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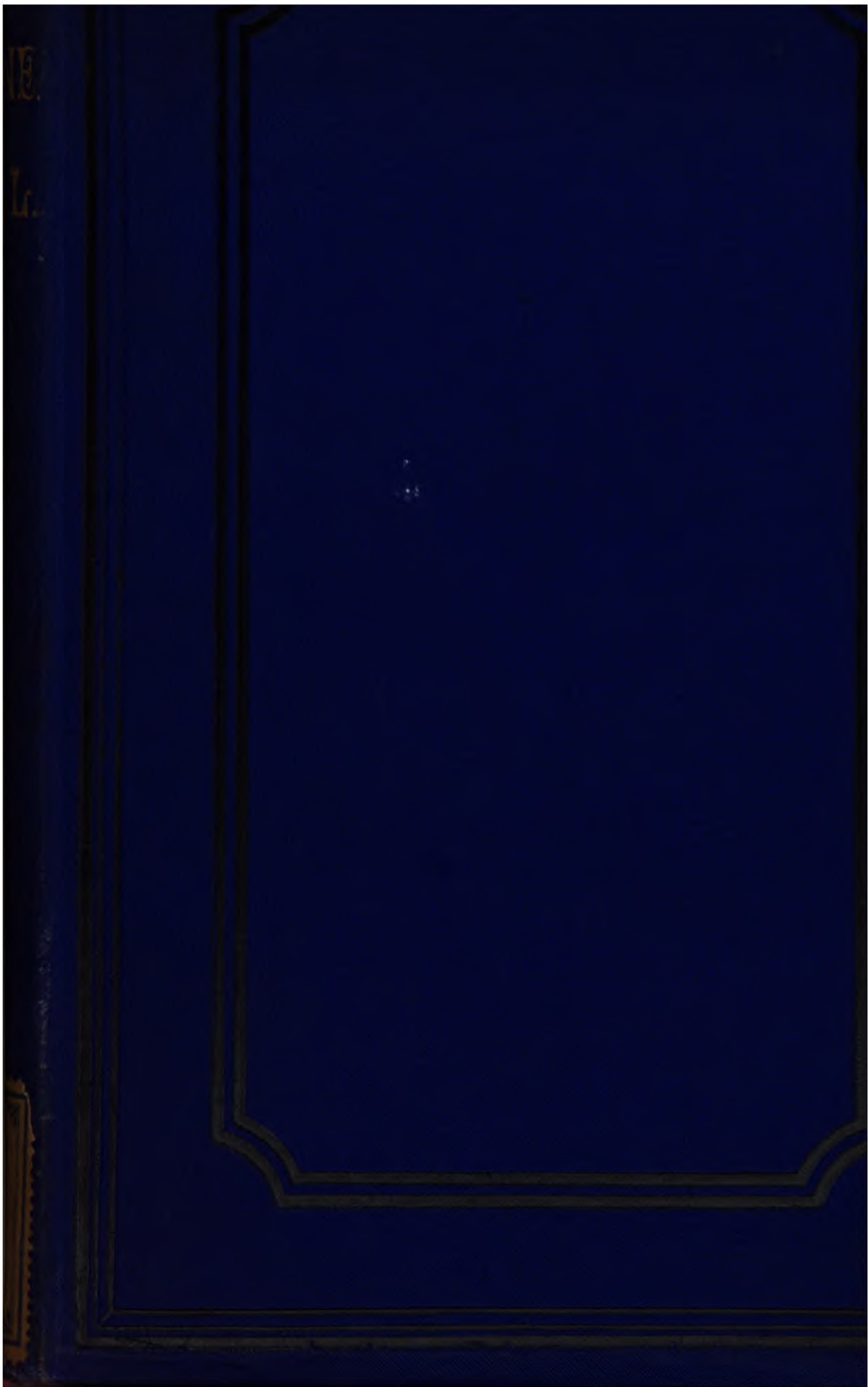
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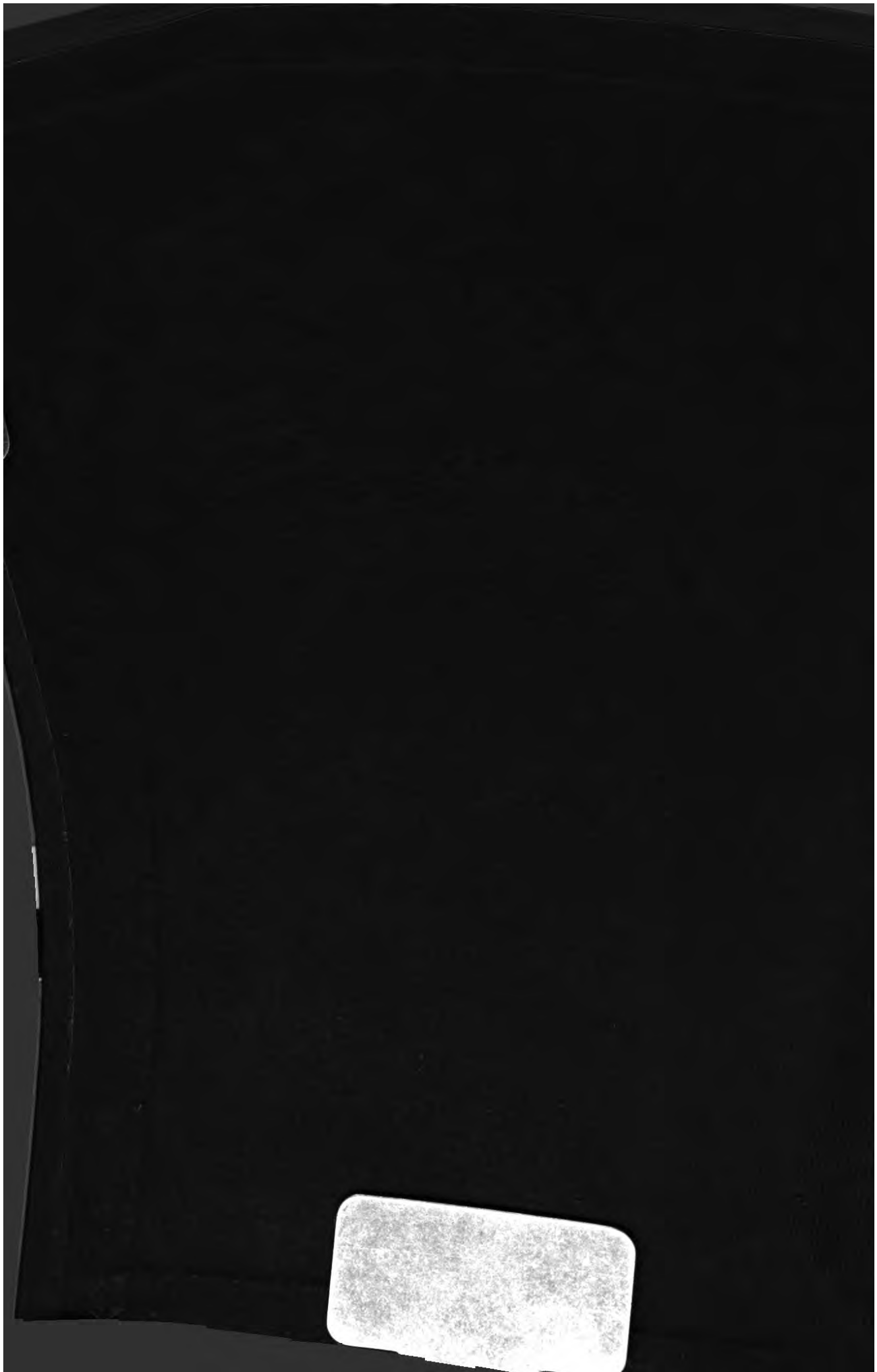
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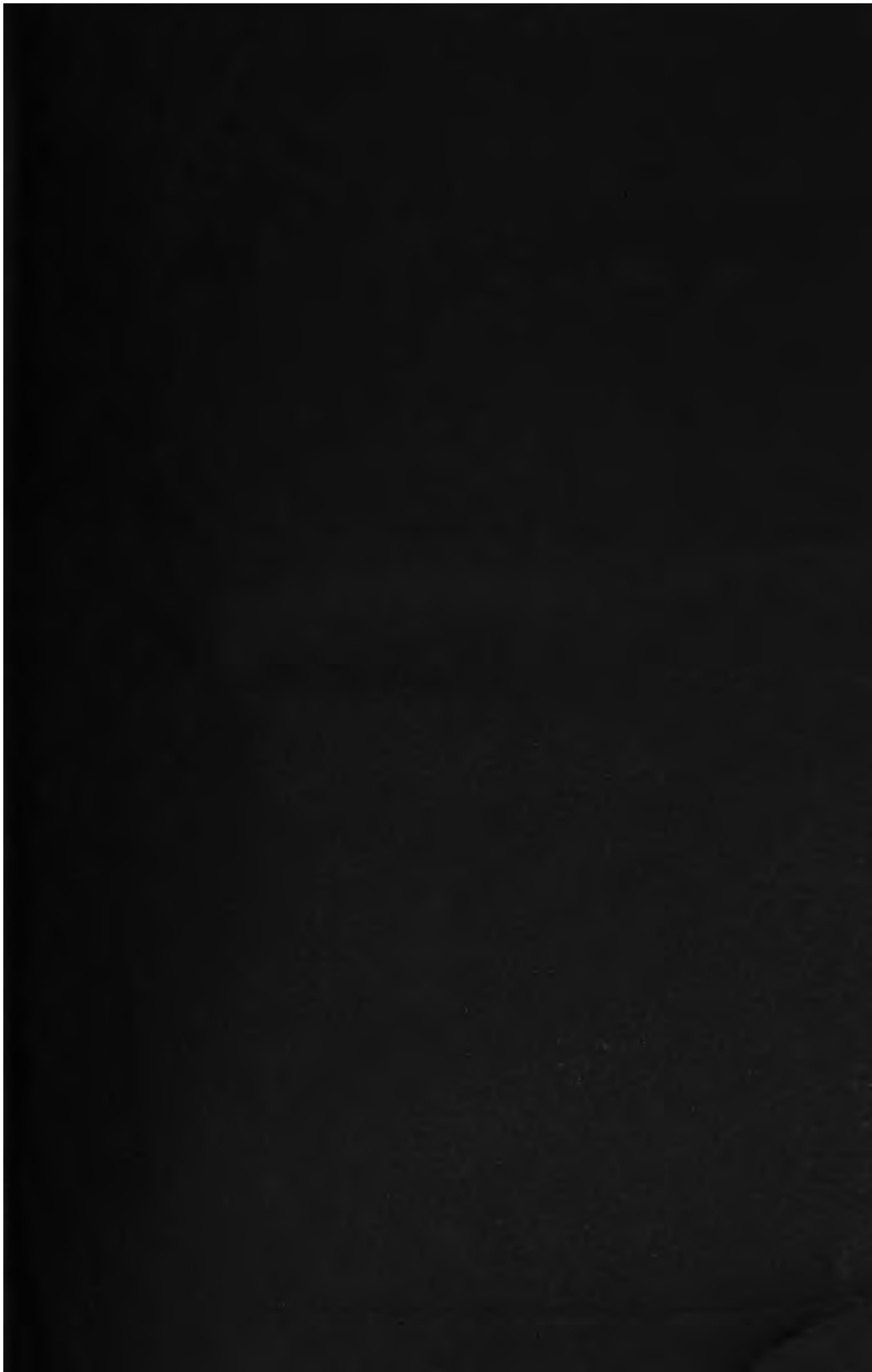
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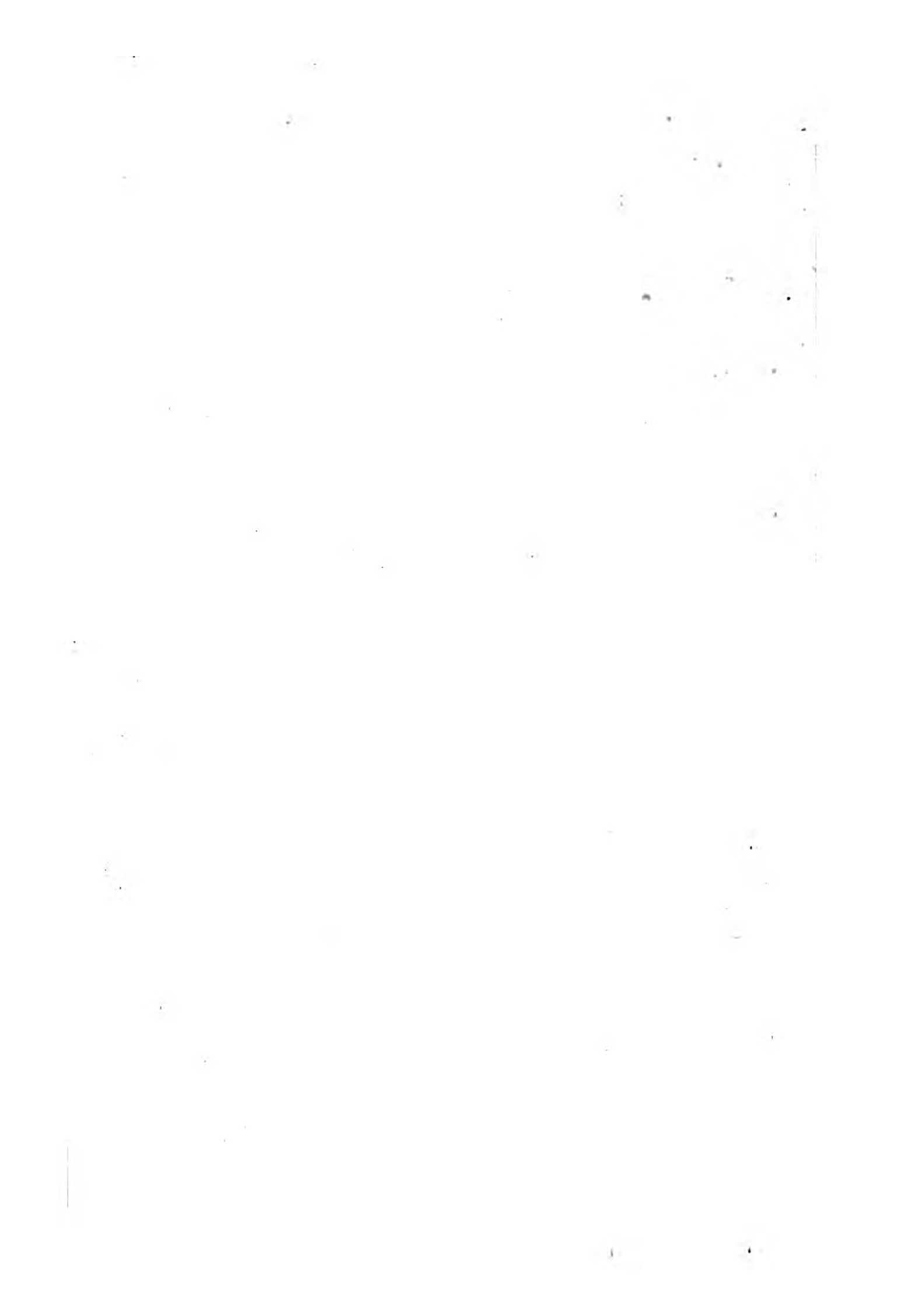


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THE DIVINE IDEAL.

BY F. M.

By the same,

“THE DIVINE SEQUENCE,” “THE ETERNAL YEARS.”



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Dedication.



MARLÆ VIRGINI ET MATRI PERDOLENTI,

MATRI LABORUM NON IGNARÆ,

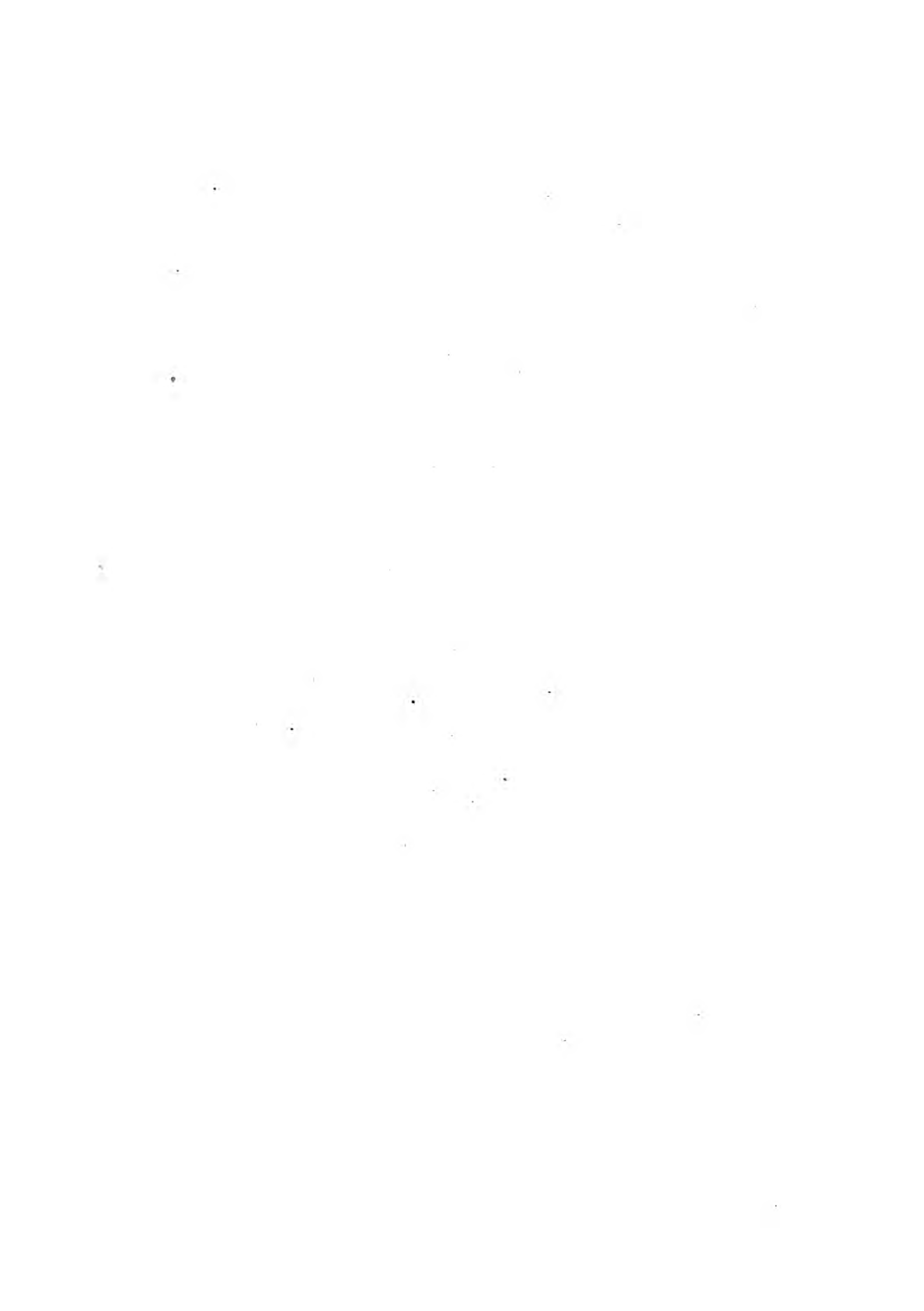
CONTEMPLATIONE DOLORUM EIUS

LEVAMEN IN ADVERGIS EXPERTA

GRATI ANIMI ERGO

OPELLAM HANC SUAM

INSCRIBIT AC DICAT.



P R E F A C E.

WITH this small volume we conclude the series we desired to lay before our readers.

In "The Divine Sequence" we endeavoured to trace the Hidden God, and the hidden life. In the "Eternal Years," the hopes and expectations of the Soul and of the Church. And in the "Divine Ideal" we have essayed to elucidate the position of Mary the Mother of God, in Creation and in Redemption ; showing the validity of her claim, equally in both ; and how through her position, are blended the old and the new, the past and the future, the natural and the Divine ; making all "holy unto the Lord."

Whatever we have written we submit unreservedly to ecclesiastical authority, and the decisions of the Church.

F. M.

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ERRATA.

- Page 11, line 2—*For* “being,” *read* “creature.”
- Page 32, line 17—*After* “hung,” *insert* “in the first instance.
- Page 32, line 22—*For* “full of,” *read* “constituted in.”
- Page 33, line 4—*Delete* “sweet.”
- Page 36, line 6—*For* “train,” *read* “prepare.”
- Page 41, line 15—*After* “creating Hand,” *insert* “they.”
- Page 46, line 15—*After* “they were, in a,” *insert* “limited.”
- Page 48, line 3—*For* “His,” *read* “their.”
- Page 50, line 9—*For* “lies in,” *read* “is manifested by.”
- Page 51, line 14—*For* “price to atone for our sins,” *read* “penalty
to give satisfaction for our sins.”
- Page 62, line 11—*Delete* “The rest is all for her !”
- Page 77, line 15—*For* “herself,” *read* “her position.”
- Page 80, line 6—*After* “His public life,” *insert* “it was.”
- Page 96, line 14—*For* “depends,” *read* “wills to depend.”

THE DIVINE IDEAL.



CHAPTER I.

“Vergine bella, che di Sol vestita,
Coronata di stelle, al sommo Sole
Piacesti si, che in Te sua luce ascosce ;
Amor mi spiuge a dir di Te parole.”

—PETRARCH.

IN the days of the old law there was one man of whom it was said that he “was after God’s own heart.”

And that man, the royal David, proposed to build a temple to the Lord.

The mystery of the promise lay like a shadow over the ancient world. From time to time there was born among the chosen race a man, an individual, with a seal upon him—a seal of divine origin ; and through his whole life, through sorrow and joy, woven into his daily existence, mingled like wood in his bread, and like ashes in his water, he walked abroad the symbol and the type of the Son of God Who should come down from Heaven.

The type was more or less legible, the seal was more or less distinct. There were intervals when

the mere human element obscured, and when human frailty overshadowed it. But underneath all, winding through the sinuosities of the free human will, and yet blindly obeying the Divine intention, the living symbol worked out his eternal destiny, the man breathed and moved as the shadow of the coming event cast before: and none knew save God, and perhaps the angels.

From time to time, as so often happens in the designs of God, the symbol seemed to fail.

Suddenly it was cut off by the death or by the delinquency of the individual. He fell away physically or he fell away morally; and an interval would elapse before the living type reappeared, and ordinary men could guess that such an one was chosen to the Lord.

David built no temple, "because of the wars that were round about him."*

He had fulfilled the measure of his partially typical existence in other ways. He was allowed no more than the devout wish and holy intention of this Temple to the Lord. And then he "slept with his Fathers, and was buried in his own city,"† leaving it to his son to build the Lord's house. The latter, again, was a further type of wisdom more

* 3 Kings v. 3.

† 3 Kings ii. 10.

perfect than himself ; and in his own person typified another and more mystic phase of the God Man.

As the time of fulfilment approached the typical life grew more rare.

The word of prophecy replaced in a measure the living prophecies. "And at last the Sun of justice arose with health in his wings ;"* another Man was born who was supremely after God's own heart : and a voice came from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."† Now therefore shall all be fulfilled. The symbols have died out. The aspirations which seemed to fall to the ground like untimely fruit will here find their completion. And the Son after God's own heart will build a Church as immeasurably surpassing Solomon's temple, as flesh and blood, soul, spirit, and eternity surpass stone and marble, gold, and time. "A glorious church not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that is holy and without blemish."‡

So wide were to be the courts of this temple that all mankind could dwell in them. So perfect was to be its construction that hell should not prevail against it.

The building of this temple commenced from the

* Malachias iv. 2. † Matthew iii. 17. ‡ Ephesians v. 27.

first moment that "the Bud of Justice began to spring forth unto David: "He, the Son of Mary, who was to do judgment and justice in the earth."*

All that had preceded His advent had been but the needful scaffolding before the fair proportions of the edifice could be seen.

But as every stone of that building had to be cemented with the most precious Blood of the great Architect Himself, so it could not be made visible to man until He had come to shed that blood, and thus to bring into actual existence in time, the divine plan which had been in the Eternal Mind before all ages.

The beauty of every building lies in its durability, in its perfect adaptation to the purpose for which it is erected, in its harmonious proportions, and in the conformity of its ornamentation to the original idea, and to its ultimate purposes.

The most grandly proportioned building would err against taste and art if the ornament were flung over it with want of method, and an absence of intrinsic meaning, by a rash and indeliberate hand.

There should be a reason for all its parts, an intention in the least particle of its construction; so that as the eye gazes on it the mind may be

* Jeremias xxiv. 15.

conscious that every stone stands in its own place, and was fixed there by united wisdom and love.

The Temple which the Redeemer of mankind has built is the Kingdom of God, and the Church of God, which are one and the same.

It is that divine system perfect in all its parts, and perfect in their union and combination. It consists of certain persons, of various mysteries, many of them in connection with those persons; of many laws; of seven sacraments, and of numerous sacramentals.

The whole is homogenous and perfect in its unity.

The harmony is absolute and mirrors the harmony of God Himself. It is like that of the unshattered ray; its diversity is that same ray broken up into prismatic colours. Its science is the only one outside those called mathematical, (and which differ from it in nature), in which we know we can, in our degree, hold absolute truth without break or flaw, without doubt or hesitation; consequently it is the only science which in the measure in which we are able to receive it, fills the mind with entire and perfect satisfaction.

It satisfies, but it never satiates: it is new, yet older than creation. It is old, yet fresher than the dawn.

It dates from the eternal years of God Himself,

and is as the immutable throne of the Triune Deity. And yet it grows and blossoms as a flower; and from its own ever living heart is weaving an endless web of everlasting beauty and richness which forms the everlasting seamless garment of the divine Bridegroom.

No human mind can take in the sense of its perfect beauty absolutely, and in all its parts.

Each man is limited by his moral as well as his intellectual capacity. And as the life of each has its own special needs and idiosyncrasies so certain portions of this wonderful whole have a greater and special charm for individuals. And this without militating against each holding the truth in its entirety. Only that truth once held, a certain variety is seen to exist in the special devotion of different minds to different mysteries.

This is not only allowable, but it is God's own work; for as the action of the Holy Ghost is absolutely individual to the individual soul, He calls some one way and some another, according to their need and circumstances. And thus, like children, they wander through a garden of delights, and some gather roses, and others cull lilies. But amidst this beautiful variety there are certain devotions which must be common to all, and which, if wanting in any of us, the garden is hardly ours to wander in.

Devotion to the cross of Christ; devotion to the Mother of God; and devotion to the Church as Christ's kingdom upon earth, with His divinely appointed Vicar at its head:—these three belong to all the children of the kingdom; partially perhaps, but more or less certainly. The only one we have now to treat of is the second here named.

Devotion to the Mother of God.

What is her place in the divine system?

Is devotion to her more or less of an ornament? Or does it form a fundamental part, without the maintenance of which the integral character of the rest is destroyed, and the effect the same as if in a solid wall one abstracted every other stone, and left the wall honeycombed and unstable?

In undertaking this task we have no intention of treating the subject specially from a devotional point of view. Outside the rigid lines of theological demonstration there is a border land where blossom wild flowers of great beauty. Childlike souls may wander there safe from harm, innocent and happy. But though we may understand and sympathise we do not mean to go one step beyond what we hope to be able to prove. We turn "to the law and to the testimony." In these we find enough to satisfy all love, and to fire all imagination with the vision of marvels which laid down in

the most sober language are unfathomable in their wonderful and translucid depths.

But before we contemplate the Mother we must contemplate the Son. It is only by knowing Jesus that we can know Mary. The greater leads to the lesser ; and it is only by knowing Mary that we can truly know Jesus. It is certain that those who inadequately know the God Man, who undervalue His nature, who have low and troubled views about His personality, are precisely those who know nothing solid and nothing trustworthy about her through whom He made His first advent among us.

It is the impression of those outside the Church that because we make much of Mary we fail to recognise the full and unique position of the Redeemer of mankind. Without pausing to animadvert upon the misconception out of which this accusation arises, we merely wish here to observe, that it is those, and only those, who give all the glory of the supreme Godhead to Jesus who are even capable of realizing the position of His Mother.

So long as there is some sort of doubt in the mind as to the place held by Jesus, so long is it impossible to classify Mary in any way satisfactory even to common sense. Mary becomes a myth to

those who do not receive in all its integrity the absolute and unbounded Divinity of Jesus. This by the way. We have nothing here to say to this side of the question.

The Redeemer came into the world to found a kingdom of which He was the head: a system of which He was the logic, a Church of which He was the Spouse: a mystical Body derived from His real Body: children born of His Blood, from the shedding of which sprang for us that new tree of life that is the Life of God, maintained in us by the Sacraments which are the fruits of that tree.

