

LEGENDS

OF

HOLY MARY.

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## LEGENDS OF HOLY MARY.

### PREFACE.

In spite of all that orators have said and sweet poets sung about that miracle of love, the heart of a human mother, we cannot fathom its warm depths, nor wholly comprehend its motives of action, nor the direction which its impulses suggest. One thing we know of it, that the power of its love can give infinite value to the smallest offering it receives; and that it does not judge of a child's gift by the worth of it in the worldly sense. And we doubt whether the rich powerful son who, out of his abundance, allots to his mother thousands a year, so thoroughly stirs the deep waters of her heart as when the little one, the darling, comes with his flushed face and his big dancing eyes full of fondness, brings her some poor wilted daisy, and says: "See here, Mamma, I gathered this, and brought it home for you."

There was no philosophical nor educated sense of duty here, but only the pure human love, sown by our Lord in the little heart, as He sowed the wild flower in the field, and as yet uncorrupted by this world.

Now, our Mother Mary's heart is a human mother's heart, possessing naturally all the distinguishing attributes of a human heart, even its proneness to indulgence, its uncritical pity and tenderness, and if we may so speak, its *weaknesses* of love; and she receives from any of us who have the grace so to offer it, the least tribute of fondness, and repays it with ineffable wealth. Remember Who was her own child here; and meet merely His humanity,—how stainless, faultless, beautiful, affectionate, unerring He was,—and think, remember, how the nurture and education and constant companionship of that perfect Childhood must have ripened and developed in her the mother's characteristics and attributes, to a degree immeasurably unattainable by the mothers of other children. And when you have thought well over

that, you will recognize how the Catholic is enabled to retain so much of the *simplicity* of filial love; how he still believes that he can propitiate his Mother's displeasure, or enkindle her love, by even the smallest gifts he may bring her. We say *small*, for so they are, compared with what we might do; but she can make them of infinite worth by the alchemy of her love. A mother on earth has a power in that way immeasurable and incomprehensible by us; what power that has that Mother, who, in addition to the most perfect of human hearts, has been drinking in the limitless love and glory and pity of God, for two thousand years, in heaven.

This is why we offer little books like this to our Mother, and, through her and for her, to her children. Let who will, old or young, read this book with a tender and devout heart, and he will reap benefit from it. The place of the Critic in heaven, if place there be, has not yet been revealed. The place of the loving soul is known. Think only how far a little real, true love may

go. You know what a little mite of pure gold, beaten out, will cover a large frame, and defy the dust and worm and mould and burning heat to injure what it covers. So, the love that instigates and then enwraps the lesser Catholic devotions, the gift to God or Mary of a flower, a book, a bit of lace for the altar, defends the heart that gave the gift from so much dust of negligence and worm of vicious association, and fiery heat of passion and corroding mould of sloth.

It is in this spirit that we offer our "Legends of Holy Mary," and if accepted in this spirit by its purchasers, it may prove a pleasure to Saint Mary, and consequently a benefit to us.

*Mt. St. Mary's.*

X. D. ML.

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But his young wife, then about to give birth to her first child, was so ill that she could not leave her bed. Her husband, however, had no choice but to go to the front, and he left her in the hands of the Lord.

## LEGENDS OF HOLY MARY.

### THE SIRE DE CREQUY.

"CONSOLATRIX AFFLICTORUM."

When, at the voice of St. Bernard, in 1147, King Louis took the cross, none of his gallant gentlemen refused to follow him. All the young nobles crowded with their vassals to the standard, and an army of twenty-four thousand men was soon in motion for the Holy Land.

Among the brave crusaders, vowed "to defend the sepulchre of Christ," the Sire de Crequy was remarkable for the nobleness of his origin, his illustrious name, and his excellent personal qualities. His father, Gerard, Count of Ternois, an old crusader, and comrade of Godfrey of Bouillon, was still alive, and was filled with joy by the sacred purpose of his son.

But his young wife, then about to give birth to her first child, was deeply afflicted at her husband's resolution, and opposed its fulfillment strenuously. The baron did all he could to induce her to consent, and the aged count then spoke to her:

"I also, my daughter, have crossed the sea; I went without my father's knowledge and against the sad entreaties of my mother; but both were repaid when I came back with honor. Certainly, dear lady, your baron can not let his king go forth to battle for the Faith, and not accompany him. He is thirty years old, and that is the age of great actions for gentlemen. Should he remain at home he will gain only shame and contempt."

At last, the pious lady yielded to the claims of honor and duty, and agreed to let her lord depart. So he went, taking with him Roger and Godfrey, the bravest of his three brothers, and thirty mounted followers.

But the lady wept bitterly when the hour of parting came, and Baron Rabul strove to comfort her by vows of loyal constancy. He took from her finger their bridal ring, broke it in two and gave to her one half, keeping the other. "The half of this ring," they said, "which was blessed for our union, I will keep as a loyal and

faithful husband should, and will bring it back to you when my pilgrimage is over, as a proof of my faith." He then led her to his father, whom he besought to watch over and guard her. Then kneeling, as reverent children did in those days, he begged the old man's blessing. "O Lord Omnipotent," prayed the aged count, "bless Thou my son in this war which he is undertaking in Thy name! Be thou his stay, O gentlest Virgin Mary, our Lady and our Queen! Protect him in all peril, and bring him back spotless and irreproachable to his home."

Then the count blessed and embraced his younger sons and their followers, and they, after commending themselves to our Lady of Victories, sprang upon their chargers and set forth.

Time passed, and the army of the Crusaders had commenced their duties in Palestine. De Crequy had heard before leaving the coasts of Europe, that a son and heir had been born to him, and this news put double vigor into his arm, double wisdom into his counsels, for he had honor to win for his boy also now. But good will, wise counsel, and strong arm, can not always keep the soldier safely, and the days of Rabul's trial was at hand. In a great battle, he bore

the Christian banner, and in his ardor pressed into the very thick of the Saracen hosts, followed only by a hundred lance. The archers proved his ruin, he was surrounded by multitudes of Paynims, his little band was cut to pieces, his brothers fell at his side, he himself was pierced with wounds. At last, when but seven of his followers were left, an arrow pierced his gorget and he fell from his destrier. The seven survivors turned out their way through the Saracens, and bore the news of the defeat and of de Crequy's fall to the Christian camp.

Meanwhile, far off in France, the boy was growing fast, the count was drawing nearer to the tomb, and the lady of Crequy was praying and waiting for her crusader.

When the Saracens came to plunder the bodies of the fallen Christians, they saw that the Sire de Crequy was still alive.

"This one is not dead," cried the archer who was searching the baron, "let us not finish him. He was the leader of the troop; his ransom will make us rich."

So they wrapped him in a cloak and carried him to their camp where his wounds were carefully dressed. The struggle between life and death was long, for the scimitars of the Paynim had bitten

deeply. But life won the prize, and the Sire de Crequy recovered. But he recovered to find himself a slave.

The beautiful spirit of courtesy and gentleness, characteristic of the middle ages, and which grew out of love for and reverential devotion to our blessed Lady: these fair flowers of character which sprang up naturally in the soil cultivated for Mary, the mystical rose, for Mary, the Lily of Israel, for Mary, God's violet on earth, God's ananarth in heaven; this spirit, and these characteristics, had, to some degree, influenced the Saracens in their long wars with the Christians. It had influenced the chief to whom the Sire de Crequy had been assigned as his share of the booty.

