will in becoming the Mother of Christ, together with the obedience of Christ in doing His Father's will, in the consequences of grace for the souls and immortality for the bodies of every child of the human race who accepts the Redeemer. The influences of Jesus and Mary move forever alongside the influences of Adam and Eve.

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Adam and Eve were two persons united in one act,—it was our ruin. Jesus and Mary are two persons united in one act,—it is our Redemption.

Every day of history will man's heart ask: "Through whom have I lost all right to heaven?" And every heart's answer will be: "Through Adam and Eve." And every day of time each heart will ask: "Through whom shall I recover the right to enter heaven?" And every heart's question shall have its answer,—Through Jesus and Mary. It is the only true answer. It is the full and perfect answer. Truth gives it,—Faith proclaims it; and the Church of Truth and Faith must realize and illustrate it. Else all is as dark to the questioning world as it was before the mystery of the Infant's birth in Bethlehem. For the mystery of man's regeneration in grace must solve the mystery of man's generation in sin. In the light of the former mystery stand Jesus and Mary. In the darkness of the latter mystery stand Adam and Eve.

Our Holy Church is the mystical Eden in this world, with gates wide open, guarded by the Angel of the Redemption. Who so wills to leave the beautiful spiritual garden may do so. God forces none to stay. But who so desire to return and re-enter cannot do so unless they come to the gates wearing the robes of grace. In the garden are the second Adam and the second Eve,—Jesus and Mary,—for it is theirs to keep and cultivate;—and in our Holy Church we meet them there together.

With us of the true Faith the glory of Jesus is the royal mantle of Mary His Mother;—and her glory is the brightest gem in the crown of Christ.

St. Paul writing to the Ephesians proclaims that

Christ's would be "a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," and that "it would be holy and without any blemish."

What are the glories of the "glorious Church?"

Her divine truths with their heavenly light? Yes.

Her laws with their sanctifying influences? Yes.

Her sacraments with their supernatural action? Yes.

Her teachings with their divine power over the human mind,—and their infallible certainty? Yes.

Her messages of Mercy, the legacies of His love, to every heart redeemed? Yes.

Sinners in their penances and pardons? Yes.

Saints in the splendors of their sanctities? Yes.

Apostles,—Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins with the supernatural braveries, sufferings, austerities and purities of their lives and deaths? Yes.

For in their persons redeeming grace has conquered their minds with its light, their wills by its law, their hearts with its love.

Ah! Yes they are the living glories of the "glorious Church" whose life is divine. They visibly realize in their persons and reflect on the world, within as well as without the kingdom of grace, the glories of dogmas, and laws and sacraments,—the splendors of Faith and Hope and Charity,—the light of the Christ who lives over again in their lives.

The Church of Christ must have other Christs,—human to prove to the world His divine Christhood. All along the ages she will have her Calvaries to climb; but she must and will have a thousand Thabors up the slopes of which she will lead sinners from the valley of sin to transfigure them on the summit with the splendors of sanctity,—so that the generations of men passing

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by will see the glory shining; and in the wonder of Faith and with the Faith of wonder, will cry aloud as Peter cried: "Oh Lord it is good for us to be here."

Churches calling yourselves Christian listen!

You must prove your title. How? In your hand you bring us the Scriptures. Well and good. We also have them. In your other hand have you the lives of your Saints? Saints are living scriptures. Do you bring us only words even though they be the words of Christ? They are dead words unless you show us men who have lived them. Life is the logic that proves the power of Christ. He Himself is not in His words. Only His thoughts are there. He Himself in His Church by His grace lives in men, women, children who participate in His sanctity. Show us such if you can.

Read for us the Litany of your Saints! Have you none?

No Saints,—no Christ.

No canonizations,—then no names crowned on earth with the halo of Christ's holiness.

Churches! do you lead your followers only through the valley of ordinary virtues and commonplace duty?

Lift up your eyes! Yonder on the mountains, rising towards the skies the splendors of the "Sun of Justice" are shining on the snow-white purities of lofty Christ-like lives. Do those lives belong to you? Is the white snow up there too cold for the feet of your children? Are the mountains of sanctity too steep and too rugged for them to climb? Are the splendors on their summits too bright and dazzling to your eyes?—Then—move on down in the valley. You know not the mysteries and the meanings of the mountains climbed by Christ,—Calvary, Thabor, Olivet. You are not His

Church. You have no saints. You have no hearts beating with the highest heroisms of Faith.

Not so we of His Holy Church. True,—the most of us walk in the lower valleys of ordinary virtue; but countless is the number of those who have scaled the steeps and reached the summits of holiness. And their glory shines down on our souls, making our way brighter and our hearts braver;—and their glory is their's and yet Christ's, and what is theirs and His is our's. We salute them as we pass, for they are the heroes in the march,—in the battles and in the victories of the soldiers of Jesus Christ. And they hail us as we pass them by with cheering words that give us comfort and courage and heavenly trust on our homeward way.

Human sanctity is the splendor of Divine grace. Where its light gleams there surely shines the moveless sun of changeless Faith. From the Birth-day of the Church until this very evening all down the ages there has been a line of Saints. But above them all, with a brighter glory than they all together possess, and with a greater power, reigns Mary the Mother in the kingdom of her Son. Mother of Christ—Mother of His Church,—such is her place and power and glory.

Is it a wonder that the Church has glorified her in every age? Is it a marvel that blazoned on her banners of battle and sounding in her hymns of triumph the name of Mary is forever united with the name of Jesus?

From the beginning she has held in her keeping the honor of the Mother of Christ. Whoso dared to lift a voice or write a word against Mary, she at once anathematized. And her reason was the simplest,—only this: Whosoever attacks the Mother assaults the Son. Arius attacked the Divinity of Jesus Christ by denying His

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divine and eternal Sonship,—and therefore attacked the Fatherhood of God.

Arius was anathematized.

Nestorius arose and denied the divine maternity of Mary. The Church has never far-fetched or abstruse reasons for her action. Clear and simple was her reason when she condemned Nestorius. Only this,—Whoso attacks the Mother attacks the Son. Just as simple and clear as her reason against Arius;—he who attacks the Son attacks the Father. Her enemies pass away leaving memories that shame the pages of history. The Church of her divine Son moves on. "All her generations, in the simplicity of their Faith call Mary blessed." It is her own prophecy becoming part of their religion. But in each generation of the children of Faith appear men full of wisdom and learning and mighty in grace who are the special guards of the rights and the honors of the Mother of Christ. Why read the roll of their names? Why quote their words from Jerome and Augustine and Ambrose down to the infallible utterances of Pius the Ninth of but yesterday? The children of the Kingdom hear them from childhood to the grave. The wanderers outside the Kingdom hear them not,—or when they do they will not understand. Look everywhere along the past see you not the beautiful bannered processions,—simply endless, for where one stops another starts, going up to the temples of Jesus to keep the feasts of Mary!