The Incarnate word was Himself King, Priest, and Legislator; Author and sole Source of the Sacraments; Founder and supreme Head of the Priesthood elect.

That He might be all this He took flesh. That from His real Body we might become His spiritual children He had chosen from all ages a maiden Mother. That He might become a son of Adam He hid Himself in the bosom of a naturally begotten daughter of Adam. He came to save humanity; and He would not do it without a human agent. That human agent must accept the office and condition, freely, knowingly, and absolutely. It must be in the power of that agent to say yes, or no, as shall please her best. God respects the free will of

His creature whether for good or evil. And the most perfect of His creatures had necessarily the most absolute use of her own free will. Unreservedly, untrammelled, unhindered, the question is answered as soon as asked; and Mary consents to become the Mother of her God.

From that freedom of will in a sinless heart;— from that alacrity of response from a long yearning heart, and from the simultaneous overshadowing of the Holy Ghost through whose action Mary instantaneously conceived her Divine Son, must necessarily flow all the mystery of Mary's future position in the Church of God; and which dates back to her position in creation, and in the eternal decrees.

We behold Mary thus uniting in her own person the natural and the supernatural. She was the earthly vessel into which the great God poured the Person of the Divine Word. She gave Him a natural body, but she conceived Him by supernatural means. She had been full of grace from the moment of her conception. She was undefiled from first to last. Her faith was as colossal as her grace, and her obedience equalled both. But this was not enough. This was no more than the pure material. The leaven was the power of the Holy Ghost which leavened the whole; that man might henceforth be nourished by Bread from heaven.

In Mary all perfections had to culminate, for she was the first among the elect, the one perfect being according to the antecedent will of God, which she had never for a second contravened. She had flowed like a pellucid stream in the eternal decrees through the dark ages of man's iniquity, until the moment came when her pure desires and her perfect humility drew down the Dove to brood upon the waters; and she became physically, and in her flesh the real and true Mother of God.

Thus was established the holiest relationship between God and Mary. She is the Mother of the God Man: and as such she becomes the Mother of the mystical and spiritual Body of Christ. The union is perfect between Jesus and Mary. The union is perfect between Jesus and His Church. And thus Mary also enters into that union; and her maternity extends from the natural Body of Christ to His mystical Body the Church.

You cannot divide Christ from His mystical Body, for He came into the world expressly that it might be formed. Neither can you divide Mary who is indissolubly united to Christ, from her maternity towards that mystical Body, which He has won to Himself through the material Body with which Mary provided Him. It was not as God alone that He redeemed humanity. It was, and is, as

God and man. This He became through Mary. She was His true Mother, and as such has become our spiritual Mother.

The gifts of God are without repentance. The mark of the finger of God is indelible. There is not a sacrament has passed over our souls but has left there an additional light or an additional brand, that will for ever brighten in heaven or deepen in hell. Not only is this the case with the sacraments, but it is so with every increase of grace which has distilled into our hearts from the countless showers that God rains on the just and the unjust. Even of those who are responding to grace there is probably not one whose memory could count up at the close of an ordinary day the multitude of half articulate suggestions, of faint hints, of gentle impulses, of tentatives from an unseen propelling or repelling Hand, that have come and gone through that wonderful world which is shut in with each of us by walls of flesh; and which literally no eye penetrates but that of God, and ourselves. The history of any twenty-four hours as we could not write it, but as our Guardian Angel might, would be the most extraordinary page that was ever penned. And though more marvellous in cases of great sanctity, or the reverse, the history of one inner day of the most common-place life of the least remarkable

human being would teem with interest, and fill us with wonder. Why it does not more impress ourselves is first because the events are generally so exceedingly evanescent, and secondly because we are forgetful.

But God does not forget, and we have sometimes questioned whether eternity itself will seem long enough for us to read the simple history of our own souls when the awful scroll is opened before us.

Science has asserted that when an idle child casts a pebble into the ocean the whole world is conscious of the act. First there is a little splash, and then a strongly marked but diminutive circle. But the circle spreads wider and wider; until finally it is lost to our coarse sight. But not so to the sensitive bosom of the ocean, or the delicate ear of the circumambient air. The elements are linked in harmony. The touch that affects one affects all; and the tiny hand that threw a stone has sent a shock through all creation. This is the law of nature and of time. A thousand-fold more indelible is the law of grace and of eternity.

When God chose Mary to be His Mother He cast the foundation stone of the temple to the Lord into the boundless ocean of His divine love, and from that moment the fact of her maternity has permeated all, has governed the entire system; has

ruled the whole Church. It spread from the material maternity, supernaturally effected, of Christ's natural Body, to the spiritual maternity of His mystical body the Church. Her maternity was the first great institute of God in the scheme of redemption. It was the first shock given to the powers of darkness. It was the principle of maternity in the law of grace, even as creation is the principle of paternity in the vast cosmos.

Mary is a hierarchy in herself, surpassing all others in the extent of her appointed position. Her maternity, divinely produced, did not begin with Lady-day and end with that Christmas night. It did not dry up when the Divine Infant eat of the butter and honey of the land, and ceased to draw his nourishment from that sinless bosom. It survived the days of swaddling clothes. It outlived the thirty years of subjection of the God Man to the human Mother at Nazareth. The obedience ceased not in the three years of active life, for the miracles of that life only commenced at her bidding, at the marriage feast. And when at length that bitter Friday, the ever obedient Divine Son, obedient to Father and Mother both, was about to give up His soul by His own voluntary act, out of the torn and lacerated lineaments of His beautiful Body, then did He solemnly and as a last

act signify to Mary, and through the beloved disciple, the only one of the apostles present, to all mankind, that her maternity had a fuller meaning, and a larger sense; and that in making her the Mother of the Disciple of the Sacred Heart He constituted her the Mother of us all.

The least act of God is not only infinite in its duration, it is also incalculable in its effects. We, on the contrary, do a thing and let it pass. Except as regards their relation to the just judgment of God, that is as regards their moral character, our actions remain for the most part truncated or abortive. We make use of persons for a time being. We drop them, and see them no more. We form a scheme, and only partially put it in execution. All our acts partake of our own fatuity, and are evanescent like ourselves. But nothing of this applies to the works, and designs, and decrees of God. They mean all they can mean, and more than we can fathom. They are made for eternity, far beyond the limit of time. This applies to the maternity of Mary. It is governed by the same eternal law as the Sacred Humanity Itself, of which it is the source. She became His Mother not only in that she supplied Him with a perfect Body, but also by the eternal desires of her most pure soul. The measure of the

grace accorded her was the measure of her receptive aptitude; and that again was the guage of her intense and consuming desire that the Messiah should be born into the world. Nor was her desire only on her own account. She looked with her frank, far seeing gaze on all the nations of the world; on past ages, on the actual time, with her own nation fallen into partial servitude; and on the distant city on seven hills, the resort of every false deity, the arsenal of abomination and wickedness, glittering with newly decorated palaces, and passing with giant strides into the rapidly developed horrors of the great empire. And in her heart she yearned over the perishing immortal souls there and every where; until her very yearning forced the laws of nature, and she gave birth to her Divine Infant some days before the appointed time of women. She longed for His coming also for herself, for she knew that it was to the prospective shedding of His most precious Blood that she owed the transcendent grace of her own immaculate conception. And as amid the thorns and briers of this evil world she grew up a lily ever fairer as years slipped by, she knew to Whose redeeming love she was indebted for her perfect immunity from all the evil and concupiscence that was rife around her. As night after night she lay down in her little bed

and composed her gentle limbs to rest, from what an abyss of humility the glad tears must have sprung to her closing eyes as she found no stain, not ever so small, so transient, on the conscience that God held in His own keeping as a sealed fountain. How she must have pined to see Him upon earth, in the flesh wherewith He had prospectively delivered her from evil; that she might kneel at his feet, and bless Him for having kept His handmaid! She did not know then that it was she who was to be His Mother. She did not suppose that it was from her own innocent flesh He would take that which was her redemption. She did not know that she, as the second Eve, would more than repay to the second Adam what the first man gave to the formation of the first woman; and that her immaculate heart was to be the human mould in which the Sacred Heart was cast. But already by her desires is she outstripping this her natural maternity, and is labouring in yearning and pain for the spiritual members of the Divine Head. And from the first moment that her material maternity was accomplished her spiritual maternity was effected. In one flash of light she found herself the Mother of God, and the Mother of God's Church. By her desires and will, for ever united to those of Jesus, she became the spiritual Mother of His spiritual

progeny; and thus the Church is said to have been conceived in the womb of Mary spiritually at the same instant that materially its divine Head was conceived; as says Saint Bernard, in her "*visceralis et maternalis affectus.*"

We have said that the creation is the outpouring of the paternity of God. It is the representation and evidence of the principle of paternity as expounded by the supreme Father.

Mary as the Mother of the God Man and the spiritual matrix of the Church, is the demonstration of the material principle, and of fecundity and reproduction. To her, above all others, does it appertain to fulfil the original law that ushered in creation, the law of increase, and multiply, she is the flower, the culmination, and (second only to the Sacred Humanity which is immeasurably more in kind as well as in degree) the blossoming out of all creation.

The material world is the type of the spiritual. The supernatural is laid on the lines of the natural. The law of our being is the palpable interpretation of a higher law.

It is true that the fall of man has so blurred the unwritten law of nature that we have lost sight of the old fact that it is correlative with the law of grace. We should have understood this always if

Adam had not sinned; and now only in proportion to the degree in which we guess at it again, and recognise the hand of God, and the presence and intention of God, alike in creation and in redemption, do we catch glimpses down long vistas of light, of the harmony of the whole, and of the glory of the end. But we fail entirely in this if we fail to understand the place that is occupied by Mary in the law of creation and in the law of grace. The maternity is as much an eternal and integral element in God's scheme of redemption as it is in the scheme of creation. Were this not so there would be a something of radical and cumulative importance existing in the law of creation which had not its primal root and supreme cause of being in the spiritual world. It would be a baseless law; a caprice, an accident; not to be accounted for in the Eternal Idea of the Supreme Being, from whom all other being, with its laws, is alone derived.

If then the maternity be an eternal element in God's scheme of redemption, we shall find it *pari passu* with the life of Jesus upon earth; and with the reign of Jesus as Head of the Church in heaven. We shall find it recognised in the laws, devotions, and whole status of the Church; and also we shall find it growing with its growth and "striking root in an honourable people." We shall find that the sacred

maternity once established, it follows Jesus in the great work of our redemption, it works with Him and for Him; His acts are tinged with its presence. It labours with Him, it suffers with Him; and now it reigns with Him. Mary was as much in the designs of God at the cross as she was at the cradle. Nor did her maternity then die out. She continued the work of Jesus after His glorious resurrection, and since her assumption she is still united with Him in all His dealings with the Church of which she is the spiritual Mother.

The theories of modern heresy treat the maternity of Mary as a fact past and gone. According to these it died out with the circumstance which necessitated it. Protestants admit the Incarnation and the scriptural account thereof. But that over, in the birth of Christ, Mary is no more than a venerable relic, laid aside as a sort of sentimental memory of the past, a picturesque and Raphael-esque image; but having no living power; forming no present and future important part of the Divine scheme. Honourable and blessed it may be, but only with reference to the past. And as regards that past they look upon the part Mary played therein almost as a fortuitous event, a something she could hardly help; and to the consequences of which, though she gave her consent, she was

only partially awake. Her obedience and humility were no doubt admirable; but hardly exceeded what might have been expected of any other holy maiden; and at any rate they do not generally suppose her to have been conscious of all it involved. Thus they wipe out the principle of maternity from the Divine scheme, and leave it something little better than an accident, or a touching casualty. Some limit it to the cave and the cradle; admitting that it reappeared at intervals, according to the Gospel. Some consider her presence at the cross as a merely natural incident. But, as Protestants, they all believe that Mary's maternity ended with its first passive act; and that her "blessedness" which she herself proclaims, was confined to Bethlehem. She was a sort of *Dea ex machina* necessary to the Incarnation, and then put aside as superfluous.

The old pagan and Egyptian creeds had a deeper and far nobler notion of the principle of maternity as forming part of the Divine programme!

Thus those outside the Church ignore the plan of God; the dignity of Mary; the liberty, intelligence, and sanctity of the Mother; as well as her appointed place as the ministerial combatant in union with the second Adam, against Satan, to repair

the fall of the first. "She shall crush thy head" was God's sentence on the serpent in the garden of Eden. And whether she (*ipsa*) applied directly to the woman, Mary, or to her seed Jesus, her divine, conscious maternity of the latter equally makes her His ally in that crushing of the serpent by which we were to be ransomed.

The Divine Being loses no time, if we may use the expression, in putting forward Mary as the channel of our salvation—channel, but not primary cause.

The great evil is done. Error has penetrated the gates of Paradise. Eve has committed the first sin, that of curiosity, and disobedience as its consequence. Adam has listened, and fallen. And we all in our day and generation are virtually implicated. "The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge." Immediately Mary appears. From the arcana of the Divine intentions the Virgin Mother, the opposite and supplanter of Eve, is announced and hailed. The whisper of the first *Ave* was awakened in the remorseful hearts of our fallen parents; and the serpent with his doom on his head slinks away, to watch for the coming daughter of Eve, who will crush his power, and more than repair all that has been lost.

Having now endeavoured to prove the enduring

maternity of Mary upon general and fundamental principles, we will attempt to trace the evidences through the life of Christ and the history of the Church.

In the Eternal *Qui Est*—the everlasting pure Being of God, there is neither past nor future, but all is the one Eternal Now. We are therefore not surprised to find that when God reveals Himself in any way to His creatures there should be a blending of the past and future as we know them; and that many of the types and symbols by which He has condescended to instruct us should span over the ages of humanity, and rest like the two ends of the single arch of a bridge, on the eternity before, and the eternity after—to use human expressions—with the stream of time flowing between.

It is with this knowledge of the way in which God teaches His Church that we must read that remarkable vision described in the 12th chapter of the Apocalypse; and which like most passages in Scripture of the same character, namely such as allude to a woman in the divine decrees, is referred to the Church as well as to Mary. But in the present instance the passage bears a far more direct reference to the latter, and in quite a secondary way represents the former, and only in so far as the former is the spiritual offspring of the latter.

A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. The woman was with child, and "the great red dragon waited to devour her offspring"—and "she was in pain to be delivered," and "the tail of the dragon drew the third part of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth." In this vision we have the fact of the original divine intention of the Incarnation; the woman who was to be the Mother of the God Man, placed before Lucifer and his angels, the "stars of heaven," of whom he was the chief, that they might recognise and adore the designs of God. But the pride of Lucifer revolted at the fact that a race inferior to himself, as was that of man,* should be the chosen medium of the incarnation, and should, as an ultimate fact, so far exceed himself in dignity. With his own fall he draws down a third of the angelic host.

The woman is delivered of her Son, and the Son "ascends to heaven to God and to his throne," and this passage can only apply to the Son of Mary. But the woman remains upon earth.

At this part the vision takes a bend backward

* "Thou hast made him a little less than the angels. Thou hast crowned him with honour and glory." (Ps. viii. 6.)

in time; and relates that the Archangel Michael had fought with the dragon (in consequence of his opposition to the woman), and that the dragon was vanquished with his angels; "Neither was their place found any more in heaven;" that he was "cast upon the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him."

In a modified sense this applies to the Church, inasmuch as the lineaments of the daughter resemble those of the mother. But its literal sense can only apply to Mary. Mary alone brought forth the Son who *returned* to His throne in heaven.

"She was in pain to be delivered"—not of that divine Son however, whose miraculous and painless birth left her virginity intact, but of those children whose spiritual birth was to cost her Firstborn His precious Blood; and for whose sake she bore the sevenfold sword in her heart; sharing in His sufferings and yearning with Him who "is straitened till all be accomplished" for the salvation of our fallen race.

"And the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God." Now the vision melts from Mary to the Church. And again in the 10th, 11th, and 12th verses, the past, present, and future are grandly brought together in one magnificent sweep, in the final triumph of

the Church, and of those "who loved not their lives."

The 13th verse identifies the woman with Mary, who alone brought forth the Man-child, and not with the Church. And the 17th verse renews this identification by the statement that the dragon was angry against the woman (Mary) and went to make war with "the rest of her seed (the Church) who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (See Apocalypse 12th chapter.)

In this wonderful and comprehensive vision we have first, Mary in the eternal decrees of God, known as such to the angels before their fall, one third part of whom object to her exalted position; and by this their rebellion prove that a denial of the true position of Mary (which necessarily involves false views of the Incarnation, and of the Church as her spiritual progeny) is the first among heresies in date, and the first in error; and which fact is further corroborated by the words of the Church addressing Mary as "*Tu sola cunctas hereses interemisti.*"

We have secondly, Mary as the revealed true human Mother of the divine Son, and as the spiritual Mother by the desires of her "*visceralis et maternalis affectus,*" of the Church. And thirdly,

we have Mary with her God-appointed place in the desert where the dragon persecutes her seed—"the rest of her seed," that is the Church. "The dragon casts a river of iniquity to cause her to be carried away." But the earth, that owes all to her as the Flower of Creation and the Great Mother, "opens her mouth," and helps the woman.

This vision has an all but unlimited scope. It dates from before the creation and the fall of the angels; and spreads itself over the whole history of heaven and earth, down to the moment of the Incarnation. And from that again covers the whole history of the Church militant. The first and principal figure in the vision is incontestably Mary. It gives us the fact of her primary position in the eternal decrees; her precedence in the minds of the Ancient of Days when "the Lord possessed her in the beginning of His ways before He made anything, from the beginning." "I was set up from eternity," says Wisdom in the person of Mary—"I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made. The depths were not as yet, and I was conceived, neither had the fountains of water already sprung out; the mountains with their huge bulk had not as yet been established: before the hills I was brought forth; He had not yet made the earth, nor the rivers, nor the poles of the world. When He

prepared the heavens [the local habitation of those future angels who were to form her court, and one third part of whom became her foes] I was present: when with a certain law and compass He enclosed the depths: when He established the sky above, and poised the fountains of waters: when He compassed the sea with its bounds, and set a law to the waters that they should not pass their limits: when He balanced the foundations of the earth, I was with Him forming all things."* In this passage we see Mary, as the embodiment of the reproductive principle.

Then comes, in the order of time, the creation of the angels, and the localisation of heaven; and before the bright phalanx of celestial beings with the impenetrable infused science of the cherubim, and the burning love of the seraphim, suddenly there appears the great sign in heaven of the woman clothed with the sun, and carrying in her virgin bosom the God Man.

But there is heresy among the serried ranks of her future ministers, and one-third of the first resplendent beings of God's creation will never see the Beatific Vision. Their brief probation is past, and for them there is no repentance.

The work of creation proceeds, and with the

* Proverbs viii.

woman ever before Him the divine Creator builds up the mountains and the hills, and the earth with her rivers, the sky above, and the fountains of waters. Through the whole the Incarnation of the *Logos* is the ultimate end in view. "For Him were all things made that are made ;" and as the means to the end, Mary the Mother "plays before Him at all times." The creation is completed. The mysterious cycles called of "seven days" close in the wonderful operations of the Creator. And in the garden of Paradise dwell the one perfectly blissful pair. Then follows the fall, through the woman's influence; and immediately that other Woman appears, as a preceding intention and as a coming fact.

The woman had appeared as a sign in heaven travailing in birth. The same woman and her seed are foretold as the remedy of the dire calamity which Eve has entailed upon herself and her children. There is to be a woman who is to escape the penalty attached to the seed of Eve, the original stain, and its consequent concupiscence: and who, with *her* seed, is to crush the serpent's head. By the merits of that divine Son Who was to be born of the woman, the angels had been victorious over Satan or Lucifer, and his followers. And by the same merits of the same Child was Satan to be

again conquered upon the earth to which he had been banished, where "he makes war with the rest of her seed,"—that is her spiritual children in the Church of God.

There is a sign in heaven and a sign upon earth; and it is the same woman. It is Mary, and Mary always. It is the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception. "Sanctissima Virgo arctissimo et indissolubile vinculo cum Christo conjuncta, una cum illo et per illum sempiternas contra venenosum serpentem inimicitias exercens, ac de ipso plenissime triumphans, illius caput immaculato pede contrivit." (Pius IX, Const: "Ineffabilis." Dec. 8, 1854.)

The ruin is great, but the redemption is greater. A woman caused the fall, but *the* woman shall bring the reparation. The children of Eve come into the world with the mark of Satan upon them because they are born in sin. But the Child of *the* woman shall buy them back again with His own Blood. What the woman has lost *the* woman shall gain, and a thousandfold more. The conceptions of the woman are multiplied that the spiritual progeny of *the* woman may be as the sands of the sea in multitude. And Adam who knows that he and his descendants are to return to the earth from whence he was taken, nevertheless does not hesitate to call his wife "Eve, because she is the mother of

all the living." Through the very sentence of death he sees far off into the promise of eternal life. A woman brought death and sin into the world, but *the* woman who sprang from the loins of Adam without an inherited share in Adam's concupiscence, was to bring forth Him Who is our life, and by whom we inherit life; our elder Brother, our newer Father, through whom we escape from the penalty inherited from our forefather, while our natural mother Eve is less our mother than our spiritual Mother Mary, who was so decreed by God before the creation, and when the lost paradise of pleasure was yet unplanted.

Only by the woman could Adam people the world, only by *the* woman will God redeem the world. Eve when she conceives is no more virgin: she loses a portion of herself; she is no longer intact, she is in a certain sense lessened, and has become subject. But the woman through whom salvation shall come wears the white wreath of virginity as well as the crown of maternity. Both honours culminate in her who is the source of all the honour due to the personality of humanity. The peace of virginity and the joy of maternity are hers equally.

Eve's sin was unknown to Adam at the time she committed it. It was her secret with the serpent.

Not till after did her husband learn her fall, and fall with her. Equally no one knew of that midnight scene in the humble house at Nazareth. It was Mary's secret with the Holy Ghost; and only a special revelation could communicate it to the bewildered and trembling Joseph. The one was a secret of sin unto death; the other of Love unto Life. The contrast is in every respect complete between the woman who brought death and the woman who brought life. And for ever the juxtaposition of facts and of principles is maintained throughout the history of redemption. We have derived our natural life from Eve, followed by death. We receive Jesus who is our spiritual life, from Mary, followed by eternal life. When the serpent came to Eve in the groves of Paradise it hung upon her word whether the race of man was to be lost. At the annunciation an angel comes to Mary with a divine message: and it hangs upon her word whether mankind shall be saved. Both were free agents. Both, equally so at the respective dates, were sinless; both were full of grace, though the second was in all respects higher, nobler, and greater than the first. Both accept:—the one to damnation, the other to salvation. And from that moment when by her gentle "fiat" the scales are turned, Mary's work begins.

A precursor was ordained for the coming Christ: but it is through Mary he is to be filled with the Holy Ghost; and leaping at the sound of her sweet voice while he lies in his mother's womb, three months before his birth, he recognises his God, and his spiritual Mother. It is always Mary who brings Jesus, even when we fail through infirmity or ignorance to recognise her. It is the elemental principle of God's original decree. Nor does He ever alter it or shift it, because He is always consistent with Himself; and the principle which He impressed upon the beginning will govern the whole progress, and bring us round to itself again in the perfect sphere of truth.

The Creator might have caused the Incarnation to take place in another mode. He might have formed another body out of the red earth as He formed that of Adam, and the unfallen Lucifer might have been deputed to accompany the human soul of Jesus that was to animate that body, fresh from the Hands of the Creator; and the Hypostatic Union might thus have ensued in a mysterious way unknown to us. Perhaps this might have been; and the Queenless angels might have accepted this version of the Incarnation and been in bliss at this hour. The whole contrast between Eve and her glorious daughter would then have been

wanting. Jesus would have worn flesh: but not the flesh of Adam.

Perhaps this cold ungenial mode might in some, to us uncertain, sense have sufficed to our redemption. But in that case the primary law of "increase and multiply," the divine recognition of the reproductive principle in the whole cosmic system would have been wanting. The maternity would have vanished from the plan: at least it would have been wanting in its underlying base and purport. That which is at the root of the natural world would have found no cause of being in the spiritual world, and consequently would have had no consecration and no sacred character.

The silver thread would have dropped out of the silken web of God's decrees. And the great principle of transmitted life would have lost its rootedness in the Being of God: as though a link in the golden chain had suddenly given way. These schemes of redemption are imaginable. We dare not presume to say they are possible. Sufficient is it for us that it was not so ordained;—that the maternity in God's scheme was the larger love that grew out of the larger need, and that the plan the Eternal Godhead adopted in ineffable wisdom was the one which bears the same stamp throughout; and which is harmonious from the first note to the last.

It starts with the woman, the mother, and the law—namely Eve and her conceptions, the law according to “increase and multiply.” It starts again with the woman, the mother, and the law. Mary of the apocalyptic vision. The Mother of the Divine Son divinely conceived, and who is confirmed to us as the Mother of the countless Church, the multitude that cannot be numbered, at the foot of the life-giving Cross.

The second has eclipsed the first. And whereas the eldest son of the first is the murderer of his brother, the elder Son of the second is the Saviour of His brethren. And Mary who has bruised the head of Lucifer becomes the true bearer of the light of the world, then and for ever.

First she shows Him to the shepherds, because it is to the poor and the humble that the Gospel is preached. Then it is Mary who shows Him to the Magi, for she is herself the *sedes sapientiæ*. She brings Him to the learned and the unlearned alike. Again Mary takes Him to the temple, the Sanctuary of that law which He had come to fulfil, and every part of which in construction and in ornament was typical of Him and of her. It is Mary who carries Him into Egypt, which means darkness, she herself being the bearer of light and realising in her own

person the title of the enemy whose head she had crushed.

In all these events she is inseparable from her Son, and her Son from her. Nor does His infancy suffice; but He must spend thirty years in privacy with her that He may train her for the moment when she shall stand beneath the cross on which He hangs, showing by this her attitude that she is one with Him in intention; suffering with Him, but never sinking, never fainting: standing upright and firm with the sword through her heart. She has been co-combatant with Him in the conflict with Satan. And she is co-redemptress with Him by her full, and perfectly harmonious, and undivided intention on the cross. She brought Him into the world for that hour. She has accompanied Him up to that hour. And at that hour she stands by Him. And when all is about to be accomplished, He turns His face to her, and crowns her work which is supremely His work, by giving her to us in the person of the beloved Disciple: as though He had said to her, "Mary, thou hast done well. Thou gavest me the Body by whose passion I have saved thee. In thy bosom I lay, and there was I nourished. Thy lap was the throne on which I sat to receive the first homage of my subjects. Thy home was my home; thy converse my sole companionship.

At thy word I began the long line of miracles by which I attested my divine mission. Thou hast watched my agony, and counted the very drops of my Blood with an anguish surpassing that of women. Mary, thou hast done well, and now behold I leave thee all the world for thine inheritance ; all mankind for whom I die ; and especially thy children and mine born to us on this bed of anguish, and now present in the person of my beloved Disciple."

Those who are outside the Church cannot recognise this harmony. To their untutored ears it is a jargon of confused sounds. They accept, in a sense, the leading events of the Gospels: but they cannot follow up the logical inferences indicated by the concomitant circumstances. To them these appear but unimportant adjuncts. To them it is little more than accident that Mary nursed the Infant Son of God, that Mary showed Him to His first worshippers, that He spent thirty unchronicled years alone with Mary, and that Mary stood through the three hours' agony. They regard these incidents as though God were subject to circumstances in the same sense in which we are. To them these facts are casualties, the natural but not necessary accessories of the drama, a series of incidents partially left to chance:—instead of being as they

most truly are, mysteries co-existing with the first divine intention of the woman clothed with the sun, and with the moon beneath her feet; and a crown of twelve stars upon her head. The woman clothed with the rays of her Son's divinity; with all the past as her standing point represented by the spent world of the barren moon, and crowned with the twelve apostles, the pillars of the Church of which she is the Mother.

These are not accidents. They are intentions. They are not imaginations. They are facts. The facts God has used to build up the spiritual world on the foregone type of the natural world. They are eternally foreseen events by which He reveals Himself to us, and through which He maintains in His revelation of Himself that perfect harmony between the visible and the invisible which is the key-note given by His own absolutely harmonious Being.

CHAPTER II.

“Vergine pura, d’ogni parte intera,
Del tuo parte gentil figliuola, e madre,
Ch’ allumi questa vita, et l’altra adorni.”

PETRARCH.