So, when that gentleman begged for permission to keep a little sack which he had worn round his neck, and which contained a reliquary and the half of his bridal ring, the master accorded the favor. Raoul was told that he was a slave and must perform the labors of a slave, until he could obtain his ransom, two hundred golden besants.\* A messenger was sent to the Christians, but he unfortunately joined a party of his armed countrymen, who were soon after surprised by a troop of Crusaders and cut to

\* A besant was about \$10.

pieces, and, following this, the success of the Christian knights struck terror into the hearts of many of the Saracens, and they fled into the interior. One of the first to flee with his slaves and his family, was the master of the Baron de Crequy. From that moment, the release of the Christian captive appeared hopeless. He wrote many a letter, but none ever reached either the Christian camp or Europe.

Meanwhile, those who had returned to France carried the news of the disastrous battle, and of Sire de Crequy's death. The poor wife was prostrated by the sudden and sad intelligence, and would have died but for her child. The old count, however, sunk beneath the blow. He never smiled again, but soon afterward departed, in hope to meet his sons in heaven. Deprived thus of her protectors the widow suffered keenly. The youngest brother, Baldwin, who had, it will be remembered, remained at home, began to plot against her to defraud his nephew, and so win the broad lands of Crequy for himself. The lady's father was a powerful lord, but he lived far off in Brittany, and could not conveniently give her the aid and consolation of his presence. Therefore, he urged her to contract a second marriage with a neighboring Seigneur de Renty; but she preferred to live alone with her memory and with hope.

So the long years passed on wearily, mournfully, to the lady of Castle Crequy and to the captive knight her lord.

He, in his shepherd's service on the Syrian hills, passed seven sad years of bondage, never forgetting, when alone amid his flock, to pray to God, and to our Lady earnestly for relief, yet saying with sweet resignation: *Fiat voluntas Tua.*

Then his kind master died, and all his slaves were sold. Two things concurred to set a high price upon the Sire de Crequy, his lofty stature and athletic form, and the hope of a large ransom. He was bought however by a bigoted Saracen, who hated the Christians, and who commenced from the first to treat the crusader cruelly.

"You see yourself abandoned by your nation," he would say, "Deny then your God; invoke our prophet, and I will give you an estate, money, and a wife."

But the good gentleman would rather have died than deny his God, or forsake the wife whom God had given him. In the hope of breaking his spirit, his master loaded him with chains, imprisoned him, tortured him. There was no roof to the tower in which he was confined, and the hot beams of the torrid Syrian sun poured into it and made of it a



furnace. Gyves clasped his wrists and ankles; a rusted chain attached him to the wall; a little black bread, and flat, sun-heated water formed all his nourishment. Day by day, his master came and called on him to deny his faith; and on his refusal, which continued steadfast, had him beaten with rods until he fainted. At last, when three years had been thus spent, making in all ten of captivity, the Saracen, hopeless of his perversion, informed him one night that on the morrow he should be strangled.

Raoul shed tears for his wife, and his boy whom he had never seen; and then turned his thoughts to Heaven.

"O Mary, my blessed Lady," so he prayed, "do thou plead for my soul unto our Father. Never more shall I embrace my wife; never behold my son; do thou protect and bless them, gentlest of mothers. To thee I commend their future and my soul."

Overcome with watching, sorrow and weariness, he sank down upon the stone floor of the dungeon and slept deeply.

He dreamed. And in his dream he saw a sweet and gentle face bending above him; he had seen those features sculptured in marble, in the chapel of Crequy. A lady surrounded with a halo of light

stood beside him. She touched the fetters and they fell from his limbs. Scarcely believing what he saw he attempted to move, and found that he could do so with freedom. He rose and walked.

The sun shone brilliantly upon him but did not burn him as it had done. He looked round him and discovered that he was in the middle of a wood. He recognized that he was awake and free, and falling upon his knees, he heartily thanked God and our Lady. The birds sang above him in the trees; flowers, long unfamiliar, grew at his feet. Seeing a wood-cutter at his work, the knight approached him, but he, seeing a tall half-naked figure, seamed with scars, blistered and tanned by the sun, his head shaved, and his chin and throat covered with a bushy beard, took the good Christian for a specter, and fled.

The baron, however, gave chase, and soon overtaking him, addressed him in the peasant dialect of the Moors. To this the poor fellow, trembling, replied in French that he did not understand.

Amazed at the sound, the Sire de Crequy cried out, "good friend, if indeed you are a reality, tell me if I dream; relieve my pain. Tell me where I am; for I am an utter stranger in this country. Where am I?"

"This," said the wood-cutter, "is the forest of Crequy. It is on the Flemish border. But you are doubtless a shipwrecked mariner."

But the baron had thrown himself upon the earth and extended his arms in the form of a cross.

"O God, most high and most merciful!" so he prayed, "O most holy Mary, our Lady and our help, our queen and mother, accept my thanks for this miracle of my deliverance." Then rising, he asked, "if the old lord Gerard were still alive; if the lady and the youthful heir of Crequy were well."

But the wood-cutter said, "What! do you know our lords? Alas, the Count Gerard went, years ago, broken-hearted to the grave, weeping for his sons slain in Palestine. Then the lord Baldwin, who remained alone here, would fain have deprived the lady and the heir of their lands, and she, worn out with hopeless weeping for her husband, harassed by her brother-in-law, unprotected and urged by her father to marry a second time, has consented at last, and will this day be wedded to the Sire de Renty. Come up to the castle; you will get a good alms there."

Raoul followed the wood-cutter to the castle. There, all was joyous preparation and bustle. The sentinels would have stopped the poor half-naked pilgrim, asking him if he were an escaped slave.

"I am," said the knight, "a pilgrim from beyond the sea. My business is important, and I must speak at once with the lady of Crequy."

The sentinel laughed. "A fellow in such an undress can not enter here," he said, "nor can any one speak to-day to the lady. Even now they are dressing her for her bridal. (You may wait in the passage here, if you like, however.)"

The knight sat down in silence, and soon afterward the lady appeared, pale, sad, and her eyelids red with weeping, but robed in bridal lace, adorned with jewels, and followed by a gay and jocund train. Raoul knelt before her.

"Noble lady," he said, "I come from beyond the sea. I bring you news of the Sire de Crequy, for ten long years a slave in Syria."

"Alas," she answered, bursting into tears, "This can not be true. My lord, his brothers and his followers, fell, fighting against the Paynim."

"Raoul de Crequy did not perish, lady, he stands before you now. Look on me, O my wife, and recognize your husband, once so dear, despite his wretchedness and the change that suffering has wrought upon him. See here, my half of our bridal ring, broken and shared between us when we parted. I bring pledge of faith kept loyally, back to you now."

And then, with her heart swelling with joy, the lady of Crequy fell into the arms of her long-lost but unforgotten lord. And the boy was brought for his father's blessing, and the bridal party was changed into a feast of welcome; but first of all, when the patron had procured suitable raiment, the reunited pair, followed by their friends, went to the chapel of our Lady, and kneeling there poured out the thankfulness which filled their hearts, to the gentle author of this wonderful escape, to Mary, *Consolatrix Afflictorum*.

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## OUR LADY OF GUADALOUPE.

*Rosa Mystica*  
God does not choose the instruments of His mercies by human rule; "not many mighty, not many learned, but God hath chosen the simple things of this world to confound the wise."

