

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

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

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,

sublime, pathetic and glorious as the poetry of Bethlehem, 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 wonderful 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.

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.

(xviii)

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

XIX

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.

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 Archangel
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.

"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.

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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.

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.

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'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, unfalling—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