IN designating the Blessed Virgin “Queen of Angels,” the Church is not merely employing a graceful or devotional phrase. She is shadowing forth a great truth which falls back upon the antecedent law of God in prehistoric times. St. Paul in speaking of the Son of God, after stating that He took a nature a little lower than the angels, says, in allusion to the whole creation: “For Him are all things.”* It follows from this that the angels, as forming part of the “all things,” enter into the scheme of the Incarnation; and as Mary enters into that scheme as the first foundation stone thereof, the representative of the primary law of creation, and the medium of its spiritual realisation—the law of “increase and multiply;” therefore necessarily Mary is above the angels; and they who are all “ministering spirits” are her subjects. Jesus, insomuch as He was man, was made a little lower

* Heb. ii.

than the angels. Mary, insomuch as she was the Mother of God, was made their superior, and through her it is that man rises into a position above the angelic host, for which, as the adopted brother of the only begotten Son of God, he was always destined. It becomes therefore certain to demonstration that Mary was the stumbling-block to the angels who fell. They were out of harmony with the will of God revealed to them in the sign of the woman in the Apocalypse. Their pride was staggered, not so much at the lower nature being united to the Godhead, as at the woman being the source of that nature. They would not have her to reign over them; and they fell: as all have done since who have resisted the sweet dominion of Mary. However much the consciousness of their own glorious and radiant being may have filled them with arrogance, it is hardly to be imagined that the view of the Second Person of the ever blessed Trinity clothing Himself in flesh, could have shaken their fidelity in itself. Unbelieving men are staggered at it because they look at the great fact through the medium of their own fallen nature, and with the degrading knowledge pressing upon them of what they and their fellows are. But the angelic hosts who knew the Son of God as He is in the bosom of the Father (not that they at that time

enjoyed the beatific vision, for in that case they could not have fallen); and who from the first must have penetrated the mystery of the coming Hypostatic Union, and have known with all the profound depth of their infused science, how impossible it was that though the Divinity might touch the humanity, the humanity could in any way impinge upon the Divinity, could have been troubled with no doubts respecting the nature or the Person of the God-Man.

It is difficult to suppose that when they had revealed to them the designs of God, and that they saw the exquisite beauty and harmony of matter with its unborn laws and forces as it escaped from the creating Hand, could have had any repugnance to its serving the purpose for which it was created, of a garment for the Divine Son in the Hypostatic Union. The unutterable charm and exquisite tenderness of the Divine thought would have filled them with astonishment and admiration. Moreover they knew that they themselves would not have been called into being but for the general scheme of creation, which contained that of the Incarnation. Therefore the prophetic history of creation must have had all the intense interest to them of the explanation of their own existence. They must have argued, "We are, because the Hypostatic

Union is to be." So far well. But with the prescience that the first intention of creation would undergo a dire change through the baneful exercise of the free will of Adam leading to the ruin of himself and his race; when they foresaw not only the Hypostatic Union, not only the divine adoration to be given to a nature inferior to their own, but that it was from a daughter of this accursed race, albeit herself preserved from the curse, that Jesus was to have a "Body fitted to Him," and that she, as a necessary consequence of her being the Mother of the Son of God, was to be their Mistress and their Queen, then they revolted—not against the Hypostatic Union in itself; for the mystery of that they penetrated as probably no saint has done upon earth, but against the Immaculate Conception of Mary, the pure Flower derived physically from the impure root—the lily from among thorns, the honey from the coarse carcase of the lion.* The depth of the humiliation of Jesus and the height of the elevation of Mary troubled their unloving temperaments; and turning their bright disdainful eyes from the woman clothed with the sun, they fell from their allegiance.

Since that hour all heretics have done the same.

The highest worship, that of *latria*, which is

* Judges xiv.

supreme absolute adoration, admitting of no rights in the worshipper and confessing supreme irresponsible Godhead in the object, we, as Christians, offer to the Sacred Humanity of the Incarnate Word; as being due to that Divine Person Who was in the beginning with God, and Who was God, and ever is God. He is the word spoken from all eternity, in the intercommunion which God holds with Himself in the fathomless solitude of pure Being: and which Word is now for our sake clothed but not obscured in Humanity—"The word made flesh, and dwelling among men." He has come down to us, and yet He has never left the Bosom of the Father. He is here in the blessed Eucharist, and yet He is for ever there. He is Jesus, the Word spoken to us. But He is also the *Logos*, the Word by which God expresses Himself co-equally, co-extensively, and co-eternally—God Who thus begot, and is ever begetting His consubstantial, co-equal, and co-eternal Son. The walls of flesh have caused no rupture, no intermission in the Divine Essence. God has become Jesus. But Jesus is still God. There are still no limits to the Godhead. The Bosom of the Father has parted with nothing in order that the bosom of Mary should be filled; and yet filled it is, leaving the wealth of the illimitable Godhead all that it ever was, and is, and will be.

In becoming man Jesus has in no degree, in no faintest shadow ceased to be the Eternal Second Person of the Trinity. There is no rift between the Eternal *Logos* and the God-Man Jesus. God is not lesser because man is greater. Mary gave what Mary could; and since that hour what God gave, namely Himself, is never disunited from what Mary gave—the “body fitted to Him.”

This is what the Hypostatic Union means, and this is what all heresies have attacked since the angels began the war. The Arians divided Jesus from God, admitting Him to be only the Son of Mary, though never going to the length of making Him the Son of Joseph. The Nestorians took a more subtle view of the question. They divided God and Mary in the generation of the Son, and so made two Christs: the one a real man, the other a sort of spiritual presence which hovered around the first.

The Eutychians confused both, reducing the sacred humanity to a myth, and the sufferings of Christ to a semblance.

Practically, Protestants are the same as Nestorians; their views of the Hypostatic Union being, to say the least, confused and inaccurate. They divide the unity of the Son of Man by dividing God and Mary as joint generators of the Incarnate Word.

They take the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost to have been little more than a pious influence, the sort of inspiration in prayer that any holy soul might be subject to, only more in degree, and a great deal more in result. They allow that Mary's conception of her Son was miraculous, but they fail to realise that it was divine.

The Catholic Church alone recognises the Paternity of the Father (in His own Bosom and from all eternity), and the maternity of the Mother of the same divine Son (in time and on earth). Consequently Protestants are unable to grasp the idea of Mary's true position, and in point of fact the Ritualists who pay her a certain honour are as far from the truth as the rest. They may make her the first among women. But they fail to understand that she is an entire hierarchy, apart in herself; and that she is so, first in her Immaculate Conception, and secondly by her position in the Divine scheme. And from the moment that any soul appreciates the position of Mary it becomes impossible for that soul to remain outside the pale of the Church. But also is it rare for any soul to be brought into the fold by a special light upon this truth. It belongs to the inner arcana of the Faith.

We are saved by the merits of Jesus culminating in the merits of His blood-shedding. But the

humanity which enabled Him to merit is derived from His Mother. God does not merit. That there might be merit, to redeem our demerit, there had to be a God-Man, and that necessitated a Mother, and a divine conception. In Mary's merit lay the possibility of God becoming meritorious, by becoming man. From the instant she gave her pure bosom for the mysterious formation and nine months' growth of the Divine Infant, she became united to Him by the strongest tie of nature, of intention, and of ministry. From the first moment of His conception the Divine Infant began to merit; and through all that unspeakably precious interval Mary's merits were so intimately united to His that they were, in a sense, one with His, even as her substance was one with His.

The redemption of our race began in the bosom of Mary, and made her our co-redemptrix, as her pulses beat for His, and her blood filled two hearts.

Mary was the altar on which the Divine Infant offered all His sacrifices to His Father in heaven, during His nine months' ante-natal imprisonment, in which He was in a special sense the hidden God. Mary also was as the Priest who carried Him whom the priesthood* alone may carry, when they elevate

* A deacon may carry the Blessed Sacrament. St. Joseph is therefore sometimes compared to a deacon : but never to a priest.

Him in the sacred species in the sacrifice of the Mass, at Benediction, or to the sick.

It was therefore during those nine months that the foundations of Mary's status in the Church were being laid; never to alter, never to diminish, but ever to increase. For the foundations, though all essential, are the minor part; the edifice is higher, grander, and in all respects nobler; and it is in her relations to the Church and to all humanity that Mary takes her real proportions. God does nothing in vain. He does not sketch out a plan and leave it incomplete. He does not make use of means loftier and more full of promise than the ends into which they are to develop. If Mary was all this to Him at the beginning of His incarnation it was because she was to be all this for ever. He has not since then let her down from a once nobler height to a lower level. Mary has not to look back upon her extraordinary eminence during those nine months, and think of it as some glorious prerogative past and gone; like a ruined heiress or a dethroned queen. The facts are past, but the eminence remains. She has forfeited nothing; and with God there is no repentance of His gifts.

Men sometimes seem to open their hands very wide, as though they were going to endow all around them with untold wealth in a burst of

beneficence. And then the hand slowly closes on its treasures, and the thin stream of benevolence is checked. His thoughts are greater than his deeds.

It is not so with the Divine Giver of all good. "He giveth liberally and upbraideth not," and when all seems poured out, there is still some sweeter drop at the bottom of the cup.

Mary can look back with no sentiment that the past was in any way greater, more intimate, more powerful, more redolent of a sweet and gracious importance than the present, as all mere human mothers must do. The accidents of her maternal position are passed. But the position she gained by her maternity can never diminish in the faintest degree. It may increase in our eyes; inasmuch as it may further develop to us, even as it has already done by the definition of the Immaculate Conception, that becoming an article of faith which had previously been known only as an universal belief. This may happen, as the Church brings out of her treasures "things new and old." But even as Jesus is clothed with His all glorious flesh, and wears His five beautiful wounds indelible in heaven, so does Mary wear her maternal crown without oneewel the less than when she wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in the manger. Mary's spiritual maternity of the Church is the

reflex of her real maternity of Christ, and is no less real because it is spiritual, if by real we mean certain and absolute. Her spiritual maternity is a fruit intrinsic to the fruit of her womb. It follows from it as the necessary result. It is the spiritual correlative of the natural law of increase and multiply.

The Church also is a spiritual mother, as she is also spiritually virgin. Some of her members are virgin (to Christ). Some are mothers (but not of Christ). But Mary is spiritually the Mother equally of each member of the Church, as says St. Augustine: "Spiritu quidem mater membrorum ejus quia co-operata est caritate ut fideles nascerentur in Ecclesia."* But Mary takes precedence of the Church in this spiritual maternity, for she first gave to the mystical members their mystical Head. This the Church does not do. She generates members *to* the Head, but not *in* the Head. Mary alone generates them in the Head, in Whom she conceived all the mystical Body; and that she may not be behindhand in anything, she also generates them to the Head, by virtue of which Head she was adapted to become the Mother of the members. The maternity of the Church is the fruit of the fruit of

* St. Augustine *de Virginitate*.

Mary, that is, an irradiation of her maternity in regard to Jesus the Head. "Sola Maria et spiritu et corpore mater et virgo, et mater Christi et Virgo Christi."* The maternity of Mary is the spiritual correlative of that which was both spiritual and material—of that which was the spiritual and most real union of spirit and matter; God-head and Manhood, in the Hypostatic Union. The glory of the Son lies in the virginity of the Mother, preserved to her by the subtle essence of the Divinity. The glory of the Mother lies in the divinity of the Son, inasmuch as she, a mere woman, was chosen to bring forth the Son of God; and through her Divine offspring received the crown of maternity without forfeiture of the crown of virginity: so that she might remain for ever the perfect type of woman, perfect in both relations: and that thus she might replace the lost position of the first woman, who was created a woman (not a child), but fell; and who only became a mother and bore sons, after her fall. Mary never fell, and in her perfect integrity was virgin and mother both.

In the divine scheme of the rehabilitation of fallen man, two great mysteries are thus blended. That of the Hypostatic Union, and that of the

* St. Augustine.

divine maternity. The first creates the second. The Hypostatic Union is the direct cause of Mary's fertility. It was a necessity in the divine scheme, the very essence of which lay in the Son of God taking the flesh of Adam. We have already glanced at the hypothesis that the Almighty might have redeemed mankind by some other means. He might have accepted a lesser sacrifice. He might have been content with such penance as man, urged by grace, could offer: or have accepted the meritorious life of Christ without His meritorious sufferings. He might have chosen to count our human sufferings, such as we all endure, a sufficient price to atone for our sins.* Theologians agree that such was possible; and that outside the means adopted by the Almighty for the remission of sin there may be a thousand others from which He might have made His free selection. But from the moment that God chose to clothe Himself not only

* "Potuit enim in primis gratis omnia condonare. Cum enim sit supremus dominus, nulli faceret injuriam : cumque ipse potissimum fuerit per peccatum offensus, poterat juri suo cedere, et culpam condonare Deinde posset ab unoquoque hominum aliqualem satisfactionem, vel pœnitentiam exigere, illaque esse contentus. Denique potuit alicui homini puro munus satisfaciendi pro aliis committere, etiam si talis homo nonniis imperfecte præstare id posset. Neque enim tenetur Deus summum, justitiæ rigorem semper servare."—*Suarez de Incarn. Disput. 4. Sect. 2.*

in flesh, but in the flesh of Adam, and not only in the flesh of Adam, but in the suffering flesh; from that moment a Mother who should be a daughter of Adam became a necessity in the case. And that Mother, although secured from the concupiscence of Adam's flesh, and preserved from original sin, was not thereby saved from the sufferings entailed upon Adam's flesh. Nor could she be: for she had to provide a suffering body for her Divine Son, therefore she too suffered, although sinless; in order that He who was to be a "man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity" might possess a body whose exquisitely delicate nerves and fibres might vibrate with every sigh of pain as promptly as the Æolian harp vibrates to the breath of the winds of heaven. The very perfection of His being was the measure of His capability of suffering. Thus the Hypostatic Union creates the divine maternity, and the divine maternity becomes the sole possible means (all things being as they are) of the Hypostatic Union, which involved as a predetermined, though not necessarily as an essential condition, the putting on the suffering flesh of Adam.

The scheme of redemption tended to more than saving the children of man from eternal separation and alienation from the Divine Creator, from and

through Whom alone can we possess happiness. It did not satisfy the incalculable love of the Creator for the creatures His hand had fashioned that they should escape, but only just escape, utter ruin. He resolved upon more than this. Not only was man to be saved, but man was to be glorified. And in a certain sense all humanity in the abstract, nay all creation, was to be re-established and elevated by the great work undertaken by the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

This was effected by the mystery of the Hypostatic Union, which gives glory to man in his human nature, and gives him the glory in his character of the representative and Lord of Creation. Man, as man, is ennobled since God became man. It is the king who by wearing the purple mantle gives dignity to the garment, and not the garment to the king. It is but the visible expression of what is inherent in himself. Thus did Jesus ennoble humanity by putting it on.

The Divine Person of Jesus operates through the human nature, not destroying any principle of action that lies in it, but bestowing on their human nature that complementary power by which its acts are produced. For personality combined with human nature gives to man his external existence ; and it was that nature which the Second Person

of the Blessed Trinity, the Eternal Son of God, took to Himself.

The entire reconciliation of God with His creature is only accomplished through the union of Jesus and Mary. It is the crowning mystery of the nine months ; it pervades the whole scheme. And since Jesus, as the God-Man, takes away the sin of Adam, Mary, as the divine Mother, effaces the degradation of Eve ; and consequently effaces the degradation which we derive from our first parents.

The first representatives of the two sexes brought about the fall of mankind. The second glorious representatives of the two sexes wrought the redemption and rehabilitation of humanity. Nothing less than the God-Man could save human nature. Nothing less than the divine and virginal maternity rescued woman from her abasement. Human nature is once more exalted ; and infinitely more so than it was in Adam before the fall. And from the Divine Son and the virgin Mother has sprung the countless progeny of a glorious Family : the Church of God " not having spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish."

Thus it is accurate to say that Mary is our co-redemptrix. She is so in an immeasurably lower degree, because she is a finite creature instead of a

divine Person. And for the same reason she is so in a different manner; but nevertheless she holds her place in the work of redemption as a real, actual, and necessary cause, decreed as such by God from all eternity.

This is why and how she is a hierarchy in herself, because while she fills the place that in a lower measure every Christian may fill according to his degree, by the grace of God; yet she holds another place to which no human, angelic, or divine being can aspire. She is therefore apart, complete, and separate in herself, with a quite special individuality, and as a distinct hierarchy. Nevertheless she is bound to us by her mere human nature, and her mere human personality. She is finite as we are, and she owes all—that great all which fills time and eternity, to the precious Blood of Jesus—just as we do. Mary was linked to Jesus by the common human nature which both possessed—she, by inheritance and of necessity, He by inheritance (from her), and of free choice. In this tie to Jesus of a common human nature, Mary was as one of the rest of mankind. But she stands alone as being the selected origin of that tie, and the active efficient cause of the humanity of Jesus, although second in order, in the conception of the Son of God. She supplied from her own sole substance

the flesh which makes the unspeakably close and precious tie between Him and us ; for through her, and her alone, is He "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." Nor can the position she occupies be a transient one. It is as eternal as the Sacred Humanity Itself. It holds its place as constantly and as enduringly; it is as complete in its degree, though that be an inferior degree. It partakes of none of the characteristics of what men call an accident. It is essential and everlasting. It was by her maternity that Mary became the mediatrix between the Father, and the Word, and man. Because it was by, and through her that the Word took a human utterance such as we could hear and understand ; and thus commenced that spiritual union with the life and sufferings of Christ which is the very essence of our Christian state. For it is not enough for man to be united to Jesus by community of human nature ; the spiritual union must be linked with it, and grow out of it ; we must become the spiritual children of her who was the natural Mother in a divine and supernatural mode, of our Elder Brother. We are, indeed, each and all, joined to the God-Man by nature when we are each actually conceived and born, because like Him we receive at that moment a human body and a human soul. But we are only united to Him

spiritually when actually conceived and born spiritually by Baptism; as also we are only preserved in union by spiritual means of conservation or restoration; that is by the sacraments, the sacramentals, and by acts of devotion, internal and external, impetrating divine grace.

Mary's spiritual relation with the God-Man lay in that blessed *Fiat* which preceded the instantaneous overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. It was accomplished then, perfect and entire, never to suffer waste or diminution from that moment through all eternity. And upon that is based her spiritual and maternal relation to the mystical body of Christ, the Church, and to each of its separate members. For we must bear in mind that in all God's dealings with His creatures, His action and His judgments, His gifts and His intercourse are addressed to the individual. Man deals with masses. God sees the mass and selects the individual. He is my God, no less than He is yours. And there is a sense, special to me, in which He is mine, and which is only known to Him and to me—indeed better known to Him than to myself. This is a principle in even the relations between man and man. Some individual attracts, by his virtue or his charm, the affection of many; but each one cares for him, and he again for them, in a way peculiar to

each, and unshared by the others. Every man is individual, all through his nature and in all its parts. It is partly this which constitutes the value of every soul; and makes it impossible through time and eternity for any man really to fill the place of another. This is why Christ died for everyone of us. He did not die for us in a body: He died for each individually and by name. And each individually, needs Him in an individual sense, and loves Him (of those who love Him at all) in his own, peculiar, individual way. Had it been possible that only one man of all the race of Adam had suffered from the fall, and all the others escaped, Jesus would have died for that one man as He has died for us all. Such is the supreme value of a human soul! And so Mary, who is God's greatest gift to man after the gift of Himself, of which she is the channel, is your Mother in an individual and peculiar sense as much as she is mine; or as she is the Mother of the whole Church.

We have endeavoured to define Mary's position as regards the Church generally, and ourselves individually. We have now to contemplate the building of this "Tower of Ivory," this "House of Gold."

The first title would seem to apply to her Immaculate Conception, her perfect purity; and the

second to her divine maternity, the womb that bore Him, the hidden house of the Eternal Son of God for nine sacred months.

In all God's works we see the absence of suddenness, or abruptness. He works by weight and measure. Time is nothing to Him, it is neither long nor short before Him. But when He is dealing with His creatures, whom He has linked to time, He accommodates His course to their perceptions, and there is no haste, no precipitation apparent, but a rhythmical sequence of cause and effect, of seed-time and harvest, of germ and growth.

Mary was prepared to be the "garden enclosed" of her Creator by her Immaculate Conception. Then came her maternity which was a further predisposition to further graces; and immediately, Mary entered upon a marvellous period of God-directed education which lasted thirty years, and in which it was her Divine Son, the supreme wisdom of God, who was her sole and absolute master. He came to save mankind, and He devoted thirty-three years to the task. But out of that period He consecrated thirty to the almost exclusive companionship of His Mother, whom in those thirty years He fashioned to be the Mother of His mystical body the Church.

Three years only, dear Lord! of busy life, of precious sayings, of glorious acts, and teeming sufferings—that is nearly all we know, all we possess. Thy many journeys, Thy hunger and thirst, Thy loving miracles, Thy gracious parables; the occasional flashes of a divine severity which make us tremble before Thee, and the long enduring invincible patience. This is indeed much; but yet it is only the history of three years; and in our poor human way we are apt to fancy the rest is lost to us. The rest is all for her! And no record remains save the one break at the end of the first twelve years, with its mystical incidents. It was for her, but it was also for us. Mary, as our Mother, was perfected for her wonderful co-operation, through time, and into eternity, by her Divine Son. This was the work of the thirty blessed years in Egypt and Nazareth.

All that the wisest doctors of the Church have ever written; nay all that the cherubim have known (apart from the Beatific Vision) is little compared to the depths of divine science in which Mary's soul was steeped in those thirty years of undivided intercourse with the Wisdom of God. Even Joseph's death, the foster-father of our Lord, the earthly reflection of the paternity of God, the great master of the silent inner life, the chosen confidant of all our home life, sorrows, and anxie-

ties, is passed over without a word, before the great importance of those thirty years in Mary's career, during which the Wisdom of God disclosed to her in the depth of contemplation the mysteries of the Triune Godhead. Only the beatific vision can fill us, each in our measure, with the knowledge of God. We shall then *see*, in the light of glory. But Mary had become the Mother of the Son of God, and she learnt of the Father, direct from the Son. She had knelt beneath the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost which wrought in her the ineffable miracle of her conception; and it was He from whom, with the Father, the Holy Ghost proceeds, Who revealed to her the mutual love of both; which Love *is* the Holy Ghost. None have ever learnt, none in the condition of wayfarer can ever learn the mysteries of the Godhead as Mary learnt them from the lips of Jesus: and from that silent influence which poured from His human presence like a perfume, conveying grace, and truth, and illumination to her maternal heart. Of all mothers she was the one who the most perfectly understood her child; and that Child was God.

What more can we say to express the depth of Mary's heart in which she kept all that she saw, heard, and felt of Him Who was the uttered word of the silent eternal Godhead! The wonderful promise

spoken of the blessed Trinity by the lips of Jesus—“We will come to him, and will make our abode with him,” was never fulfilled, and never can be, as it was in Mary’s case. The presence of Jesus was to her enlightened and sinless heart like a perpetual communion. For the Father and the Holy Ghost were by concomitance wherever Jesus was, and He was with her. It is true God is everywhere. But not in the same sense in which He comes to us in holy communion; nor yet in the sense in which the Father and the Holy Ghost were present wherever Jesus was upon earth. But in the fulness of that sense was He, the Triune God, revealed to Mary through the constant presence of Jesus. She sank deep, and soared high into the mystery of the Trinity, as no other creature had ever done, because, in virtue of her predestined position, she had stood in direct relation to the three Divine Persons as no other creature ever was or could be.

Jesus as the *Causa exemplaris* in whom all created things were resplendent as in a glass, taught Mary the adoring contemplation of God as the Creator. In Him was reflected, as it were, all the mysteries of creation, because for Him it originated, and He was the reason of its existence, summing up in Himself all its laws and their hidden agency. Mary *saw* the link between God and His creation;

for she was herself the clasp of the long chain which united God and man.

The form of devotion which addresses itself to God as the Creator is not an usual form. Rightly understood it embraces and contains all other devotions. But it is too wide and vast, too deep and rarefied, for many of us, in the toil of daily life and hourly dangers. But it was suited to Mary, who learnt it from its very source, and to whom it came as the explanation and elucidation of her own glorious and exceptional position.

Jesus also as the Life made her the greatest contemplator of God the Sanctifier. He dispensed life to men and angels; but no where did He pour a larger measure into a more ready heart than during those thirty years that He, the Tree of Life Himself, dwelt by Mary's side, that she might incessantly gather the precious fruit and be nourished in sanctity. He was also the Light of the world, and as such He taught Mary a supreme devotion to God as the Revealer of all things—to Him Who illumines and sanctifies all intelligences from the loftiest archangel, from the Cherubim and Seraphim, down to the child-saint maidens, keeping their flocks on mountain steeps, to whom from time to time He has granted infused science; to the "babes and the sucklings" who have proclaimed His name.

Jesus, as the Word incarnate, made Mary the mirror of all graces and virtues on which His Church was to be modelled. He was Himself our great example. But also He was far beyond us. His life upon earth was an exceptional life. He died for us; but few of us are called to die for Him. He taught publicly in the streets and synagogues. We mostly sit at home, and work, or wait. But Mary lived the life of common humanity; representing in her own personality the collective humanity of which she was to be the spiritual Mother. She was the maiden, and the spouse, and the Mother. She lived in obscurity, and in poverty. Even when she followed her Divine Son from time to time, in His three years' ministry, with one glorious exception her influence was hidden, her presence undemonstrative, as became her sex and her modesty. Thus she practised in a perfect and supremely heroic degree those virtues which are not exceptional, which are expected from every one of us, and which belong equally to all ranks and to both sexes. They are the daily bread of daily life; without them, in a greater or lesser degree, all life, and all society, would fall to pieces, and become impossible. It is the absence of them which produces the confusion, mars the happiness, and destroys peace in this world of ours. Meekness, gentleness, forbearance,

modesty, obedience, tenderness, industry, contentedness, humility, unselfishness, sobriety, patience, truthfulness, and candour—Ah, they are household words on the lips of every one. But they are the pearls of life. They are Mary's roses and lilies, common things that should be shared by all; but which are too often wanting in us who call ourselves Christians and Catholics, and who sometimes think we aspire to some high place as devout and pious souls. In all these Mary is the mirror of the Church, because she is the perfect reflection of the Heart of Jesus.

As Jesus is the centre of the glory of creation, which glory is solely due to Him, and which flows from Him upon His own work, so He taught Mary devotion to God as the Glorifier. She learnt that there is no glory outside God, and that all which leads up to God leads up to glory, for He dwells in glory. As she stood in the full blaze of the thought of God's glory, she saw as none of us can do, how futile and evanescent is all human glory. In vain do most of us repeat it to ourselves and think we mean it. The next pageant that meets our gaze renews our keen appreciation of human power, whether that of monarchs, of great men, or of successful genius and ability. Nor is it intended to be altogether otherwise. Religion was

not meant to take the colour out of human life and mow down everything to one dead level. There is a certain salt in human things, and human states, which is as necessary to our existence and well-being, and fuller development morally, as is, physically, the oxygen in the air we breathe. Certain emulations, certain ambitions are indispensable to man's development upon earth ; we do not say to every individual, but to the race. Human life can no more go on without them than a temple can be built by raising a high dead wall, which as such has no comparative proportions. The vestibule and the porch, the pillars, the arches, and the dome, the plinth and architrave, the sculptured marbles and tessellated pavements unite to build the fair sanctuary. And so in life, some are the common brick and others are the carved marble ; and here, as in heaven, one star differs from another in glory. It was the knowledge of all these things, learnt from the lips of Incarnate Wisdom, which taught Mary a deeper sense of proportion (that all-important element in human perception) than had ever been granted to any human soul ; and thus led her up to a higher revelation of the transcendent glory of God the Glorifier ; and gave a proportionate estimate of the emptiness of human things, as compared with divine ; and of the fact that, what-

ever importance they possess, exists solely in relation to some superior and divine claim.

She saw by faith how, in the far-off ages of eternity when the whole scheme of salvation shall be consummated, the glory of God shall shine forth in all the vast multitude of the redeemed ;—when the creation, the limits of which who can even guess at! shall be lighted by the radiance which pours from the Face of God Himself: and when He shall once more look on the things that He has made, and shall pronounce that they are “very good”—a thousand-fold more good than when He first pronounced them so, because a thousand-fold glorified by Himself the Glorifier.

We are like people living in the dark back alleys of a great teeming city. We see little of the glory of the earth, and but a strip of the glory of the heavens. But Mary dwelt at large alone with Jesus; and when she raised her eyes to His she saw more than any creature ever did, of the future glories of the world He had come to redeem.