Shortly after the Mexicans had received the true faith, the blessed Virgin desired to manifest her favor toward the newly converted country in an especial manner; and in the drawing room or on the open plain, from the shepherd boy on the hill side, from the cattle driver on the pampas, you may hear this legend of her goodness to Mexico.

In A. D. 1531, ten years after the conquest by Cortes, there lived a young Indian in the village of Quatitlan, about two leagues from the city of Mexico. This Indian had been converted, and was baptized into the Church by the name of Juan Diego. He had married a Christian woman of his nation, and the pair lived with an aged uncle, all pious, gentle, and devoted to their religion. Every Saturday, the day

of Mary's Mass, Juan walked to the capital to assist at the holy Sacrifice and to pray before the altar of our Lady.

On his road he was obliged to pass a hill, known in that country as Tepejajac. This was a celebrated spot, for there in pagan times, the people had adored an idol which they called the mother of the gods, and Juan, as he passed the place, would remember the ancient idol, and would offer up his thanks for the light of truth, to the true Mother of the faithful, to Mary Regina Caelorum.

Well; it so happened on the 9th of December 1531, as he followed his accustomed route along the foot of Mount Tepejajac, he heard, to his surprise, mingling with the simple hymn which he was singing, sounds of most wondrous melody. He stopped and looked about him for the source of these sounds. They seemed to issue from a richly tinted, glorious cloud which hung with vapory grace over the top of the hill. As he saw this, cloud he fell upon his knees, and at that instant a voice called him by name, and gently commanded him to mount the hill.

So soon as he had recovered from his astonishment, he obeyed, climbing up the steep ascent until he had reached the top. There, seated upon a

throne of wondrous brilliancy sat a lady, beautiful, majestic, gentle, serene and kind in look. From her face and even from her robes, light was thrown out, which clothed the very rocks with golden and prismatic splendor.

The surprise of Juan ceased; his faith, mighty in simplicity, understood all at once. He knew that he was in the presence of Mary herself. As he knelt before her, she, with ineffable sweetness, said to him:

"Where were you going, my son?"

"To hear the Mass of the blessed Virgin at Mexico."

"My son," said the lady, your affection pleases me, and I have long known your goodness of heart. I am that Virgin Mary, whom you so love to honor; and I desire that a church be built here upon this spot, whence my grace may descend upon all who are faithfully devoted to the cause of my eternal Son. You, Juan, shall be my messenger.

The Bishop of Mexico at that time was Juan de Zumarraga, a pious and learned Franciscan, particularly renowned for prudence. To him, our Indian, full of joy, hastened and fulfilled his mission with simplicity and evident truthfulness. Nevertheless, the communication was of such great importance,

such marvels were so totally unexpected, and the possibility of self-deception on the part of the Indian so clear, that the bishop hesitated and finally dismissed Juan Diego.

The poor fellow, not understanding that what his own eyes had seen, should thus be doubted, went sadly away. On his return homeward, he found the hill occupied as before, heard the same celestial music, saw again the sweet face of Madonna. Again she spoke, asking him how he had sped on his errand. He told all, and then set forth the humility of his station as unfitting him for so august a mission, but Mary bade him be of good courage, and told him to return the next day to the bishop.

Juan obeyed; but the prelate received him as before, with kindness but with doubt. "There must be another witness," he said.

"Ah," murmured Juan, "I know what I will do. I will bring my old uncle Bernard the next time." So he heard Mass devoutly and went home. On his way he found the sacred vision as before, and told his second repulse to the blessed Virgin.

"To-morrow," she answered, "I will give you a sign. Go now in peace."

Juan went on toward his village, still determined to have his uncle for a companion the next day.

But unfortunately, on his arrival, he found the old man prostrate and suffering from a malignant and severe fever. So ill was he that Juan forgot every thing in his affectionate nursing, and never even thought of Mexico, until the critical condition of Bernard required the presence of a priest to administer the last consolations of religion.

The Indian set out, but at the sight of the well-known hill, he recollected at once the command of our Lady, and in his simple shame for having forgotten it, he took another path to avoid Tepejaco. But in the middle of the new road he saw before him the glorious form.

"Why have you chosen this path?" the Lady asked.

"Pardon me, holy Virgin," said the poor fellow. "My uncle's illness has made me forget my promise."

"Fear not," she answered gently, "neither have any further anxiety about your uncle; he is cured from this moment. But do you go forward, and seek out the bishop. You shall bear him a sign. Go to the hill top of Tepejaco yonder and gather there a bouquet of flowers."

It was not the season of flowers; nor had the mount ever produced any thing but thorns and

flowers; yet, nothing doubting, Juan went, and, on reaching the forest, found himself in a very garden of beauty. He culled the most exquisite flowers, and carried them to Mary. She, with a touch of her most sacred fingers, at once arranged them into harmonious order, and gave the bouquet to the Indian; or rather, placed it in his poor stiff mantle which he had taken from his shoulders to receive it.

As he entered the house of the bishop, a perfume of indelible richness diffused itself throughout the atmosphere. The attendants saw and begged to touch it, but Juan would not allow them, so they hurried off to tell the Bishop. Monsenor came; this time more disposed to believe in Juan's message. To him the Indian opened his rustic mantle, but to the amazement of all, there were no flowers in it. In their stead, painted upon the cloak, was a portrait of our Lady, most entrancing in its beauty, and wrought with art surpassing that of mortal hands.

All fell upon their knees and with full hearts  
venerated this miraculous picture, after which it was  
carried to the chapel and exposed to the whole body  
of the faithful.

Next day, with Juan Diego at the head, a long and stately procession set out from Mexico to Tepic. The Indians requested to point out the

precise spot where he had seen the vision, but as he hesitated, a fountain suddenly burst forth, and to this hour has never ceased to flow. And here was erected and still stands the splendid church, renowned throughout Christendom for its miracles, of our Lady of Guadalupe: one favored shrine for Mary, the Mystical Rose.



on the poor sailors who still made pilgrimages to the neighborhood. As a shepherd belonging to the household of a worthy gentleman of those parts, perceived that one of his lambs had a habit of wandering from the flock, unhindered by the dogs, to a spot in the meadow where the herbage was greenest and the wild flowers fairest. It was not to feed either that the lamb went there, but to paw at the earth, until tired, and then to lie down among the daisies and buttercups until the sound of the evening Angelus. Well, sir, at last they resolved to dig down below that bright spot on the meadow, and there they found the long-lost image. It was carried with joyful pomp to the great church of Bayeux, and solemnly set upon an altar there; but in the night it disappeared, and was found the next morning in the place where it had been buried. So they built a shrine there, and even since it has been a place of pilgrimage for the shipwrecked mariner. But see how the cloud has spread; and feel the sharp sleet of the squall; our Lady, help us now! the storm is upon us!"

As the sailor crossed himself, the voice of the captain rose suddenly and loud. Reiterated orders to take in sail followed thick and fast. Then the

squall struck; and it howled through the tent cordage; the canvas was torn from the boltropes and whirled off to leeward, the foretopmast snapped like a willow bough, and as the wreck came crashing down on deck, and the hull reeled drunkenly, torrents of blinding rain and sleet and bitterly cold hail poured from the ashen-gray clouds most furiously. Then the cry of "a leak!" was heard, and all hands, passengers and crew, sprang to the pumps. Then the mizzen-mast, and then the main went by the board, and the ship rolled helpless on the water without a spar erect, except two thirds of the foremast, with its torn shrouds fluttering from it. And the storm showed no symptom of abating, and to make all more terrible the gloom of the night began to settle down and to deepen the mirk of the tempest.

