

The Little Red Lamb

O mistral of morning,
Thy grassy home scorning,
To welcome the rising day.
O sweet is thy singing
Nearth heaven's gate ringing
Out joy in thy gladsome lay.
O greeter of brightness
With song full of lightness,
No harp of the mountain through
Pines lays like thy putting
In the firmament soaring
In rapt - of love and song
O'er thy home in the flowers
While thy tender mate covers,
Sing us thy bridal lay.
Thro' bright sunbeams gliding,
The honey cloud luring
Maiden's words of mortal joy
May thy lay last forever.
May the soulful notes never
Miss music from the sky,
Long, long mayst thou sing it,
And from sunny air ring it,
Euthroned in bright clouds on high.
-Translated from the Irish by A. P. Graves.

MADRE MARIA'S HOPE

BY MARGARET KENNA

A WAYSIDE CALVARY.

Three little boys passed under the cross, which stretched its rude arms across the brooding sky of Italy. The climb to the mountain top had tortured a hot scorching into their cheeks, their eyes had a wild brightness in the sunshine, and the sweat dripped from their faces to their breasts. They could not speak for their beating hearts.

Luigi Roselli ran back for little Margherita Riardo, who stood in the path with tears in her eyes. She could not make the marching-time the boys did, but the tears only glistened in her eyes, they did not fall. Luigi's strong little heart was thrilled at her courage, for she was little—so little she still wore the coarse white linen slips of a baby. He was sorry she was not as strong as he was, and, although he was wearier than the others, he ran back for her.

"Come, bambino," he cried, dragging her by the hand, "it is the hour." Margherita looked at him a moment, wondering at the words. Luigi looked at her, wondering, for she was strange to his Southern eyes. She had the faxen hair and the pallor which make an angel in Italy.

Pietro Valdi was already climbing the cross when they reached the spot. "No, Pietro," said his brother Nino, a year older than Pietro and then only seven, "come down; Luigi is the oldest. He must be crucified."

"Come down, Pietro," Luigi called. "I will be Jesus." Pietro came down sadly. Nino twisted a wreath of green thorns and laid it on Luigi's black curls. Little Margherita had heard the women talking about the Passion Play the night before, and her mother had told her that Joseph Meyer, who took the part of Christ, was not hurt, only very tired for many days after.

She looked over her now what the boys were doing. "I can hang myself on the cross, Nino, but I cannot give, so you must come back for me," said Luigi softly.

He climbed the cross with the might and grace of his little hands and hung himself to it by a flax rope. The boys looked up at him with eyes blinded by the sun.

"Come down, Luigi," said little Margherita; but Luigi did not speak. "Come home now, Margherita. Nino and I will come back for Luigi at three. We're only practicing for the Passion Play. Once, when Luigi was a baby, the fishing-boats did not come home, and the village was starved, and an artist painted a picture of Luigi's mother and the Madonna, and then Madre Maria bought bread for the village. Luigi and Nino and I will soon be men."

If the village is in need again, we can have the Passion Play, and many people will come from Rome to see it, and you, Margherita, can be the Madonna; so come home now, bambino."

He and Nino started down the mountain, but Margherita would not follow. "Luigi," she murmured, winding her little arms around the foot of the cross, "are you thirsty?" But the boy hung there in ecstasy. A thorn pressed into his temple and the blood purified over his cheek.

"Madre Maria will be crying for you, Luigi!" The lashes fluttered over his eyes at the lashes' name. "Come down, Luigi, Madre Lucia told me last night that Jesus died on the cross to make us happy. Are you happy, Luigi?"

The cross did not tremble under his frail figure and the earth was still. The bird Margherita stayed, and the birds gathered on the arms of the cross and sang as if sin had never touched the world.

Luigi never knew how it was that his mother, passing the wayside cross on her way to the convent with the sun's lines, saw him and took him down from the cross and carried him home on her gray donkey—he and little Margherita and the convent lines, a sorry weight for Giovanni. It was many days before Luigi with old Madre to the wine-press. A fever seized him, and he was content to be carried out to the meadow every morning in his mother's arms and to

lie in the grass and watch the sheep. "Madre mia," he said one afternoon, "when I lie still and close my eyes I can hear the birds singing as they sang when I hung on the cross. It is the music of Good Friday."

Maria laid her hand over his eyes and sat trembling and thrilled. She scarce dared look at Luigi those days, lest the village should see in her eyes the hope in her heart. It was a mighty hope to Maria's pure heart. It made haloed out of her smiles and tears. Only Padre Filippo divined it. It was her secret and his, and it stood between them like an angel of God.