Do you not behold the consecrated Virgin walking side by side with the Magdalen who has come back to the shrine of mercy, through the prayers of Mary? Do you not see ignorance in ungainly hurry jostling learning when she moves with a step that cannot help but be stately though her face does wear the look of Faith's

humbleness? And listen! where they move with psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles singing the endless "*Sanctus! Sanctus! Sanctus!*" to the Son, and re-echoing back to Mary His Mother her own glorious Magnificat. From the hall and from the hovel come the singers singing. The robe of the king touches the rag of the beggar man and becomes more beautiful and more royal for the touch. The mantle of the princess floats beside the tatters of the peasant. The Tiara crowned head of the Pope bows where the little altar-boy is kneeling. The Bishop's purple and the priest's black cassock meet before the altars to honor Mary. The Purple and the Black meet there on perfect spiritual equality. Savagery and civilization repeat together the same Our Father and the same Hail Mary. The Indian strolling the forest tells the same beads as the sage in his study. It is all for Mary because it is all for Jesus. Is she not then the Glory of the glories of our Holy Church: and is it not our glory, with our words and with our actions, with our whole hearts and with our whole souls and with all the strength of Faith the truest and of love the tenderest, to glorify the blessed name of Mary in life, in death and in eternity.

ASPIRATION.

"PRAY for us, oh! Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ."

PRAYER.

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.

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THIRTY-FIRST DAY.

The Flower of Catholic Devotion to Mary.

"Be ye imitators of me as I am of Christ."—*St. Paul.*

We have gathered Flowers for the Crown of our Mother and Queen from Heaven and from earth;—flowers whose roots are in the eternities,—which bloom in the vases of the Scriptures and blossom in the Dogmas and on the altars of our Holy Church;—their spiritual beauty and their glory and their fragrance filling all the days of time. Let us come back to our poor, little earth to find a fadeless flower growing out of the hearts of the Faithful of Christ,—and cull it,—and twine it in the crown of our Queen. And she will be glad. Christ was devoted to His Mother in life, in death and after death. His Church like Himself is devoted to Mary. That devotion is one of the signs and proofs of its Truth. Jesus was subject to Mary in the days of time and is subject to her in the days of eternity. For He never changes. So His Church subject to Him is subject for His sake to Mary. Both subjections have their reasons in her divine maternity. Subjection is another name for devotion. And Devotion is another name for love. Jesus Christ loved Mary more than He could love all other created beings,—loved her for her incomparable graces,—loved her for her love for Him,—loved her with the infinite love of God for His Mother. So

the Church loves Mary,—and must,—in order to be in harmony with the divine heart of Jesus. The measure of the Faith that adores Christ measures the Faith that honors Mary. And the measure of the love that springs from Faith in the Son of God measures the love that is given to His Mother Mary.

Love is the beating heart of Faith,—the lifted look of Faith,—the wide, everlasting embrace of Faith. The heart of the Church beats towards Mary;—the Face of the Church is ever lifted in love's look to the Face of Mary;—and the arms of the Virgin-Mother Church are clasped around the Mother of Jesus in an everlasting embrace. It cannot but be so. It is in the nature of things and in the super-nature of things that it should and must be so.

The children of the true Faith,—not only the sinners but the saints, have announced to the world the glorious ignominy of their slavery to Mary. In the face of the world they hold up their chains,—Rosaries and Scapulars,—chains for their hands and chains for their necks. They openly exhibit the signs of their lofty degradation,—they wear them in the brave pride of the Faith that defies the scorn of this world. They are medals,—golden,—silver, brass or of humbler materials made. But no matter. Her figure is graven on them,—or her name. That alone,—and is it not enough?—makes them precious. They are related to the Crucifix as Mary is related to Jesus. Wherever the Crucifix goes,—and where has it not gone?—they follow. Not because the Crucifix absolutely needs them;—but because the Crucifix lovingly wants them. What the Crucifix means for Christ,—they mean for Mary. They are a part of the adornments that enhance the beauty of the Church,—the Bride of the Lamb.

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All round the world the Rosary chains are clanking. All round the world the scapulars are living their mysterious hidden life out of the world's but in heaven's sight. And all the earth over, the outward-worn medal reflects the rays of every sun in every clime. They are the marks of "The Legion of Honor" in the army of Jesus Christ.

Love wants nearness. Her pictures on the temple walls or hung in Christian homes,—and her statues on the altars are sweet and beautiful to the eyes of the Faith that loves her Son.

But they are too far off. Love wants something nearer,—something to touch and hold and possess and wear. And if natural love has her own ingenuities,—supernatural love has her's as well. Blessed the neck that hides the holy scapulars! Blessed the hands that hold the blessed beads! Blessed the heart beating back of the breast where shines the blessed medal! Is it foolish? Well;—it is the folly of Faith. Is it blindness? Let it be called so. It is the blindness of love. Is it superstition? Well;—and in reverence we write it,—it is like the superstition of Christ Himself who wore and would only wear the seamless garment woven by His Mother's pure hands.

If the world laughs at these signs of our Faith;—why let it laugh,—poor blind thing that it is;—for how can it understand the spirit of our Faith?

And if so-called Christians scorn us for what we do in Mary's honor (they doing nothing for her while they pretend to do every thing for Christ, her Son)—why let them scorn,—for scorn like their's does but simply show that we and our Holy Church are Mary-like—and therefore Christ-like.

The inheritance of the saints is the contempt of the world without any belief and the scorn of those who only half-believe. Between non-believers and half-believers there is an alliance not openly proclaimed yet none the less hiddenly existing. For, the enmities between Satan and the woman, and "between his seed and her seed" find,—sad and shameful as it is to say it,—soldiers and standards and weapons not only in the Godless world,—but even in the camps of those who pretend to be the soldiers of Christ. So-called Christian soldiers! the banner of Mary waves over every word of Scripture. On its pure, white folds in red letters of blood is blazoned the name of Jesus. Now—tear—if you dare,—that banner down,—trail it in the dust of the beliefless world's denial, or in the half-cold ashes where the flames of Faith once brightly glowed. Are you not traitors? Take heed,—and have a care! To betray Mary and her honor is to betray Jesus Christ Himself and His honor.

Be on your guard. You may kiss Christ, as Judas did, with the kiss of a pretended love only to deliver Him into the hands of His enemies. And you may kiss your Scriptures where Mary's name is written (I wonder do you?) with a kiss of Faith that falters and half-denies, and with no love at all,—thereby delivering the Mother of your Christ into the hands of unbelievers! And you have done it. It is the sacrilege of your system.

Never mind. Mary was not in the garden of Gethsemane desecrated by the kiss of Judas. But she stood beside the cross of Jesus on Calvary, consecrated by His dying on it and her presence beneath it. You cannot drag her thence. Why,—the very Cross with the infinite dead burden on it would go with her who came up

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to it with her heart by sorrow broken. And Magdalen, who is crouching there, would even leave His feet and rise to defend the Mother whose prayers had helped to save her soul from ruin;—and with Faith's divine wrath ablaze in her glorious eyes, and in tones ringing with the authority of an Apostle,—she would bid you begone. Or she might tell you where to find the tree, whereon, in the dark, the other traitor hung himself. . . . .

Hard words these! Then let them be hard.

The Church of Truth is built on a rock, firm, strong, moveless,—not soft enough to be splintered. Let other churches than ours, with their soft, shaky, shifting foundations, use soft words in their teachings. It becomes them to do so. But it does not become the Church of Christ.

Christ is King of the Church. Mary is Queen. Their united honors;—His Divine and Infinite, her s human, sinless, perfect, highest,—give the true tone to all true teaching. In the temple of God's truth there is nothing soft in the foundations,—in the pillars,—in the stones of the lofty walls,—in the loftier dome,—in the very cement that helps to hold the temple together. Nor in the voice that fills the temple with Faith's eternal accents is there or can there be a falter or an uncertain tremulousness. Firm, strong, certain, true,—ringing as the clarion rings marshalling the ranks for the battle with falsehoods,—sounding as loud trumpets sound clear, triumphant in the hour of Faith's victories and Truth's definitions,—are the voices of the leaders of the hosts of the Lord. Jesus and Mary!—Son and Mother!—go sounding together down the long cross-bannered lines of the close-serried columns.