The crew, nearly all Normans, had already sung to the simple music taught them in their parishes, the *Ave Maris Stella*, and were now watching the deepening of the shadows, without hope of saving the ship. Suddenly a strong wave smote the vessel; she quivered and seemed to be settling. Then the old sailor, before spoken of, cried out:

"We are lost if our Lady of Deliverance help us not. Let us pray to her."



In a moment every sailor's head was bared, and kneeling down there upon the drenched deck, they sent up their prayers, up through the overhanging clouds and the pouring rain to her in whom they trusted, vowing a pilgrimage to her shrine if she should help them in their strait. When the devotion was over, the Portuguese passenger, who had taken part in it, looked with surprise and vexation at the captain and his two brothers, who stood pale and cold, but with covered heads, upon the quarter-deck. The youth and manhood of these three men had been blown upon by the arid winds of Calvinism till their hearts were as dry as corn husks in the autumn.

But Mary, who had heard the prayers of the sailors, touched even these dried hearts with her grace. The eldest, who was also captain, fell upon his knees.

"O holy Virgin," he said, "if indeed thou can'st hear us, then do I also invoke thee."

His second brother followed his example, and then the wind lulled and the turbulent billows sunk, and the sailless vessel moved steadily shoreward as if borne upon a river tide.

"Oh, our sweet Lady of Deliverance," cried out the second brother, "Mother of God and Queen of the world, I am thine for evermore."

The youngest of the three had not knelt down, nor prayed, and now, when reproached by his elder, answered coldly:

"I can see in this the goodness of God, but I do not so lightly abjure my religion."

The Portuguese answered warmly:

"A Protestant who re-enters the bosom of the Church, abjures nothing but his mournful errors. The icy sect to which you belong, in taking from you all those sacred and lovely aids which we have, has given you nothing in their place."

"Look yonder, wretched boy," said his brother. He looked, and lifting his cap knelt reverently. Above the splintered summit of the broken foremast stood, in a cloud of glory, smiling serenely and with extended, grace-bestowing hands, our Lady of Deliverance, our dear Mother Mary, Star of the Sea.

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 without aid of her own mind, and she  
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 of I and held to something off and in her  
 "I can see in this the goodness of God and  
 not to think again in religion."

### SISTER BEATRICE

In a certain convent, in the Jura mountains, there  
 lived about the beginning of the twelfth century, a  
 young girl named Beatrice. She had come there  
 as a mere child, and there her earlier years went  
 by, purely, sheltered, and gently, knowing no care,  
 no sorrow, and no sin. Always happy and devout,  
 she was never more so than on the day when she  
 pronounced her vows and was enrolled among the  
 sisterhood whom only she had known from infancy.  
 In her great devotion to the blessed Virgin, she de-  
 sired to consecrate herself especially to her service,  
 and so much grace was given her in return, that she  
 became an honor and a blessing to the convent.

At eighteen years, Sister Beatrice, to an innocent  
 heart, a spotless conscience, and a soul filled with  
 serenity, added a gift too often fatal to its possessor  
 — the gift of remarkable and almost perfect per-  
 sonal beauty. Of this, however, she thought nothing,

and lived as if she knew not that she possessed it.  
 She lived the life of a saint, striving to walk in the  
 steps of the Model of Virgins, and of following  
 without diverging, the way of salvation. She found  
 the greatest pleasure in prayer, loved the frequent  
 the holy offices, and listened with the most earnest  
 and flowing attention to the spiritual readings. Her  
 greatest recreation was to adorn the altar of our  
 Lady in the chapel; to embroider rich veils for her  
 statue, to renew each day the flowers of the pascha,  
 and, in the winter months, to imitate with her needle  
 or by cutting from many a tinted tissue the roses,  
 violets and lilies of the spring.

The whole convent admired Beatrice, and the  
 sisters seeing her so happy, used to say, "surely the  
 blessed Virgin loves that child." They appointed  
 her sacristine, and made her happier by thus giving  
 her especial duties which kept her in the chapel,  
 and by intrusting her with the keys of the coffers  
 wherein were kept the sacred ornaments consecrated  
 to St. Mary.

One day, a young knight grievously wounded  
 and apparently dying was brought to this convent,  
 and in those days, it was thought sin to refuse hos-  
 pitality. He was carefully nursed, and began to  
 recover, but alas, he used the lingering hours of his

convalescence, to fill the mind of the young Beatrice with false descriptions of the glories and beauty of the world. He painted its fascinations in the most tempting colors, spoke of the homage it would pay to her wondrous beauty. He had already her deep pity for his sufferings, and with wretched ingratitude he used a fiendish skill to deepen that pity into love.

Enough to say, he perverted that pure and lovely soul, and Beatrice gave her promise to escape from the convent on the night of the day he left, and to join him in a neighboring wood. And Beatrice kept that promise.

But ere she fled, in the still midnight, when the good sisters were asleep, Beatrice stole with fearful step to the chapel, once more to kneel before the image of that good Mother whom she was about to forsake, but whom yet she intensely loved.

"O holy Virgin," she murmured, as she bowed herself at the foot of the image, "O best Mother and my only support until this moment, I am about to quit thee; and yet I was faithful to thee, and firmly believed that I would always remain so, and yet I still love thee, O compassionate Mother. But see me now drawn away from thee, and

already no longer worthy to serve thee. Have pity upon me."

Then she rose, and with a trembling hand laid the keys of her charge at the foot of the image.

"Here," she said with simplicity, "are the keys which were intrusted to me, and which I dare not return to any one but you."

At this moment a little flower fell from the hand of our Lady. Beatrice seized it, and resolving never to lose it, turned away, and with one sigh of despair, left the chapel.

She entered thus the world: entered it by the gate of dishonor and of vice, and in the path of dishonor and vice her journey lay for the future. Soon forsaken by her tempter, she led the life of the lost. For fifteen years, she steeped her soul in sin, unhappy, friendless and remorseful.

At length it pleased God, for her soul's sake, to afflict her with a grievous illness. And in the long weary hours of that sickness she had but one thought: it was for her whom she had never been able to forget, whom she had once so tenderly loved, so faithfully served, and in whose memory she had always kept the little flower which had fallen from the sacred hand.

Believing that she was about to die, and knowing that Mary was her only hope, she accused herself bitterly of her past life, and with tears of unfeigned penitence sought the Refuge of sinners for one brief, one last glance at it was for power to go once more where she could look upon that image which she always venerated and once adored: once more to kneel in the pavement of this convent chapel, and to beg her way thither, and there expiate her faults by a public confession.

This was her prayer, and Mary, Mother of Mercy, heard it. As soon as her strength returned, Beatrice arose from her bed and prepared for her journey. First, she sold all her possessions, her jewels, raiments, house, etc., and gave the proceeds to the poor; then penniless, and clad in a garment of the coarsest serge, she started for the convent. A hundred leagues lay between that and the city where she had lived, but she walked on patiently, and already less wretched than when amid the splendors of sin. She walked on, offering her weariness and pain to God; and at last reached the spot where she had passed the pure and saintly days of her early life. As she drew near, she heard and recognized the sound of the bell that summoned the community

to chapel. Her heart beat quickly and the tears gushed from her eyes. She fell upon her knees and poured out fervent thanks to that good Mother who had enabled her to come where she might lay her broken heart at the feet of her Redeemer.