There exists in the world of grace a certain law of attraction, which is almost incalculable in its effects, and the extended action of which will be one of the most interesting of the mysteries we shall penetrate when we come by God's mercy to the world where all secrets are revealed. There is

ever a subtle power, generally unknown to themselves, in all souls that are living in grace and in communion with God. They, as it were, emit an influence, which attracts and repels according to the spiritual condition of those they approach. We know, as a rule, very little of the inner state of those around us. It is extraordinary how hidden, save from God, is the heart of man! We see their faults. We are more or less ruffled by their little peculiarities of manner, of voice or motion. Trifles like these weigh with us quite out of all proportion with their intrinsic importance, which is often very nearly nil. But in spite of these superficialities the soul that is in close communion with God never fails, in the long run, to make itself felt by all its surroundings. In some it excites a mysterious repugnance, and they shrink away from the mystical influence which they can neither resist nor understand. Generally speaking, souls that are living in illusion, in self-deception, in some hidden spiritual deceit, or in some concealed sin, are suddenly roused in that presence to overt acts, which betray them and tear off the mask. And where they do not repent, they rush away from the light they will not acknowledge and cannot bear. But to the simple, the faithful, and the true, that soul brings by its very presence a deeper peace; and they live and

thrive in its atmosphere as a plant in a good soil. It is a divine attraction. It is as it were a spiritual and holy mesmerism, which, without spoken words, without even a conscious will, draws like to like, and tightens the links of the chain of the supernatural. People come and go, they cross each other's path, they call to each other from above or below, like wandering shepherds on the mountains' rugged sides, and each goes his way. But the man who is near to God leaves his mark as he passes, flings on the trembling air a word that is echoed, sheds a light along the way as he walks; and though perhaps not recognised or understood by ten in ten thousand, has nevertheless an influence and an attraction appropriate to himself. It may be thus in all ranks and ages; the poor sempstress or the man of the world; the hard-working priest, or the humble lay brother. The law is universal in its action, sometimes more, sometimes less; generally hidden, seldom more than half perceived; but always silently bearing witness that the children of God "are not of this world," and that, like their Divine Master, when they walk by the way the hearts of those who accost them are made to "burn within them."

In this lies the secret of the thirty years of mysterious life at Nazareth, in the little house which

harboured a woman conceived without sin, and God made man. It was thus that Mary grew into the divine likeness, day by day adding a few more ineffable touches of grace and knowledge; until God's greatest handiwork was complete, and the new Mother of a new creation "stood confessed."

When Eve first appeared, a full formed woman in the garden of Paradise, she came from the bone and flesh that her lord and master had yielded for her existence. Whatever may be the exact interpretation of the scriptural account, it is plain she was derived from man, and created for man. Her nature was essentially plastic. "The Lord God *built* the rib which He took from Adam, into a woman." She was very part of the man, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh; though personally man had nothing to do with the work which God accomplished while he lay in unconscious sleep. But when the second Eve appears it is she who gives her flesh to the second Adam, while He for thirty scarcely recorded years imparts His spirit to her, until she has grown to the perfect stature that her lofty mission of spiritual Mother of the Church demanded. She retains all the essentials of womanhood. She is subordinate by nature; and the retiring domestic characteristics of ordinary woman's life are enhanced in her case by poverty, which en-

velops her like a veil, hiding all her precious graces from the gaze of the vulgar, and intensifying the sacredness, and, as it were, the jealous reserve and care with which this fairest Flower of creation is nurtured and cultivated by no less a hand than that of her Creator. Consciously, and with all the force of the will of God, is the new Eve built up ; not in the space of a brief deep sleep, but in the gradual development of many years ; while all the world around lies unheeding.

The unthinking crowd goes to and fro, and sometimes, though but rarely, passes before the humble door of the little house at Nazareth. Proud Eastern merchants, and strings of camels heavily laden with gold, and purple, and spices ; the Roman post carrying Rome's latest mandate to the king of Jerusalem, hurry by ; freighted with importance, burdened with self-respect, but even more unconscious than Adam, their first fallen father in his deep, but perhaps not dreamless sleep, that within the shadow of that unguarded doorway was growing up a mystery before which the treasures of Orient and the world-wide politics of Rome were less than dust in the balance—the building up of the new Eve, the second Mother ; who for ever after was to be the *Causa nostræ lætitiæ* and the *Janua Cæli* of all creation.

Since then, Mary draws all to her with the very perfection of that attractiveness which belongs, in an immeasurably lesser degree, to all those who have any of the perfume of holiness clinging to their presence. Since then, her bosom is our refuge, her arms our support, her lap our repose. They are ours by spiritual inheritance, for they were those of our Elder Brother. They are ours because they were His ; and because, while His, He taught her those unfathomable secrets of divine love which enable her to support all our miseries, and to become, in the fullest spiritual sense, as Eve was in the fullest natural sense, the Mother of all.

CHAPTER III.

“Vergine sola al mondo, senza esempio
Ché'l Ciel di tue bellezze innamorasti ;
Cui nè prima fu, nè simil, nè seconda.”

—PETRARCH.

AS our object is not to write a life of Our Blessed Lady, but rather to illustrate her position as fellow worker, and, in a limited sense (as a finite creature and without bloodshed) co-redemptrix with Jesus, we shall consider events less in their chronological order than as bearing collectively upon our theme.

We have seen in what way Mary supplants Eve as Mother of mankind; how she repeats in herself, in a spiritual and deeper sense, the position and prerogatives of the first Eve, who, with Adam founded the status of the human family, and laid the first stone of the world's civil and social life. How the first brought spiritual death, and the second spiritual life; how the first gave poisonous food to man, which assimilated man with Satan, the enemy of God; and how the second brought Bread from Heaven, which incorporates man with God. We have now to trace the steps by which the second Eve accomplished her vocation, and was united with her Divine Son, not in His

public outward ministration, but in those spiritual effects and results which the outward ministrations, and His journeyings to and fro, were intended to establish. For as all Catholics know, Jesus did not come on earth solely to be an example, or solely to redeem us by His Precious Blood. He came to establish an entirely new order of things ; to build a spiritual city, and to found a kingdom. And what we have to show is that whereas He did not require Mary's help to preach in the synagogue, to reprove the wrong-doer, to heal the sick and to raise the dead ; all which public life was unsuited to the reserve and modesty of her sex ; He, nevertheless, required and employed Mary in those essentially spiritual secrets of His mission which comprise the essence of His work as Head of the Church.

The very words in which Jesus and Mary are represented as each accepting their mission, express this ;—the words of the first, from long ago, from all eternity, and uttered by the lips of the Prophet King before it was to be accomplished in time.* Those of the second were pronounced at the very moment previous to its accomplishment ; for, as God would have it, the execution of the first hung

* Ps. vii.

upon the utterance of the second. The Redeemer says, "Behold I come to do Thy will, O God."* The second Eve says, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to Thy word."

The words come to us like Antiphon and Response; her voice answering to His. From this we see Mary revealed to us in two lights; first, the light of the divine scheme which falls from God upon Mary, tracing all her lineaments, and throwing into strong relief her divergence from the first Eve, and her likeness to her Divine Son. And secondly, we have the light which pours from Mary's acceptance and prosecution of that design, and which further elucidates herself throughout her life.

No time is lost in inaugurating the duties and privileges of Mary. At once she assumes her full position as the bearer of light and the channel of grace.

Far away, across the mountains, in the long sterile womb of one of Israel's noble matrons, lies the six months' unborn babe who was to be the precursor of the God-Man. And Mary's heart, already full of infused science, knows that the child is to be consecrated before his birth, and that "He

* Heb. x.

who shall be called Jesus" and whom she carries in her bosom, will have her voice to be the revelation of miraculous knowledge, and as waters of baptism to the wonderful son of Elizabeth and Zachary. Already is Mary's connection with the future Priesthood and future Sacraments of the new kingdom,—the corner-stone of which she bears beneath her sinless heart,—to be established as the very first fact, and first action of the Divine Sovereign of creation. "She rose up and went with haste into the hill country." She hesitated no more in accepting this first consequence of her first acceptance than when she replied so promptly, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." Her humility was too great for her soul to be one moment troubled. The Light of the world was hidden with her. It was then for her to carry Him wherever He chose to shine forth. He would go to illumine His immediate precursor; but He would not do it without Mary. He required no other vehicle of His grace, no priest to bear Him along, as when He is carried in the Blessed Sacrament on the Feast of Corpus Domini. His Mother and ours is all He needs. And the young girl on whom had just dawned the dignity of growing maternity, sets forth undaunted to execute His first missionary act to one of His elect. The Burden she carries is the source of her

strength. She speaks with her own voice, but the meaning of that musical sound lies in the depth of His silence. While within His Tabernacle in her bosom He sheds ineffable light and knowledge upon the venerable Elizabeth.

And at the same instant "the little one understood subtilty, and the unwise took notice,"* because the arrows of her words were winged by the Divine Wisdom Who spoke by her lips. Elizabeth, in one moment penetrating the great mystery of which there was as yet no outward token, exclaims, "Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the Infant in my womb leaped for joy."†

The first visible act of Jesus after His incarnation is to sanctify His precursor, the future St. John the Baptist. And He does it through Mary. It is the only act of Jesus while in the womb of His Mother which has been revealed to us. We know as a logical sequence, derived from the principles of our Christian faith, that the whole period of nine months that He lay hid He saw His Father face to face, and ceased not to offer Himself as the Victim for us. But the one only known deed, as distinct

* Prov. viii. 5. † Luke i.

from acts of the will and affections, was effected through Mary. It was the inauguration of her place in the first thirty years, dating from His conception, of the private life of the Son of God; just as His converting water into wine, at Mary's prayer, was the first act of His public life; again so disposed as to indicate Mary's position and functions. While the two taken together, point her out as alike needful to us in the inner and outer life, as the channel of divine grace and the mediatrix of divine aid.

The effective cause is the Word Incarnate. The ministerial cause is Mary. She brought grace to the Infant John because in her bosom lay the human and divine nature of the Word Incarnate. And later on, and through all time, and into eternity, Mary will not cease to be to all, the bearer and channel of divine grace, because God's acts, like His gifts, are without repentance, and it is impossible that His Mother should grow less in power or position at any given time.

She is clothed with the sun which is ever resplendent: while the unstable moon, which waxes and wanes, is placed beneath her feet; denoting, by contrast, her enduring and unclouded glory; derived from the glory of the Word Incarnate, and her dominion over all things in and through Him.

Elizabeth in her barrenness is the type of the Synagogue. Mary in her fertility is the type of the Church. The shadow, as such, brings forth nothing. The type is sterile, until it touches on the object typified, and then the truth leaps forth in the embrace of the type and the reality.

St. John the Baptist as the seed of the Synagogue had to be fertilised by the new divine light before he could be capable of his mission as the forerunner of Christ. And that no link might be wanting, that no pulsation of time might beat between the new and the old, leaving for a second a spiritual vacuum in the unbroken divine scheme, the fruit of the synagogue as typified in Elizabeth, is brought into communion with the fruit of Mary who typifies the Church, before the bosom of either brought forth her child to the life of man. The chain is unbroken. There is neither flaw nor imperfection. And the perfect sequence is maintained through the agency of Mary.

“And Mary brought forth her First-born Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger.”* It would seem impossible for God Himself to give the world a more wonderful instance of the way in which He has bound together

* Luke ii.

the natural and the divine than in the momentous words of this short sentence.

God is born into the world. The Word has taken flesh. And what happens? Are there not colleges of trained priests ready to receive Him? Have not His altars been long ago erected and prepared for the glorious hour? Has not His ritual been laid out in regal order, and committed to memory by numberless holy and learned men, that nothing may be wanting to the dignity, so far as earth can procure it, which should accompany His advent?

Far from it! He has Mary, and with Mary He is content. She prefigures His future Priests as she has already prefigured His future Tabernacles, and His throne on earth. And in thus yielding Himself exclusively to her He has established still further her place in His Church, and drawn still closer the bonds which connect her with the priesthood and the sacraments.

In future times the priests of the future shall take Him in their consecrated hands, as He lies hidden beneath the thin Eucharistic veils in the most blessed Sacrament, and they shall lay Him in the little silver Pyx as in a manger, and shall hang fine linen and silken curtains round His sweet and silent Presence. In future times they shall carry Him through the streets with lights and flowers

amid kneeling crowds. Thus did His own Vicar bear Him when Rome was free. And thus is He also borne across fair fields and over mountain paths in happy Catholic lands.

But this lies in the womb of time. At present His only minister is Mary. His only altar is her bosom ; His only throne her lap. Nor do her immaculate hands need any chrism to give her, not orders, but the grace of orders. His primary object is to put her before the world as embodying in herself the hidden reality of this distant future, which will be the carrying out *de facto* of her mission as well as of His ; the principle of both lying at that time *in jure*. Actual but not effectual. Absolute but not expanded.

His second object is to consecrate all human life as God has ordered it ; to set His seal on law and order, on nature and its developments ; so that for ever after to our purged senses there should be nothing "common or unclean" in the blessed and sanctified life of our human homes. He has passed through it all. He has hailed the morning and the evening of each day, and pronounced it good. He has broken bread and gathered fruit ; and moistened His divine lips with the waters of the well. Fire has warmed Him. Wool and flax have clothed Him. His Feet have pressed the daisies and the

grass, and consecrated the dust. The rain of heaven has distilled upon His sacred locks, and the sun's rays thrown their poor material halo round Incarnate Wisdom. He has rested by our weary road-sides and climbed our rugged hills. Our forests have bent their boughs above Him. Our seas have kissed His feet. The timid moon has dared to fling her pale ray across His sleeping form. And the gay little stars, as they seem to us, have glided past His window pane, in the silent night, from the heights of their mysterious magnitudes. And from henceforth there is nothing common or unclean.

Only one kind of place never saw Him, one sort of roof never covered Him—save once when they insulted Him by neglect, and once when they condemned Him to die—He sat not in kings' palaces, He lingered not in rich men's halls. Purple and fine linen were not in His way. Gold and silver had He none. And when He spoke of them there was ever a sad severity in His words.

May He have mercy on those whose lot is so at variance with His own! Their peril is great indeed. But He knows it is so. And He has said of them, "With God all things are possible." Therefore is it possible that to those who fear Him, even the wealth and luxury He never touched, may not be "common and unclean;" nor "the men of riches

sleep their sleep, and when they wake find nothing in their hands."*

Like a gathered snowdrop lay Mary's First-born on the chill earth before her, as she stooped to clasp Him to her bosom. And the unconscious world went on its way unheeding.

The temple of Janus was shut at that auspicious hour, but yet Rome knew not that the Prince of Peace was come. The restless activity of the Roman power spanned the world with its hurried chariots. Sophists led their disciples from one vain discussion to another, like a flock of sheep. And poets sang, but not of Him.

Yet surely though the material world, and those who lived in the slavery of its sorrows, or in the still greater slavery of its pleasures, were all unconscious of the greatest event that ever has occurred or ever will occur; in the world of spirits, the limbo of expectant patriarchs and prophets, a thrill of infinite joy must have traversed those dim regions. Chiefly to Adam and to Eve must the glad tidings have been granted. And perhaps to her who erewhile sat in the forlorn world, outside the gates of paradise, nursing with joyless forebodings her first-born Cain, while the dark shadow of the curse

* Psalm lxxv. 6.

deepened around her, there may have been granted a vision of her one, only sinless daughter, with the Divine Infant at her breast. Then at last will Eve have raised her downcast eyes. The centuries of penitential expectation will have rolled back and shrunk to a moment ; while the present event, and the slowly developing but glorious future, bursting on her new consciousness, she will have exclaimed with the Church, *O felix culpa!*

Already Mary's calls to ministration crowd upon her. "To the poor is the Gospel preached." But as yet the Divine Teacher is a little silent Infant. Nevertheless the shepherds are warned by angels that "that day is born to them a Saviour." And no time is to be lost in preaching the glad tidings of salvation. Already is the Sacred Heart beating with love towards His human brethren ; and above all towards those whose lot is poor and humble like His own ;—the shepherds keeping their flocks at night, on the steep ascents of Bethlehem's hills. He needs no speech. Mary will speak for Him, and her knees will be His seat of wisdom. His presence is enough. It is all He then affords. But Mary knows how to act, and if need be what to say. And when, later on, wise men from the East, crowned kings and their numerous retinue, shall follow in the shepherd's wake, and with still greater

faith seek out the Child and His Mother, Mary is again as readily the minister and the interpreter, and is as little perturbed by one kind of visitor as by another. For she has the dignity of spotless innocence, and the calm grace flowing from untold depths of wisdom and science ; too saturated with the presence of God not to see Him in everything and everything in Him ; and thus incapable of the shallowness of surprise, or the flutter of self-consciousness. In these two events, the worship of the shepherds and of the kings, that of the whole world is represented. The rich and the poor, the learned and unlearned, the Hebrew and the Gentile. And in these two events Mary is the primary active ministrant. St. Joseph could only be second to her on either occasion. And the Divine Infant was passive, though secretly communicating His will and intentions to His Mother's soul in a more intimate and complete way (because unobstructed by the possibility of actual or original sin in the recipient) than God now communicates to each of us His will, by the infusion of His grace into our conscience, and in response to our use of the Sacraments, and to interior acts. In these two events therefore, which were the samples of similar future occasions when divine truth should be made manifest to mankind until the consummation of all

things, Mary's ministerial position is at once exposed and defined. It could not be greater. It could not be more absolute. It was perfect, sole, unshared, and above dispute. What it was then such is it now, and such it ever will be. For God's gifts are without repentance.

We can imagine here that some who are outside the pale of the Catholic Church may be inclined to argue that we are taking advantage of circumstances flowing from necessary facts, but not affording sufficient basis for our deductions. They may say that Mary, being the Mother of the Saviour, and He at that time an Infant, things could not well happen otherwise than they did, but that the inferences we draw are more or less suppositions. This is a line of thought common to those who allow the natural to overwhelm the divine. Or who, looking upon the creation as the antecedent will of God, and the Incarnation (followed by the scheme of redemption) as the consequent will, are led to regard it as something, (however beautiful and merciful), merely superadded. To such it may seem that the view we are taking of Mary's position is somewhat strained. Let us examine this objection in detail.

We are often what we call the victims of circumstances. We have very limited means of calculating the results of our best considered acts. We launch

our tiny freight of deeds on the sea of time, and cannot calculate what storms may assail our vessel, what rocks it may encounter as soon as it is beyond our sight. We form a great design once or twice in the course of our little lives; and when it is accomplished, more or less accurately, immediately it ceases to be ours and follows a course we had not prognosticated, giving rise perhaps to circumstances entirely unexpected, and leading up to results possibly directly at variance with those we anticipated. Even if successful in the main, it is always more or less attended by the unforeseen; sometimes in a propitious form, oftentimes the reverse.

This is the course of human actions. Does any of this apply to God? Can He plead that circumstances have outstripped His intentions, or that the circumstance was a trifle in itself and ought not to be weighted with its own logical conclusion, like an imperfect syllogism? Is the Almighty thus overborne by His own laws and smothered beneath their results? If He did not mean His providence and His act to bear all its consequences, why did He do it?

The absurdity is not ours, kind readers. It is the only adequate expression of the limping reasoning of those who are afraid to follow truth to the logical end.

If infants ever were helpless and silent it was

because the Word Incarnate was to be so. If mothers ever nursed their babes on their knees and nourished them at their breast, it was because the Son of God was to take flesh. The divine must always in the everlasting scheme have preceded the natural. The greater cannot fortuitously grow out of the lesser. The lesser exists in virtue of the greater. The greater is eternal; the lesser passes over the phase of time, but is not the first in the external procession of the divine Idea.

Given the facts, it is impossible to make Mary less. Because it is impossible that God Himself did not foresee the logical conclusion of those facts. By permitting the facts He endorsed the conclusions; and when He willed the one He willed the other.

In the whole of God's government of the world natural causes take their course and flow in freedom unrestrained. It was the decree of Cæsar that all the world should be taxed which so filled to overflowing the hostelries of Bethlehem that there was no place for the expectant Mother and her spouse. The fact was probable, and simple enough. But beneath the crust of natural causes is hidden an idea, a divine conception, a supernatural order, which will become the sovereign and dominant fact. Joseph obeys Cæsar. Mary obeys God. Joseph

finds God in the second causes. Mary carries the First Cause Himself within her bosom.

The solitary cave, the extreme poverty, the rude surroundings are all easily accounted for; they appeared an unfortunate casualty, an unpropitious coincidence, a trial and an incongruity, just as so many events of our life appear to everyone of us. But nevertheless the whole divine scheme must have been different had these occurrences been other than they were. Bethlehem is the "House of Bread." There must therefore the Bread of Life be produced; and Mary's words, as prophecy predicts them, be justified in their mystical sense, "Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you."*

The cave is a stable, and the Child is laid in a manger. Men have become as beasts before God, and it is from a manger that such are fed. In His wonderful abasement to their low level He shrinks not from this, that He may raise them higher by uniting them to Himself. Thus Mary began what the Church continued in unbroken sequence. In an open cave with no gates and bars to check the passing wanderer or the eager worshipper, open to all comers alike, Mary is the altar on which

* Proverbs ix. 5.

shepherds and Magi come to adore the hidden Deity. On His Mother's bosom He will destroy all differences and make all men brothers. But without her the union is not complete. "Habeas in utero, idest in viscerali et maternali affectu, Filium Dei, et totum mysticum Christum. Hoc est caput cum toto corpore electorum."*

It was thus, and then, that Jesus and Mary, the infinitely inferior co-operating with the Infinitely Superior, the creature with the Creator, laid the foundations of the Church of God and the new kingdom.

It is in the contemplation of these facts that the souls whose predominant devotion is to the Infancy and to the most blessed Sacrament, twin mysteries, find their delights. To such is known the yearning of the Spouse in the Canticles, when having described the manhood of her Beloved "as Libanus, excellent as the Cedars," she turns with the simple pathos of a virgin heart to another aspect of His divine human life, and exclaims, "Who shall give Thee to me as my Brother sucking the breasts of my Mother?"† Then indeed "no man may despise her"—for is she then not sister to the Divine Infant, and is not Mary the Mother of both!

* St. Bernard de Glorios. Mariæ. Nom. cap. 2.

† Cant. viii. 1.

“Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see the King in the diadem wherewith His Mother crowned Him in the day of His espousals.”* Then for the first time when the shepherds and the Magi came to worship might that be said, for Mary has crowned the Everlasting Word with the humanity in which He espouses the Church.

The Church beholding Him in the cradle adores the true God because she receives Him from the Father. She adores Him as true man because she receives Him from the Mother. The Mother is the ministering cause of the Sacred Humanity which is the crown of His espousals. Without the Father Jesus were not God. Without the Mother the Word were not man. And without the Father and the Mother combined He were not the God-Man or the Man-God. In the cave at Bethlehem when the first worshippers appeared, it is the Mother and the Child who fill the picture; and no where in the life of our Lord is this so pre-eminently and conspicuously the case. Mary fully assumes her position. She is the Spouse of God, and His Son sits upon her knees. She is not surprised that the simple shepherds come crowding in, or that three kings should have travelled from

* Cant. iii. 11.

afar to recognise and adore her child. Joseph's presence throws no doubt across the scene which is all divine. As putative father his position was glorious and honoured, but only in an indirect way. He was only called His father, while Mary was really His Mother. Joseph's greatness is reflective. Mary is the bush which burns with divine fire. Joseph is but as a mirror which reflects the light of that flame. It is true his place is important, for he was the shield of the divine mysteries; his presence was essential to their security and secrecy. He was the panoply flung over Mary's single prerogative; and it is in this that St. Joseph is the type of the Priesthood, for Priests like him derive their greatness as the inheritors of Mary's privileges. It is they who bear Jesus in their hands, and dispense Him in the Sacraments. But as Joseph preceded the Priesthood, so Mary preceded Joseph. She had entered on her active ministry before Joseph so much as knew the secret of her divine maternity, when she went to the house of Elizabeth and Zachary, and remained there three months. On her return to Nazareth, when the heart of the holy Patriarch was torn with doubt, and God revealed to him the secret of her conception, occurred the first inauguration of the Priesthood in the person of St. Joseph. Then did he first learn that the Son of

God would live under his care, and be, oh wonderful fact! in subjection to him. He knew it then as a thing of the future: and, the knowledge imparted, Joseph disappears, and Mary alone remains. His position was temporary, and, as it were, intermittent. Not so hers. And when the thirty-three years of the divine presence upon earth are drawing to a close; and that bitter Friday is tolling forth its slow and terror-laden hours, Joseph has long since been gathered to his rest. His presence was not needed on Mount Calvary. But Mary's was essential. Joseph's blessed vocation belonged to the infancy and youth of our Lord. Mary's is unbroken to the end. She walks *pari passu* with Him in His great work; infinitely inferior, being only a creature; but necessary, because He would have it so, because she is in the very foundations of the eternal scheme of the union of the natural and the divine.

Until now our path has led us through the most gracious and soothing scenes. An angel's visit, and a maiden Mother; a mountain journey and a holy and joyful meeting; a painless birth and a divine Child; a pastoral song and a royal idyl. And as it happens, we have been writing it on Christmas eve. But already the scene begins to change. One week of deep unutterable joy is given to Mary

and then the law speaks, and He Who "came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it" in His own person, and finally to close its iron rule in His own death and drown it in His blood, begins to suffer for those who by His sufferings shall be made free. "After eight days were accomplished that the Child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus."* Already the sevenfold sword has thrust one blade into the Mother's heart. She sees the blood of her Child for the first time, and she who knows that every drop has yet to be spilled! But when that time comes He will walk Himself into the vineyard and tread the wine-press alone. Now He depends on Mary's courage, her faith, and her obedience. She has entered on the path of humiliation, shame, and suffering. It is the path our Lord chose for Himself, and assigns to His saints. Humility belongs to all. Humiliation is reserved for His more chosen friends. But Mary is equal to all that is demanded of her; and having seen Him suffer as if He were the son of sinful man, she carries out the full accomplishment of the purification, (under none of the conditions of which did she fall:) and she bears Him to the Temple to redeem Him with a pair of turtle doves or two young

* Luke ii. 21.

pigeons. She might have offered a lamb for a holocaust.* The wealthier families did so; and doubtless the shepherds had been glad to honour Him and her by supplying the defect of her poverty. But Mary knew that He was Himself the Lamb that was to be the holocaust for all creation; and therefore were the doves a more fitting sacrifice, while the conditions of the law were equally observed. She obeys the requirements of the law with perfect exactness, although herself above its touch; and first she obeys it because the inauguration of the new Covenant was not to be effected by the sudden disruption of the old. The synagogue was indeed to fall into ruins, for all that it symbolised was in process of being accomplished. But Jesus would have it done even as men replace a wall which forms the main support of some important edifice, for every stone they take out they insert another. Had all been suddenly condemned, by the non-observance of the law in the person of Jesus, there would have arisen scandal and disorder. Mary knew this, and the type was in no case removed until He who fulfilled all types replaced them one by one. And as such was the will of Jesus, so Mary acted in fellowship with Him, and obeyed what He obeyed. Secondly, Mary obeyed the law, because like the

* See Leviticus.

presence of St. Joseph, it served as a veil to hide "the King's secret," of which she was the depository, until the time should come for all to be revealed.

Thus Mary and Joseph carried Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord. Oh! joyous moment for Mary, when taking Him from the foster embrace of St. Joseph, she holds Him in her arms and herself lifts Him on her heart to His Divine Father in heaven, ere she puts Him into the hands of the officiating priest.

This once has the great victim been spared! He has been redeemed Who came to redeem. The two doves, less innocent than He, have been consumed on the altar. And Mary receives back her Treasure less from the priest than from God Himself, that she may keep Him till a more perfect sacrifice is demanded of both. The first-born was offered according to the law of Moses in token that, as representative of all the other children who might be born, he acknowledged the sovereignty of God, and was prepared to answer for his brethren, as well as to inherit the rights and fulfil all the duties of the family represented in him. Thus every first-born male of the Hebrew race was a type of the First-born of the restored human race; restored in His person, and Who should adore, obey, and expiate for His brethren.

The law of primogeniture of the descendants from Abraham was ordained for this signification. The first-born was a hostage to God for the other sons, and was redeemed by blood, as typical of the redemption by the blood of Jesus. He was the reality. They were the shadows. The Priest stands in the place of God. And Mary lays the Divine Infant in his arms as offering Him to God Himself. In this she is only doing outwardly and under the law what she did first, interiorly and directly, at the moment of His conception ; and again at His birth. The external act was the ratification of what was less an act than the perpetual inward state and attitude of her soul. She offers Him to God in a double character, first, because she is His Mother, and herself the Spouse of the Divine Father. Secondly, because in having become the Mother of the Saviour through the operation of the Holy Ghost, she is the common Mother of all the saved ; and, wider still, in the intentions and desires of her heart, the Mother of all mankind. For as Christ died for all, so is Mary Mother of all. All are not saved, although Christ died for all. All do not recognise Mary, nevertheless she is the Mother of all: as universally their Mother spiritually, as Eve is their mother according to the flesh.