It was so from the dawn of the day of perfect Truth;

and it will be so to the last Vespers of the day of perfect Faith. Adoration of Jesus necessarily implies Love of Mary. Love implies honor. Honor implies Devotion. Devotion means more than mere profession of Love and Honor of Mary's person and name. It has a higher meaning? What?

Your own hearts feel and your own lips pronounce it;—imitation of Mary's virtues.

"Imitate Mary"—do you doubtingly ask?

"Imitate Mary"—I certainly answer.

Her privileges are beyond you. Her prerogatives are, in a true sense, like God's, incommunicable. Not so her virtues. You cannot touch the sun. It is too far off. But you can catch its rays and see and walk by their light.

Mary's virtues are the rays shining out of her grace-filled, sinless heart. The rays reach sinners as well as saints. Every virtue that has a name she possessed in perfectness. And we can possess them all—though in imperfectness. She will surely help us. Is she not "The Refuge of Sinners" as well as "Queen of all the Saints?" Is she not "The Help of the Weak"—as well as the "Strength of the Strong?"

And she will aid us for the asking.

What virtues do we need the most—the most just now—to give our living testimony to Jesus Christ?

The answer is plain and simple.

We need to be faithful in the possession and practice of those virtues, which the world without God, and Christians of only half-faith, are boldly denying or are forgetting or are almost losing in this our day and generation.

What are these virtues? First,—the chief of all the

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virtues,—Faith. The world has boldly ostracized divine Faith. And Christian Churches have chained Faith with the fetters of human opinion. To the world Faith is an outlaw,—in those so-called churches Faith is a slave. The world has reasoned away Revelation. Science has found a Calvary on which to put to death the very name of God. Science is blaspheming still. Faith can wait,—and waiting pray: "Forgive them for they know not what they do."

Men calling themselves Christians have been trying to uncrown Christ by their efforts to uncrown His Holy Church. Their Faith grows weak as their human opinions grow strong.

Their teachers are not dogmatic. They have shuffled off, as if they were slavery's shackles, the bonds of Faith, to wear the manacles of man's opinions. And they think that they are free, confounding the "liberty of the children of God" who believe all and are free, with truth's freedom, with the license of the children of men who believe what they please and so believing can never be free from human error.

We in Holy Church in our times must confront the conspirators against Religion.

How? By our Faith firm, practical, loyal.

Christ is the object of our Faith. Who ought to be our Model? Whose Faith was first and firmest and fullest? Whose Faith was clearest and most certain and perfect?—Whose? You have pronounced her name—Mary's.

It is an age whose idol is pride,—national pride,—race-pride,—individual pride,—pride of mind,—pride of heart,—pride of will. It laughs at the past and boasts of itself. It believes in bravado. It worships

force. It points to its material prosperity as if that were the very consecration of its genius. It mocks at the very word—humility,—and looks down in scorn on the humble.

To that pride we must oppose humility.

And who our Model? You have called her name,—Mary. "My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour; because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid." They are lowly words graven on lofty gates through which the Son of God did enter this world.

But why speak of her other virtues?

Their story can never be fully told.

All virtues ascend towards one,—their Queen. Her name divine Love,—love of God and love of man.

The mystery of Mary's love for God and man is simply beyond the reach of thought. We bow in silence before it as we would bend in worship before a tabernacle with its hidden miracle of Eucharistic love. Mary! Mother! Queen! we kneel in silence before thy altar. Our thoughts fly away from speech. Our souls are still,—too still for aught but a breathless, soundless prayer. Thou art listening to it down in our hearts!—Let us love Jesus with Mary's love.

Aspiration.

Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! our life and sweetness and our hope!

Prayer.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth

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as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. *Amen.*

Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women; and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. *Amen.*

THE following Legends translated from the French,—and as naively translated as they were simply written, will close; and with their child-like simplicity will crown the "Crown for our Queen." Legends, sometimes, are based on facts;—but, perhaps, are more frequently, the beautiful imaginings of Faith. For, though Faith is the unquestioning assent of reason to truth, divinely taught—it, still, can, while believing, imagine many beautiful things which, like golden sun-lit clouds, float across the horizons of Truth;—and make the skies of Faith so beautiful. May I say it? I think I may. Legends in unison with Truth are the poetries of Faith. Legends are to the heart somewhat what doctrines are to reason. Irreligion has no legends; nor has Protestantism. We have. So,—just as they were written;—and just as they have been translated by a child-like heart,—they close and crown my humble work.

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LEGEND OF THE FAMILY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

STOLLON also called Nathan, a virtuous Israelite, a descendant of the tribe of Levi and the priestly family of Aaron,—espoused in the first century before Christ a young Jewish maiden called Emerentiana. She was descended from the tribe of Juda and the royal race of David. They lived in Nazareth, a small town in lower Galilee beautifully situated on the summit of a hill. From their union blessed by Heaven three girls were born,—Mary, whose husband was Cleophas, and whose sons were those disciples of Jesus, called in Scripture "brothers of Christ;" Sobe, mother of St. Elizabeth who was to receive in her old age a visit from her young relative the Virgin Mary; and lastly St. Anne destined by God to carry in her womb, as in a couch perfumed by roses and lilies, her whom He had chosen to become His Mother! A great wonder attended the birth of Anne, and revealed to her parents the precious charge confided to their care and affection. A noble resident of Nazareth who was blind from his birth, inspired by God asked to be led to the child's cradle; taking her two little hands in his own, he said in a trembling voice: "Child of the Most High open my eyes that I may see the glories of heaven." His prayer was immediately granted and the first object which met his eyes was the sweet countenance of Anne smiling at his happiness. St. Anne espoused St. Joachim, like her of royal race. According to the prophecy the Messiah was to come from the tribe of Juda and the family of David. Joachim and Anne were called by Providence to realize the words of the oracles, in having for child the Mother of the Redeemer. Anticipating the distinctive character of the law of grace, the care of the poor, and the ritual of the house of the Lord, Joachim and Anne had divided their fortune into three equal parts: one destined for the relief of the poor, the other for the temple to contribute to the grandeur of its feasts; and with the third they lived very frugally.

LEGEND OF THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

A PIOUS solitary whose life was unknown to men living in a desert heard every year on the night of the eighth of September angelic harmonies coming from heaven. Surprised at this miracle he prayed the Lord to reveal to him what was the meaning of this heavenly melody. An angel appeared to him and said: "The immaculate Virgin Mother of God was born this very night, men forget but the angels celebrate her Nativity in heaven." Since this secret was given to the world the Catholic Church celebrates the eighth of September the day when the Virgin of Juda was born, and as that day is the Hebrew Sabbath it is not strange that Saturday has been consecrated in a special manner to Mary. Pious authors who have written the life of the Blessed Virgin do not agree as to the place of her birth. Some say she was born in Jerusalem, others in Nazareth in a house belonging to St. Anne's parents. However it may be, in that moment of ineffable joy Joachim and Anna were filled with gratitude, and a voice from heaven was heard saying: "Blessed art thou in this world O my well-beloved! a heavenly choir thrilled with transports of joy, assists at thy birth:—may the Holy Ghost repose in thee! Heaven and earth will submit to thy power, and the angels will serve thee as their Queen." It is not without a profound mystery, writes a chronicler, that Mary appeared on earth at the time of year when the grapes begin to redden and ripen—and when the grateful laborer sees his hopes at last realized; the vine whose sweet fruits are gathered in autumn—is it not Mary herself the sweet vintage giving joy to the world—expected by the patriarchs, announced by the prophets. On the anniversary of a loved mother children who love and respect their parents offer her the double tribute of their gratitude and affection.