And so she reached the convent gates, and mingled there with the crowd of poor people who were waiting till the dinner hour for their accustomed alms. By and by some sisters came forth to distribute food to the poor. The one who approached her she recognized as a companion of her former days, and the sight almost overcame her.

"Why do you tremble so?" asked the sister gently.

"It is because I have come from a great distance and have suffered much," answered the penitent. Then forcing a little strength, she said: "My sister, is it not in this convent that a young girl called Beatrice once lived?"

The sister looked at her in surprise, as she asked, "Do you know Sister Beatrice?"

"I did long, long ago, when she was happy and had the care of the chapel."

"Do not tremble and grow so pale," said the kind nun, "if you know Sister Beatrice, it is a great happiness for you."

"Ah yes! for, during the last fifteen years,—” here the poor soul stopped, pressed her hands upon her forehead, and continued, “Is it known what has become of Sister Beatrice for these last fifteen years?”

“Oh yes; every body knows that well. You must have come from a great distance.”

The penitent hung her head, supposing herself known, and she sank down at the sister’s feet. The latter gently raised her, and said: “Come in; since you once knew Sister Beatrice, go in there to the chapel, you can see her again for a moment.”

“I,” stammered she, “I see the Sister Beatrice. But it is another one of that name. It is not the one of long ago.”

“Yes; it is the same, our own dear Sister Beatrice, for thirty years the joy and glory of our convent, who was brought up here, who has been our sacristine for seventeen years; the model of a good religious; the dear friend of the blessed Virgin. Go in there to the chapel and ask her prayers, for they are powerful.”

The unfortunate woman, not knowing whether she were awake or dreaming, obeyed. At the door she

knelt and moved upon her knees toward the altar. When she raised her eyes it was to behold a sight that filled her with trepidation and amazement. Upon the altar steps she herself appeared to stand, she, Beatrice! Not with the hollow and worn form of the present, but nearly as she was fifteen years before, when radiant, pure, sinless and happy.

The figure smiled with wondrous tenderness, and coming toward her, placed in her hands the keys, those very keys which, ere she fled, she had laid at the feet of Mary’s image.

“Here,” said a voice of ineffable music, “here are your keys. You gave them to me when you left, and that none might know of your flight I have filled your place, performed your duties, and personated you. Your penitence has obtained your pardon, and I know you will sin no more. Go then in peace to your cell, resume the habit of the sisterhood, and with it your duties in the chapel.”

Then in a cloud of glory, our Lady, for she it was, rose from the ground, and smiling pardon, disappeared.

Such is the Legend of Sister Beatrice, taken from her written confession; and by her confessor’s advice kept secret till her death. Then, according

to her own request it was revealed. Many years she lived in the convent after her return, the type of saintly penitence; constant in love and devotion, until called to enjoy the never fading presence of the Sinner's Refuge and the Mourner's Solace in the Temple of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

In the twelfth century there lived at Champfleury, in the province of Champagne, a knight, whose expenditure was more lavish than his fortune could well admit of. He was too much devoted to pleasure, and spent all his wealth in festivities; so that at last he fell into deep distress; and his friends, who were so devoted to him while they shared his banquets, ceased to know him when he became poor.

### THE KNIGHT OF CHAMPELÉURY.

He had married a young lady, whose sweetness, modesty, and simple grace rendered him the happiest of husbands. But the dowry of the gentle Marie had been wasted like all the rest; and there now only remained to this impoverished couple a half ruined manor-house, in which they lived in total solitude. But the young wife, always resigned and submissive, never breathed a single word of complaint, question, or reproach.

One day, as if to complete the distress of the

Lord of Champfleury, it was announced to him, that the Count of Champagne, his suzerain, was coming to pass a few days on his estate, and would halt at his house for dinner. The knight, who loved vanity and magnificence, fell into the darkest melancholy; he left his house, and sought a lonely place, where he might weep in secret.

After wandering about for an hour, he stopped in the middle of a desert plain, and threw himself down on the dry grass, in a space where four ways met, inclosed by seven withered chestnut-trees. As he was giving vent to his vehement grief, and seeking in vain in his mind for any device whereby he might be enabled to receive the proposed visit in a fitting manner, without perceiving that the day was drawing to a close (it was in the month of May), he suddenly heard the rapid steps of a horseman approaching him. He hastened to dry his tears, rose up, and found himself in the presence of a man of lofty and imposing stature, but gloomy aspect, mounted on an Arab horse as black as ebony. He looked at him attentively, and was sure that he had never seen him before. The unknown dismounted.

"You are in great trouble, Sire de Champfleury," said he with an appearance of interest; "do not be offended if I beg to know the cause of it, per-

haps, however, I know it already. If then you will consent to do me homage, I can relieve you, and replace you in a brilliant position, restoring to you greater riches than those you have lost."

The astonished knight, before he replied, examined the stranger anew. He was simply clad in black; and there was no coat of arms, either on his mantle, or on the trappings of his horse, to indicate a mighty sovereign; neither had he squires nor attendants of any kind. At last the Sire of Champfleury spoke, and "My suzerain," he said, "is the Count of Champagne. Whatever I can do to serve you that will not falsify the oath of fidelity which I have sworn to him, I will gladly perform, when I am convinced that your promises are serious. But first of all I must know who you are."

"When we have made our agreement," answered the black knight, "you shall know me. The homage which I require does not in any way interfere with that which you owe to the Count of Champagne, your suzerain, who in two days' time intends, with a brilliant suite, to stop for dinner at your manor-house."

These last words cruelly recalled to the knight his desperate situation.

"Whoever you may be," he said at last, after a

moment of silence, "and if it ruin me utterly, only saving my honor, I give myself up to you; for I was at the point of death; but," he added, in a tone of agony, "I must first know who you are."

"Well, then," answered the black knight slowly, "be not terrified; though my name may perhaps sound strange to your Christian ear, and your prejudices will rise up against me; I am he, who, once an imprudent rebel, am now a reprobate chief;—do you understand me now? You see in me the object of the terror of your brethren, that fallen angel who dared to strive in heaven!"

"Satan!" exclaimed the Sire of Campfleury, recoiling with terror; and he raised his hand instinctively, to make the sign of the cross.

The stranger hastily seized his arm. "Stop," said he, with an agitated voice, "what you were about to do is painful to me: I come to save you; but for me you are on the very threshold of disgrace; but I can restore to you riches and honors."

"I doubt it not," answered the knight bitterly; "but I will have none of your gifts."

"As you please," said the other; "in two days then, when the Count of Champagne arrives——"

The knight started; then, as if fascinated by a

glance from the black stranger, he resumed in a tone of apparent tranquillity: "But in what consists the homage to which you desire to subject me?"

"In very easy matters," replied the fiend, who paused for a moment, as if to recollect himself, and then continued:

"I shall only require three things. The first may seem strange to you; but you see, I must have some guarantee; the rest will be more easy. You must sell me the eternal salvation of your wife; and bring her to me on this day next year."