In that act of Mary's Jesus was given to the

human race. Not as the first effective gift, that being from God the Father ; but as the first ministerial gift, and the prelude to the long succession of priestly and sacramental gifts, whether partial or entire, by which each individual soul becomes partaker of the merits of Jesus, and is united in the mystery of grace to Jesus. In that act of Mary's her work was shown to be inseparable from His. And so also will her sorrows be in common with His ; for now Mary has entered on another step of her high calling, and has begun her office of mediatrix. She has for the first time done openly and officially that which she is always doing mentally, in offering her Divine Son to His Divine Father, and pleading for us with Him. He is essentially hers to offer, for she is His Mother. Nor can her offering be rejected, for He to Whom she offers Him, is His Father.

Thus so mysteriously and inextricably is Mary bound up in relation to the Three Divine Persons of the ever Blessed Trinity that by Their immutable act she has been made the clasping link between God and man.

By this deed of Mary's Jesus was put in the possession of the Church:—not actually, for the hour had not yet struck, but potentially. It was Mary who fulfilled the law of the symbolic lamb as an

offering, for she presented the "Lamb who was slain for us from the foundation of the world." And Simeon, divinely inspired, pronounces that a sword shall also pierce her own soul. Why?—"that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed." Thus Simeon joins Mary with Jesus in the work for which He has come down from Heaven, and for which she was then offering Him. He recognises her presence in it, immeasurably inferior always, but actual and effective. The Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many. And the sword that shall pierce her soul is for the revealing of thoughts out of many hearts; because Mary is the appointed mediatrix from whose extended hands flows the stream of grace whereby thoughts of salvation and of peace are revealed in the hearts of her children.

How hidden was this great event, how surrounded by the mere ordinary incidents of every day! There were doubtless many other mothers who had gone that day to the Temple with their first-born. But not one of them recognised the Elder Brother of all. One holy woman "confessed to the Lord" and spoke of the Infant she had that day seen "to all who looked for the redemption of Israel." And one venerable man who "had received an answer from the Holy Ghost that he should not see

death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord," took Him in his arms, and uttered that inspired evensong of exquisite peace, the *Nunc dimittis* of all future ages. In it the aged prophet has condensed the perfect praise of the Redeemer as being in His own Divine Person the cause of Peace, Salvation, Light and Glory. He is our peace, because He is our Mediator with God. He is our salvation, because He has redeemed us. He is our light, because He is our Divine Teacher, and through Him we receive the Holy Ghost who "brings all things to our remembrance." And He is our glory because it is only through Him that the fallen world can again be glorified, with a far greater glory than that before the fall. He leads us up to the light of glory through the gates of Heaven which He has opened to us. This hymn of the holy Simeon is an epitome of the whole Gospel: the Incarnation in peace; the teaching in light, the redemption in the salvation of the cross, and the resurrection in glory. And He who was to accomplish this divine work was the Child of Mary, and was offered for the work by Mary. She has her share in the work, and therefore her share in the anguish. For though He shall tread the winepress alone, He alone shall be slain, and stain His garment with the red blood of the vine, yet a sword shall pierce her

soul also. Simeon forewarns her of the consequences of her great act, of her offering and of its acceptance; for already has the Divine Infant entered on His mission, and Mary's lot is inseparable from His. She took it on herself in her maidenly *fiat*. She has consented to His offering of Himself, and she has carried Him to the temple, as, when He is a man, she will follow Him to the cross. The nails will pierce His sacred limbs; the spear will pierce His sacred Heart, and the sword will pierce her soul. Both are together now. Both shall be together then—and for ever. *Jesus and Mary* are the touchstone of faith; the token of friend or foe. Alas! those who deny the position of Mary have cast her out of the Temple, out of the liturgy, out of the heart. It is only in the one true Catholic Church that she is always in the Temple with Jesus.

We behold in Simeon the impersonation of the expectation of the law, which after long centuries sees the rising "sun with health in his wings," and closes his eyes on the happy dawn, having "seen salvation." But as he was the impersonation of the past, so did he foreshadow the future, and was a type of the Vicars of Christ who in long succession of aged Pontiffs bear the light to the "revelation of the Gentiles." And as they represent Him in their sacred office, so are they like to Him who is

set for the fall and for the resurrection of many "and who ever remains" a sign that shall be contradicted. For "Senex puerum portabat, puer autem senex regebat."*

Thus types and shadows, old expectations and dawning fulfilments crowd together in one momentous scene. The past and the future meet and embrace—the former fades, the latter shines more and more unto the perfect day. And through it all Mary is the ministering agent.

The days of persecution have already begun. Herod seeks the young child's life ; and a crowd of infant martyrs will shed their blood for Him.

The family from which descended the chosen people had gone down to Egypt; carrying out in their journey and residence there, in cause and effect, a long line of divinely typical events. In like manner the Son of God is carried into Egypt, the land of darkness, at the warning of an angel—that in His case, as in that of the predestined race, the prophecy might be fulfilled, and God should "call His Son out of Egypt." It had been the refuge of the Israelites. It has become His. "The Lord will ascend upon a swift cloud, and will enter into Egypt."† The message is given to St. Joseph, as the protector of the young Child and

* Mass of the Feast of the Purification. † Isaias xix. 1.

His Mother, who is the "swift cloud" that will lead Him thither. The eyes of men will discern no more than an infant and His Mother, for like a cloud she conceals His divine origin, while Joseph's presence throws a shield over the double mystery. Jesus is the bow of the covenant, the sign between God and us for perpetual generations (Genesis ix) Mary is the cloud in which the bow is set. God "will cover the sky with clouds." That is, He will cover the Church and the ransomed world with the influence and mediation of Mary, because "the bow shall be in the clouds, and there will God see it, and will remember the everlasting covenant that was made between Him and every living soul of all flesh which is upon the earth."* Without the cloud we do not see the bow. Without Mary we see not Jesus. The two are essential to the ratification of the covenant. Mary is the pillar of cloud. Jesus is the pillar of fire.† "Thou, O Lord, art among this people and art seen face to face, and thy cloud protecteth them."‡ When God speaks to Moses it is in the darkness of a cloud.§ When the Lord gave the law of the old covenant He came down in a cloud.|| Mary is the cloud that covers the Tabernacle.¶ Everywhere the cloud is symbolic of Mary

* Genesis ix. † Exodus xiii. 21. ‡ Numbers xiv. 14.
§ Exodus xix. 19. || Exodus xxxiv. 5. ¶ Numbers xi. 25.

who covered the Sacred Humanity for nine months in her womb, and who carried the Divine Infant in her arms.*

It appears to us that, though the cloud has also been interpreted as meaning the Sacred Humanity, it is more accurate to regard the bow as the type of that, and the cloud on which the bow rests as typical of the Mother of God. It is on seeing the bow that God will remember His promise. It is through the Sacred Humanity that God has become reconciled to man. But the cloud is also specially named as that on which the bow rests—even as the Sacred Humanity rested on Mary, the Body which God has fitted to the Word.†

How wonderful must have been those years in Egypt respecting which the Gospels are so silent, and only the prophets speak!‡ Away from the holy city and the Temple; no longer having it in their power to go up for the feasts, Joseph and Mary lived in the daily contemplation of Him Who was the accomplishment of all that the Temple prefigured. And in His presence they realised that the rest were but shadows while the substance lay hidden with them.

The persecution of Herod was but a mere human

* Numbers ix. 15. † Hebrews x. 5. ‡ See Isaias xix.

cause which God made subservient to the fulfilment of prophecy. Herod enjoyed his own free will ; and God worked His own eternal will. And when the tyrant was called to his account the angel again appeared to St. Joseph, and he being warned that Archelaus reigned in Herod's place, went to Nazareth. The name of Nazareth means the place of flowers; a title truly apposite for the dwelling of the Rose of Sharon and the lily of the field. It also means separate and holy. Jesus was called in contempt a Nazarene—for when did not the world express its contempt for all that is more especially holy and separate to the Lord !

Silently the years slid past with the calm monotony that is man's safest approach to happiness in this life, and every year saw the holy family journeying to Jerusalem for the Pasch.

But when the divine Child had attained His twelfth year, the age at which, according to Jewish law, every male was to enter on the trade or profession to which he was destined by his parents, an event occurred which suddenly snapt asunder the hitherto unbroken chain, an event full of deep meaning and further revelation, and which even to Mary's expectant heart seemed to have come too soon. "Having fulfilled the days, when they returned (from the Temple), the Child Jesus remained

in Jerusalem, and they knew it not."* Mary who was with the women believed Him to be with Joseph, while he, travelling with the men, supposed Him with His Mother. Meanwhile the Child was in the Temple with the Doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. And after three days it was there His sorrowing Mother and St. Joseph found Him.

How touchingly simple, and yet how vivid is the Gospel narrative! But when we come to unravel this strange, though natural episode, we find a complication of mystery which classes it with the few rare incidents in our Lord's three years of active life in which it is difficult to determine whether He mostly declares or mostly conceals His Divinity. At first we are startled by His unusual conduct. He hides Himself from Mary. He seems to have forgotten His willing self-imposed subjection to her and St. Joseph. Nay, more, He allows them to suffer the most intense anxiety and agonising fear on His account, and leaves her maternal heart a prey to terrible apprehension and dread. If He desired to remain in Jerusalem, why did He not openly say so; doubtless they would have obeyed His slightest wish: and to Mary whose soul was as

* Luke ii. 41-50.

a mirror reflecting all His thoughts, it would have been easy to have explained His motives. But no ! He leaves her without a word of assurance, and outwardly shows no compassion for the sorrow of both herself and His foster-father.

There have been commentators on this mysterious passage in our Lord's life who have not hesitated to call this incident Mary's eclipse: as though a shadow had been flung by her Divine Son over the glories of her position, and she had been, in this one instance at least, somewhat severely reminded of the infinite distance that lay between Him, as the Son of God, and herself as His human Mother. They deem it possible she might forget that she was a mere creature, and needed perchance one sharp lesson in humility in the long glorious time and eternity of her marvelous prerogatives ; as though in short she were less than immaculate, and might possibly be subject to some transient error or deficiency.

We cannot too energetically repudiate this view of the case ; for indeed there is no incident in the history of Mary, hardly even the Annunciation itself, which so wonderfully points out the place Her Divine Son has given her in the scheme of redemption ; for *here* it is He Himself, and not an angel, who declares it. Moreover He declares it

not as part of a discourse, not as an allusion called up by other matter ; but as a fact of such importance that He leads up to it through a whole three days of deliberate action on His part ; and of deep sorrow on hers.

He was with the Doctors hearing them and asking questions.

There He stood ! with something of the dawning dignity of youth, and more of the sunny beauty of childhood. He stood in the Temple, of which every stone, every pillar, every ornament was symbolic of Him, and of her who bore Him—He the verification of them all. And the venerable Doctors discoursed of that great theme which was the burning topic with every learned and holy Hebrew in those times—the coming of the Messiah. They commented on the prophecies, and they debated of their possible and probable fulfilment at about that date ; for the time seemed to be at hand, and men's hearts were beating high with expectation. He listened ; and He asked them questions ; —He who was the subject of their discussion, and Who stood visible, but unknown amongst them. In later years He will preach in their synagogues, and ask questions of none of them. But now He leads them on by His inquiries into the knowledge they already possess towards the truths He will

not yet openly declare. He makes their own replies to His questions, the utterance of the facts to which they are blinded. He, the Boy of twelve, stands in the midst of them holding their intellect, their heart, their utterances as much beneath His control as though He laid His fingers on the strings of a harp. And as He puts questions to them, He leads them up to the elucidation of the truth, standing palpably before them, while as yet they see it not. "And they were astonished at His wisdom and His answers." Yes, even at His answers, for they find themselves questioning and consulting the Boy as some one supernatural in knowledge, and who threw a fresh new light upon the old subject that was old ages back, the long lingering expectation of all mankind—When is "the Desired of nations" to appear? As this scene was passing and repeating itself on the third day, how often must they have marvelled with themselves from whence came this wondrous Child, who were His parents? where was His home? and who had been His masters in this marvellous lore and profound knowledge? But there was that about Him which precluded their questioning Him on other matters than those He Himself chose for His discourse. He appeared daily among them as a stranger. He left them again for they knew not whither.

And no man durst ask Him "whence comest thou?"

Now we see why Mary and Joseph were kept away. They could have been questioned ; and the hour was not yet come when all could be revealed ; nor were men's minds able to receive it. There was Mary's virgin honour to be sheltered and concealed, and Joseph had yet to pass for more than a foster-father in the eyes of those to whom God had not revealed the truth, as He had done to the shepherds and the Magi ; to Simeon and Anna.

Therefore did the Divine Child silently abstract Himself from the society of His Mother, and commence already to lift the veil that concealed His divinity. But as in all God's dealings with mankind, He took the natural combinations, and the common events which seem so undesigned, and yet which, in His hands, lead to such pregnant results.

He has laid before the Doctors all the Scriptures which speak of Himself. He has expounded to them that the Son of man is also the Son of God. He has told them of the Virgin that shall bear a Son. But had Mary been at hand, worse than being questioned might have befallen her ; and yet the time was come when, in the plenitude of His wisdom, He would sow thoughts in the hearts of

men, hearts destined to bring forth the fruits of faith later.

While this is going on, Mary's absence is essential. When it is done Mary finds Him, and her first words complete the mystery. Unintentionally, unknowingly, she breaks in upon this wonderful scene, and calls Him, Son!—"Son, why hast thou done this?" she asks, for well she knows that He alone can explain His acts; and that all He does is well. The Boy has been discoursing of the Mèssiah who was to come from heaven through the womb of a Virgin of the house of David; and at that moment Mary of the house of David appears and calls Him Son!

Joseph is at hand, and his presence covers the mystery of her virginity and her maternity; nor is she alarmed, nor does she take heed of this: for this is the inner arcanum of the faith, that faith without which no man can see God. The Elders and the Doctors must believe in the divinity of Jesus, and in the virginal maternity of Mary, if they or others are to have part in the new kingdom. That is the touchstone of faith. They must believe the virgin in the Mother, and the Mother in the virgin. They, and we, must acknowledge the Divinity in the flesh, the God in the man, and the man in the God. And therefore Mary in all the

dignity of her exaltedness, and clothed in the beauty of her fruitful chastity, came forward and named Him Son! Nor does He repudiate the name. Yes! He is her Son. But St. Joseph is not His father. And for one moment He lifts the veil which covers the deep mystery; that mystery for which the worlds were made; and lifted it publicly, openly, before the Doctors to whom He has been telling of the Divine Person and human nature of the Messiah, He repudiates Joseph as His real father, and turning to Mary, His real Mother, He says, "Did ye not know that I must be about my Father's business?"—as though He had said to her, "You are, indeed, my Mother, but Joseph is not that father to do whose work I have come down from heaven and have taken humanity through you."

Thus He terminates His discourse with the Doctors—as though before leaving the Temple, whose symbolic courts had echoed to the sweet sound of His boyish voice, He had said to them—"I have expounded to you the coming Saviour, the Desired of the nations. Together we have perused the Scriptures which tell of Him. And now behold my Mother, but not my Father, comes to seek me. In me is united two generations. The first is in eternity with my eternal Father, and

without a mother. The other is in time with this my Mother, but without a father.—And now do you not know me?"

Mary had served Him well out of the obscurity and temporary ignorance in which He had left her. Then she entered at the right moment in the providence of God, and she uttered the right words. Her maternal ministry has served her Son's divine purpose—as it ever has done, and ever will do Jesus seems by His reply to say to her, "My Mother, indeed, thou art. But it is my Father's business which has called me away." And then He passes from the Temple—can we not think we see Him—whom we indeed know and adore? He gives a little hand to Mary and Joseph both, and without another word, without giving the Doctors time to reply, He passes from their sight, and goes down with Mary and Joseph to Nazareth where for eighteen years He will be subject to them, and with His sweet presence will make up to them a thousand-fold for the one occasion when in His higher divine mission He has been painfully mysterious and hidden in His dealings with them, and caused them, knowingly, but divinely, the first and the last disquietude.

This then was Jesus' first public act. And in it He gives, as it were, an epitome of the whole

mystery of the Gospel. And moreover. He does this by the aid, with the words, and in the presence of Mary. The incident was natural, and yet it was divine. It grew out of ordinarily possible circumstances. But it ministered to a divine mystery. And here as elsewhere the natural and the divine blend together like a perpetual shadow of the Hypostatic Union, sanctifying all things, from the vast cosmos of countless worlds down to the humblest paths of our human daily life.

CHAPTER IV.

“ Qui vi era imaginata quella
Ch’ad aprir l’alto amor volse la chiave.”

PURGATORIO, *Canto* 10.

IN considering the position and prerogatives of Mary, it is necessary that our readers should bear in mind the twofold character of the question, and should observe the just balance between the natural and the divine. Were we to lose sight of this distinction, and in any degree fail to give to each their due, we should forfeit our claim upon the sympathy of our readers, as well as miss the fulfilment of our purpose, namely, the showing in as strong a light as possible the blending and harmony of both in the divine scheme.

In the former chapter we have been considering the mystery of the three days’ loss in the Temple, all that it was intended to teach us (so far as we are able to discern it), and the way it elucidates the mysteries of the faith from circumstances which, to those who see nothing below the surface, might appear ordinary and accidental. We have not dwelt upon Mary’s anguish of mind during the

mysterious absence of her Son, because it must be obvious that no words could express it, and that it must have reached the extreme limit of agony short of that which she endured when standing beneath the cross. We must never lose sight of the fact that, in all matters apart from her Immaculate Conception, in all the ordinary incidents of human life, Mary is not put beyond human conditions. She does not exhibit her character of co-redemptrix, of Mother of the Church, and of second Eve, except in those acts which surpass her mere human nature, and which reach to the height and dignity of her divine maternity and ministry.

These acts were not perpetual in the sense of excluding simple, though sanctified human acts. The state of soul, and the condition of her predestination, out of which her acts of divine maternity and ministry sprang, were perpetual ; but they no more interfered with her humanity, pure and spotless always, and her individuality and natural character, than (in a very much lower degree) the supernatural states to which saints have been called, interfered with theirs. Saint Paul was caught up into the third heaven, and knew not whether he were in the flesh or not. But apart from the newer and higher graces and knowledge that the vision conferred upon him, he was the same indivi-

dual human being, with individual characteristics, after as before. And thus it was with Mary. However numerous, and some have supposed perpetual, were her supernatural states, she nevertheless in no way passed the border land of our common humanity. She was a woman always, a daughter of the house of David always, and no more. She had not two natures like her Son. He never ceased in the exercise of His divine nature, and of His human nature both. Even in His transfiguration the human nature was all there though clothed in unearthly splendour. Equally was the divine nature there when in His agony He cried to His Father, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" The human nature is there at this hour in heaven, sitting on the Right Hand of the Throne of God, infinitely glorious, and now impassible. When on earth, and suffering as man suffers, He exercised His divine nature correlatively with His human nature, because though the nature was double, the Person was one. Whereas Mary, like all of us, had one nature and one person, and both were human.

Her sufferings therefore in the three days' loss were those of a human mother, carried to the highest pitch of exquisite sensibility, because in no way impaired or deadened by evil. But though

her sufferings were natural there was a supernatural intention in connection with them ; and, as it were, her divine mission extended a claim upon her even in this, inasmuch as in the agony of her desolation she prefigured and shared the desolation of the Church collectively; and shared the individual suffering in the hearts of the saints for the absence of the Bridegroom, and for the offences committed against Him in the world at large.

Some spiritual writers have imputed to Mary certain gifts which would appear to carry her outside the limits of humanity, and which therefore seem to us to militate against that perfect harmony which is her great characteristic, as the one being who sums up in her own person the harmony which the Creator evolved in the work of creation, and which is the necessary condition of the union of the Godhead with humanity, of spirit with matter, and of the fertilising essence with the universal womb of nature ; of which Mary is at once, in the eternal decrees, the type and the epitome.

The gift imputed to Mary to which we especially allude, is that of having known at the time of her Son's crucifixion, if not before, which souls in the past, present, and future of humanity would reap the benefit of the divine sacrifice, and which would fall outside the arcana of salvation. The idea does

not impress us favourably. Nor, if we may be allowed the expression, do we see the use of it. It can hardly be said to add to the glory of Mary that she should have a prescience of the damned while in her condition of viator. What she knows now, in the light of glory, is a question on another level. But that the Mother of mercy, the Mother of fair love, should have been called upon in her sweet human, maternal nature to bear so dread a burden jars with our sense of God's infinite tenderness towards His Spouse. The tree covers itself with blossoms, and asks not which of the fair flowers will bear fruit, and which shall fall barren to the ground. Surely it was enough for Mary to see her own people rending the beloved form of her Son, and their Redeemer, without the additional anguish of knowing how many of those unhappy Hebrews would be saved by their august Victim's prayer of "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," and how many would perversely fight their fatal way outside that widely constraining petition. In a certain sense it is true to say that Mary has nothing to do with justice. It is mercy which is her special prerogative. In thus speaking we repudiate that antagonism in God's nature, that hideous anthropomorphism which is the great bane of much mistaken religious teaching, not of the Church.

But whereas justice and mercy are one and the same in God, justice and mercy are not one and the same in Mary. She has a human and consequently a divisible character. And though absolute union with the Divine Will makes it, in a certain sense, all one to her, whatever He does or permits, yet to burden her simple human nature with the superhuman attributes of the Supreme Being has the effect of crushing it out with an unnecessary and overwhelming weight. There were certain things that even our Lord, in His mere human nature, declared that He knew not, but only His Father in heaven. Why then attribute to our Lady a particular dark point of knowledge which in no way enhances her power, or her glory, and which of right belongs to God alone? We may be wrong, but it is contrary to our sense of the fitness of things; and as Mary is indeed, blessed be God! *one of us* it might interfere with the unquestioning, unreasoning abandonment with which we can now cling to her knees, clasp her mantle, and insist on her obtaining our salvation, as spoilt children might do to a mother who can refuse them nothing.

No gift seems consonant with the condition of Mary that does not enhance her maternity. She is essentially the Mother. The whole of creation

is based upon the law of fertility. It is the natural law, symbolic of the divine law. God is the great Lover of the universe. Mary is the typical Mother. All the old faiths held the idea, expounded it, and finally losing in the darkness of man's nature the divine spark of truth, debased and degraded it. Modern times have not debased it. The practice of Christianity rendered that impossible; but they have more or less (except in pure dogma) lost sight of it. Hence the almost universal tendency either to Manichæism, or to materialism, in our mode of thought and parlance. Ordinary pious talk is full of it, the speakers innocently thinking they are spiritual when they are only calling that "common and unclean" which God has made. The "fulness of the earth" is specially God's, because He has ordained the laws which make it full: and because they are the laws adumbrating His own eternal Paternity, and precanonising Mary's virginity and maternity; the two crowns of the inferior sex, alone united in her who was to be the Spouse of God, and in whom the Divine Love embraced, not Mary only, but the whole creation. We are told to despise the "things of the world." We are never told to despise its laws. Its laws are the exponents of God's will; nay rather of Himself. Its "things" are the waste, the redundance, the fluff and dust which,

in its fallen and disordered state, it casts off ; its accidental developments ; things to which we attach a false value ; its gold and silver, its praise and honour ; its titles and distinctions, often mere "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal." They are the expression of the world's judgment and opinion, sometimes right, generally wrong. Their value is relative, not positive. The merest fragment of truth, scientific truth if you will, about the Cedars of Lebanon down to the hyssop that grows on the wall, or the zoophytes and corals that cover the sands beneath the seas, or the great sea dragon that is formed to play therein* has more to do with telling us about God, and expounding the weights and measures wherewith He has laid out the laws of creation, than all the fleeting wealth and stagnating dignities which "constitute" the "things" of the world in contradistinction to its laws. It is true that we already have more knowledge than we know how to manage. But the more we know the better we shall ultimately understand. We have a redundancy of facts, and we do not yet see how and where to place them. We are like children laying out a puzzle. Some of the pieces seem to be wanting, and that throws the whole into

* Psalm ciii. 26.

unmeaning confusion. Wait awhile and we shall find the missing sections. Meanwhile Catholics alone have the clue and can afford to wait ; for they know, as none others can know or imagine, that all things are by and for Him. But the clue would be wanting to us without the Church's theological teaching with respect to Mary's position in the scheme of creation and redemption. There would be a gap in the rationale of the subject which nothing could supply ; and it is this gap which makes the illogical inconsistency of all so-called creeds, outside the Church's pale. Without Mary, and all that Mary is, the union of the natural and the divine would fail in its principal and elemental point of contact.

The universal embrace by the Creator of His entire Creation attained its completeness when Mary conceived the Son of God through the intervention of the Holy Ghost, and, remaining Virgin, became Mother. The universal law of creation was, as it were, taken up then into the very Triune Essence of the Godhead, and reached its apogee ; and by that touch of God upon the world of matter in the person of Mary and in the Incarnation of Christ, the law became for ever after what, from all eternity, it was destined to be, "holy to the Lord ;" and the expression in a visible, tangible, and limited form, of

Himself, of His Being, and of His indivisible attributes. Then, and there, was constituted that mediatorial hierarchy which binds nature to man, and man to God. Like an electric chain it ran through the universe, linking each to all and all to Him. The least was ennobled by it; the greatest was naught without it. "*Lex divinitatis est infirma per media ad suprema reducere.*" The mediation is thus established between God and man. It stands betwixt the two, and touches upon both. Jesus in His Humanity mediates through Mary, who conferred that Humanity upon Him. Mary by Jesus mediates with the Father Who sent His Son into her bosom; not thereby emptying His Bosom of the Son, Who for ever dwells there, but by the ineffable Hypostatic Union of two natures in one Person, that Person remaining in all things unaltered. Nothing has ever happened or can happen to cut the chain of the mediation thus established through Mary. The ascension of Jesus into heaven, and His session at the right hand of God, have not separated Christ from the Church He founded upon earth. He continues to operate in His Church. He governs her through His Pontiffs, He ministers to her through His Sacraments, in which He conveys to her Himself, His divinity, and humanity unbroken and undivided. The same consistency

of sequence applies in its own degree to Mary since her assumption. Nothing has intervened to make it otherwise. The greatest of all events, the event which can occur but once to each, the one which in its issues is more certain, absolute, and irrevocable than our birth with its hopeful possibilities ;—Death—has had no effect in interrupting by one beat of a pulse Mary's union with the Church, and her continuous position of co-redemptrix and mediatrix.

Every time we repeat the Creed we declare our faith in the Communion of Saints. And yet perhaps the Creed has no article which as a rule we realise so feebly. We are all too apt to look upon death as the destroyer instead of the *restorer* of the past. And it is natural we should do so, because all beyond the closed portal of the tomb is a matter of sightless faith, of strained imagination, of mere conjecture, of blind throwing ourselves into the arms of the Infinite with a certainty that He will take us and keep us. But how, and in what mode we know no more now than Abel knew when he, first of all of the race of Adam, suddenly and violently was thrust through the dark door that shuts out the last sight of this world from the first wide-open surprise of the hereafter. Less than a thin line to step across, less than a second of living breath, and

we go forth into the vast unknown to find our God. Yes! It is always awful; and there are times when it is terrible. There are times when with rash impatience at the blind doubt of how it will feel, united to its utter inevitableness, and the absolute ignorance of when or by what means it will come, the temptation is upon us to rush unbidden through the dire moment and have done with it. But "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." We are not saints. But we are His children, His creatures, and "living or dying we are still the Lord's;" and for all that vast and interminable unknown we will trust Him, as absolutely, nay if possible, more so, than for the next beat of the heart, the next aspiration of air in our moments of perfect health. And this being so, why do we so frequently look upon death as the destroyer rather than as the restorer of all to us, and of each to all?

There is something almost appalling to our little natures in the slow and unhurried march of the events by which God has distinctly revealed Himself to man. He speaks; and the word is followed by centuries of silence. He puts forth His hand, and years roll by before He gives another touch to the work begun. The Boy Jesus has just revealed Himself to His Mother before all the Doctors of

the Temple, and declared that He must be about His Father's business : and when our expectations are thus raised and we feel the kingdom is to be restored to Israel, lo ! He turns His steps back to the little cottage in Nazareth, and for eighteen long years remains subject to Joseph and Mary. Hitherto deep as has been the solitude which surrounded the Holy Family, it was broken in upon by the shepherds, the Magi, or the Doctors of the Temple in open discussion with the Divine Child. But now He enters upon a further phase of the inner life, and as though to give more prominence to the authority of Mary and to her august position in the Church, He remains for the larger portion of His presence upon earth obedient to but one earthly parent. We know nothing positive of the time when it pleased God to call away St. Joseph from any further participation upon earth in the life of the God-Man. But there was an interval, and probably a long one, when no one was present to break the wonderful union of the Son and the Mother in their joint life—a life in which she ruled, and He in His human nature was subject; while in His divine He sustained and ruled her, and the entire universe. There had been moments before now when the mystery that was being enacted remained entirely or partially hidden from Joseph.