Let us never fail to give Mary the tender token of our filial piety, and she will rejoice and reward her children.

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LEGEND OF MARY'S INFANCY.

SOMETIME after the birth of the Blessed Virgin St. Joachim and St. Anne gave a banquet in their house at Nazareth at which were present the priests and chiefs of the synagogue and temple. Mary was presented to the priests who called down on her all the blessings of heaven. Afterwards they called her by her name *Mary*, which the angels had given her.

St. Anne brought Mary to the temple and renewed her vow of consecrating her to the Lord when she would reach her third year. Mary, enjoying all the fullness of her reason without showing any outward sign, interiorly ratified the promise. At that instant a light was seen surrounding the mother and her child. Mary concealed all her privileges, appearing always like a little child, she never was impatient nor did she cry over trifles so common at her age, but in her humility she concealed her admirable disposition, weeping often for the sins of men, in order to obtain their forgiveness and to hasten the coming of the Redeemer. Mary unlike all children was not deprived of the power of speech during the first months of her life, nevertheless she remained more than a year before uttering a word, and before using so dangerous a gift she entreated God to assist her, that she might not say anything to displease or offend Him. St. Bernard poetically calls her, "The Immaculate Lily exhaling the odor of Hope."

During this period of her life St. Anne would have the the Blessed Virgin stand beside her and holding in her lap the Scriptures, would have Mary follow with her eyes her hand while she pointed out to her the words of the Sacred Scriptures; thus initiating the little Mary into their mysteries. Sculptors and painters have often produced in their art this tradition. The picture of the calm face of Anne and pure features of Mary awakens in our soul memories of childhood's first impressions. How priceless are the beautiful beliefs

which bring back to the memory only the days of candor and peace. Holy religion of childhood, the heart that is false to thee is alas! guilty, but the heart that despises thee is a heart unhappy indeed!

LEGEND OF THE PRESENTATION OF MARY IN THE TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM.

THE time of parting from their darling child having come, St. Joachim and St. Anne said to each other—"Let us go to the temple with our Mary and give her to God according to our promise." Taking with them a few maidens of their tribe they departed. On their way to the temple they stopped to rest and Joachim pressing his darling child to his heart said to her with ineffable tenderness: "My child I will never see thee more." The holy child had on a blue robe and mantle, her little arms and neck were covered with flowers. Having arrived at the gate of the temple Mary without assistance mounted the fifteen steps which led to the house of God. Anne and Joachim watched her with anxiety, thinking that never again would their lonely hours be brightened by the presence of their sweet and gentle child. Mary was received by the high priest Zachary, who was to watch with so much care over the Virgin of Juda. Joachim offered a lamb as sacrifice, and while the victim was being consumed and the smoke of the holocaust ascended heavenwards, Anne and Mary remained in a precinct of the temple reserved for women. An altar was then erected and Mary knelt on the steps with Joachim and Anna. The priest cut off a few of her tresses and placed them in a thurible. The couple renewed the vow they had made of consecrating her to God. Mary then offered herself to God with such fervor that never since the beginning of the world had there ever been so pure an oblation. Zachary placed on her head a veil, and leading her to a place in the temple where she was met by six maidens the

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priest gave the child to one of the matrons of the temple and went away. Mary then turning towards her parents, and falling on her knees asked their blessing which they gave her. Joachim and Anna departed in great sorrow for their only child. The prophetess Anne presented Mary to her companions. At night Mary was led to the cell prepared for her—the one nearest to the Holy of Holies. The attendant retired leaving Mary alone with her God, alone with the angels watching near the sanctuary. She who was to become the immaculate sanctuary of the Divinity; the Ark of the new alliance; the virginal propitiatory from which the Lord was to announce his pardon to the guilty world. The cherubims cover her already with their wings and greet her as the "Mother of the Redeemer."

LEGEND OF MARY'S ESPOUSALS.

THE young maidens who were brought up in the house of God only remained until the age of fourteen years. The high priest would then solemnly announce to them this news; and tell them to return to their parents to become faithful spouses and happy mothers after having been obedient and submissive maidens. All of Mary's companions who like her had attained that age obeyed the priest's order. Mary alone modestly declared she could not obey. The high priest knowing the vow she had made to the Lord found himself in the alternative of annulling a sacred engagement or of authorizing a usage against the custom of the Hebrews. Not willing to decide such a question alone he convoked a council of the principal men of the people and the doctors of the Law. They all began to pray. Their High Priest went to the altar to be enlightened from on high. Suddenly a voice from the Propitiatory was heard saying: "The oracle of Isaiah must be fulfilled. There will rise a branch from out the roots of Jesse and a flower will bloom

from the stem. Let all the family of David lay each their rod in the temple, and the one whose branch will bloom will be the chosen one to espouse the Blessed Virgin."

The command of God was made known by the sound of trumpets; heralds went all through the city proclaiming the command; and rumor brought the tidings into the confines of Judea. All the young descendants of the family of David came to deposit their rods near the altar. They offered sacrifices to the Lord. But the next day none of the rods had blossomed. The high priest again consulted the God of light and truth. He was answered as the father of David was answered by the prophet Samuel: "Here are not all your sons." Immediately new search was made and one named Joseph was found who had not appeared in the Temple with those of his tribe.

The priests sent for him. Joseph came. When he was brought into the presence of the priests they gave him the testing rod on which they wrote his name; it was then laid near the altar and the following day it was found covered with flowers. Mary was called, and she appeared in the midst of the assembly with her modest grace, her angelic beauty. On learning of the prodigy she adored the mysterious designs of the Lord and as a sign of consent placed her pure hand in the hand of the poor artisan. What a moment for the holy patriarch, how unworthy he deemed himself, with what respect he received from the hands of the High Priest the Lily of Israel, and with what joy he heard from Mary that from her earliest infancy she had consecrated herself to God; he who had made a similar vow. Before leaving the temple, where she had spent such happy hours, she bade farewell to her companions, her superiors and the holy old priest Zachary. Mary left in sadness, but her sorrow was softened by the knowledge of accomplishing the will of God.

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LEGEND OF THE NATIVITY.

In the vast empire governed by Augustus, the clashing of swords was heard no more. He had quelled seditions in Rome, and revolutions in the world. After waiting more than four hundred years, God at last announced in low, solemn tones the word of eternal peace, and celestial messengers were soon to sing the grand "*Gloria in Excelsis Deo, et in terra pax*," sublime summary of the religion that the God-man will give to the universe to redeem it.

Mary enclosed some wearing apparel for the child Jesus in a coffer, which she carried with her to Bethlehem. Nazareth, destined to possess so long the God hidden from its eyes, was not to see Him born. That honor was reserved for Bethlehem, the city of David, the smallest of all the towns in Judea, as the prophet Michaes had foretold. The Emperor of Rome in ordering a census of all his subjects, was to be an unconscious agent in realizing the prophecy, foretold many centuries before, in bringing back to Bethlehem, whence they came, St. Joseph and the most holy Virgin.