The knight, though he expected some revolting proposal, was indignant at this, and his heart beat fast with anger. But he was under an influence which made itself felt more and more powerfully every moment. By degrees his indignation calmed itself down; he thought that the rebel angel might have demanded something yet worse; that he had a year before him wherein to modify the abominable bargain, so he only muttered in a hesitating voice, that it was not in his power to execute the condition proposed.

"Only bring her here," said the black knight, "that is all I ask; on this day next year bring your wife here alone with you, without having warned her of our contract. The rest is my affair."



The Knight of Champfleury accepted this first condition, and signed with his blood on a triangle of blank parchment, the promise to fulfil it.

The eyes of the prince of hell then glared in triumph; and he proposed his second condition, which was, that the knight should deny his God. At this fearful proposal he recoiled in horror and burst forth into a torrent of reproaches, to which the stranger answered nothing; and too soon the knight's resistance had exhausted itself, and he consented to this second crime, secretly whispering to himself that he had a year before him wherein to repent. Without flinching, therefore, to raise his eyes toward heaven, and shuddering all the time at his own baseness, he repeated the blasphemies which the evil spirit dictated to him, and formally renounced his portion in paradise.

Thus he was entirely in the grasp of Satan, and while cold dews of horror stood on his brow, he asked what was the third condition of his compact; and the fiend, protesting that after that he would ask nothing further, declared to him that he must renounce the blessed Virgin.

The Sire de Champfleury started back at the word, and recovered some remains of energy; for, though he well knew that in denying his God he

had committed a crime still blacker, yet this third act was to him as the last drop which made the cup of horror overflow.

"Renounce the blessed Virgin!" he cried,—"after two crimes which destroy my soul, shall I further renounce the Mother of God,—the patroness and protectress of my own Marie?"

The fiend started at the name.

"If I renounce her," thought the knight, "what support, what resource shall I have left to make it possible for me ever to be reconciled to God?" No," he continued, speaking aloud, "I will never submit to this last degradation; you have led me too far; you have ruined me: let us have done, and do thou leave me."

He was so determined that the demon, seeing that he might lose all if he pressed him too closely on this point, contented himself with what he had already gained. Then he told the knight of a secret corner in his house where he would find immense sums of gold and heaps of jewels; after which he mounted his horse and disappeared.

The knight, greatly agitated, returned home. He found the promised treasures in the precise spot where he had been directed to seek for them; and gathering them up, without confiding to any one the

treaty by which he had made them his own, prepared for the expected visit.

He received the Count of Champagne with such magnificence, that those who believed him to have been impoverished knew not what to think; and they were still more amazed when, on one of the barons in the count's suite reminding him that St. Bernard was at that time preaching the second crusade, and inviting him to follow under the banner of his king, Louis the Young, he replied that particular engagements would keep him at home during the whole of that year, but that he begged to offer to the count, his suzerain, two hundred marks of gold, to furnish the equipment of his troop. The count accepted this liberal sum with gratitude; and the whole court complimented the Sire de Champfleury; who soon after this enlarged his possessions, rebuilt his castle in the most sumptuous manner, and distinguished himself more than ever by his magnificence and the splendor of his entertainments.

With all this, it was remarked that he had lost all his former gayety; and that his brow was constantly clouded with care. The joy of his newly acquired wealth, the perpetual round of festivities in which he indulged, the occupations which he multiplied to himself, in the hope of distraction,—all

could not suffice to deaden the anguish which pierced his very soul, when he remembered the fearful promise which he had given, and signed with his own blood; his heart was slowly wasting away within him; his nights were sleepless; his happiness only a splendid pageant with no reality. He could no longer feel any of those impulses which lead to prayer; on the contrary, if ever he entered a church, he was seized with a trembling horror which drove him from it; so that he never dared assist at any of the sacred offices. He had reckoned on making use of this year to reconcile himself with God; but a bar of iron seemed to be fixed in his heart between remorse and repentance. His wife gave him a little son just four months before the anniversary of the fatal compact.

The knight, whose pride revolted at the idea of confessing from what source his riches came, had never revealed to any one his dreadful secret. It was only at the moment of fulfilling his engagement that he regretted he had not consulted some learned religious; but it was now too late. One single hope remained to him,—his young wife, so pure and pious,—could it be that heaven would abandon her in her need?

When the fatal day was come, he called her to

him, and said: "We have a journey to take to-day. Get ready, for we must mount on horseback immediately."

The young lady placed her little son in the arms of her servant, said her prayers, and followed her husband.

"Shall we soon return?" she asked.

"Oh, we are not going far," answered the knight, vaguely, and hastened their departure.

After the pair had journeyed on for about a quarter of an hour, they came to a little chapel consecrated to the blessed Virgin; and the lady of Champfleury, whose tender devotion to her gentle patroness the knight well knew, begged his permission to stop for a few seconds in this oratory; for she never passed a place dedicated to the blessed Virgin without pausing there to offer up a short prayer. Accordingly, he gave her his hand to dismount, and remained himself at the door while she went in, holding the two horses. The lady remained but a short time in prayer; and, as soon as she reappeared, the knight replaced her in the saddle, and rode on by her side, shuddering inwardly more and more, the nearer they approached their journey's end.

Never had his young wife,—of whom, now that

he was perhaps about to lose her, he felt bitterly that he was no longer worthy,—never had his sweet Marie been so dear to him. Her beauty, full of modesty, the serenity of her countenance, her smile sweeter than ever, claimed from him at once respect and tenderness. But he could only sigh: he felt himself a slave to the compact he had signed; and he stood in too great dread of him to whom he had bound himself, to dare dream for a moment of drawing back from the fulfillment of his pledge; although it seemed to him that to snatch away his young and virtuous partner would be to tear from him his heart. Hot tears from time to time rolled down his cheeks, and his breast heaved with sighs when he beheld the seven withered chestnut trees, under which his interview with the black knight had taken place. Involuntarily he drew nearer to Marie, and would have taken her hand, but dared not; he could only murmur, "My dear Marie!"

"You weep," she answered, "you tremble; have you any sorrow?"

"Oh! let us move on," he cried; "I may not delay." A feeling which he could not account for had arisen within him toward his companion,—a deep sentiment of veneration, such as we pay to

the saints in heaven, absorbed every other. He dared no longer even look toward her, but spurred on his horse in despair.

As soon as they reached the spot where the compact had been signed, the black horseman came galloping up, followed this time by numerous squires, all clad like him in black. But he had no sooner raised his eyes toward the lady whom the Lord of Champfleury had brought him, than he grew pale, shuddered, fixed his eyes on the ground, and seemed afraid to advance a single step.

"Disloyal man," said he at last, addressing the knight, "is this your oath?"

"What!" replied the Lord of Champfleury, "am I not here punctual to the hour fixed? I have brought you more than my life; but I am under your spells."

"The compact is signed with your blood, base and dishonorable man," interrupted the demon, "and you have enjoyed all the fruits of it. Were you not to have brought your wife to this place? instead of which you are come with my inveterate enemy."

The knight, in no way comprehending what these words meant, turned toward his companion. An aureole of light surrounded the lady's brow; and

the black horseman, as this aureole gradually grew larger, dared no more to uplift his voice.

The truth was this:—the lady of Champfleury had gone, as we have seen, into the chapel of the blessed Virgin, and had placed herself lovingly on her knees before the revered image of the Queen of Mercy, the Comforter of the afflicted; but she had fallen into a miraculous slumber after her first Ave, and the Mother of God had taken her form, herself to accompany the miserable knight to the fearful place of meeting.