In the house of Zachary where Mary visited Elizabeth, Joseph was not present. It was solely the mission of the Mother with her Divine Babe still hidden in her bosom. Once, the mystery was revealed in the Temple to Simeon and Anna, while the whole city lay around in utter unconsciousness. But now the veil has fallen deeper and darker around the two all-important personages in the history of the world's redemption; and for years it is only Jesus and Mary, Mary and Jesus, who weave together from their own two hearts that beautiful silent poem of the perfect inner life, the one divine, and the other immaculate but not divine, which is the most absolute praise of man to God; as silent to mortal ears, and more glorious, than all the harmony of the spheres. We too have a hidden life upon which the Eye of God is resting in every one of us, while His Ear catches every thrill, and counts, alas! every jar of that which only He knows or understands; of that which is our only real true self; the absolute Ego which will stand revealed at the day of judgment, to the surprise of most, and the dismay of many. More entirely withdrawn from the observation of the world than ever, the years glided by, and obscurity deepened around the sacred Two. But it was an official obscurity only. It was no suspension of act, or of

power. Jesus was no less the Saviour and the Judge of all mankind within the narrow walls of the House of Loreto, and Mary was no less the co-mediatrix and spiritual Mother of the Church than are both now in the great heavens. He was there as Head of the Church and second Adam. She was there in the same relationship to the Head as at the Nativity or the Crucifixion; and as second Eve to the Second Adam. Dates affect us: and intervals of time dim our perceptions. But the immutable truth goes on; and Jesus, silent and hidden for long years, is always the efficient cause of our salvation: while Mary, obscure and unknown, is ever the instrumental and ministerial cause, following in the wake of the efficient. But all was hidden at Nazareth. The presence of Joseph had hidden the mystery of her virginity; the human nature of Jesus hid the mystery of her divine maternity. His subjection created her authority. It was a willing and not a necessary subjection, as hers must have been had He not by His divine will submitted Himself, putting aside, as it were, His divinity in order to make room for her possible authority. For Mary was infinitely inferior to Jesus as being a mere human being, although she was superior to all the rest of humanity as being immaculate and the Mother of God.

Jesus as man is inferior to God ; and of course as God His superiority to man is an infinite superiority. But even in His humanity He is immeasurably superior to Mary on account of that Hypostatic Union by which the divine and human nature have met and embraced, without in any way destroying or consuming the latter ; thus making His humanity superior to that of every other being, including even Mary. Therefore His subjection to Mary in those many hidden years was a double subjection. For He first veiled His divine nature in His humanity ; and then His superior human nature in His obedience to her. For the centre of Jesus is God : and the centre of Mary is Jesus : while each draws us to the Father. It is good to keep the secret of the King ; and surely the King Himself has laid a veil of mystery over this secret, which makes it one of the deepest and the most precious among the many on which contemplative souls love to dwell as in green pastures by the side of still waters.

Would that we might silence the busy hum of life and the vagaries and phatasmagoria of our restless imaginations ; and sit down beneath the shadow of this great Rock in a weary land, till the end come !

During those eighteen years of serenity Jesus

perfected Mary in her character and office as Mediatrix of the Church, that she might for ever after attract the Church to herself, and through herself to Him; for be it remembered, her position is derivative, while His alone is absolute. Her glory is in Him and by Him. His is in Himself. And yet without her the work were incomplete in the divine scheme, the links broken, the perfect yet gradual leading up of the creature to the Creator intercepted; the logical sequence truncated, and a chasm cloven in the path that leads to God. But amid the hierarchical gradations, as God has ordained them, Mary in the divine intention as the affective source of the Sacred Humanity, as the first and essential link between the natural and the divine, becomes the channel of grace to the Priesthood. Also as the typical Matrix of all creation we trace in her the Sacraments, (that is the divine grace conveyed through material forms), and finally the Sacramentals, each and all flowing from the primeval divine idea of Mary as the Mother of God. She is the means to the end. Not the efficient means, which is the Son of God Himself: but the approximate means forechosen by God from the beginning. Her co-operation is the attraction and the point of contact between Christ and the Church: Jesus draws Mary to Him-

self, that by her He may become our Elder Brother. And Mary draws us, her spiritual children, to Jesus, in her union with Whom she has spiritually conceived us. All who love Jesus are drawn by Mary as Mediatrix, even though they know it not ; for their ignorance cannot break the integrity of the divine Hierarchy in which Mary holds the initial part. Those who may belong to the soul of the Church, though through involuntary ignorance, and to their own great loss, they have never entered the body of the Church, owe everything to Mary. They are not saved by the Sacraments, for these in their entirety exist only in the Church. They do not sit down with the children at the Father's banquet, for that is spread in the Church alone. Yet still that Father has reserved a help for them. The end includes the means. And the Mother of Fair Love has mediated for them. She whom they neither acknowledge nor revere has obtained, by her intercession, even for them, the crumbs which fall from the Master's table. For, if it be possible, heretics, schismatics, and pagans owe to Mary more than even ourselves. In their corporate capacity they are out of the scope of the Divine system. A gulf opens before them, inasmuch as error rends in twain God's perfect truth. And were it not for the exercise of Mary's un-

solicited mediation, reaching back to the creative love of God "when the Lord possessed her in the beginning of His ways, before He made any thing from the beginning,"* and claiming all creation as her dower, it would be impossible to say by what means they could appropriate to themselves their share in the redemption of the Cross, or lay their hand on the Head of Him Who has borne the weight of all our sins. What will be their surprise when they find that they owed the spiritual graces they received upon earth, and the fact that they are saved, not to the vain shadow which they called a Church, not to this or that fragment of a mutilated creed, not even to pious emotions or good resolves and good works; but to the intercession of one whom they either ignored or only imperfectly esteemed! As the typical Mother of all creation, she has pleaded for them; and not in vain. Mary, the help of Christians, is the sole merely human intercessor who pleads for them with adequate weight, for it is her motherhood and not her lips alone that pleads. She is the unfallen one; and only by realising that she is the human source by which, tracing it back through endless ages, we learn the antecedent will of God with respect to all creation, only by realising what

* Proverbs viii. 22.

Mary is, can we see nature in her original purity, and arrive at a just estimate of natural laws as they lay in the Divine eternal idea. The whole world had sunk in iniquity. It is sunk to this day, though not as it was before the slow-flowing tide of Christianity began to lave it. But Jesus as the second Adam, and Mary as the second Eve, proceeded to image again that portraiture of the divine attributes and characteristics, revealed in creation, which had been obliterated or blurred by evil. Thus Mary elevated marriage by her matrimony with Joseph, entailing on herself the natural subjection, which is the woman's part in creation; while she exalted the parental tie by her divine maternity, and so exemplified and sanctified the whole circle of family life. This is instanced in her visit to her cousin Elizabeth, inasmuch as underneath its great and divine import in the consecration of St. John the Baptist, it illustrated the deference due from the younger woman to the elder relative, and the affectionate solicitude which should more eminently exist among kith and kin.

Jesus in being subject to His parents filled up the picture of home life, and in His self-imposed obedience to them adumbrated the position of religious superiors, and the obedience rendered by free choice; and thus conferred that

superiority of the Religious Life over the natural which is one of the doctrines of the Church. Had Jesus been a mere human child, His obedience, however perfect, could not have conferred this pre-eminence upon voluntary obedience. It was His choosing and instituting such obedience, which while it confers merit on the simple obedience of children to their parents, elevates ordinary obedience into that appertaining to the supernatural religious life. It was in the house of Nazareth, where the family and maternal life were sanctified, that the higher life in religion, which gives up the family and renounces the parental life, was divinely consecrated. For it was in the house at Nazareth that Jesus sanctified the principle of filial relationship, and of obedience to civil law, the two bulwarks of civilization in its truest sense ; while also, as a stretching forth beyond the merely natural and towards the supernatural, (as it became His divine nature to do); He established, by His example, the voluntary obedience which lies at the root of the higher life. Thus in the little house of Nazareth, silently and secretly, was carried on a triple life, by Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, which was one unbroken protest against the consequences of the fall entailed upon humanity. It was, essentially, a life of law and liberty ; the last being impossible without the first.

It was ready obedience in perfect freedom; Mary's willing submission to Joseph sanctifying the tie between husband and wife; and whereas divorce is the tyranny of marriage, being the disruption of a voluntary bond by force—and slavery is the tyranny of individuals over numbers; and revolution the tyranny of the multitude over the few; Jesus, Mary, and Joseph co-operated to destroy these erroneous principles, not by words, but by building up their opposites. The office of Christ is constructive. It is only while building the new that Christ destroys the old.

Some writers have alluded to the eighteen years of the hidden life as required to fit and prepare Jesus to teach in Israel. It is impossible to take this in any other sense than as physically required to perfect His Manhood and His experience, as of course at every period of His life He contained in Himself all power and all knowledge. Nor were they needed to increase the dignity of Mary. That could admit of no augmentation, being perfect and entire from the moment she conceived her divine Son. Eternity itself could not add one iota to the intrinsic dignity of her virginal maternity. What could increase was the sum of her meritorious acts, and their ever deeper intensity. These could grow even as the glory of the blessed

in heaven may grow, inasmuch as our state there will not be one of arrested, but of progressive being.* She grew in actual knowledge: whereas her Son grew in stature and in experience. She grew in merit, whereas His merit was always equal, because it always reached the height of the Hypostatic Union, and nothing can surpass that. There can be no degrees in the merit of a God-Man. It must always be transcendent,† and infinite in every act, like His being and His divine essence. It is more reasonable to say that the thirty years were needed to prepare John the Precursor, and to illustrate the closeness of that union between the God-Man and his human Mother, by the fact that for all those years, during the life of Joseph and after his demise, Mary shared the same house, table, and life as Jesus.

They dwelt together; one in life and one in office; one as originator, the other as co-operator; one as efficient, the other as instrumental; both reinstating the natural which had been defaced by

* Not of course increasing in merits, the sum of which closes with our probationary state; but in knowledge and its accompanying happiness. We cannot realise any finite being as arrested and yet immortal. God alone is complete. To Him alone can nothing be added; and from Him nothing taken away.

† Note 2, Appendix.

sin ; the one by His sacred humanity, the other by her immaculate and virginal maternity. One was the divine Creator; the other was the divine and typical human Mother, that is, she became Mother by direct divine influence. This does not take Mary out of her human nature, any more than it takes away her human personality. But it exalts both, and so doing, in her it glorifies humanity, and the whole creation; which creation is a series of indissoluble links leading up from the lowest to the highest; the last link being locked in the Sacred humanity of Jesus, while all the others pass through the nature and office of Mary.

Through the sin of Eve all things in creation had become common and unclean. But Mary in her Immaculate Conception is the white sheet let down from heaven, in whom all living things were brought together, when the law went forth that henceforth they were no more to be called common or unclean. The hierarchical mediation which reunites the fallen creation to the Creator begins in Mary; and through her divine maternity is carried on and upwards to the Hypostatic Union, by which the Eternal Father is once more reconciled to the world and the world to Him.

There is, if we may use the term, a singular appropriateness in this thirty years' seclusion of

Jesus and Mary. For God works by measure. There is nothing abrupt or hurried in the acts of Him Who is patient because He has the habit of Eternity. Mary, in all her perfection, was merely human. Unutterable capabilities lay in her pure nature, but though without flaw they demanded time to develop them. The whole burden of her position as co-redemptrix probably did not burst upon her at once. She kept all His words, pondering in her heart* the indications of her exceptional position; and her knowledge of its extent grew with the years she spent with her divine Son. The sacred humanity is at once the foundation-stone and the key-stone of the work of redemption. Only the Son of God could save humanity; and He knew from the first moment of His conception all that lay before Him in that work, as perfectly as when from the cross He announced that "it was consummated." Every detail had been before the sweet serious eyes of His fair infancy as they were when actually passing in time.

But the whole of so terrible a burden of apprehension was too much to throw at one fell swoop on the heart of a human Mother. For though the passion was His; the com-*passion* was hers. He was

* Luke ii. 19.

the Foundation Stone of His Church; and as the apostles were co-foundation stones, and every man may be a co-worker with God, so in a superlative degree was Mary co-foundress, and co-worker with Jesus. Mary was indispensable in a way in which none other could be. She was the gate through which the Hypostatic Union passed. An apostle might turn traitor, like Judas, and another take his place. A type, like Solomon, might fall into sin and mar in his own person the dignity of his eminence. But Mary, as Mother of God, stands apart from all. For she is essential to the eternal design; and that can be said of none other in the universe. Not the highest of the archangels is essential; not the holiest of the saints that ever was or will be. Mary alone is essential. We have already alluded to the theory that God might have saved man through other means than those which in His wisdom and love He chose. Nevertheless that particular mode being His choice, Mary in her degree becomes a necessity in the case. But, as we have said, it is improbable that she should have from the first moment of the annunciation realised the whole amount of what lay before her. It is still more improbable that after the birth of her divine Son it came in one flash to mar the joy of her maternity. But thirty years' intimate daily and hourly converse

with Him expanded her nature, strengthened her desires, perfected her com-*passion*, deepened her love, and widened her knowledge ; so that from the moment of her remote co-operation in our redemption, by her fiat spoken to the angel, until Jesus left her side to commence the three years of active life in which He was ever walking towards Calvary, Mary was more and more being built up into a "tower of ivory" and a "house of gold" in ever increasing supernatural strength and glowing ardour, until at last she "stood beneath the Cross," her com-*passion* united with Christ's saving passion. From the first she had gone on with her Son, never faltering, never shrinking, and as His mission developed before the eyes of men, so did her knowledge and her co-operation develop. Both began at the same moment—the moment of the Annunciation. Both culminated at the cross: and both are going on through all eternity, the Son acknowledging the Mother: and the Mother pleading for us with the Son.

The view which we have taken in this as in our former works, of the Incarnation as being the cause of the creation, not in the order of time but in the eternal designs, is necessarily the one which confers the most glory upon Mary, and is indeed the only one which gives a complete interpretation to the

passages we have so frequently quoted from the 8th chapter of Proverbs, and which are applied, though not in an exclusive sense, by the Church to our Lady. This is the view which seems to run through the beautiful "Office of the Blessed Virgin," and especially in Matins and Lauds. In the 94th Psalm, all men are called upon to "sing unto the Lord," in "Whose Hands are all the ends of the earth, and Who beholdeth the heights of the mountains; the sea is His and He made it, and His Hands founded the dry land." The enumeration of the works of creation is interrupted from time to time by the salutation to Mary, "Hail Mary, full of grace;" and again "the Lord is with thee,"—showing that in the allusion to the creation and its glory, Mary comes before us as the primary idea in the divine scheme, as the initial point and highest product thereof. Mary, the divine Mother, symbolises creation, gathering in her bosom its reproductive energies, and offering the perfect type and stainless image of creation's primeval law. "For man has been crowned with honour and glory, and set over the works of His Hands. All things are put in subjection under his feet."* "Blessed is Mary among women." Again is all the earth called upon to

* Ps. 8, and Antiphon.

sing unto the Lord; "for He hath established the earth, and it shall not be moved. The heavens shall rejoice, and the fields, and the trees of the wood, before the face of the Lord. And the Virgin Mother shall rejoice, for she alone hath destroyed all the heresies of the world."

"O holy and immaculate Virgin! with what praises I shall extol thee I know not: for He Whom the heavens could not contain rested in thy bosom."*

The Office for Matins having thus dwelt upon the position of Mary while on earth, and having intimately and repeatedly blended the joy and glory of creation with the fact of her immaculate conception, and her virginal maternity; that for Lauds sings the mystery of her Assumption. "Mary was taken up to heaven. The angels rejoice, and with praises bless the Lord." And then the whole creation, which had "waited for the redemption of the sons of men" is rapturously summoned to bless the Lord, now reconciled to the works of His Hands through the Son born of a pure virgin. Men and beasts, heat and cold, hoar frost and dew, sun and stars, nights and days are to bless the Lord. "For the root of Jesse hath

* Ps. xcvi. and Antiphon.

budded, a star hath arisen out of Jacob, a virgin hath borne the Saviour, and we praise Thee our God." "Behold Mary!"* It is not till the veil of evening has descended on the earth that the shadow of a darker thought falls upon the choir. Then indeed there comes a touch of weariness at the memory of the persistence of the wicked, which like a bar sinister crosses the fair bearings of creation; and at the same moment the declaration that all offenders shall pass away as completely and as worthlessly as the rank "grass on the house top wherewith the mower filleth not his hand, nor he that gathereth sheaves his bosom." As the night wraps us round, so our thoughts turn to Mary's other kingdom, the world of shadow, and expectancy of the ransomed who are not yet the glorified; and we consecrate to them a *De profundis*, followed by an act of deep humility from a "heart that is not exalted, and eyes that are not lofty." But immediately the choir turns again joyfully to her who is the "Mother of Fair Love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and holy hope;" and all is summed up in the exquisite evensong of the Church, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen

* Lauds Office.

Thy salvation." Thus is closed an office so beautiful in construction, that it would seem as if the angels themselves had framed it; and the inner sense of which appears to us to be an undeniable affirmation of Mary's place in creation.

The reason of creation could not be defeated by the fall of man. In spite of man's degradation, the Second Person of the Trinity will still clothe Himself in flesh; He will still become our Elder Brother; and now, since our fall, He will be our suffering Brother, and Chief of all others, the "Man of woe." He declares that His Father has "fitted a body for Him;" and He assumes a new condition, as His consequent will, in union with His antecedent will. That is, whereas He was to take flesh and unite Himself to His creation, so now will He take a *suffering* flesh and redeem His creation. And she who was to conceive the body fitted to Him, from whose bosom He was to derive His human nature, will join in His consequent will, and occupy the same post there, and will be as completely one with Him as she was in His antecedent will, when in the eternal idea, she "was playing before Him at all times." If we lose sight of Mary as the necessary gate of the Incarnation, we necessarily lose sight of her as the co-redemptrix. If we consider the Incarnation as rhythmically second to the

creation, we make this former a secondary intention ; and Mary still more so. But if we take the Incarnation as the basis of the creation, we put Mary in her place in the Eternal mind ; and as, when the misery of fallen man had followed his sin, the Redemption became incumbent (not of necessity but of love) on the Incarnate Son, we must keep Mary up to the level of the new requirement. She changes her character from the happy Mother of the Incarnate God to the suffering Mother of the suffering God-Man. He abased Himself to meet His passion. He raised her to second it. We are at fault in representing to ourselves our Lord's life as one of thirty-three years of ordinary life as regards suffering, and three hours of passion. It was passion from first to last with Him : and it was com-*passion* with her. With her it grew. With Him it must ever have been at the high tide of the waters of bitterness. It is not that He was the Babe of Bethlehem, the Youth of Nazareth, the grown and active Man of three years, and the Redeemer on the cross only. He was the Redeemer always. The character of the eternally intended Incarnation was changed from first to last, and so, therefore, was the character of the maternity. "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth." Eve physically ; Mary, the second Eve, spiritually.

It is wonderful how this view of the eternally intended Incarnation, as leading up to the creation, harmonises everything. It is the golden key that unlocks the Holy of Holies, the innermost mind of God. It raises and elevates everything. It brightens all God's acts and dispensations. It preaches Jesus, as not only the Redeemer, but as the glorifier of His brethren, and it puts Mary in the place assigned her by the Scriptures and the Church. To the mind which habituates itself to contemplation of divine truth as a whole, and does not rest content with the fragmentary holding of phases and portions of the great system before, or instead of grasping, so far as may be, the whole spherical truth; these considerations are full of permanent consolation and all-enduring repose. In them alone do we find a complete response to the cravings of the intellect, as also to the desires of the heart. The cares of life dwindle before the immensity of the thought, and we learn how every exigence of our being is crowned by the grandeur and perfection of the future glory that shall be revealed in us. As the spiritual offspring of Mary, as the brothers of Jesus, we are caught up into the radiance of that world where all tears shall be wiped away; where the perfection of love, and the endlessness of knowledge shall flood our

spirits with glowing intensity, through the ever instantaneous and ever enduring pulses of eternity, where, if there be a break, it is but the influx of a fresh tide of glory, a newer aurora of light and joy, in the enduring love of Him with Whom we shall be steeped in blessedness.

CHAPTER V.

“Riguarda omai nella faccia ch’a Cristo
Più s’assomiglia, ché la sua chiarezza
Sola ti puo disporre a veder Cristo.”

—IL PARADISO, *Canto* 32.

IT is our intention in this work to limit ourselves to an investigation of certain scripturally recorded facts, and endeavour to see what those facts indicate, and whither they lead. For this reason we do not allow ourselves to dwell, as we might wish, on the feelings and trials of Mary when the moment at length came that the quiet and peaceful home-life of Nazareth was brought to a close : and that she saw Him Who was the delight of her eyes, and the sole joy of her heart ; saw Him Who had dwelt with her for thirty years in a visible, tangible intimacy, which doubtless equalled the exalted and grace-giving sacramental communions granted to a St. Francis or a St. Catherine ; pass from beneath the shadow of the lintel into the outer world, its garish light and its discordant sounds. Eighteen years had come and gone since He had first said He must be about His Father’s business. The

time had been spent in laying deep in the heart of Mary the seed of the Church of which she was to be the Mother. But now the hour had struck when the great, the stupendous three years in the world's history were to begin their brief but crowded course; and close in the great act which throws all other events into the shade; before which the rise and fall of empires are no more than the destruction of an ant-heap;—the act of the dying of the God-Man.

Ever since that death, which we have called an act in the highest sense of the word, because in all its parts it was (unlike our compulsory deaths) a deliberate and active act, fore-known, fore-felt, and intentionally endured; all Christianity has been engaged in studying it for more than eighteen centuries. We bring our little plumb-lines of devotion and contemplation, and attempt to fathom it. We kneel before our crucifix, by the hour, and try to read between the lines; and whether it be wonder, or compunction, or love which most fills our breast we equally feel that eternity itself will not be long enough to measure the mystery in all its proportions, or to realise in its immensity the eternal consequences of the *Death* of the God-Man.

No human being has, on earth, known so much about this mystery as Mary did. No one had

ever so keen a sense of all that is meant, and all that it would effect throughout eternity. And she alone saw Him leave her side and set forth on the career that was to lead to Calvary.

How was it done? Had He in the brief twilight of an Eastern evening repeated the words, "I must be about my Father's business," and in them summed up the whole teaching of the thirty years which she had been pondering in her heart? Did He then pass silently from the dear little quiet house that had been a home so long, that had sheltered His boyhood, and His youth, and even seen the ripening of His manhood; and closing the humble door, withdraw His adorable presence, while sleep still lay gently on her eyelids? Or did she know fully that the rising sun was to usher in the first day which was to break up their hourly commune, and bring long intervals in their companionship? Did she stand,—as later on she will stand beneath the cross,—to see Him pass that door-sill for the world where He had not where to lay His head? and did she watch Him descending lower into the valley, down the winding mountain path, to gain the main road that led from the humble village of Nazareth to the great Jerusalem? Now and then a bend in the road reveals Him again to her sight. But the last bend is taken

and Mary turns again to the silent house from whence the real light is withdrawn; save as it is for ever enclosed in her own heart, save as in will and full intention she is with Him still; co-operating in His mission, compassionating His sufferings, and ever and anon coming before us in the evangelical history as near Him still and ministering always.

Nor was the time long before her presence and her words led to another half uttered, half secret revelation of His divinity, like that which occurred just eighteen years previous, when He had first told her He would have to go about His Father's business. Three days after His baptism by John the Precursor, to whom Mary had conveyed the doubly miraculous pre-natal sanctification, Mary, and Jesus, and His disciples were guests at a marriage in Cana of Galilee. Two disciples of the Baptist had followed Jesus, and Andrew and Peter Philip and Nathaniel. They were probably all present. The bridal feast was not concluded, but the wine had failed; and Mary said to Jesus, "They have no wine." And Jesus answered, "Woman, what is it to me and to thee? My hour is not yet come." It did not appertain to the human nature which she had given Him, *per se*, to work miracles. And the hour had not struck when

He was to reveal His divine nature by superhuman acts. He had gone with her to the marriage feast as any other guest, though, it may be, more honoured than all others even then; and attended by His wondering disciples hardly yet fully aware Whom it was they were attempting to follow. Why then did she call upon Him to transcend the limits of the Manhood He had derived from her pure bosom, and show forth the stupendous and bewildering light of the God-Man? She might know, as she did know, that He was not what He seemed, only the Nazarene, the Son of Joseph. But from all others His divinity was a secret still; and if we may dare to say it, He, as it were, hesitated to beam forth on the varied groups of that marriage feast in the tremendous powers of His hidden Godhead. While they knew Him not to be more than He seemed, they were innocent in their ignorance. But once let forth the rays of His divinity, the ground on which they stood would be altogether changed. The higher responsibility of higher grace would fall upon them all. And it may have been possible that His human heart shrank from the terrible outburst of those powers lying in His divine Person, which, once exhibited, were to be a savour of life unto life, or alas! of death unto death. "What is it to thee and to Me? Thou art merely a

woman. I appear as merely Thy Son, and thou askest of Me a miracle that the hand of God alone can effect. My hour is not yet come."

But oh! how wonderful is the sequel. Mary has spoken; and she never speaks in vain. Eighteen years before, she had spoken, when with unutterable anguish she had sought Him for three days, and found Him in the Temple. Then too He answered her negatively, saying He must be about His Father's business. But nevertheless at the sound of her voice He leaves the assembled doctors, He comes down from the Temple, and for a double novena of years, He dwells alone with her. Then, too, had He taken Mary's words as the occasion to declare Himself above a mere human origin, and claimed His Father in heaven. And now again He follows up Mary's words by the very act she had desired of Him, and which testified to His mission. And though His reply seemed evasive, so certain is Mary that her implied request will be granted, that she turns to the servants of the house and enjoins them to do whatever He may tell them. Beneath the seeming refusal she has discerned the acquiescence; and true to her mission she prepared the way by desiring that His orders, be they what they may, shall be obeyed.

How wonderfully she understands Him!

How the intuition of grace enables her to follow His hidden intentions and to foresee His acts! She does not hesitate, or even deliberate for a moment. She knows already what He will do. She is conscious that her words, which were not more than a suggestion, and hardly seemed to amount to a prayer, will not fail. Her heart reads His, and Mary is safe against any refusal.

Oh! Mary, will you remember us? *Monstra te esse Matrem!* Speak for us and our cause is gained. First in the mediatorial hierarchy which is at the root of the divine scheme of redemption, prior to all others in grace, as prior to all others in the divine intention, one word from thee to Him will be our salvation. Jesus cannot look upon thy face without seeing in thee the type of all creation, the representative of its first and universal law of fertility and increase; thou who art physically His Mother, and spiritually His Spouse, canst never ask in vain. If Mary be on our side, who shall be against us? And even in the untoward events of our ever varied life, its hours of anxiety, its terribly abasing moments when there is no wine left—when claims crowd upon us and there are no means of meeting them; claims on our energy, our health, and our possessions, that make our lives seem sordid to our sense of honour, and ignoble to our own

self respect, it is to thine exquisite knowledge and pellucid perception of human nature in all its needs, that we turn with the fullest confidence.

We might, in our narrow way of looking at events, hesitate to ask of God for all the many and often mean requirements of our poor earthly existence. But Mary is a woman and a Mother, and the tact of the one and the tenderness of the other culminate in her.

It could be of no great moment that the wine was exhausted. The guests had had wine ; no one was about to suffer from thirst. In far less than the proverbial hundred years hence it would be all the same whether or no the marriage feast in the little town of Cana had or had not been abundantly provided. But Mary does not take this coldly philosophic view of the needs of her friends and her clients. Her feminine delicacy suffers for the loss to their honour, and the vexation to their hospitable intentions, in that their provision of wine was not sufficient for the requirements of their day of rejoicing. And she, in the full knowledge of Who her Son was, and aware that before Him, as God, there could be no little, as also no great event in the course of human existences, does not hesitate to ask that this small mishap may be remedied, and this cloud which shadowed their family meeting be dispersed. She turns to Jesus, and in few simple words

states the case. His reply is indirect ; not so His act, which is immediate. He orders the servants to pour water into the large jars which stood ready. And immediately the "best wine" flows from them.

These are the obvious inferences to be derived from this first recorded miracle of our blessed Lord. And certainly they are formed to increase our filial confidence in Mary, and to call forth our loving gratitude towards Him Who has compassion on our infirmities and knows all our needs.

