

from view. Was that the crib, she wondered; she had seen it once or twice in Catholic churches; this one must be beautiful.

Mary's eyes rested upon the congregation around her. How devout they all looked, how silent it was; the opening and closing of the door as people entered was done with as little noise as possible; no one seemed to speak, no one looked about. She glanced at her own friends; they were all occupied with their devotions; even Harry seemed to pay no attention to his surroundings, but had his eyes bent devoutly upon a prayer book. The priest had not yet come out; the service had not commenced; how strange they should be all praying beforehand. Why was it? She saw no harm in sitting at ease and looking around a little if one were early for church, or even in a whispered word or two; though, of course, after the services had commenced, none would be more decorous and devout than was Mary Sunday after Sunday in their pew at the Anglican cathedral. Mary soon saw she was the only one gazing around, and immediately drew her eyes to the front.

On the stroke of midnight the priest entered, preceded by his acolytes. This was the white-haired, gentle-faced priest Mary had frequently seen passing their house. From her earliest childhood she remembered him, and had always been attracted by his kind, benevolent expression. Katie had often told her of dear Pere Le Moine, the chaplain at the convent, so beloved by the pupils.

There is a gentle rustle as all go on their knees; a faint rustle comes also from behind the grate. The priest stands at the foot of the altar and Mass begins.

It seemed a little tame at first to Mary; she could not understand what was going on, and wondered at those around her, whose devout attitudes and rapt attention showed a perfect comprehension and sympathy.

But, hark! what heavenly singing! Where does it come from? Mary could not refrain from looking up; there she saw, high above the heads of the people, a grate similar to the one below, but smaller. Evidently the organ loft was there, inside the cloister.

How exquisitely they sang! The children's choruses were enchanting. "*Gloria in excelsis Deo.*"

That must be a nun; what a voice; how sweet, how lovely! "*Gloria in excelsis Deo!*" Mary was herself a sweet singer and enthusiastic about music.

By and bye a little bell is rung at the foot of the altar; the silence becomes, if possible, more intense; a devout look of expectancy is upon every countenance. Mary remains seated, but attentive. She fancies she hears a little motion behind the curtains; they seem to shake a little. Ah! they are drawn slowly apart. Mary can see a veiled nun kneeling beside the curtain; before she can look further the little bell rings again, and instantly every head is bowed. As Mary

looks now into the chapel she sees row upon row of benches occupied by pupils, but all are bowed in adoration; she can see nothing but snowy billows of white veils; the stalls on each side of the chapel are occupied by the nuns, who are also bending low, their veils concealing them completely from Mary's curious eyes. She turns to look at the worshippers around; they are in the same attitude of adoration; a breathless silence reigns; every head but hers is bent. A feeling of loneliness, of desolation comes over her; she feels as though all had gone somewhere and left her behind. She looks at the altar; what is it? The gentle-faced priest she had seen so often was holding something aloft. A majesty, a dignity she had never before observed seemed to invest him. What is it?

Mary sank upon her knees and bowed her head; she knew not why. A whisper came into her heart: "What if after all I should be wrong." Oh! the agony of that thought. "God help me! can it be that this is truth, and I am outside the pale? O! God, no! this is only a temptation!" While these thoughts were passing through her mind her exterior was calm; no one guessed her mental excitement. She continued to observe what was going on. After the elevation two acolytes approached the side altar, and while one lit the candles around the shrine the other drew aside the screen which concealed the crib. A beautiful representation of the Infant Jesus lying in the manger was revealed; near by stood a statue of Our Blessed Lady. Mary looked first at the sweet little Babe, then at the Mother, that dear Mother of Mercy and Love who was as yet a stranger to this other suffering Mary. As she gazed upon the tender countenance of that dear Mother she exclaimed, "O! if you have any power in Heaven exert it for me now, I am so miserable." She was conscious of a stir around her; people were advancing towards the sanctuary railing; it was time to receive Holy Communion. It took a long while to administer Holy Communion there. First the priest went to the grate, where the nuns and pupils all received. Then he returned to the sanctuary railing, and nearly all the congregation went forward in turn. The Wilsons went, and Mary again felt left out. An intense longing to partake of that mystic Communion seized upon her. As she watched the priest passing down the line the same sensation she experienced at the Elevation came over her "What is it?" she breathed. "My God, what is it?"

At length Mass was over; a few left at once, but nearly all remained for at least a quarter of an hour in silent adoration. Mary had time to compose herself; it would never do to let the Wilsons see her agitation. When they were outside Katie said:

"How did you like it, Mary?"

"Oh, it was beautiful," answered Mary, drawing in her breath. "The singing was lovely; who sang that '*Gloria in excelsis Deo!*'"