The journey lasted several days. The holy patriarch procured a small animal used to fatigue and eating very little. It was bitter cold in the valleys, surrounded by mountains. The homes were few and uncomfortable, the road was filled with people, but the angels walked before them and lightened by their pious hymns their sufferings. The holy travelers arrived at Bethlehem on Saturday at sunset. They sought in vain for lodgings, no one would receive them. Mary knew by revelation all these refusals, but to practice humility and patience, she followed her spouse from door to door.

It was nine o'clock at night; Joseph, not knowing where to direct his steps in this inhospitable town, went with Mary towards a grotto outside the walls of the city, where shepherds, during stormy days, would come and seek shelter As soon as they entered this miserable place, they went on

their knees, thanking God for the double gift of poverty and humility which He deigned to give them. They both took a little food. The Blessed Virgin filled a crib with straw and hay on which the infant God was to rest. The beast of their travels and an ox that was in the stable were placed so as to warm by their breath that cold and damp couch. All these preparations finished, Saint Joseph retired to pray. The hours went by, and night had completed half of its course when the Saviour of the world was born. Mary wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and after embracing Him as her son she adored Him as her God. She then placed Him on the straw, when suddenly the stable was filled with a marvellous light. Saint Joseph, contemplating his God in the form of a little child, wept tears of joy and kissed the little hands which seemed to open as if to caress him. Joseph and Mary are thus models of all real worshipers of Jesus; after them come the shepherds. Warned by the angels, they fly to the stable and pay to the new-born child their simple and humble worship; they return full of joy to the care of their flocks, praising and blessing God for what they had heard and seen. And Mary was keeping all these things and treasuring them in her heart.

LEGEND OF THE MAGI.

The birth of Christ so hidden and humble, was signalized by different wonders. At Jerusalem all the writings of the Saducees were scattered here and there through the temple. In Rome, one of the fountains which watered the city bore to the Tiber for a whole day wavelets of pure and limpid oil. A statue of Jupiter crumbled to dust. And the Emperor Augustus saw above the Capitolian Mount a woman bearing in her arms a little child. Three Magi who were watching and praying on Mount Victory, saw a new star in the heavens shining with wondrous light. They were descend-

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ants of Seth, and knew that a resplendent star would one day rise in the heavens to announce the birth of the Saviour. On perceiving the prophetic sign they were filled with joy and announced the glad tidings to the other wise men who like them were awaiting the coming of a divine King. The happy Magi who were favored by the celestial vision were called Gaspard, Melchoir, and Balthazar; and though young they were renowned for their profound wisdom and knowledge. The miraculous star, came shining nearer and nearer: and lo! they saw in the midst of its rays a child of heavenly beauty bearing on its head in a halo of light the form of a cross. At the same time they heard these words: "Go to the country of Judea; there you will find the King who has been promised, and who has just been born." The Magi descended the mountain and began their journey towards Palestine. The star preceded them. Mounted on the dromedaries of Madian they carried to the Lord the riches of their country. When they reached Jerusalem the star disappeared. "Where," they asked, "is the new-born King of the Jews; for we have seen His star in the East and we have come to adore Him." The priest opening the Book of the Prophets, said to them: "In Bethlehem of Juda the Messiah is to be born."

The ambitious Herod fearing the loss of his throne, exacted a promise from the Magi to return to Jerusalem and tell him where they had found the Child, that he also might go and adore Him. The Magi departed joyous and confident. The star which had guided them towards Jerusalem reappeared and led them to the place where they found the Child with Mary its Mother. Prostrating themselves before the Infant they adored Him, then opening their treasures they offered Him gold, frankincense and myrrh. The most Holy Virgin touched by their faith placed her son in the arms of Gaspard the oldest of the three: then taking the veil which enveloped her person, she gave it to him. The Magi bowed down, and their hearts were filled with gladness and gratitude for the Virgin's gift.

LEGEND OF THE PRESENTATION AND THE INFANCY OF THE LORD.

THE time having come for Mary to perform the ceremony of Purification and to present her Son to the priests, the Holy Family left Bethlehem and went down to Jerusalem. The cold was so excessive that it made the Infant weep. Affected by His sufferings, the Blessed Virgin used the power God had given her over creatures and changed the rigorous weather into a mild one for her infant Son—but she never made use of this supernatural power in her own favor. Arrived at the Holy City, she enters the temple with Saint Joseph, carrying in her arms her Divine Son, that celestial treasure, all the wealth and happiness of the world. "O Eternal Father," says she, "Creator of the universe, Behold thy Divine Son and well-beloved, whom you have made my own. I give Him to thee now to accomplish thy divine will." She then gave to the priests the five sheckels demanded by law,—fruit of the labor of Saint Joseph, and two doves, the gift of poverty. The old man Simeon had received interiorly the promise of not dying before seeing with his own eyes the consolation of Israel. Warned by the spirit of God he entered the temple at the same time that Mary was entering with the Infant. The dazzling rays which emanated from that glorious circle attracted the attention of the people, and whilst the other witnesses of that scene remained unmoved, Simeon is not mistaken by this marvel and recognizes in the child the desire of his old age, and the Rest of his heart. He approaches with delight the Blessed Virgin, who placed the Infant in his arms. He then recites in a touching voice the hymn *Nunc Dimitis*, the last which was to come from his lips. Simeon then predicted to Mary that her soul would be pierced with a sword of sorrow! These words, which were a prophecy of Calvary and its unutterable sorrows, begin the martyrdom of the celestial Queen by lifting the veil which hid from her view the most heart-rending

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mysteries. Hereafter the gentle Mother of the Saviour will have to suffer. The prophetess Anna, who had been Mary's directress, was also inspired to go to the temple at that hour of peace. On recognizing the gentle Virgin and at sight of the miraculous light which surrounded the divine Infant, her eyes filled with tears, and after having adored her Lord, animated with a holy enthusiasm she began to speak of His glory to all those who were expecting the redemption of Israel. Nevertheless Mary in her humility shone like a celestial rose. Saint Joseph then distributed the presents which the Magi had given them. One half he gave for the decoration of the temple, and the other half destined for the rearing of the poorest maidens brought up in the house of the Lord. The poor had already received theirs. All which being accomplished, the Holy Family went back to Nazareth. Jerusalem, the grand, the populous, the noisy city, was not to become the home of the poor artisan whom Jesus was to call Father. The days and months went by rapidly in that solitary and blessed home. After having enjoyed the return of spring, winter came, and with it the anniversary of the birth of Christ. The wind blew with violence, the most-holy Virgin, holding her child on her bosom was warming Him with her maternal breath. Suddenly two angels appeared in Mary's humble home: "It is the first year of the Redeemer's birth," said they with their melodious voice, "we come to bring Him an offering," and prostrating themselves before the Child they offered Him a small cross. His Mother grew pale on seeing this sign, but Jesus received it smiling. Immediately the walls of the holy house of Nazareth shone like a palace of heaven, and the two angels slowly reascended towards the empyrean amid a shower of lilies and roses of fire, which in falling were consumed like burnt incense at the feet of the Virgin.

SOJOURN OF THE HOLY FAMILY IN EGYPT.

SYRA was the first of the towns of Egypt which the Holy Famiy entered. The descendants of Pharaoh who lived in the time of Joseph, had built a temple in which were all the gods, objects of their superstitious worship. The exiles sought shelter under the portico of the majestic edifice; but hardly had the child Jesus placed His foot in the temple than all the idols, by a sudden impulse, fell down with a great noise. The priest who had charge of the temble had them replaced on their pedestal but the following night they fell down again. This commotion was spread throughout Egypt, whose soil was covered by the "débris" of the mutilated idols. It is thus that carried in the arms of its Mother the Infant God triumphed over the devil and strewed on this pagan earth a harvest rich with blessings, which will bloom in silence, peopling this earth with angels whose life will recall the life of the angels of heaven.

