

FRONTISPIECE



WHEN the King of Heaven resolved to share our exile, it was not His ancestral palaces that He chose for His dwelling, it was not the cradle of David that heard the first wailing of the newborn Child. He slept not under curtains of purple and silk, nor did the great ones of the world, nor the officers of their courts, come to do Him homage. No! His palace was a stable; His cradle, a manger; He slept upon straw, wrapped in poor swathing-bands, and the only witnesses of His mysterious birth were the domestic animals.

The first adorers of the Infant-God were humble shepherds, keeping guard over their flocks. It was to the little, the humble, the ignorant that the shepherds first made known the ineffable Mystery. True, the royal and the learned came later on to offer, along with their homage, their magnificent presents. They indeed, came, but—later! and God did not send before them His celestial messengers. In the same way does Jesus act in the tabernacle. Around His Eucharistic Crib, they whom Jesus calls the first are still the humble, the lowly.

As soon as the morning-bell sounds in the valley, who are they who set out in haste for the village church? Some poor, simple, ignorant women, some good laborers who come before yoking their oxen to the plough, to bow their head in presence of Him who makes their wheat to shoot forth; some pious workmen who begin their toilsome day by hearing Holy Mass. The others, the great, the rich, the pleasure seekers, are still reposing at their ease in their darkened chambers.

And in the cities, while silence and darkness everywhere reign, who respond to the call of the matin-bell? Humble Servants of the aged and the orphan, good religious vowed to poverty and prayer!