"Luigi," she said to the child, "you must not think so much about the cross and the birds. The cross of Jesus is a gospel of gladness to the world it redeemed. You have a sad nature, like mine. I want you to have your father's soul. He was like the sea, Luigi mio—rough some days, but with the sun over shining on his heart, as it does on the wild waves. Have you not seen how little Margherita and her mother are always laughing in the fields? Yet Margherita's mother is a saint, and Padre Filippo—he is smiling always and so poor!"

"Luigi has a good heart," Padre Filippo murmured, pausing where the mother sat with the boy's head on her knees. "He needs to watch the flocks and let that wild little Nino light the altar-candles. The scent of the fields, the bleating of the lambs in the dawn, the sailing of the sheep in the starlight, the drinking of the grape juice from old Maria's wine press—these are what Luigi needs to make his body grow as great as his soul!"

"Yes, padre," said Maria, with a glad smile. Luigi looked out dreamily over the meadow. The grass ran down to the brook and finished with a fringe of lilies. He raised himself on his elbow to watch old Mario leading the donkey about, with little Margherita at its woolly back. It was his mother's donkey, and for her birth-day old Madre Pollogini had woven him a gay blue bridle to give to her. The laughing child and the donkey and Mario, so black with sun-burn, were a wondrous picture to Luigi, who had the Italian love of color. The lambs were drinking in the brook. In the moist air the splashing of their little tongues made a murmur of music. In the distance the women were coming home from the vineyard, singing snatches of Vesper chants.

Maria saw Luigi watching Margherita. The child was growing so beautiful as a seraph. Already he loved her very dearly in his little heart; Maria loved her too, but ever a vision rose before her eyes. She tapered the same in the village chapel, the same was speaking to his people. It was not Padre Filippo. Margherita would go to a convent in Rome to be educated. The Riardos were wine-sellers and could well afford it. Perhaps she would marry a prince, and Luigi—

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a sword of disappointment, struck into her heart never to be withdrawn. Though the lips smiled, the black eyes seemed to sing an eternal requiem. It mattered not to Luigi that her body was of a brilliant blue and her skirts shorter than Roman women wore. She was his mother, and he saw the world gaze at her with joy in his heart. He wanted her to come home with him to lunch and then back again to the church, so he carried a little flagon of wine to her and made her drink it in the porch.

Margherita was waiting for him when he reached his studio. "Where is Madre Maria?" she cried when she saw Luigi. "She is still at church," he said, the spirit of the church lingering in his voice as he held out his hands to her.

He stood looking at her, and she returned his gaze, regarding him softly with her blue eyes—eyes which did not know the world, and yet eyes which it would never dazzle.

"I love you, Margherita," he murmured, bending and touching her brow with his lips. "Yes," she said, just brushing his curls with her fingers.

"The statue is nearly finished. It is wrought from memory. Memory is so beautiful sometimes that one fears to make it better."

He drew the sheet away. Margherita clasped her hands as at a vision. The studio was darkened; the angel seemed to stand in a twilight between the worlds. The head hung low on the breast, giving a beautiful dreaminess to the ethereal face. The strong light wings swept down, as if a breeze were brushing them, in flight, and the hands touched the shoulders of the child playing in its shadow. It was not a bare theme under Luigi's chisel. It was the angel fluttering between time and eternity.

"Yes," she said, as thrilled, and yet he stood trembling, as if he waited for her to speak. She rose and wound her arms around the angel's throat and laid her cheek against the stone. Luigi saw that out of the fire of his heart he had made the marble breathe, even as she was breathing now.

"Luigi, how could you make it so human and so divine? You are the new Angelo!"

"Perhaps Angelo's shade was with me as I worked. Oh, that old man! He had more than a sculptor's chisel—he had a seraph's heart. But, Margherita, my angel is not fit fame. It is a little votive-offering which I make—not that the world may tremble at the beautiful art of it, but that the angels may look up and smile as they pass, even as I smile, because God has given me an Guardian Angel!"

—he raised her hands to his lips. —then he struck the angel's face one or two exquisite blows and the spirit of a smile passed over the lips. "Tell me, Luigi, how is old Mario? Did not Madre Maria tell you of him?"

"Yes, he is well, and Giovanni— it is not strange that Mario must always have a donkey. Giovanni, to ride the babies about on, since the one he gave my mother when we were little? The present one is wiser than his ancestors, for he goes alone to carry the convent linens, though you must know he meets many on the mountain-path to tempt him from the way of holiness!"

"Has Madre Pollogini still her rheumatism?"