The Lord of Champfleury, stupefied with astonishment, felt his mind and spirit overwhelmed, and threw himself down from his horse to fall at the feet of his beloved Marie, and ask her pardon; for he still believed that it was she whom he had brought, and the aureole which encircled her brow appeared to him only as the consoling sign of the protection of the blessed Virgin. But at last the lady spoke; and with that voice, full of a celestial harmony, and calming all the tumults of earth, she said to the demon:

"Evil Spirit, didst thou dare to claim as thy prey a woman who trusts in me? Will thy miserable pride be never quelled? I come not to chastise thee, nor to aggravate thy pains; but I come to lift up

this weak sinner from his apostasy, and to withdraw from thy hands the guilty promise which thou didst constrain him to sign."

The Spirit of darkness bowed his head, slowly yielded the parchment, and withdrew in mournful silence.

The knight, overwhelmed, threw himself on the ground and burst into tears: the blessed Virgin touched him, and in that moment he found again what he had lost for a whole year, the blessing of being able to pray; and confessed with sobs and anguish and beating his breast, the enormity of his fall.

"Rise, my son," said the blessed Virgin, "and know that forgiveness is more easy to God than sin to you; but remember your transgression, and renounce pride and presumption for ever."

These were all the reproaches she addressed to him; and then she led him back to his wife, who was not yet awake. When she arose at last from this miraculous sleep, she saw her husband kneeling beside her. The blessed Virgin had gone back into heaven, and there only remained her holy image, calm and placid, in its little rustic tabernacle. The knight returned to his house with his beloved wife,

and confessed to her his enormous sin, and the unexpected help, which had dragged him back from the abyss.

From that day the Lord of Champfleury was no more celebrated as a proud and brilliant knight, but as a model of piety and charity.

## A LEGEND OF ST. AGATHA.

### I.

THE Consul Quintianus reclined in one of the chambers of his palace, at Catana, at the foot of *Ætna*, in Sicily, in the company of his ugly favorite, Lippus. The patrician sipped his wine languidly, and the spy stood obsequiously near.

"Lippus, this life in Sicily is a cursed bore. Here the emperor sends me away from the delights of the city, and instead of filling my coffers, as other pro-consuls, I find the people so infernally peaceable, that there is no chance for a single confiscation. Decius is a good emperor,—a jolly soul; but he has given me a hard lot. Tell me, Lippus, what can I do?"

"Marry a fortune," answered the favorite, curtly.

"Marry a fortune? thou counselor of impossibilities! Where is a fortune, in Sicily?"

"Truly, your highness need not go far. There is the daughter of the Catanian patrician, the peerless beauty, Agatha. She is wondrous rich, inheriting all the fortune of two uncles and her father."

"Aye, Lippus, now thou touchest my heart roughly. I know Agatha. I have sued for her, and been refused."

"Refused? Are you Quintianus? Have you the emperor's power, and your own knowledge of the world, and talk of being rejected by a provincial maiden?"

"Nay, nay, good Lippus! shrewd Lippus! I wooed not, as a green boy, but with art and power: and though I won the father, I was baffled by the daughter."

A slave glided into the apartment. "A messenger from Rome would see your highness."

"I will see him here; let him come."

The messenger entered, and touching his lips with his hand advanced and handed a roll of parchment to the proconsul—

"From Decius, the most mighty emperor."

Quintianus unrolled the parchment, and read without speaking a word until he had finished the scroll.

"The commands of the emperor shall be obeyed."

Lippus, the dogs must be let loose upon the Christians."

Lippus rubbed his hands with glee. "I am glad, I am glad," he exclaimed. "I knew Decius was faithful to the old gods, who let us do as we please. Now your highness can have Agatha."

"How?"

"She is a Christian."

"I know it,—for that, she scorned me. She was betrothed to the Gallilean!"

"Well, Governor of Sicily, have you not racks, dungeons, axes to put before your bride, and the power to make her choose between them and the honorable alliance with yourself?"

"Lippus, you are too great a villian to know mankind. The arts of terror fail on those who look to another world for their reward. The Christians are very obstinate. I must see Aphrodisia."

The imperial messenger retired, and Lippus went out to call Aphrodisia.

## II.

A lady of right royal mien, was bending over her embroidery, in the midst of her maidens, in her chamber in the palace of the patrician of Catana.

She finished the last little cross that was to ornament the stole, and leaning her elbow on the marble work-stand beside her, reclined her head upon her hand.

"Our lady is sad," said Lucia, the fair-haired Thracian, dropping her work and stealing gently to the lady's side.

"Indeed, Lucia, I am sad. Shall we have strength to bear up under this murderous edict of Decius?"

"My lady need not fear. Quintianus loves the patrician of Catana, and his household will not be disturbed."

"I know not, Lucia,—but do you think you will have strength to be faithful?"

"I doubt it not, sweet lady. Shall we sing for you?"

"Oh no, no. Sing not, gentle Lucia. Let us sing when we have conquered. I will go and pray." She arose,—“Nay, follow not, maidens,” she commanded, as she saw them rising, “I must go alone.”

"How strangely our lady talks," said the maidens one to another, when she had gone. "I could weep to see her so sad."

"She has awful bodings of evil from the edict of Decius," answered Lucia, "Yet why should she?"

Hark! 'Tis the tramp of horse in the streets

without. The sound of their footfalls goes ringing along in front of the palace. Why does the noise cease? Have the horsemen vanished so soon? The tread of armed feet and the clang of armor are heard in the great corridor. The maidens look at one another aghast. Suddenly a page enters breathless with haste and affright.

"Fly, madam, fly. I have sent the lictors to the other rooms; fly to the secret passage! Quick! Quick!"

"What is the matter, boy?" asked Lucia, calmly. "Do you not see the lady Agatha is not here?"

"Oh, Miss Lucia! take our lady quick, and go; fly, maidens, fly with her! The lictors are here, with Lippus."

A shudder of horror ran through the group of maidens at the name of Lippus. Lucia snatched the stole her lady had been embroidering. "To the secret passage, girls!" she said; "I will pass the oratory and bring our lady."

She entered the oratory in haste. "Lady, we must fly; the lictors are here."

"Are they come so soon?" inquired Agatha, calmly. "Go then, Lucia, and you and my maidens pray for me."

"I will wait for you, lady!"

"No, child, you must go. Hark, the clatter of sabres in the passage!—begone!" Arising, she opened a door that led into the secret passage: "Come, child, save yourself!" She pushed the maiden gently through the door-way, and closing the door resumed her kneeling posture before the crucifix. A rude blow shattered the door of the oratory. The lictors were upon her. "Be my strength, O God," she said; and she was torn from the altar.

### III.

"Quintianus, you are but a child!"

These words were spoken to the consul by Aphrodisia the witch, in the private chamber, where we have seen him with Lippus.

"So it seems, Aphrodisia, since I must seek counsel of you; this Christian girl baffles me. I offer her wealth; she smiles at me in pity. I offer her consular dignity, and the possibility of the imperial throne; and she murmurs half to herself, of reigning with Christ. I speak to her of beautiful gardens, troops of slaves, balmy odors, delicious viands, soft music and voluptuous delights, and loathing unutterable is in her queenly aspect. Speak, Aphro-



disia, thou practicer on woman's weakness, what am I to do?"

"Do?" answered the hag, while fire flashed from her small black eyes: "Remove the obstacle that lies between you and her."