Let us take heart of grace and not be so easily chagrined and cast down amid the cares and contrarieties of our poor life. The reverses of fortune, the narrow means, the sudden drying up of the little stream that still kept us afloat in the position we were used to, or in, at least, its respectable semblance, the sudden demands upon our limited resources, which it seems so disgraceful not to be able to respond to at once ; the fear lest others should suffer through our need ; and all the consequent haunting terrors which make the night sleepless and darken the day ; let us tell it all to Mary, who as woman and as mother will understand, and will plead for us not in vain.

But a deeper and more mystic meaning lies hidden in the changing of water into wine. There is a special importance in the time and circumstance of

the first known public miracle of our Lord. He had gone to the marriage feast as an invited guest : it is supposed as a relative of the bridegroom's, through His Mother. But this is no mere chance. His presence nowhere could be a simple inconsequent accident. He is about His Father's business, not passively, but actively ; no longer hiddenly, but openly. And His first miracle is in honour of the first law of creation, the primeval principle of all that exists on earth. Now, at last, was the rehabilitation of the human race to begin. Now was the ruin wrought by Adam and Eve to be transformed, and from the lowest depth was to grow up that blending of the natural and the divine, which is the ground work of the Sacraments, and the essence of the Sacramentals. Hitherto be it remembered there had been no Sacraments. There had been sacrifices. But they were merely types. There had been inflowing graces, great and glorious. But though many of these had been concomitant with religious exercises, the latter had never risen to the height of Sacraments. At the best they were a sort of holy phantasmagoria of something that was to come hereafter. They were mystical, but they were not efficacious. They belonged to the infancy of the human race. The manhood began with Christ.

In what words shall we speak of it ? How shall

we, who have lived and walked in the dignity of Christianity, express the sordid condition to which the fall had subjected our race ?

We will take the words of Scripture in their grand simplicity, and the rest will follow. When God created man, "male and female He created them." "It was not good for man to be alone." Throughout creation the system had been dual. Conjugal love was, and is, the law of all earthly existences ; from the hyssop on the wall to the cedars of Lebanon ; from the lowest form of scarce sentient life to the lord of creation himself, it was, and is, at the base of everything, and, consequently, when man fell from grace it was the law most subverted and the principle most degraded. The woman was the first to sin : the woman was the most to suffer. Her union with man became her degradation ; she was his slave, his beast of burden, his thing ; at the same time that she was his temptress, and his necessity. And so the whole world was out of joint ; and discredit and dishonour fell upon what was, nevertheless, the great, the inevitable, and the typical law of "increase and multiply."

There was, therefore, a holy and mystical propriety in the first miracle being in connection with a marriage festival. From henceforth everything was to become "Holy to the Lord." Man was to

arise from his degradation because the God Man was come. Woman was to assume her originally intended status as his help mate, because the Virgin Mother was the second Eve. It was woman who had been the most degraded in consequence of the fall. And, therefore, it is *the* woman who, at the marriage feast, shall plead, and not in vain, that the water may be turned into wine ; that what was a natural law which had become sullied by man's fall, should be changed into the wine of a holy and sublime Sacrament, full of its own special graces ; mystic and mythical in its divine intention, no longer a tyranny and a slavery, "but honourable in all;" dating back to a primeval law, but wrapt in a divine intention ; a necessity still until the new heavens and the new earth, but sanctified and raised ; hedged round with holy meanings, supported by appropriate graces, and no more called "common and unclean," but one of the seven Sacraments, the pillars of the Church, and the undefiled channels of the great grace of God. It is only in the Catholic Church that marriage is placed on its proper basis ; that it is pronounced indissoluble, like all other Sacraments, and that it is really crowned with a mystical sense which draws it within the area of the supernatural. Outside the Church, divorce is possible ; and that possibility

discrowns the matron and degrades the man. The bond which is to give souls to eternity cannot be a transient affair. And the primary law of creation must touch on its divine origin, and be at the height of its mystical intention.

The fact that virginity is better, more noble, and generally happier, implies nothing to lower the dignity of marriage. That stands on its own essential grandeur, first as the primeval law, secondly as a Sacrament, and lastly as typical of Christ and His Church.

In the fall of our first parents, it was the woman who first marred the sanctity of marriage by becoming, not the help mate, but the tempter of her partner. And as Mary came to undo the work of Eve, and in everything to show light where Eve had engendered darkness, so was it fitting [that at her request the first public act of our Lord should have been to sanction and honour a mystical feast.

As He did so, He addressed her as "Woman!" That one word carries us back through all the past history of fallen man, and ruined and degraded womanhood, to the lost paradise, and the first unhappy mother; and the contrast starts up vividly before us between Eve and Mary;—*Woman*;—*the* woman who shall efface the error of the first woman, and win for all her sex the position originally

intended to be their's, and which she has regained for them in exact proportion to the degree in which Christianity is cherished, and the Sacraments of the Church are understood and revered.

Some Protestant commentators have imagined a kind of contempt or humiliation intended in our Lord's use of the term "Woman."

It is very difficult to understand why. Unless it be that Protestantism, having lowered the position of woman, so far as general civilization would admit, it is in the minds of these writers, in itself an opprobrious epithet. It is not so in the language of southern Christian countries. And, anyhow, it is inconceivable how it could enter into the mind of any mortal man to imagine our Lord wishing to reprove or humiliate His Mother !

Nay, rather the word woman, covering as it does all the possible attributes of woman, the spotless virginity, and the glorious motherhood, the daughter of the house, and the help mate of the spouse, seems fraught with a far-seeing and deeply appreciative tenderness.

Moreover, it partook of the same mysterious allusion to His divine nature, which we have already noticed in His reply to Mary in the Temple. Then, also, in reply to her appeal He alluded openly to His higher nature, and, nevertheless, yielded to her plea.

Now, again, He alludes in His reply to His divine nature, in saying His hour was not yet come, namely the hour to manifest His miraculous power; and He asks, "what is it to thee and to Me?" as though he were to say, "it is not as thy Son, and in the attributes of My human nature, that I work miracles; and the hour for Me to proclaim Myself of higher origin is not yet come."

Nevertheless, a few seconds later the hour *has* come; because of Mary's prayer; because the second Eve was pleading away the dishonour of the first; because the common law was to be caught up into the law of grace; and because one of the seven Sacraments was then and there, at Mary's intercession, to be instituted for ever.

It is more than eighteen centuries ago that our divine Master wrought this miracle in honour of marriage; and hardly even yet is the topic popularly treated with the deep respect that belongs to it. The abstract teaching of the Church is upon this matter, as it is upon all others, complete, entire, and infallible. But so deep is the corruption of nature, and so terribly has that corruption worm-eaten the common parlance, and the half-digested modes of thought, prevalent even amongst good people, that not unfrequently we may hear them talking of the Sacrament of marriage in a way that

seems to place it, like Moses' law of divorce, as a something, not approved but permitted, on account of the "hardness of heart" prevalent in human nature. Almost in short, as though the Holy Ghost had given us in the Church "six Sacraments and one snare." The mistake is a grievous one. In the happiest marriage there must be much to endure, and the load and responsibility of life is increased. It is only by honouring the state that it can continue in steady and noble solidity, through the pressure of a double life, and the consequent disintegration of solitary individuality. Where life is halved with another, some degree of disintegration must ensue, whether that halving be in affection and peace, or in indifference and discordance. It is the solidarity of the individual that is the glory and beauty of virginity. It is man's far off but beautiful imitation of the divine self-sufficingness. The air blows more freely round the solitary heart, and the still, small voice reaches it more easily. So long as we are human, all union brings its trammels, save only union with God, which is, in itself, the only perfect freedom.

It is a grand thing to stand alone—that is, alone with God. But it is also a good and holy thing to walk hand in hand along the path that leads to God. And if this cannot be, if the little rift within the lute

long since has silenced its music, then is it a noble and efficacious thing to bear and forbear, trusting in the grace of the Sacrament, and patiently enduring to the end. We have nothing to say to those with whom marriage is not a Sacrament, and divorce is possible. Life is sad enough at all times. But to these it must, as often as not, seem no better than a cruel mockery, the chaining of a living soul to a dead body.

If our readers have been able to follow our proposition of Mary being in her own person the representative, and, as it were, the summing up of all creation, they will perceive the obviously appropriate position which she holds in the marriage feast of Cana.

In the Son of God we behold the Creator of the Universe, from Whom sprang all that is ; in Whose Eternal Being for ever dwelt that stupendous idea of which creation is the embodiment.

He is at once the Creator and the Sustainer of all.

If we look, then, at the Son of God, we see in Him Creation. If, on the other hand, we look at Creation, we see *that* in which He has mirrored Himself. And, as we said before, we have far more reason to suppose that creation is complete, than to expect future creations. Future developments there

may be ; nay, most certainly will be, seeing that we look forward to new Heavens and a new earth. But fresh increment we are not led to expect. Science does not testify to such in the past, but rather the contrary. And the mode in which the Creation is spoken of in the Scriptures, however much it may revolve within, and upon itself, and so evolve new phenomena, leads also to the view that it is a work finished, and complete in itself. Moreover, this idea is carried out by the expression, "and on the seventh day God rested from the work He had done."

But Creation once achieved, there lies at its very root the secondary idea of its fertility and reproduction. "Be ye fruitful." And in Mary we have the representative of that secondary aspect of Creation. In the divine Person of Jesus we have the God made Man. In the personality of His Immaculate Mother we have the representative idea of the fertility of creation, of its varying aspects, of its fructifying power, of its harmony in mutation, and its stability in variety. But for Mary, the immediate link between the Creator and the created would be missing. Jesus is the Head. The Body is the Universe. But Mary is the neck that unites them. For, though only human, she is apart from all humanity, in so far as she is a hierarchy in herself, and inasmuch as the first moment of her

existence was, *per se*, different from all the other children of Adam, because free from all taint.

The seven Sacraments of the Church are of two parts ; namely, the sign and the grace. The sign, therefore, belongs to something in creation, while the grace belongs to God. All that creation can afford, that is visible, lies under the ban of the fall, save only she who has been saved from the consequences of the fall. But Jesus, by His Precious Blood, having bought back the fallen world to Himself, Mary, who has never shared in the fall, is the type and representative of those signs which become the vehicles of the Sacraments. She is in her own person the sole representative of the visible world, as apart from the fall. She is, therefore, the representative of the *signs* of the Sacraments, with their reproducing, fertilising, and nourishing graces. In other words, she is the Queen of the Sacraments, as she is the Queen and the channel of grace.

It is by the Sacraments that the soul becomes united to God. They are the carrying out of the Incarnation, being, as it were, the claim which the Divinity asserts to work through His own Creation (redeemed though fallen), and through the elements of the Creation to draw souls to Himself. And, as through Mary's pure nature He arrived at His Incarnation, so by the Sacraments He arrives to

each one of us. The Sacraments, therefore, are the continuation of the Incarnation. The Divinity is revealed by them ; in another mode, and in a lesser form ; but still with the same intention as when He took flesh in Mary's womb. There were, as we have already said, no Sacraments, in the sense of the seven Sacraments of the Church, until Mary brought forth her Divine Son. But as, in her, the Creator became reconciled to His Creation, so, through her, the bread, wine, water, and oil of the Sacraments become the reconciled means and vehicle of invisible grace to us. The principle is the same ; only brought down lower, and spread wider, extending even to the Sacramentals ; they again carrying down the divine reconciliation of God with His Creation, to all matter, organic and inorganic, to all that came pure from the creative Hand, upon which subsequently the Spirit of God moved and brooded, when the world first grew into form, and sprang into life. That brooding was repeated, at the moment of the Incarnation, in the person of Mary, when the enmity that, through the sin of man, had fallen upon the creation, after the first moving of the Spirit on the face of the waters, was removed by the reconciliation wrought at the time, through the Virgin who conceived the Son of God.

Mary was the medium of the first union of God

and Man in Christ. And the carrying out of that union is given in the Sacrament of Baptism to each of us.

Mary was the first of God's creatures who officiated, as does the Priesthood, in the handling and lifting of the Body of Jesus. And thus the office of the priesthood takes its rise in her, and ministers to us in the Sacraments of Order, or of Penance, of Communion, and Confirmation, and of Marriage, at the hands of those who have received Orders. They each and all date back to Mary as the first link of union between God and His fallen creation. They are the diffusion of the renewing, reproductive, fertilising, and nourishing powers of which Mary is the arch-type ; inasmuch as by the rights of her Immaculate Conception, and her divine maternity, she personifies the reconciliation of God and His creatures.

The work of Redemption covers in extent the Incarnation, and the Incarnation covers the Universe. All the powers and forces of the world combine to produce one child of man. In His Incarnation, therefore, Jesus took up all creation into His sacred humanity. And He now sits as Man at the Right Hand of the Father in Heaven, as our Representative and Great Mediator.

The work of Redemption is an organic whole ;

and of that organic whole Mary forms an indispensable link between the cause and the effect.

Adam had in his fall ruined the whole Creation. He had ruined the species, and the individual, and with the human species all nature was also dragged down, and "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." The natural generation of each individual actuates the fall in that individual. Not one can escape.

But the supernatural generation actuates redemption in individuals; for we must always remember it is to the individual that grace comes, as surely as though each one were the only one. And it is by the Sacraments that this actuality is produced. In the unconscious infant it is mercifully compulsory, in the Sacrament of Baptism, even as the consequences of the fall are compulsory, and unconscious. In the other Sacraments, or in adult baptism, the union of Christ and the soul is a free act.

That it should be compulsory in infants is one of those wonderful mysteries of God's redeeming love that fill the heart with joy to think of.

The child cannot help its fallen origin. But immediately the mercy of God steps in, and the second Adam claims the fruit of the first Adam, that it may be garnered in the threshing floors of the Church.

As reason dawns, two forces become necessary to

produce the union of the soul with God. First grace, and secondly the will of man. The one is ever ready. The second is never forced.

In the fall of our first father, it was Eve who presented the material of the fall. It was not Eve who ruined the whole race ; she was responsible in so far as she tempted Adam to the act which made him fall. But had he resisted her counsels the fall had not been. She influenced him directly and immediately, by offering the material through which the fall took place. She wished him to do as she had done ; she solicited and counselled him. She made herself the medium between the spirit of evil to whom she had given credence, and himself ; and finally she prevailed. Had he not yielded, her sin alone would not have ruined our race. The sin was dual. So also was the punishment. Man was henceforth to labour in the sweat of his brow. And woman was to endure suffering in child-birth. There had been the combination of a double will in wrong doing. Eve in solicitation, and Adam in acquiescence.

The second Eve will offer the material to the second Adam, even her own pure flesh. And the second Adam will combine with the second Eve to reverse the doom entailed on the progeny of the first. The circumstances of each will correspond in

the inverse sense. Adam and Eve jointly fell, to be restored by the joint work of Jesus and Mary. The guilty Eve will give place to the spotless Eve. And the old Adam to the new Man. Mary, by the ministry of her piety, and com-*passion* with the second Adam, will destroy the fatal ministry of the first Eve to the first Adam. And as the fall of man was effected by the first man, not without the co-operation and ministry of Eve, so will the restoration of man, wrought by the new Man, be accomplished, not without the co-operation and ministry of Mary.

The mystery of redemption will replace the mystery of iniquity ; the Passion of our Lord being the primary cause, and the com-*passion* of Mary the primary consequence.

In each there is the dual action and the dual force ; in one to destruction, in the other to salvation. The action does not stand on the same level. The force is not of the same value. Mary is a mere woman. Jesus is God. But, nevertheless, the work, as God has ordered it, is only complete in, and by the Divine Redeemer and the Immaculate Mother. The solidarity of the work lies in the combined action of both. Jesus as the Word, Mary as the Echo. Jesus as the Redeemer, Mary as co-redemptrix. Jesus as the God-Man, Mary as the perfect woman ; pure and stainless ; a mother, yet a virgin still.

It is the law of substitution ; and look on it as we will, turn it from side to side, view it on His part or on her's, we see that only by the union of each with each is perfect solidarity obtained. It was a law unto death in Adam and Eve. It is a law unto life in Jesus and Mary. The doom of Adam is done away with in Christ ; and the responsibility of Eve in Mary. Adam passed away in Christ, and Eve's ministry of evil passed away in Mary's ministry of grace. The Passion of Christ, founded in infinite sanctity, and the com-passion of Mary, perfect but finite, formed one consolidated ministry of rehabilitation, thereby destroying, in the consummation of all things, the fatally conjoint work of Adam and Eve.

It is true that not all will benefit by the redemption wrought in their favour, because not all will add their co-operation and active consent to the benefit that is within the reach of each. And God saves no man against his will. But not one child of man is left out, forgotten, or excluded.

Also, Mary is not only the mother of the elect. For, as the arch-type of all creation, she gathers *all* to her maternal bosom. She is the Mother of Mercy, and there can be no exceptions in her compassion, and no forgetfulness in her love.

The fall of Adam, without the co-operation of the

woman, would be historically and dogmatically false. And, if in the Redemption you omit the part occupied by Mary, you mutilate that counterpart of the fall which the life and death of our Blessed Lord effected, but which He effected with the co-operation of His divine Mother,

Eve personally yielded to the suggestions of the Evil One. Mary personally accepted the message of the Angel ; and, so doing, personally co-operated in the overthrow of the kingdom of darkness. Mary is thus the personal substitute for Eve. Even as Christ is the substitute for Adam, apart His Personality, which is divine.

The compassion of Mary is the fruit of the Blood of Jesus. It is not the mere natural sensibility of a holy woman. It does not arise only from her own personal and individual grace ; for being divinely appointed as the spiritual substitute of Eve, and shadowing forth the priestly character, as we have already seen, she, in her own person, mystically as it were, slew the woman who had been the mother of all who are born in the death of original sin, and herself became their mother.*

* Thus there was a wonder seen in Heaven. A throne, far above all created powers, mediatorial, intercessory ; a title arch-typical, a crown bright as the morning star ; a glory issuing from the Eternal Throne, robes pure as the heavens, and a sceptre over all. —“Development.” See preface of 1st edition, by Card. Newman.

We read in the 5th Chapter of the Apocalypse of Him "Who sat on the throne, and in His Right Hand is a Book, written within and without."

That Book is the Gospel ; or, in other words, the work of the redemption of the world, and of the formation of the Church, according to the eternal decrees of God, written in two parts.

The "within" of that mystic book is the prophecies of the Old Testament respecting the redemption of the world. The "without" of the same book is the history of that redemption in the life and death of Jesus. This is the New Testament or Gospel.

The "inside" is the type, the symbol, the prophetic word. It is obscure and hidden, save to a few chosen souls. But the "outside" is the rising of the Sun of Righteousness ; it is the immortal history, and the wonderful consummation of that which was only adumbrated by the inside of the Book.

There are, therefore, two Gospels. The hidden Gospel of Prophecy ; written by the Prophets in the symbolic language of the long ages before the redemption of our race. And the second Gospel, written by the inspired Evangelists of the Word made flesh and dwelling among men.

And Mary is in both. In the inner writing she is the "Virgin who shall conceive and be with Child." In the outer writing she is "the Handmaid

of the Lord," who speaks the "Fiat" of our redemption. Mary is the arch-type of all that is at work in the scheme of redemption, adumbrating though not possessing all its fulness.

The two parts of the Gospel are bound together ; the spirit and intention of each being the God made Man, and Mary the Mother of God. The fact is without a divergence or a flaw. It is the dual force ; not equal but concomitant. It is the law of substitution, absolute and entire. It is the new taking the place of the old ; and the living of the dead.

CHAPTER VI.

“ Vergine Madre, figlia del tuo Figlio,
Umile ed alta più che creatura,
Termine fisso d’eterno consiglio.”

—IL PARADISO, *Canto 33.*

THE Gospel, taking that term as meaning the whole body of revealed Truth touching the Redemption of Mankind, may be considered as consisting of three parts, or as divided into three epochs.

It was prophecy before it became history. It lay in the eternal design before it became prophecy.

We have endeavoured to put before our readers the presence of Mary in the divine design ; and the place she held as a necessary, obvious, and elementary part of that design.

Her excellence springs from the part she fills in it ; and from her voluntary and intelligent adhesion to it, not only in an act here and there, and more or less apparent, still less as divorced from her will and affections, but on the contrary, an adhesion ever increasing in intensity, and always active

according to her degree. She is necessary ; though only in the degree of means to an end. She is also consequent, as being the shadow of her Son.

Therefore when we come to the active life of our Blessed Lord, Mary as being the consequence of a cause, the ministering effect of that cause, in some sort recedes from view, and her presence become less evident.

In the active life of our Lord we are contemplating the sun in his midday glory, when the shadows are dwarfed. As our one great Exemplar, Jesus stands alone; and it is within the narrow space of His three years of active life that He is more especially our Example.

But the position held by Mary is not essentially diminished by this. For it stretches back to all the past in time, and to all the future in eternity. In the past we find her in the prophecies, and they project her presence over the whole ground which they cover, that ground being the whole Gospel scheme.

Moreover if we would find Mary we do so best by finding Jesus. For in reality all the evident acts of Mary, in the infancy of our Lord, were His acts, exercised through and by her, by her consent, and with her co-operation as a reasonable being and a sinless creature.

Jesus was then hidden in the bosom, or in the arms of Mary. Yet we know He was the principle of each act and the guide thereof.

As therefore we acknowledge Him and His hidden presence there, we carry on in its own inferior degree, the spiritual reality of Mary's presence in the public life of our Lord ; although in that life she is evident externally, as little as He had been previously.

The position of Mary once seized and verified in the divine scheme, we no more require to have it proved outwardly and demonstrably, in every incident, than, *vice versa*, we need to be assured that in the antenatal sanctification of the Precursor, the reception of the Shepherds, and the Magi, and when an Infant, the circumcision of our Lord, the flight into Egypt, and the finding in the Temple, it was the God-Man in each and in all, Who instigated, actuated, governed, and carried out His own divine will, by His presence with Mary.

In studying this subject we must not forget that the life of our Lord is one thing, and the story of that life, as written by the Evangelists, is another. The Evangelists although inspired by the Holy Ghost had their own human standing point in all they wrote. They were the disciples of Jesus, His followers, His companions. They wrote what was

uppermost in their minds as events most affected each one of them individually, without a preconceived and formal plan. They were not pre-occupied with any idea of hedging their subject, or their statements, against the possible objections of those of little faith. Indeed they were most strikingly wanting in any such precautions. In their own intention they were writing for those who already believed and loved, like themselves, or who at least were enquiring; and consequently they wrote with a total and most marked absence of all critical precautions, and literary anticipation of future objections. And for this very reason they are but imperfect guides to those who, being outside the Church, have none other. A book, however sacred, however inspired, can never supersede a living voice.

But we have another standing point from which to contemplate Mary.

Our Lord, as the Scriptures tell us, came to fulfil all prophecy. Go back then, you who doubt, to those prophecies, and remember the place Mary holds there.

Having got hold of the abstract idea of Mary's position, and seen that it is essential and consequently true, we have but to hold it fast in the steadiness of faith, without exacting that the

written history of that fulfilment of prophecy should bring it in with the regularity of the refrain of a song. It is difficult to comprehend how even those who are outside the Church, if they have once understood the position of the "Virgin who was to conceive and bring forth a Son," can so entirely exclude her in their devotional thoughts from her necessary, though silent and hidden position in our Lord's life upon earth ;—where, indeed, it is only as preparatory to her position in Heaven, just as in another and superlative degree our Lord's life upon earth was preparatory to His sitting down in His Sacred Humanity at the Right Hand of the Majesty on high.

There is a logic of facts which no more requires to be written down in black and white than it requires a treatise to persuade us that the sun will rise to-morrow. Therefore if we would read the Gospels aright, we must read them in combination with our knowledge of the divine scheme of creation and redemption, to which even the old Eastern religions, now fallen into the blackest darkness, in their youth gave testimony: and with advertance to the gradual development and accomplishment of those prophecies in time, and in fact. We must read them by the light of the seven lamps of the Sanctuary, and by the teaching and Sacraments of

the Church ; until by the great grace of God we behold the perfect spherical truth, with all its component parts, in absolute and indivisible harmony and unity.

Mary's position in her human nature, and in her character of viator was one that required to be built up. Graces were heaped up in her. Touch after touch of the Divine Hand conferred fresh increments of grace, as that of the artist by stroke upon stroke produces a picture. Although always essentially sinless, Mary like every other human being was growing in grace, and gradually made more and more perfect ; and as a necessary consequence there were more, and there were less, external evidences of her greatness. With our Lord this was not so. All His acts and sufferings being those of a Divine Person had an infinite value as such. His Person being divine nothing could be added to Him, excepting the experiences of His human nature.

St. Thomas teaches that Jesus Christ merited our redemption from the first moment of His Incarnation. "*Christus a principio suæ conceptionis meruit nobis salutem æternam.*"

St. Bonaventure excludes from Christ progress in merit as regards the virtue of merit ; and only admits of it as regards the number. "*Non pro-*

fecit Christus secundem meritum quantum ad virtutem meriti, profecit tamen quantum ad numerum meritarum; plura enim habuit merita in passione quam in conceptione."—*Sent. lib. 3. Dist. 18, Art. 1, 2, 11.*

When therefore our Lord entered upon His active ministry. Mary by that very fact, and in consonance with her sex and her position, is made less perceptible; though not thereby erased from or even diminished in the divine scheme.

She stands on another level, she fills another place, in harmony and in union with her divine Son; but not identical in act, although identical in intention. Hence Mary's apparent absence from the incidents of our Lord's active ministry.

Throughout His active life Mary will continue to hold the secondary position, not prompting the acts of her divine Son, but bathed and as it were lost to sight, in the splendour of that Hypostatic Union which she had been the conscious means of His assuming. She follows, but she does not guide in those few years of missionary activity. Even in the thirty years which we have been contemplating in a previous chapter, she was still second in the order of grace, as by her sex she is second in the order of nature. In all the prophecies we find her position melting into that of her Son; and,

though in veiled expression, the mission of the Mother and of the Son are blended together. Thus in the second chapter of Daniel we read of "a stone that was cut out of a mountain, without hands ;" and according to the Fathers this stone is the sacred humanity of our Lord derived from a Virgin "*prius et posterius*," who is prefigured by the mountain. The stone breaks into pieces the kingdom of this world, and itself becomes a great mountain filling the whole earth. The two mountains melt into one. The Sacred Humanity derived from Mary, and Mary as the means and way of the Sacred Humanity, are conjoined and indissoluble, and fill the whole earth ; for the stone which is cut from the mountain and has become a mountain, shall "consume all the kingdoms of the earth and itself shall stand for ever ;" a prophecy which can only refer to the Church militant, expectant, and triumphant, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.

Mary as being the mountain from whence the stone is cut, produces (in His humanity) the Head of the Church ; the fecundity of which Church produces the members, united to Jesus through the maternity of Mary.

All prophecy points to the same binding together of the divine Son with the Virgin Mother ;

and what prophecy foretold God has fulfilled, and is daily fulfilling; for the true recognition of the position of Mary is one that develops itself more and more. It "takes root in an honourable people;" that is in the hearts of those who are seeking truth, and who having found the pearl of great price, are prepared to sell all rather than not possess it.

The full recognition of Mary's true position is visibly growing in the world of grace. It is shining forth more clearly as the increased intellectual wants of the day require to know, as a solution to many doubts and difficulties, what is her real standing point in creation and redemption. The glorious definition of the Immaculate Conception gave a fresh impetus to this desire. For whereas in the history of the Church a dogmatic definition has generally been called for by some contrary heresy which had sprung up among those who previously belonged to the body of the Church, this great treasure of divine truth was the result of the Spirit of God moving the hearts of the faithful, till the *vox populi* crying aloud from all parts of the world that Mary, our Queen, had never known the taint of original sin, it became evident it was the *vox Dei*. The Sovereign Pontiff proclaimed that truth from the universal consensus of the faithful,

under the influence of the Holy Ghost ; of whom He, in His character of Vicar of Christ, is the human infallible mouthpiece.

It has opened out new vistas refulgent with the love of God towards His creation. It has heralded possibilities of the future which as yet we hardly can yet put into language. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what things God hath prepared for those who love Him." And as a simple, natural, logical sequence, as it is to Mary that we owe (in her ministerial mediatorial character) the beginning of the law of love and of redemption, so it must be in connection with her (not as superseding Jesus, but as co-operating with Him) that these further revelations of redemption, of gathering together in mercy, of glory and of perfection shall be made evident. We are bound to expect them, and nothing but the narrowness of our own poor hearts hinders their more rapid advent. Let us become "men of desires" like the prophet Daniel, that so we may be allowed, as it were, to force the hand of God that all the sooner He may grant to us to know more, and to see how Mary is as the Church says, the sole conqueror of heresy,* and that we may clearly apprehend how we owe all to

* "Tu sola contra," etc., Office of B.V.M.

Jesus and to Mary in the continuation, the perfection, and the consummation of time.