Leaving Syra, our holy travelers advanced towards the East, in the interior of the country, where the inhabitants of a burgess offered them hospitality, according to the patriarchal traditions, which they had faithfully continued to practice. The family which welcomed them to their hearth was celebrating a wedding; but joy, the faithful handmaiden of all such feasts, was not seen on the face of the partakers. Beneath the crown of roses which decked her young brow, the bride had felt a strange sensation. Her tongue refused to articulate a sound, she had suddenly become dumb. The bright smiles had been replaced by stupor and horror on the lips of the guests.

But this afflicted woman had drawn near to Mary. She was contemplating with an ineffable look of tenderness the marvellous child sleeping on the bosom of the stranger. His ineffable grace, His innocent charms moved deeply every heart. Taking the infant Jesus from the arms of the Virgin, she embraced It with respect and tenderness,

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and while the daughter of Egypt bestows on the Eternal Word these demonstrations of love her tongue is loosed, she suddenly recovers her voice and speech.

In another town of Egypt, a child who was possessed by the devil, took from the child Jesus a robe which he had and placed it on his head. Immediately the demon left the pagan child. His father being present said: "It is possible that this child may be the Son of God, because since he has been here all of our idols have been overthrown." The poor exiles lived then in Heliopolis. The wretched hovel in which they lived is often pointed out to travelers.

LEGEND OF THE RETURN FROM EGYPT.

BEFORE the massacre of the innocents, St. Elizabeth hid her son John the Baptist in a grotto whose entrance could not be discovered by the agents of Herod. The angels revealed his place of security to the Blessed Virgin, who gave thanks to the Lord for it.

The hour of Divine vengeance was near for King Herod. He was seized with a violent fever, worms gnawed his entrails, causing him horrid pains; he uttered despairing shrieks; his whole being was a prey to unutterable suffering. He died from so much tortures, carrying to his grave the curse of the Jews and the indelible stain of innocent blood. An angel then appeared to St. Joseph telling him his exile was ended. The holy patriarch went immediately to Mary and announced the glad tidings.

They gave their tools and few articles to Jesus to distribute among the poor of their neighborhood, and many were the words of comfort and hope spoken to them by their friends when bidding them good-bye. Mary mounted a beast similar to the one that had brought her into Egypt. She held the child Jesus in her arms—and Joseph walked before them.

When they arrived at the border of the desert they met St. John the Baptist, clothed in his garment of camel's

hair. He shared some roots with them which was all he could offer them for their meals. The precursor's joy was indescribable on seeing the child Jesus, but it was of short duration. Immediately after resting a few hours the holy travelers crossed the Jordan leaving St. John in the desert. He was scarcely eight years old and lived alone in the desert, his father and mother being both dead.

St. Joseph had taken the road to Bethlehem, thinking to continue to Jerusalem and live there; but an angel had warned him that Archelaus, a son of Herod, reigned in Juda. He continued on to Nazareth which was governed by another man. When they returned to their country the Infant Jesus mingled with all the children. One day helping St. Joseph with his work the Divine Child cut his hand—the wood was red with His blood. The Blessed Virgin was called out to Him. The Child reassured her with a sweet smile, but she perceived a small cross on the wood He had been cutting. She turned away her head to hide the tears that silently fell down her pale cheeks. The cross is a present of the Child Jesus to us, and when He gives it to us dyed with His blood, cut by Himself—we ought to receive it with gratitude, embrace it with joy,—as being a token of Christ's sufferings and of an eternal love.

JESUS LOST AND FOUND.

THE grand feast of the Pasch brought back every year Joseph and Mary to Jerusalem. Being twelve years of age Jesus accompanied by His parents and friends went to celebrate this great day. The days of this feast over, Mary and Joseph with a few of their companions returned to Nazareth. According to the Hebrew custom the men walked together and the women followed with their children. Joseph thinking that Jesus had remained with His mother did not feel uneasy at His absence, and Mary not seeing Him near her, thought that the Jesus-God had gone with Joseph. At night

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they all stopped at the same place to rest. The Blessed Virgin on seeing St. Joseph asked immediately for the child Jesus. Joseph was troubled at that question, and answered in an anxious voice: "I thought He was with you?" Perceiving their sorrow, His parents looked for Him among the crowd that was with them; not finding Him they went back to Jerusalem asking every one they met if they had seen the Child Jesus. Mary would say describing Him, "His beautiful hair falls to His shoulders, His features are faultless, His smile angelic and His look divine." "Poor mother!" they would answer looking at her with compassion, "perhaps later you will find your Son so gentle and beautiful." The two travelers met in Jerusalem a woman who told them she had seen such a Child asking her for alms, and afterwards saw Him in the hospital consoling the poor and the sick. Mary went to the temple thinking to find Him there and saw Him with the doctors of the law conversing and propounding the most difficult questions with great wisdom, and astonishing the people with His answers. Mary looked at her Son and with a low plaintiveness spoke to Him the words written in the Gospel. Preserving the majesty of God Jesus answered in a grave and solemn voice: "Why do you seek me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business."

He followed His parents, and when Mary found herself in a quiet place she fell on her knees before Him and asked His blessing. Jesus then consoled her, and told her more fully than ever before the mysteries of His heart.

DEATH OF ST. JOSEPH.

THE Blessed Virgin seeing that her chaste spouse was about to die asked her Divine Son to aid her to soothe his last moments. The Child Jesus promised her not only to assist him in his agony but to raise him to such a rank in heaven that the angels would be struck with admiration. Assisted by these two lights, Jesus and Mary, the last hours of

Joseph resembled more the dawn of a new life than the evening of a life passing away.

Before sleeping the sleep of the just Joseph went once more to the temple to pray. "Merciful God," he prayed, "author of all consolation, prostrate at Thy feet I adore Thee, my life is passing away, sovereign Judge of mortals, hear my last prayer. Illuminate the path that must lead me to Thee and send your angels to take my soul and carry it to the bosom of Abraham."

Thus did Joseph pray, when he returned to Nazareth he died in the arms of Jesus and Mary. Jesus on seeing him whom He had so lately called father lying still and cold, tenderly embraced him. Mary prepared him for the burial, and the next day the holy remains of the descendant of the Kings of Juda were deposited in a vault given him by a wealthy man. He was not embalmed like the rich Hebrews, with aromas of great price and perfumes from Arabia, but he carried into his tomb a glorious immortality. Many Saints believe that the holy body of Joseph, sanctified before his birth, did not undergo corruption, but was reunited to his soul when Jesus ascended into Heaven.

MATER ADMIRABILIS.

IN a convent situated on the Pincian hill in Rome, there is a little sanctuary in the midst of the cloister containing a beautiful fresco painting of the Virgin. The pilgrim who comes to pray before this beautiful representation of the Maiden of the temple of Jerusalem feels a religious calm steal over him which seems to emanate from this graceful image. The Virgin is sitting down weaving linen; near her to the right is a distaff and on the left is a vase containing a lily whose fragile form seems to bend towards Mary. That lily seeks Mary, she raises her eyes in order to look upon its beauty, and she inhales its virginal perfume.

