

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

BY REV. F. MAHONY (FATHER PHOEBUS.)

There's a legend that's told of a gypsy, who dwelt
In the lands where the pyramids be;
And her robe was embroidered with stars, and her belt
With devices, right wondrous to see;
And she lived in the days when our Lord was a child
On His mother's Immaculate breast;
When He fled from His foes—when to Egypt exiled,
He went down with St. Joseph the blest.

This Egyptian held converse with magic methinks,
And the future was given to her gaze,
For an obelisk marked her abode and a sphinx
On her threshold kept vigil always,
She was pensive and ever alone, nor was seen
In the haunts of the dissolute crowd;
But communed with the ghosts of the Pharaohs, I ween,
Or with visitors wrapped in a shroud.

And there came an old man from the desert one day,
With a maid on a mule, by that road,
And a child on her bosom reclined—and the way
Led them straight to the gypsy's abode:
And they seemed to have traveled a wearisome path
From their home many, many a league—
From a tyrant's pursuit, from an enemy's wrath,
Spent with toil, and overcome with fatigue.

And the gypsy came forth from her dwelling and prayed
That the pilgrims would rest them awhile;
And she offered her couch to that delicate maid,
Who had come many, many a mile;
And she fondled the babe with affection's caress,
And she begged the old man would repose;
Here the stranger, she said, ever finds free access,
And the wanderer balm for his woes.

Then her guests from the glare of the moonday she led
To a seat in her grotto so cool;
Where she spread them a banquet of fruits—and a shawl,
With a manger, was found for the mule;
With the wine of the palm-tree, with the dates newly culled,
All the toil of the road she beguiled;
And with song in a language mysterious she lulled
On her bosom the wayfaring child.

When the gypsy moon, in her Ethiop hand
Placed the infant's diminutive palm,
Oh, 'twas fearful to see how the features she scanned
Of the babe in his slumbers so calm!
Well, she noted each mark and each furrow that crossed,
O'er the tracings of destiny's line;
"WHENCE CAME YE?" she cried, in astonishment lost,
"FOR THIS CHILD IS OF LINEAGE DIVINE."

"From the village of Nazareth," Joseph replied,
"Where we dwell in the land of the Jew;
We have fled from a tyrant whose garment is dyed
In the gore of the children he slew;
We were told to remain until an angel's command
Should appoint us the hour to return,
But till then we inhabit the foreigner's land
And in Egypt we make our sojourn."

"Then ye tarry with me," cried the gypsy in joy;
"And ye make of my dwelling your home.
Many years have I prayed that the Israelite boy
(Blessed hope of the Gentiles!) would come"
And she kissed both the feet of the infant and knelt
And adored him at once:—then a smile
Lit the face of His mother, who cheerfully dwelt
With her host on the banks of the Nile.

A STORY OF THE ALPS.

(From the *Ave Maria*.)

In a little cabin, built up against the hill-side in a certain part of Italy, lived a widowed mother and her only son. She had reached the good old age of sixty. But in place of her boy, there was often a strange, an unwelcome guest beneath her lowly roof, namely, sorrow, deep, heartfelt sorrow. For her son would no longer stay at home and mind the cow and the three goats, which had been long the only wealth of his parents. He had become a wild and reckless youth, rambled over the hills by day and by night with others as reckless as himself, who had formed themselves into a band of brigands, and who set all laws, human and divine, at defiance. The tears and the prayers of his mother were in vain; Gallus obeyed but the dictates of his passions. As is the case with many another young man, his ruin began by the neglect of prayer and of his religious duties, and by associating with evil companions; and now, if it chanced that he ever had to pass by the little church of his native place, he stole by as if afraid of Him who was hidden in the tabernacle there.

No wonder that, day and night, the rosary never left his sorrowing mother's hands, and that the string on which the beads were fastened was ever moist. The mother's tears flowed unceasingly, and the mother's heart ever prayed for God's mercy and grace for her son.

One day a rough huntsman came to the poor mother with the sorrowful news that her son lay in a hollow on the summit of the hill, with a bullet through his breast, and a broken ankle. "He will never enter your house alive," added the messenger of evil, roughly.

The poor mother begged him most urgently to call the people of the neighboring village to give their help, but first of all to get the priest.

"No use to talk to him of confession," said the huntsman; "he swore at me not to bring a priest near him."

This was a crushing blow to the poor woman; but she entreated the messenger to stand by her, to bring the priest in spite of what was said, and to hurry. How could he refuse? When he was gone the mother asked herself: "What shall I do? What shall I do?" After some moments she stood up and said: I will do penance for him now, in the hour of his death; that is what I can do. Though the journey is long for me; I will go to my boy away up the hill.

She took an earthen pitcher with her, in order to bring him a cool and refreshing drink, and soon began to climb the high hill, along through the woods, and over the stony ways, and over the rocks. Soon it was not only the mother's heart that bled, but her feet and her hands, from the sharp stones and the thorns; she panted and wiped the sweat from her face and the tears from her eyes. She can go no farther, poor old mother! and yet there is another half mile of scrambling before her. Motherly love urges her forward, she kisses the blood-stained rosary, and rejoices at its new adornment. "All as a penance for my boy! Oh! surely the heavenly Mother will implore mercy for him now she beholds this rosary stained with a mother's blood." Such thoughts give her new strength, and she totters forward again. Now she sees the priest walking forward with vigorous strides on the rocky path, and she is inspired with new hope and new courage. Thus she moves on, slowly and painfully, but she is coming nearer to her son.