If once the intellect has grasped the fact of the whole creation being reconciled to God, and the material world having been given back to man, no longer "common and unclean," to be used in His service and for His glory, through the Incarnation, we shall receive everything as coming to us from Jesus through the hands of Mary. Many holy souls have lived upon this thought. Mary gives us Jesus, and we all reach Jesus through Mary; and this not as a devout phraseology, but as a fact from Mary being the source of His humanity, in and through which He alone becomes *Jesus*. To Grignon de Montfort, this reflection coloured his whole interior life, and gave it that wonderful sweetness for which he was so remarkable. Sweetness, tenderness, and peace would seem to be the natural characteristics of such a devotion. Special devotions may be cultivated, but they cannot be imposed, and this form may not recommend itself equally to all. Nevertheless, in our degree, we must all, as members of the Church, practise it, because it belongs to an essential truth, a dogma of the Church. It would, probably, become easier to devout souls if we taught ourselves more often to remember the relations of Mary to Jesus when we

receive the Eucharistic Sacrament. The Body and Blood which we receive of Jesus is the Body and Blood which Mary gave Him. In becoming His, and in the Hypostatic Union, it has necessarily ceased to be her's. We are in no danger, therefore, of falling into the condemned proposition of worshipping Mary in the Blessed Sacrament. But the fact remains that it was her flesh and blood before it was His, and that it was her free gift to Him. She is, therefore, well entitled to say to us, "Come eat the bread and drink the wine which I have mingled for you."* It is always Mary who invites us to partake of the great feast of which she is the ministrant, as she was the first to provide the natural elements. Only the natural elements, mark you!

The soul is from God alone, not only in the case of the Hypostatic Union, but in that of every child of man. The Divinity is all His own. The concomitant presence of the two other Persons of the Trinity belongs to the essential inseparable nature of the Deity.

But we must remember nothing of this could come to us, no fragment of the Bread of Life, with all that it brings with it, could ever have passed our lips and nourished our souls had not Mary "mingled it."

* Proverbs ix. 5.

If it were possible for Mary, who sits in Heaven nearest to her Son, close to the Sacred Heart, to be astonished at anything, as we can be ; were she not in such a blaze of the light of glory that no question, not already answered, could surge in her completed being ; we could imagine that as she looks down upon her children upon earth, she must be perplexed to behold how we can forget her ; how little we realise what she is, and how we take her gifts without recognising her hand. But she is not impatient with us. She knows that the day will come when an increased knowledge of her position and her graces will be the larger light which shall dispel the darkness of heresy. It is no exaggeration to assert that we shall better understand the whole of creation, and its laws, when we know more of Mary. And when that shall be, not, perhaps, in dogma, for what could be dogmatised concerning her which we have not already ? but, in practical devotion based on dogma, then will the still closed gates of the supernatural be more often and more widely opened. He "will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions."*

* Joel ii. 28.

Life is so difficult ; so lofty in its design, so complex and so mean in its routine, that we need, like tired children, to turn to her who in her maternal character is the type of creation and the mistress of its secrets. And, while sheltered in her arms, to dare gaze on the grand mystery of the Universe and its gradual development.

We see in its resplendent order, in its destined destruction, and future glorified resurrection, the type of our Divine Lord, Who, in His divine nature, is the Eternal Wisdom, the Logos partially uttered in the worlds He has made, and Who, in His human nature, died and rose again, and "dieth no more."

Mary as the created wisdom is imaged to us, in the maternal and fruit-bearing character of nature, in the cyclical renovations of time, as morning reissuing out of night, and spring out of winter; while Jesus as the Eternal Wisdom is the anti-type of that higher creation, of which we only know now through faith; that creation which has put on immortality and over which death has no dominion.

Thither the Angels have long since welcomed their Queen. The Saints are there. And some whom we have loved and wept are gone before.

The Blessed Eucharist is the external and internal application of the Incarnation to us. It brings to

each of us the Incarnation itself, and all the graces which flow from it. And, therefore, as Mary is the Mother of the Incarnation it brings her before us as the means to the end; for every tie to Jesus is, in an inferior degree, a tie to Mary. Every link which binds us to Him sets her before us with her maternal and ministering aid, prerogatives, and powers.

If in the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus, Mary comes before us in a very special manner as the Mother of that Body, so in all the other Sacraments which confer on us special graces she comes before us as the Spouse of the Holy Ghost. It is she whose Immaculate Conception made it possible for God in the Hypostatic Union to become reconciled to His creation, through the elements of which creation the Holy Ghost condescends to impart Himself to us; using those elements as the vehicles of His Presence. Mary is the Golden Gate through which Jesus passed when He became Man. And Mary is the Golden Gate bringing Jesus and the gifts of the Holy Ghost to us through her Immaculate Conception, which has reconsecrated the elements of nature in her person, to the service of God. Neither Jesus in the Incarnation, nor the Holy Ghost in the Sacraments, or in the Sacramentals, could come to us through a polluted way.

The fall had placed the whole creation under the curse, "the earth brought forth thorns and briars." The Immaculate Conception has done away with the curse upon nature in the person of Mary, potentially, though not as yet actually. The Immaculate Conception is as much a necessity in the order of grace as is the Incarnation. God could not become the God-Man in the bosom of one who had ever so remotely belonged to original sin and concupiscence. The very thought of the reverse involves a blasphemy. Mary in her Immaculate Conception, represents and sums up in her own being, the reconciliation of the Creator with the fallen world, because she is the representative of creation in its fundamental law of "increase and multiply." And, albeit the consequences of the curse remain, they are transformed to the elect into the means of grace, and the occasion of suffering with our suffering Elder Brother. They are transmuted to us into fragments of His cross, which are pregnant with graces to those who endure with and for Him ; until the new Heavens and the new earth, when at last, through the Redemption of Jesus and the mediation of Mary, the curse itself shall have died out.

Those who are out of the Church look upon the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception either as

blasphemous, or as belonging to the senseless redundancy of ornamentation with which they credit Catholic devotion. They do not see that it is the necessary pedestal on which the Incarnation rests. The Son of God could not unite Himself to pollution, and even supposing Mary never to have committed actual sin, yet had she been born under the curse of original sin, the taint would have been there, as it is in every child of man ; and the powers of darkness would have had a claim upon the Mother of God. Nothing but an inadequate conception of the Divinity of our Lord can logically account for false ideas respecting the Immaculate Conception.

This by the way. It is for believers alone that we are writing.

The great commentators of the Scriptures have divided the history of the world according to the seven days of the creation ; namely, six of labour and one of rest.* Thus the typical and prophetic

* Whether the days of creation were days or epochs, long or short, in no way affects the propriety of this division. Equally the importance and weight of a scriptural statement loses none of its importance, whether it be a fact, or a parable representing a fact.

For instance, the fall of man is a dogma of the Church. It makes no difference whether it was really brought about by eating an apple, or by an act which is thus represented as in a parable. It is the doctrine that is essential. Its verbal envelope is secondary.

period answers to the six days of labour, and the coming of Christ, the Prince of Peace, answers to the day of rest ; and embraces the whole period of grace from the foundation of the Church to the consummation of all things.

A perfect harmony reigns in all the disposition of God's government. There are no flaws in the intention, no falling short in the result. His laws are not tentative, like most if not all of ours, for ours are based upon experience while His are the embodiment of a principle ; which principle has its root in His own Eternal Being. Therefore, with Him, what is begun is continued, for every portion belongs to a perfect plan, consistent in every part. His intentions do not branch off into another aim, or dwindle into insignificance, but they grow, for growth is the characteristic of God's work. It is synthetic Truth, and, like a living body, you cannot mutilate it, or truncate it, without destroying its essence, and putting darkness for light, and bitter for sweet.

The Church is not only a body of doctrine, and a definition of dogma, it is also a living Body, a Society, divided into three sections, each closely bound to the other. It is a body, viatorial or militant ; purgatorial, and triumphant.

Obviously it would be a wound in that body if

Mary, who was, of necessity, in the first principle of its construction, were in its fuller development to grow less. The body must all grow together and in fair proportions, if it is to remain a beautiful object. If one limb wither the grace of the body is lost for ever. You cannot relegate Mary to the Incarnation and then put her aside, like the side scene of a theatre, no longer wanted as the drama develops. And yet this is what is done outside the Church. For among all forms, without exception, of non-Catholic religious societies, there is wanting the bond of uniform dogma, and of jurisdiction, without which no constituted society can carry on existence.

In the Catholic Church we do not separate the doctrine from the people, nor the people from jurisdiction and authority, nor dogma from the infallibility, nor the Saints from their intercession and the perpetual value of their prayers, nor the dead from the benefit of our suffrages, nor Mary from what she was at one time in prophecy, at another in actuality, and from what she is now in Heaven, where all her powers and prerogatives have met in one focus, in the light of the Beatific Vision.

The position of Mary is not an *opinion*. It is a dogma, because a fact, as every Catholic knows, and, like all Catholic dogma, it is eternal and unchangeable, and has an intrinsic power of development.

There are spiritual writers, who think that our Lord, in the parable of the Shepherd seeking the lost sheep, and the woman looking for the lost coin, referred to Himself and His divine Mother. The Shepherd is Himself, and He is in Himself the light of the world, and needs to carry no lamp. But the woman lights a candle to look for the lost treasure ; for Mary is the true bearer of light in that she is the Mother of Jesus ; and if she find the lost it is with, and by, her Divine Son.

Again, in Matthew 13th, our Lord says, "the Kingdom of Heaven is like to leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened." The woman is Mary, who by her "fiat" of faith and obedience united God and man in her womb.*

The object of the Man and of the Woman is the same, the salvation of sinners, and the development of the Church, which is represented by the leavening of the whole. Can this Man and Woman thus engaged be other than Jesus and Mary ? And is there not something touching in our Blessed Lord thus in His parables uniting Himself with His Mother, in the great work which they began together on that ever memorable 25th of March.

* See St. Bernard De Cons : V.M., chap. 10.

There are two passages in St. Luke which, by those outside the Church, who have failed to realise the status and position of Mary, are interpreted unfavourably to her eminence. The one is in Luke viii. 20-21. The other in Luke xi. 27.

We do not think it necessary to go into the question in a controversial sense, because if a certain position be once established, if the rationale of the question be firmly laid down, and the whole be consequent, logical, and according to the tenets of Christian truth, it is not possible that any incidental passage can contradict a verity thus established. We would only protest against the view taken by some commentators of our Lord having intended to humiliate His mother, as derogatory to both. So extraordinary and painful an idea could only be entertained by those who have failed to realise their mutual position, and her transcendent prerogative of being without sin.

Into what imagination did it ever enter to suppose the Almighty wishing to humiliate the Archangel Gabriel or Raphael; and yet who are they as compared to Mary?

When a created being is already down in the abyss of its own nothingness, and of the all-being, all-loving, all-eternal Godhead, how could any thing put such a creature lower, or humiliate one who is

essentially and perpetually aware that God alone is All in All?

We have endeavoured to represent the Mother of God as united to her Son by *intention, compact, and fidelity*.

We have maintained that the intention, once formed, in the moment of her fully conscious and deliberate reply of "Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum," was carried on through every act, important or secondary, of her entirely pure and supernatural life. It never ceased, it never flagged. It had an intensity which only a perfectly pure heart could have endured without breaking; and not even so, she being human, without constant aid from her divine Spouse. We may all know the strain that has been laid, not only on our physical but on our mental condition, when we have been much in prayer, dwelling very near to the presence of God, immersed in our own nothingness and transpierced by the light of the divine countenance.

We are miserable sinners, and it is not to be wondered at if we quail beneath the fiery rays of the furnace of divine love. But, even were we spotless, our mere frail human nature would be overwhelmed, if this lasted always in equal intensity. We should feel we must go back to the light of common day, or cease to live. Apart from

all our moral infection, there is the limited power of our feeble mind and spirit, and beneath too long a tension nature would give way. But Mary *had* to live. She had to stand for ever in the refulgence of her exalted position. Every waking moment, and possibly even in sleep, the fact that she was the Mother of God was upon her ; Mother of God, and, as such, spiritual mother of the Church. The fact went on through all the thirty-three years. It received its last emphatic seal when, unfainting and unflagging, she stood beneath the Cross, and heard the last words addressed to her by Him who hung on it : " Woman, behold thy Son." Once again by Him whose word has been her prop and stay, she hears herself called " Woman ;" once again in that appellation she knows that all creation is summed up, since in her alone is represented the law of fertility, which as it is the law of continuation, is the sustentation of creation.

At that moment the fact was sealed in the presence of John, who stood as the representative of us all. The human race was given into the hands of Mary as her dower, at the moment of her supreme union with Him Who was her Spouse, and when her com-*passion* was beating with every pulse of His Passion on that cruel bed of *dolour*.

At that hour He turns to the Woman with whom

He had made the pact which has cancelled that of Eve with Satan. He obliterates the fall in the Redemption, the curse in the Cross, the alienation of mankind in the adoption of the human race in the person of John, who alone of the Apostles remained by Him ; and Mary has sustained her part in unbroken fidelity to the very stroke of consummation.

At that moment the crown of dolours was placed on her brow by Him Who wore the crown of suffering humanity in the Hypostatic Union, "the diadem wherewith His Mother crowned Him in the day of His espousals."*

Thus from the Annunciation to the Crucifixion we have seen Mary called to a voluntary, active and passive co-operation with the three Persons of the ever Blessed Trinity. She is the conscious and willing instrument of the Father of that Son of Whom she is the mother ; of the Holy Ghost, through Whose agency she conceived ; and of the Son Whom she carried in her bosom. The ever Blessed Trinity has opened the depths of Its Being to Mary. The Father *as* Father. The Holy Ghost as Divine Love, and the Son as the God-Man.

It is this which sets her entirely apart as a

* Cant. iii. 11.

hierarchy in herself. No position can come within reach of hers. The Archangels, the Seraphim, and Cherubim are simply her court. There is no possibility of assigning her a lower place than that which the Church claims for her. No omissions in the Gospel narrative, no passages like those in St. Luke at which uncatholic minds stumble, can, when rightly interpreted, we do not say invalidate, but even in the remotest way affect the great fact that she has been all this, that she is this still, and that she must retain her position to all eternity.

It is the only view of Mary which is consistent, logical, and, granted the Hypostatic Union, inevitable. While she lived among men it was necessarily partially hidden, just as the divinity of her Son was hidden. It was obscured by her inferior sex ; it was thrown into shadow by so slight a cause as eastern habits and custom. It was kept like the secret of the King by the comparative silence of the Evangelists. But nevertheless it is demonstrable and indubitable.

If any part of the Christian faith be true : if the Paternity of God the Father be true ; if the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son be true ; if the Hypostatic Union be true, then is Mary all we have said, and a great deal more than any human language can express.

If the laws of nature be true ; if the works of creation have any reality, and are not merely a beautiful and vanishing vision, a phantasmagoria of exquisite deception ; if the dear Sacraments be the fountains of grace, and all the sweet homely Sacramentals be not empty superstitions, then is Mary our co-redemptress, the necessary medium and channel of all grace, the irrefragable link between God and man, between earth and heaven ; and the one, eternally triumphant conqueror of all heresy and all infidelity. If human affections have any value and any meaning, and are not only a bitter irony flung in the face of suffering humanity ; if the kiss of the Mother on the sleeping face of her newborn babe have not its great and sublime antitype in the eternally decreed divine maternity ; if the clasped hand of friend with friend have not its consecrating ideal in the eternal brotherhood of Jesus with man, then is the position we have assigned Mary as the epitome in herself of all creation, as the re-consecration of all creation in her human person, through her maternal contact with the divine person of her Son, a primary necessity, a fact embracing all law, and leading up in perfect melody and with infinitely varied harmony to the full burst of the song of Heaven, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, our God, to receive

glory, and honour, and power, because Thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they were, and have been created."*

We are writing this at a period when the world, even the so-called Christian world is rapidly drifting into dark and narrow channels of unbelief. Alone the lamp of the Catholic Church burns bright. But it hangs like a lamp in a thick fog, the one solitary bright spot environed by Cimmerian darkness.

The black shadows of unbelief fall athwart the paths of daily life in gigantic forms, and fling a tinge of gloom almost on the elect. Knowledge has increased with vertiginous celerity, and we are caught up in the sudden developments of science like travellers in the high wind of a tempest when lightnings score the Heavens. We lose our way, and are alternately dazzled and despondent.

The laws of nature have suddenly been giving up their secrets, and flashing upon us like strokes of electric light, a very glare of knowledge. Some instinctively clasp their hands over their eyes. Others contemplate and are staggered. Whither are we drifting? and who will show us the way?

Those who are outside the spherical and complete faith are asking if indeed what we see, and

* Apoc. iv. 11.

know, and are, be not all irresponsible law, unrelenting and inexorable, and no God. Others dream of a first great cause moving the huge mechanism ; and who, when you come to inquire about Him, or rather it, seems to be no less blind, no less irresponsible than the laws it has—shall we say originated ?

Such great minds have gone astray ! Such noble hearts, such well-governed lives are sitting with the courage of despair in the black darkness of no-faith !

And we who are within the charmed circle of the true fold, who know that the treasures of the Church are unlimited, however slowly developed, who believe, as we believe in our own present existence, that all knowledge is hers intrinsically and potentially, and will prove itself hers actually when the Holy Ghost who governs her shall so decree, know with a certainty as great as any theorem of mathematical truth, that it will, in homely phrase, all come right. The bark of the Church will steer her way through never such troubled waters, and as she sails she will pick up the tangled nets which human science has let down into the depths, and gather them within herself, making all the rich treasures of the deep her own. In God's good time she will explain and

classify them ; for she holds the golden key of knowledge and will unlock all natural mysteries when He, Who is the God-Man and causes all mystery to culminate in His own Being, shall so will it. Then will men lay all at His feet, and at the feet of her whom He has made the Queen of Creation, the acme and epitome of its great laws ; snatched from even the faint echo of that universal jar with which sin and evil have marred the originally divine harmony.

What a mighty task lies upon us the children of the Church ! It rests with us to hasten the day-dawn of the reign of the Holy Ghost. It depends upon our prayers, our faithfulness and our zeal, to call up the aurora of a brighter day from the placid bosom of the ocean of divine love. What are we doing towards it ? How are we acting, and praying, and suffering, aye *suffering*, so as to make our souls like altars of incense on the high mountain of Carmel from whose summit we strain our eyes eastward ?

This is the great question for us at all times. But it never yet has pressed on man as it does now that faith is growing cold.

It may be that the sublime view of Creation and Redemption, upon which is based all we have ventured to write, and which was the view of the great

Franciscan, Duns Scotus, viz., that the Incarnation stood prior to the creation in the eternal rhythm of the divine idea ; or rather that the Incarnation was included in the idea of the creation as the essential supplement to it, whether or no the fall had taken place ; and that as a consequence the Virgin Mother was " ever playing before Him," " set up from eternity,"* shall, in the fulness of time be dogmatically affirmed.

When larger hope and wider faith have taught us more fully to realise the supernatural as the sole cause and only foundation of all we see, and know, and are, then, perhaps, will the voice of all Christendom hasten the declaration to be given by the Holy Ghost through His sole organ the Church. So that this wider doctrine which covers the wider area, and embraces and solves (as we venture to believe) all the problems that are now racking the heart and brain of thoughtful humanity, shall be announced by the infallible voice as an incontestable truth, to the shame of infidelity and the unutterable consolation of the faithful. As the crowning of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, it is not, perhaps, presumptuous to look forward to the yet more lavish gifts which our mother the Church,

* See Proverbs viii.

who brings forth out of her treasures things new and old, may unlock from the stores of divine truth—as we can bear them, as we are able to receive them, as by our present lives and prayers we are striving to merit them.

Then, indeed, will the Virgin Mother have struck deep root in an honourable people. Then, indeed, will she wear in the sight of the great universe, and to our everlasting joy, the triple crown of her Immaculate Conception, of her divine maternity, and of our co-redemptrix, and past, present, and future Queen ; in the glorious presence of Him Who through her is our Elder Brother, as well as our Saviour and our God.

The doctrine we have endeavoured, though feebly, to sustain, averts the danger, pre-eminent in the present time, of looking upon creation as a failure which necessitated the Incarnation ; the latter being chiefly as a remedy, consequent on the breaking down of God's original design. Taken in this aspect, the vastness of the Creation (viewed as we are compelled to view it in connection with the sin and suffering of the world), assumes the appearance of a dread and painful mystery, so huge in its proportions, so obscure as to the why and wherefore of its existence, that the divine after-thought is, so to speak, in our human way of viewing

things, like the tentative healing of a disease, the disease itself being the salient point.

But if we reverse this order of thought and look upon the wide universe as the prologue to the Divinity clothing Himself in matter in the Hypostatic Union; and only the suffering nature of the God-man as superinduced, in consequence of sin, and therefore born into pain, we maintain the dignity of creation, the innate beauty of matter, its ulterior glorification, and the unutterable tenderness of God towards the suffering world.

The Incarnation shows itself, what of course it must always be, the principal fact, the primary cause of all, the essential reason of every existing thing; and that once granted, all the rest falls into place; the disproportion disappears; the infinitely little is as unappalling as the infinitely great; because both are the exordium of the supreme event, the clothing of God in human nature.

The outrage cast upon the Creator by man's abuse of his free will, has, so to speak, changed the aspect of the divine scheme. It has made the God-Man a sufferer like us. It has subjected Him to painful death like us. But (without lowering the importance of this, to us, saving addition to the divine scheme) it has done no more.

It did not originate the intention of the Incar-

nation, giving to that supreme mystery the comparatively limited character of a supplemental remedy. It altered the aspect of the Incarnation by lending to it a pathos and a sad intensity to which it would otherwise have been a stranger. It caused Mary, the initial link in the Incarnation, to become the Mother of Dolours. It caused Jesus to be the Man of Sorrows. But from the newborn Infant down to the lowest depths of hiddenness in the Blessed Eucharist as the spiritual food of man, the Incarnation was the primary motive and special intention of Him Who was from all eternity.

Viewing the creation in this light we cease to be dazzled by the ever newly discovered vastness of the organic worlds, the secrets of science bursting upon us with bewildering rapidity, and seeming to overwhelm our littleness, and make a mockery of our helpless and suffering state.

When we think of what the overture must be to a drama so rich in divine harmonies as the clothing of the great God in His material creation, nothing can be too vast, too intricate, too inscrutable.

And though at present we are, as it were, staggered, we know we have only to be faithful and patient for all the parts to unravel themselves into a beauteous whole in which we shall read the laws of the Divine Being ; of Him Who is our *Summum*

Bonum and our last end ; with the intelligent precision (according to our degree) with which a practised musician reads the score of music, internally hearing the harmony, which to the uninitiated presents a page of dumb and meaningless hieroglyphics.

Nor is it without significance to reflect that in taking this view we are so far endorsing the consensus of mankind in the great Eastern faiths of antiquity. We are stretching forth a hand of fellowship to the unchronicled generations of the long ago past. We are claiming sympathy with the faith obscured indeed, and overlaid with vilest error, but partially true and beautiful in its primeval dawn, of those who lie swathed in the dark cerements of Egyptian tombs, who raised the Pyramids, and imagined the Sphinx ; and with that of the pathetic death-haunted Etrurians whose relics tell chiefly of how they loved their dead, and of the gloomy and funeral thoughts their brilliant skies could never dispel ; while old Brahminical temples, standing now in wild jungles where the tiger sleeps, and sentineled by lonely palms, might echo the same thought from their fretted walls and elaborated traceries.

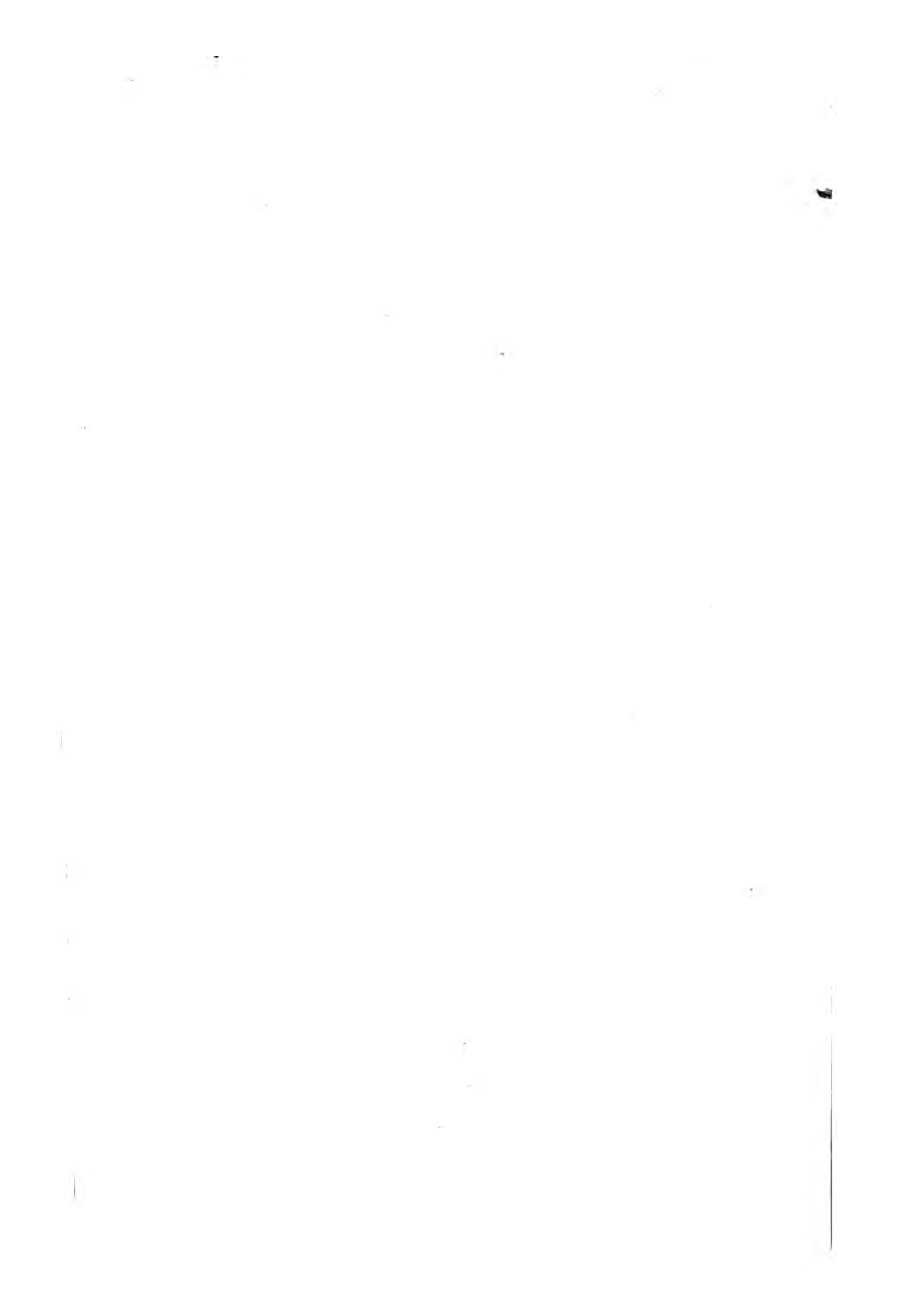
But that we shudder to approximate even by a passing word, the pure mysteries of Christianity

with the abominations of false and fallen faiths, we might trace the initial truth through heathen creeds, as well as in obscure biblical allusions in patriarchal days, and into far off prehistoric times.

Is it not much to know that, however jarred, there beat in the dim old creeds in which millions of our fellow men lived and died, a pulse to which our own pure faith responds; thus linking our fuller knowledge to the faint hopes and beliefs of the nameless, and long-forgotten dead.

May we not think that Mary gathered beneath her mantle many who vaguely hoped in our common Mother, the Virgin Mother of a mysterious Child; the Isis of Osiris; while with our fuller knowledge and enlightened faith, we the sons and daughters of the Church, repeat the cry "*Monstra Te esse Matrem?*"

THE END.



APPENDIX.



Note 1, Page 16.

“ The appointed time of women.”

From the Annunciation to Christmas day is short of forty-two weeks, and though the authority of the Church does not guarantee the above dates it is not to be supposed she would put forward any which, did they not involve a special grace, would imply an imperfection.

Note 2, page 139.

“ The divine and typical human Mother.”

It is very important in all theological writing to weigh well the nature of each term as we appropriate it.

A Divine Being can be only God Himself, because the substantive Being when preceded by Divine, expresses all that belongs to the One God, Unlimited and Eternal.

In the term Divine Mother, on the contrary, the first term, divine, is limited by the maternity implied by the second term; and therefore expresses only a maternity the result of a Divine influence or action, and does not embrace the entire being of the subject or Mother.