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Here in a few words is the origin of *Mater Admirabilis*, which title she has merited by the wonderful prodigies which have happened at the foot of this painting. It was in the month of May, 1844, during the nuns' recreation to whom belongs this beautiful monastery, whilst they were celebrating with great pomp the grandeurs and mercies of Mary (then a great custom in Rome), the superioress was called away to the parlor. On seeing her place vacant one of the nuns exclaimed: "Ah! if the Blessed Virgin could come and take her place and preside at our recreation." At that moment an artist who had come to Mount Trinity to finish her studies in painting fixed her eyes on a recess in the wall opposite to the place occupied by the superioress. She saw in a moment by a flash of genius the work she was to paint with such perfection. "Do you wish me," said she, "to make the Blessed Virgin come in the place of our mother?" "Yes, yes," was echoed by all, "let the Blessed Virgin descend and come into our midst!" The first of June the artist commenced her work, which was to be completed by the middle of July—but alas! instead of the lily of the valley which the artist had promised, they saw with horror an illuminated figure draped in a black robe and a yellow veil. This horrified all those who were admitted to judge of the work. That appearance was caused by the fresh lime upon which the picture was painted. The poor artist herself recoiled with horror. When the drapery was removed which had concealed the painting for three weeks, and they saw the Madonna in all her innocent beauty, cries of joy were heard. Later the Sovereign Pontiff Pius IX prayed before the *Mater Admirabilis* and solemnly blessed the painting. That benediction brought on so many miracles that the Madonna became a place of pilgrimage where we learn from Mary the secret of self-abnegation, humility and devotion.

LEGEND OF MARY'S TRIALS.

THE bright young years which came one by one to crown the Virgin blessed with the first flowers of maidenhood, increased the infirmities of her parents. St. Joachim felt the presentiment of sorrow and prepared himself by many virtuous acts to end worthily his long career fraught with so many beautiful virtues. When his end drew near he sent for Mary; she left the temple and came to Nazareth. She had just comp'eted her eleventh year and for the first time since her entrance in the temple she went to visit her parents. But that joy was troubled by the pain of knowing that she was to see her father only to bid him a last adieu. Joachim embraced her tenderly and lifting his drooping hands, he placed them on her head. At that moment the Patriarch saw the angels surrounding their glorious Queen and guarding her. In the transport of his gratitude the happy old man commenced a hymn of thanksgiving but it died away on his lips. Calmly he passed away. After helping her mother to render the last services to the dead, she returned to the temple weeping. A year after she returned to Nazareth to receive her mother's dying blessing. The Blessed Virgin predestined to become by excellence the mother of orphans, was to be an orphan herself in order to know the inexpressible sadness of those who have no parents to guide and support them. When she returned to the temple the holy priest Zachary (spouse of St. Elizabeth) received her with tenderness and promised her to be a father to her. Mary bowed her head in gratitude and promised to obey him in all things. The demon jealous of the great virtue which distinguished Mary, and not able to make her commit the least sin, breathed the spirit of jealousy into the hearts of her companions. Under that fatal influence they reproached her bitterly for imaginary faults and succeeded in turning against her some of the priests of the temple. Mary listened gently to the reproofs of her superiors; she opposed only

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meekness and silence to these unjust accusations, and humbling herself before God she prayed for those who accused her. The demon vanquished by this heroic patience abandoned his work; the innocence of Mary was proclaimed and the young maidens called her Queen of Virgins, when suddenly an angel descended into the midst of the maidens saying: "The words you have just uttered will not be meaningless, they will be the fulfilling of the prophecy." At sight of the heavenly messenger, the young maidens filled with fear, fell prostrate. When they rose up the angel was gone but Mary knelt in peaceful prayer.

JOAN OF ARC AND THE DIVINE EUCHARIST.

JOAN OF ARC, the humble shepherdess, the gentle victim, the heroic martyr, had a most tender and innocent devotion to Mary. The greatest pleasure of her infancy was to make crowns for our "Lady of Domrémy."

Nothing prepares us to receive worthily the Blessed Eucharist as devotion to the Lord's Mother. When Joan arrived at the age in which she began to understand the divine gifts she prepared herself by fervent prayer to make her first Communion worthily; and it left in her pure soul a memory of peace that never passed away. Henceforth the Holy Eucharist became the sun of her young life and the supreme strength of her last moments. See the heroine advancing towards Orleans with an army composed of only four or five thousand men to rescue that faithful city from the English besiegers. In the morning Joan's soldiers arranged an altar in the camp; and under the dew of heaven, before the kneeling troops the angel of France received that day in Holy Communion the contract of her mysterious alliance. She breaks through the enemy's ranks, she pursues them, forces them to admit their defeat; yet not even then does the heroine lose anything of her piety and fervor even in the

midst of carnage. She is seen mingling with the children in the Church of the Franciscans going to the Holy Table and receiving her Adorable Lord. Joan after saving France by victories was doomed to become an innocent victim and to suffer an awful martyrdom.

Her love for the Eucharist far from weakening when she was bound in chains only increased. Vainly does she entreat the Judges to allow her to go to Mass and receive Communion. Nothing is more touching than to see the poor captive kneeling near the church door before which she has to pass to go to the tribunal. The door remains closed, but her faith penetrates the walls and her soul unites itself with the God of the Tabernacle. The most unjust of sentences condemns the heroic young maiden to be burnt alive as a heretic and apostate; her whose faith was so vivid and pure. What does she ask her executioners at that last moment, a respite, a moment's grace? No! no! What she entreats, what she begs with heart-rending words is for the Holy Eucharist. When at last she receives Him at her last hour, her face is illumined by a heavenly light and Joan receives in this supernatural union with her Jesus in the Sacred Host grace and strength to die resigned. Brought to the public square she is bound to her funeral pyre. It is lighted by the cruel executioners. The flames ascend, ascend! The moment she feels the scorching fire the poor victim shudders and asks for some holy water. Water, water, she cries! It was the cry of nature and it was her last. Heaven opens to receive her; her Calvary becomes a Thabor, and from that temple of fire a voice pure like that of an angel is heard saying—"My saints have not deceived me, my mission came from God." The martyr then gave a last dying look towards the image of her crucified Saviour; then drooped her virgin head! She gave one cry—"*Jesus!*" All was over. . . . The pure soul of Joan had flown to Heaven.

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LEGEND OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES.

