

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.

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 completed 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

mekness 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.

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 or 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 ambassador 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

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 ecstasy, 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.