"Yes; and Padre Filippo's grave has just had a new sod laid on it, and my mother has planted lilies and passion-flowers there."

A shade passed over the two young faces and they looked up at the crucifix.

"Is Nino's little brother tired of being shepherd, in your place?"

"I do not know. My mother says the lambs are beautiful this year."

She was still standing by the angel, with her hands resting on its wings. A breeze swept the hair over her brow, and her young eyes looked out at Luigi through a cobweb of gold.

She was faintly conscious of her own charm. In the school the girls all turned to her, but she tried to conceal her sovereignty. Alas for the veils which human tenderness would draw! A violet may be sorry for its own beautiful blooming and may hide in the deep grass, but the dew falls in its little heart, the sun lights up the dew-drop, and the violet is betrayed!

Luigi smiled as he watched her. "Is there nothing wonderful at the convent now, Margherita?"

brava, Luigi? Madre Maddalena worldly! It was a sweet day, and in the evening we had a feast of straw berries!"

"There came a pause after their sweet laughter. The blue paled in the sky. A flight of doves stormed the window for the crooning crumbs. Ave Maria sounded in one moment from all the bells in Rome.

Luigi started. "Would you like to be married in the village church at home, Margherita?"

As he spoke Madre Maria stood in the door. It was Good Friday. Together Madre Maria and Margherita and Luigi went to St. Peter's."

The day hung its shadow over the two women, as they stood waiting in the throng. Maria's eyes were cast down and the lashes trembled on her cheeks. Her gnarled hand clasped her wooden rosary. There was a prayer on her lips for the world. That was its only existence to her. In the midst of it she abandoned herself to God. Beside her Margherita was but a child. Rome had nothing to match her white loveliness, unless it be the lilies waiting at yonder door of St. Peter's in tremendous battalions for the Easter bells.

At last they were within the doors. Was there a garment of death upon the human race, or was it but the darkening of the sun in St. Peter's? They were almost affrighted in the gloom. Scarlet and purple and gold were dimmed, the blue sky was forgotten, the multitude was as one human heart throbbing before the Presence which the altar fire betrayed.

Out of the silence, out of the darkness, voices rose. "Stabat Mater Dolorosa."

The Lamb was meeting a new death. His blood waivered in the music. Night had fallen when Luigi and Margherita left the church. The streets were like snow in the moonlight. They had lost Madre Maria in the crowd, and they paused by one of the columns to wait.

Margherita spoke at last. "Luigi, Padre Filippo's little donkey is waiting to take you far and wide across the mountains, on missions of love. There is none to take his place but you, Luigi—I know it now—you are chosen!"

"Yes, I will break the Bread of Life to Padre Filippo's people."

She lifted his hand with sweet reverence to her lips, as if his words had already consecrated it. He looked into her eyes.

"And I?" she murmured—"I will sing for the world. God has given me song."

Luigi found Madre Maria sitting on the steps in the moonlight. She had lost her way, but she was not afraid. In the church she had confessed to her own heart that she had sinned in her blind yearning to see Luigi a priest of God. Now a smile waited on her wan lips, to bless his betrothal to Margherita.

"Madre Maria," the girl whispered; just at that moment a breeze swept the lilies at yonder door, and they bent their heads—"the shepherd is going back to his lambs."

At last Maria realized. Tears splashed on Margherita's hand.

"Madonna!" Luigi cried, kneeling for his mother's blessing.

St. Vincent de Paul Society.

M. A. Pages, president of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul at Paris, has a copy of the general report to the Holy Father. The Pope has written him a letter in reply, warmly expressing his satisfaction with the progress of the work, especially in England, and sending him the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. He has appointed him a member of the Council and to all associates.

Every man watches his balance in the bank, and his balance in his pocket, pretty closely. There is another ledger account that the average man entirely forgets to his own undoing. It is his account with destiny. It is his account for this life and death account. It is his duty to himself to look up this account once every day and see that the balance is on the right side. It doesn't pay to let this account run on, and have it debited with indigestion, and then tempore blood, and finally nervous exhaustion, or prostration, or deadly consumption. When these diseases come it means a debit balance with death brought down in the blood red ink of another life sacrificed on the altar of foolish overwork and neglect of health. Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery makes the appetite keen, the digestion perfect, the liver active and the blood pure. It is the great blood maker, flesh-builder and health-giver. It makes firm, healthy flesh, and does not produce impotence or raise the weight above nature's normal. It cures 95 per cent. of all cases of consumption, Bronchitis, throat and catarrhal affections. Honest dealers don't use substitutes.

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