We find at Lourdes a little child very simple, knowing nothing but how to say her Rosary, which she was always repeating at all hours whilst tending her sheep, such are the instruments God loves to use when he wishes to create wonders, because their humble weakness does not obscure His divine transparency. It was Thursday, the eleventh of February, 1858. It was bitter cold at the Soubiron's (Bernadette's parents.) Her father was a miller at Lourdes, and her mother attended to their household, the fireplace had no fire in it, the meal hour was past, and there was no wood to prepare anything to eat. The mother says to Mary her second daughter, "go and get some wood on the banks of the Gave." Bernadette asked her mother permission to go with her sister and Joan Abadie their little neighbor. They descended to the prairie which extends below the city following the course of the current,—Bernadette less active and weaker than the others lingers in the rear. Arriving at Massabielle's grotto she thought she heard a noise, suddenly a gust of wind swept past her with irresistible power. It is doubtless a storm thought the child, but the impetuous rolling of that noise continued, and raising her head, she remains, spellbound, transfixed, dazzled by the sight which met her eyes and fell on both knees. The grotto before which Mary and Joan were picking wood, in an excavation in the form of a recess which crowned the rock, was standing in the midst of a celestial light, a lady of dazzling beauty! her veil and robe were as white as snow, her girdle half knotted around the body was the color of the heavens, and on each of her feet which reposed on a rock, bloomed a mystical golden rose, an alabaster rosary hung between her crossed hands, but her lips remained immovable. Instead of saying the rosary the Queen of Virgins seemed to listen to the immortal echo of the Angelical salutation and the music of Bernadette's prayers who being magnetized, dazzled, commenced to recite humbly her rosary. When she came to the

last *Gloria Patri* the apparition disappeared. The child went home very nervous, and the other children had not seen or heard anything. Her mother listened to her story, fearing that perhaps she was the dupe of an illusion. Nevertheless, the next day she consented to the child's entreaties to return to the grotto. The apparition came again, the child obeying the advice of her companions, threw some holy water on the apparition—to be certain it was no demon. But the Virgin approached nearer to the grotto smiling on Bernadette, she fell on her knees and taking her rosary she recited them with angelical fervor. When she finished, the apparition disappeared. The young visionary returned to the grotto on the 18th February accompanied by two pious ladies of Lourdes. The Blessed Virgin appeared again and asked her to come to the grotto during fifteen consecutive days. Bernadette promised her to do so, and the Blessed Virgin promised her not happiness in this world but in the other. The child had to overcome many difficulties, to bear many trials, but she kept her promise, and every time she went to the grotto she was followed by a curious crowd, who were anxious to see that child of earth, who, when transfigured by prayer, resembled an angel; the apparition was seen by Bernadette alone.

The august Queen was preparing a new surprise for her protégée. On the 23d of February she called her by name and confided a secret to her which concerned only herself. "Now," she added, "you will tell the priest to have a chapel built here." After having said these words she disappeared, and poor little Bernadette felt very sorry and her face lost its angelic look. Mary's little ambassadress went without loss of time to the pastor of Lourdes. He, wishing to test her words, asked as a proof that a twig on which the Blessed Virgin placed her foot should bloom. The next day Bernadette told the Blessed Virgin of this; the Apparition smiled, and in answer to her only confided another secret. Some time after this, to the great astonishment of the multitude, they saw Bernadette walking on her knees repeating these words: "Penance, penance!" As for the rose tree it remained sterile. Mary was reserving a greater wonder to prove

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her appearance in those unknown regions. The Virgin appeared a fourth time to the child, revealed a third and last secret, and said to her:—"Go and drink, wash yourself in the fountain, and eat the grass which grows in the grotto." The child directs her steps towards the river Gave, but the hand of the Apparition points to the right of the grotto: the same barren place where on the eve Bernadette had walked on her knees. The child obeys, but finding no trace of water digs the soil with her fingers and nails, the hole fills with muddy water. Bernadette feels sick at sight of the water, nevertheless she obeys, drinks of the water and eats the grass growing at the foot of a rock. All these things being accomplished the Virgin cast a look of satisfaction on the child and disappears.

The next day Bernadette went to the grotto accompanied by an immense crowd, but the most Holy Virgin did not appear. This was the second time that Bernadette was deprived of her presence, though the gentle sovereign was not present her work progressed and the fountain impelled from the mysterious depths by an invisible force comes bubbling on the soil to the surprise of the dazzled multitude. Whilst each one commented in their own way about these marvels, a laborer, who had lost the sight of his right eye, came to the fountain and washed himself in the water and immediately regained his sight. This first miracle was followed by many others. The fifteen visits to the grotto were ended, and yet on the 25th of March Bernadette went again. She had a presentiment of the joy which was reserved for her. Arrived at the rock of Massabielle the little visionary fell on her knees, the apparition showed itself to her charmed looks, just as ever an ineffable light is seen about her whose splendor is without limit, whose gentleness is infinite. Bernadette, contemplating her in ecstacy, asks her three times: "Madam, I pray you tell me whom are you and what is your name." At the third question of the child the apparition opens its arms and inclines a little to the earth to show to the world her virginal hands filled with blessings. Crossing them again with incomparable fervor she pronounces those solemn words—"*I am the Immaculate Conception.*" Having said these words she disappears in a

luminous cloud and the child finds herself with the crowd in front of a lonely rock. But the crowd soon knelt on these rugged stones sanctified by Mary's presence. A beautiful statue of the Apparition has been placed in the rustic recess where the Blessed Virgin appeared to the child.

LEGEND OF THE IDIOT OF THE WOODS.

AMONG the legends which are said of Mary there is perhaps none so touching as the history of Salaün called the idiot of the woods. He was idiotic but of a holy idiocy which has a place in paradise. It is believed that in the beginning of the XIV century was born a being frail, sickly and poorly endowed by nature, fortune also frowned on him, his parents were poor country people who lived off the fruits of their labor, they dwelt in a hovel situated in Lower Brittany, not very far from the town of Lesleven. When their child was old enough to attend school they sent him to the neighboring village, but all he learnt to remember were these two words, "*Ave Maria.*" His parents died leaving him penniless; he begged his bread from the people and lived in a wood near a fountain shaded by a large oak-tree. It was at the foot of this tree that Salaün stretched on the ground would sleep. Although very ignorant he was very pious, and every morning he went to Lesleven to hear Mass, and whilst the priest was raising the sacred Host during the elevation he repeated ceaselessly "*Ave Maria.*" On coming out of church he would ask for alms, saying in his peculiar language, "Salaün would eat bread if he had some, '*Ave Maria.*'" The children who heard him continually repeating the same words would run after him crying out, "Salaün the fool," but the older ones would give him in the name of God the nourishment he so much needed. He would then go to his woods, and seated by the fountain would saturate his bread in the water and at each mouthful would repeat "*Ave Maria.*" Sometimes he would get up on his tree and

swinging himself to and fro on its branches would incessantly repeat, "*Ave Maria*," and the neighboring echoes would answer the blessed refrain of poor Salaün "*Ave Maria*." In winter he braved all the inclemencies of the weather and never left his retreat. A few charitable persons, touched with his sufferings, offered him an asylum in their house, but he would never accept. He was never heard to utter one complaint; never was offended at the injuries he would receive; never would steal, and always looked contented. The wolves and wild animals which roamed the forest never tried to molest him. The all-powerful Virgin whose name was always on his lips chained their sanguinary instincts. After living forty years that solitary life he fell sick. As he did not appear at his accustomed place in church, the people of Lesleven went to his retreat in search of him and found him by his fountain. They begged him to let them carry him to their house where he would be nursed, but all their entreaties he refused, declaring that he would die where he had lived, but he asked them to send him the pastor of Lesleven to hear his confession. The good priest came immediately. After piously confessing all his sins poor Salaün gave his pure soul to the Blessed Virgin whom he had so often invoked and slept in the Lord. He was buried with great simplicity, but wonderful to say some time after his death the people saw a beautiful lily all in bloom growing on his grave, bearing on each petal the words "*Ave Maria*." The news spread far and wide, and counts, barons, ladies, simple villagers all came to contemplate the beautiful flower. But after the lily had bloomed its brightest it began to fade, then every one wished to see how the lily grew. Pushing aside the clay from around the plant they discovered that its roots rested in the mouth of the fool Salaün. The duke of Brittany, hearing of this surprising fact, ordered a chapel built near the fountain under the name of "Our Lady of Folgoët, or The Fool of the Woods." This forest sanctuary became a place of frequent pilgrimages.

THE END.

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