

through around her, as with radiant face and quickened step she bears her precious burden. Now and then she turns her beautiful eyes from the magnet of her soul-upon the gracious face of her holy spouse beside her. The meek, patient, silent St. Joseph, favored depository of the secrets of the Most High, chosen minister of the divine decrees. How we marvel at his silence—fitting companion of her who "kept all things in her heart." With an admirable simplicity, "the highest grace and the last attained," they bear with them the timid nestling dove's exquisite figure of Him who shall ever accompany the word made flesh. How beautiful this picture to the eyes of our souls, and how utterly inadequate do we find our feeble words, when we come to phrase the thoughts which well up in our hearts as we think of this joyous mystery. Strange are the ways of God, and inscrutable to mere human eyes His dealings with His own. Mary, with the old time humility which drew Him to take up His abode in her ivory palace, where He fed among the lilies, now presents herself to the aged priest of God, venerable in his patient waiting for the desired of nations. The light of life flickers dimly in his eyes, that have long been straining for the sight of Him who would come from the everlasting hills. And now as the modest trio ascends the Temple steps, the heart of the prophet priest is strangely stirred within him. His pulse is quickened, the vigor of youth reanimates his feeble frame, and with a mighty triumph his soul leaps out from his lips in the words of prophecy. Again he changes as he holds the wondrous Infant within his arms. Sweet, and soft, and low as a lute touched by some gentle hand, is his voice as he murmurs his "Nunc dimittis!" Oh! how tremulous are his lips as with a daring reverence and an awe stricken love he presses them to those of Him who will soon be his Judge. But oh! what of her who gave Him into the arms of Holy Simeon? How will the Eternal Father reward this faithful fulfilment of the law in the Child and the Mother? What fresh streams of joy will flood her soul as He comes back to her warm embrace, in all the beauty of His winning infancy? Her eyes see only Him, but oh! her ears are listening and she hears

the minor chord that Simeon sings after his canticle of liberation.

Like an icy wind from the frozen north it sweeps over her soul. "Thine own soul a sword shall pierce," and instinctively she presses her Babe to her bosom as if her first thought had been the fear of losing Him.

What other sword could pierce her soul? Here is the lesson of the first dolor of Mary. When God sends sorrow, press closer to Him, "Even though He slay me, Still will I trust in Him." The Lenten days will soon be upon us. The twilight of the Church. The days of search lights into the grey mists of the soul. The days of darkness that precede the perfect day. What shall we do in the twilights on Lenten days? Sit at the feet of Mater Dolorosa and learn the lesson of her first dolor. In it she appeals to us with a tenderness and a pathos greater even than in succeeding ones. She was so young, so fair, so sinless, and yet the dark waters submerged her, and the night closed in upon her in a darkness compared to which ours is as the brightness of day. Young as she is, yet she will be as a tower of strength to us who lean on her in the days of desolation. Fair and sinless, yet will she be very near to us, because of a common sorrow, Sorrow knits hearts that joy would never reach. So will we spend the Lenten twilights with the beloved Mother of Sorrows, and implore her with our eyes, if our tongues be mute to teach us how to keep close to God even when He tries us.

"Abide with me, fast falls the even tide,
The darkness deepens, Lord with me abide,
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, oh! abide with me."

"And entering into the house they found the Child with Mary, His Mother." Such the joy that awaited the three kings. Such be ours if we bear in mind the monition.

"The Child, *with* Mary, His Mother. Let them not be separated, then if sorrow come, as come it must, we will bear it no ill-will, because 'twill be but the shadow wherein the Child and His Mother ever walked. Who would not be with them in the shadow, rather than in the glare of the hard, cold world?

Grateful shade, no matter whence it fall, if it but give us the peace of heart which we so wistfully seek.

We will find it even in Egypt with the Holy Family.