

THREFOOLD

When Elizabeth Andrews drifted back from the borderland where she had carried so long, her husband asked, "What shall we call the little one, Bess? I would not have her named because I wanted you to choose her name yourself."

"What is your choice, John?" The thin fingers closed weakly over his strong brown hand. "Elizabeth is the dearest name in the world to me, but you shall call the child whatever you wish. I still have one Elizabeth," brushing the hair from her forehead with a tender touch.

"Let us call her Mary; not a high-sounding derivation, just sweet, simple Mary. Then we'll have her consecrated to Our Lady and ask Our Blessed Mother to counsel, guide and protect our little girl all through life."

"Nothing would please me better, dear; I love the name of Mary more, I think, because it is Our Lady's than for any other reason."

So the first-born of the Andrews was called Mary. She was her mother's right hand, her father's comfort—a sweet-tempered, helpful child—but she was hopelessly deaf. Her great passion was music. She would sit for hours at the piano letting her fingers stray over the keys, producing all manner of sweet sounds. Professor Merwin, when asked if he could teach her to play, answered with a smile, "Not only can I teach her to play the piano, but I predict that she will become a finished musician. Mary has ears in her fingers."

And such seemed to be the case, for those slender fingers never struck a discord; they seemed to feel and recognize every variation of sound.

When Mary was about eighteen Father Halpin asked her to play the organ for the children's choir. Sister Placide was always with the children, and the young organist relied entirely upon her to guide the singers and keep the music up to the degree of excellence which Father Halpin required. Mary cherished a very tender devotion to Our Lady, and was never happier than when teaching the children to sing her praises.

Mary had composed the music for a hymn to which she set the words of Adelaide Proctor's exquisite poem, "Threfoold." She had worked on it so tirelessly and so lovingly that the melody thrummed in her brain and echoed in her heart with sweet persistency.

On the first Sunday in May there was always a May-day celebration at Notre Dame. On that day the statue of Our Lady was crowned with sweet spring flowers, and the entire congregation was placed under her protection for the ensuing year. The young Ladies' Sodality and the Children of Mary—robed in white—walked in procession from the school to the church. The sodality banner was carried at the head of the procession, and each sodalist carried a bunch of flowers for Our Lady's altar.

This May day was always a great occasion for Mary. She had arranged two of the beautiful May hymns for the children to sing during the procession. Miss Haskell, the leading alto of the "big choir," was to sing Mary's hymn, "Threfoold," during the interval between the sermon and Benediction.

May-day dawned bright and clear. The sodalists approached Holy Communion in the morning, and all was ready for the celebration in the afternoon. Half an hour before time for service a messenger brought a note to Mary. Her heart sank with a foreboding of evil as, with trembling fingers, she tore open the note and read:

My dear Miss Andrews:—I awoke this morning with a sore throat. Though I have been treating it all day it grows rapidly worse. It will be impossible for me to sing this afternoon. I am more disappointed than you can possibly be, for I had looked forward to the singing of "Threfoold" with such pleasure.

Hoping that I may have that pleasure some time in the near future, I am, Very sincerely yours, JULIA N. HASKELL.

Mary slipped into the school chapel. With bowed head she knelt before the altar and wept bitter tears. "Threfoold" was very dear to Mary; the beautiful words had become a prayer to her. She had woven much of that feeling into the melody, and the hymn was to have been a special offering of love to Our Lady on this the first day of her own beautiful month.

Perhaps she had taken too much pride in her work, she thought; and by so doing had made her offering unworthy. Mary had read much of Miss Haskell's voice, and she knew that the music of "Threfoold" was well adapted to its singer. After a few minutes of fervent prayer she felt comforted. Perhaps the sacrifice of her will would be more acceptable to Our Lady than the beautiful music would have been.

Tearing from the altar Mary found Sister Placide beside her. Without a word she placed the note in the good Sister's hand. When she had finished reading the note, Sister Placide wrote upon the little ivory tablet which Mary always wore at her side: "We must have the hymn, dear. Why not sing it yourself?"

Mary gave her a startled look, the blood mounting slowly to her pale cheeks. She seized the tablet and wrote rapidly, "I have never sung a note in my life."

"But I am sure that you can sing, and especially this your own composition, the hymn you love so well. Do you not sing it in your heart?" "Yes," wrote Mary, white and trembling, "I sing it in my heart, seldom spoke, preferring to use her tablet for a continuous conversation. "Yes, I think the melody is always in my mind, but I should not like to sing it in church."

Mary's hand. "That is right, dear; I am sure Our Lady will be pleased." The gentle nun had no fears, for she had often heard Mary sing. The girl was quite unconscious of the fact, but whenever the children reached a particularly beautiful or difficult passage Mary's voice rose clear and pure above theirs. Sister Placide had never told Mary of this, fearing that the knowledge would make her self-conscious and spoil the really beautiful effect.

During the procession the choir sang two of the sweet May hymns. As the head of the procession reached the altar they sang:

O Mary, take the humble crown Thy children twisted for thee; And hail thee Queen of May In love and clemency

Thy subjects are proud to be, And fondly own the way; Oh, may all hearts be true to thee And hail thee Queen of May.