"Is there but one?"

"But one."

"What is that?"

"Her innocence! Give her up to me for a few days."

"To you?—to be the associate of your six daughters?"

"Even so."

"Can you do any thing? I would like to have her estate."

"Leave her to me!"

"It is a hellish business to let you have her; but I have no other resource!"

"It is well!" the hag turned. "Now Christian, saint, that once gave me alms and advice, I have you in my power."

#### IV.

Thirty days passed, and Agatha was in the home of the witch and her six depraved daughters. With

many tears she implored the protection of God, and triumphed!

Aphrodisia, baffled, returned to the consul.—  
"Well, Aphrodisia, you were long in achieving your conquest, or in bringing me news of it. Is it complete?"

"I can do nothing, Quintianus, unless you allow me to tear her;"—and the hag stretched her long fingers, as if to grapple her victim.

"Nothing? Hell and furies! I will do something! I will try the rack! She thinks I fear to torture a patrician's daughter—gods! She shall find I fear nothing—not Jove himself. Go away, Aphrodisia; you are a driveller! What! ho! there, slaves! send the lictors for Agatha, the Christian! I will judge her myself."

In the dark judgment-hall, amid the coarse hangers-on of a cruel court, Agatha was stretched upon the rack. Her sides were torn with iron hooks, and then burned with flaming torches, and she smiled. Her breasts were cut off, and she reproached the consul with having forgotten his mother in the act. Bleeding and fainting, but with a spirit unbroken and a faith unflinching, she was led back to prison.

## V.

In the dark dungeon, with wounds unbandaged, and oozing forth blood, lay the patrician's daughter. Nature was exhausted, and her spirit troubled. In the thick darkness of the cell, and amid its dank odors, it was not physical suffering she felt. It was the torture of the soul. Images of what she had seen and heard, during the thirty days in the witch's brothel, assumed form and life in the impenetrable gloom. And spectre-like, lewd figures seemed to pass to and fro in the cell, and the air seemed to vibrate with sounds her soul loathed. They mocked her with hideous gestures and grimaces; and for a long time, she knew not whether they lived and breathed in their unutterable deformity, or whether reason had tottered on its throne within her. So live in the soul the impressions made on it, through the outward senses, by objects no more present. The dreams of the sea-farer after he has landed, are for weeks, of plashing waves, and dancing spray, and breaking cordage. The din of trumpets, the roar of artillery are around the resting soldier's peaceful pillow, and squadrons charge to and fro, in his sleeping fancy. So the brutal jest, the lewd

threat, the indecent song rang through the gloom of her dungeon in the ears of Agatha, and scenes of unutterable horror seemed to pass life-like before her straining eyes.

She burst into tears, "O God of my salvation! this is too much! Leave me not, desert me not, in this hour of trial!" and covering her eyes with her hands she wept.

Suddenly peace began to come over her heart. A soft light, like that which in a cloudless clime crimsons the glowing east shortly after dawn, stole through the dark cell. As it grew, hues of unutterable beauty were seen to float undulating in it, and be lost to the eye in its increasing brightness. It shone through the damp stone walls, through the iron gates, through the tiled roof, and with its subtle power penetrating their grossness, made them transparent and viewless as the purest air. Then Agatha beheld in whose presence she had suffered and wept.

Far, far away through the illimitable but thronged space, she saw the source of the light which entranced her, a blaze of light inaccessible. Beneath it, and nearer to her, was a throne high over all, beside this ineffable Light, on which sat in majesty the GLORIFIED REDEEMER. Lower still, and next to Him, sat

the Queen of men and angels. Further down, in circling bands, the nine choirs of angels, rank upon rank. Below them still, arranged in distinguishable bands, the apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, the elect of God. The light that fell upon them from above seemed joy itself; and each countenance reflected back its radiance in smiles of rapture. Neither did the ranks seem stationary in the glittering space; but there were movements from rank to rank, and to and fro, which seemed to awake harmonies of unutterable sweetness. And now of a sudden all eyes were bent on Agatha. And from the choir of the apostles its prince came forth, and with inconceivable swiftness descended through the shining bands toward the prison of the martyr. He came near to her and she felt the thrill of his touch, and knew that her lacerated body was healed. "Courage! Agatha," he said, and his voice was like a gush of music from ethereal harpstrings. And "Courage, Agatha!"—fell on her ears in the mingled tones of the countless people of the skies, deep and clear as the sound of mighty winds and waters, yet soft and sweet as the music of a dream. "Courage, Agatha!" and the Queen of angels bent from her high throne a look of love upon the virgin, "You shall soon be one of these," and she pointed with her

sceptre to a radiant band near to her. Back through the soft light, winged his way, the prince of the apostles. The light faded, the vision fled, but the peace remained.

## VI.

"So, the sorceress is cured? Knives and pincers, the rack and the flesh-comb take no effect upon her. Let us try fire!"

And the slaves bring huge kettles of living coals, and spread them over the fragments of broken pottery on the paved floor of the judgment-hall, and they seize her and roll her naked body over the fiery and jagged mass.

"Bear her away!" said Quintianus, after enjoying the scene for some time, "She must be dead."

She was borne to her dungeon. The vision still fitting before her, she said: "O Lord, my Creator, thou hast ever protected me; thou hast taken me from the love of the world; receive now my soul," and expired.

Hark! as Quintianus leaves the judgment-hall: a wild commotion in the street! The jar of the earthquake, the crash of falling walls and roofs, the shrieks of maimed victims! "It is over," said

Quintianus, when the shock passed. "It is but begun," shrieked the shrill voice of Aphrodisia, in the door-way. "The ocean of fire is rolling down from the mountain! The end has come!"

It was true. From the crest of *Ætna* was pouring out wave upon wave of fiery lava. It was careering madly down the slope, over vineyards and country seats, an irresistible torrent. "Stretch forth the arm of thy power now, O ruler! stay the torrent of fire with the strength and influence of mighty Rome!"

On it came, hissing and crackling and seething toward the doomed city.

"My treasure! my treasure!" gasped Quintianus. "It is in the house of Agatha. It is the price of her death. I must save it!" and he dashed madly toward the burning flood. Scarcely followed by a slave he reached the house and entered; but the torrent did not wait for him, and he was buried in the liquid mass.

Onward it bounded, roaring and resistless toward the square where, with blanched cheeks and chattering teeth, the citizens were huddled together.

"So," said Aphrodisia grimly, "we are to ride on fire to hell."

"Can not the gods save us?" ejaculated a citizen

so unused to prayer that he dropped his money-bag, clasping his hands.

"Gods, fool? there is no God but Agatha's!"

At that moment a cry arose. On the outer railing of a balcony, which the flames almost licked, stood a female form. The hands clasped a bloody veil, and the lips moved in prayer. The cheeks were unblanched, and the hands untrembling.

"It is Lucia," shrieked Aphrodisia, "with the veil of Agatha!"\*

The torrent seemed to have met a barrier. The waves from the rear no longer urged on those in front, but mounted above them, forming a wall of fire, whence forked flames, like serpent's tongues, darted toward the square which they could not approach.

At length they began to recede. "The virgin has saved the city!" shouted the people, "THE GOD OF AGATHA IS THE ONLY GOD."

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\*The Catanese tradition is, that the veil of Agatha stopped the approach of the lava which threatened the destruction of the city.