The sodalists advanced, two by two, knelt, offered their flowers, then passed to their places in the pews. When the last one left the sanctuary the altar was a mass of flowers. The acolytes lighted the many candles, and the decorations were complete.

The "Little Office"—dear to the heart of every sodalist—was recited; then Father Halpin gave a short address to the sodalists, urging them to be true to their Queen, to imitate her virtues and to spread, particularly by example, the devotion to her. "And remember," he said in conclusion, "that if the Mother of God is your queen, she is also your mother. Go to her with all your cares and troubles; no matter how trivial they may be, she will help and comfort you. Tell her the desires of your heart; ask her to intercede with her Divine Son for you, to obtain from Him the grace of favor you desire, whether it be for yourself or for another. Mary is the mother of all mankind, but she is particularly a mother to you, her chosen ones; you have enlisted under her banner and wear her livery."

"This month, the most beautiful month of spring, belongs to Our Blessed Mother. Pray often to her during this time; pray for yourselves and pray for others. Pray for those you love, for those who have grown indifferent and have forgotten their duty to God; for those who are bound by the chains of sin, and for those who have no one to pray for them. Mary is the treasurer of heavenly grace; go to her with a simple faith, a pure heart and a firm confidence. You will not ask in vain."

When Father Halpin left the altar Mary felt that the time of her trial had come. She looked appealingly at Sister Placide, who smiled encouragement. Mary played the introduction, then sweet and low came the pleading voice:

Mother of grace and mercy, Behold how burdens press Weigh down my weary spirit. The Past, with all its memories Threefold, still I bear Before thy shrine: The threfoold offering of my love, Mary to thee!

And drive in here—to thee— Of pain—had brought repentance; Of joy—had brought regret, That which has been—forever So bitter sweet— Lay in my humblest offering Before thy feet.

All the pain and longing of her affliction—so tenderly borne—was voiced in the beautiful paths of the third verse, a pathos expressed by every tone of the flexible voice:

The Present, that dark shadow Through which we toil to day; The slow drops of the chalice That must not pass away; Mother! I dare not struggle, Still loss do I bear and shrink, I need thy presence in thy hands, And leave it there.

Sister Placide glanced at the young organist. Mary looked like the picture of St. Cecilia. Her head was raised, and the light from the stained glass fell full upon her upturned face. Her voice, a rich, pure alto, filled the church:

The Future, holding all things Which I can hope or fear, Brings sin and pain, may be Nearer and yet more near, Mother! this doubt and shrinking Will not keep me from thy hands, Unless I trust my Future To thy dear hand.

Father Halpin and the acolytes waited in the sacristy whilst Mary sang the last verse:

Making the Past my lesson, Guiding the Present right, Ruling the Future true, Bless them and me to-night, What may be and what must be And what has been—forever In thy dear care forever I leave my Queen!

Every word was distinct, coming as they did direct from the heart of the singer. Each member of the congregation felt their influence, and all joined in the threfoold offering.

Mary felt sure that her guardian angel sang with her, for she felt his voice. Her heart was filled with such peace, so uplifted with sweet religious fervor that she was hardly conscious of the children's voices singing the Benediction hymns. Whilst singing the "Laudate Dominum" Mary's hands trembled, and the notes in the book seemed to be blurred and indistinct. When she had finished she hastened to Sister Placide, who was preparing to follow the children downstairs. "Sister," she called.

Sister Placide turned back. Mary held out her trembling hands. "Speak to me, Sister; speak to me!" she cried.

"Why, Mary, child! what is the matter?" The gentle nun was startled by the girl's death-like pallor.

"It is true, then," she cried, clasping her hands. "Thank God! Oh, thank God!" Sister Placide was just in time to catch the unconscious girl as she sank to the floor.

was the striking of the gong at Benediction. Then I heard one of the children speak to another. I could not believe it, Father, until I heard Sister Placide answer my question."

"This is Our Lady's gift to you, my child," said the priest, reverently.

Mary is, because of her wonderful voice, quite prominent in musical circles. She is in great demand for concerts and for special feasts of the Church when the music is more than usually elaborate. But she is still organist for the children's choir, and is never happier than when singing the sweet hymns to Our Lady.—Lida L. Coghlan in Church Progress.

SOME MISCONCEPTIONS OF CATHOLIC FAITH AND PRACTICE.

THESE IDEAS ARE PRESENTED BY ANSON TRUMAN COLE, A CONVERT TO THE FAITH AND A MEMBER OF THE ALUMNI SODALITY.

Primary among these misconceptions is the notion that Catholics worship a quaternity, of which the Blessed Virgin is regarded by Catholics as the fourth member. But we have only to show by the Creed, in either of its forms, to whom alone the Church renders divine worship. All the collects and post-communion prayers for every feast of the Holy Ghost, as officially to affirm the status in the Church in a more plain and clear. Several of these are readily found in the Manual of Prayer, known as the Baltimore Prayer Book, on pages 675, 761 and many others. We need not hesitate to use with our non-Catholic neighbors the reverential terms Mother of God, for an Ecumenical Council—that of Chalcedon, late in the fourth century, whose enactments are generally accepted—was so guided by the Holy Ghost, as officially to affirm the status in the Church in a more plain and clear. 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