A TEMPERANCE STORY

Written for the Total Abstainer, Glace Bay, N. S.

The Bowdin Hotel occupied a central location in the hustling town of Forfar. It was the only house in that town that could afford comfortable accommodation to the travelling public, which, so far as Forfar was concerned, consisted principally of tourists and commercial travellers. Although the law of the Province in which Forfar was situated did not permit the sale of intoxicating liquor, the Bowdin was permitted by the authorities to openly and without molestation from the officers of the law, conduct a most elaborate and well-stocked barroom, where "choice liquors were dispensed almost every hour of the twenty-four. The law was thus allowed to be violated on the theory that a bar-room is an absolute necessity for the proper accommodation of the travelling public in an up-to-date hotel such as the Bowdin claimed to be. But it was a well-known fact that the bar-room patronage of Forfar's sole hostelry came largely, not from bona fide guests, but from those who boasted of being the "respectable moderate drinkers" among the citizens of the town, and, it may be noted, this particular class included the "authorities" by whose gracious permission the law was being violated.

It was on a delightful Saturday afternoon, the latter part of August, with the business places of Forfar closed under a regulation adopted for the summer months, that Mrs. Carter, wife of the proprietor, sat in her large and heavily upholstered arm-chair, on the piazza of the Bowdin. She was a stout and stately lady with snow-white hair, and her face gave indications that during the latter part at least, of the fifty odd years she reckoned as her age, she had passed through days that brought her else than peace and cheer. On the spacious lawn in front a game of tennis was in progress. Engaged in this interesting pastime were three young men who, after having quaffed their favorite glass of brandy and soda in Room 4, a private annex to the bar of the Bowdin and reserved for special patrons, were enjoying their off afternoon. Three years ago they came to Forfar, each from a different section of the country districts with which the town was surrounded. They left their humble country home about the same time, bright and intelligent young men, after having received a careful religious training from good parents who warned them of the many dangers that are in the pathway of the young man once he emerges from under the parental roof, and they were further warned never to forget the one great bulwark to resist temptation; a strict attention to religious duties, and particularly to avoid intoxicating liquor, the taste of which they had never yet known. But, alas, these warnings were soon forgotten once they became enticed into the glamour and whirl of the so-called "social circle." They secured positions with business firms in the town of Forfar. For the first year they were model young men, attending well to their religious duties, but while they were strictly temperate they did not join the League of the Cross, having no experience with a temperance society, none being established in their home country parishes, and this proved the vulnerable point to which successful seige was laid by the subtle tempter. Gradually they began to mix in with society. Their visits to places of amusement became oftener than to church, and finally to properly qualify for the social functions they entered the dancing classes of the music hall. The associations there formed made it necessary that they should practise "late hours," and at the end of the second year it was not unusual for the gray streaks of dawn to find them seated at the gambling table in Room 4 of the Bowdin. The off-afternoon and the evenings of the outing season were spent on the lawn or at private garden parties. Religious duties became irksome and burdensome and it was preferable to "enjoy life" according to the code of ethics regulating society.

On this particular afternoon their associates in the game were three young ladies, the youngest of whom with tresses of golden hair streaming over her shoulders, was some years from passing out of her teens. She was Miss Lilian Carter, and while her mother, seated on the piazza, admired the dexterity and swiftness of her only remaining child of a family of five, she pondered sorrowfully over the past. She was carried back twenty odd years, and there, through her mind's eye, she saw her two young boys, whom she idolized as they romped through the corridors of the Bowdin the first few years after she and her husband had taken charge of the house. She delighted to see her darlings petted and fondled by the guests, with whom they were favorites; she watched them as they scampered with their father into Room 4, where no objection was raised to the "sips" offered them by the drinkers; she listened delightfully to their cheerful laughter as they came running to her to repeat the story of Mr. So-and-So and the witty sayings of Mr. This and-that in Room No. 4. She follows them down a few years later when she finds them budding into manhood, taking their places in sport and amusement, their company sought at social functions; she would listen during the early hours of morn to the maudlin speech at their home coming and enjoyed as most amusing the incoherency of their talk with the thought that, if in their "innocent" enjoyment of the pleasures of life, they were a "little in their cups," it was something to be overlooked and not condemned in the life of one who wished to be popular. In her mind's eye she followed their career a few years later, and then it was that tears of anguish streamed down her cheeks. She found them ostracised from society, where once they shone so brightly, shunned by the respectable, and their only associates the low and the degraded. "And where are they to-day?" she asked herself. One is wandering in foreign lands, an outcast, and the other—Oh the thought of it,—while a participant in a drunken brawl went into eternity as the result of a fatal blow dealt with a piece of iron in the hands of a comrade. Her thoughts then went to her two young and handsome daughters, whom, not only their parents, but the whole town admired as they grew up to take their places in Forfar's most charmed circle of accomplished young womanhood. They were given a liberal education and their parents, with unstinted hands lavished upon them the wealth of the Bowdin which was reputed considerable as the business of its bar was very extensive. The entertainments, at which they presided with such grace and dignity, were events of more than ordinary interest in the social world of Forfar, and those whose distinguished privilege it was to attend were regarded as highly honored. Whether these functions were held in the spacious drawing-rooms of the Bowdin or in the marquee of the lawn, the serving of the choicest vintage was the all-important feature and there did not seem to be real enjoyment until all began to feel the effects of the copious draughts of sparkling wine. The sorrowful mother gave a passing thought to those days of gaiety, and then, oh, then the present, with what sorrow she contemplates. In the homes of those two daughters there is neither peace nor happiness. The appetite for strong drink was carefully planted in both husbands and both wives at the gay gatherings that were so vividly before her mind a moment ago, and now a full and plentiful harvest is being reaped in misery and degradation. And she asks herself: "Whence came this cup of sorrow filled to overflowing?" Too well she realizes the answer, it is the product of the one department of the very institution over which she herself has presided for over twenty years, the bar-room of the Bowdin. Then she turns loving eyes once more towards the only remaining member of the family, the young, gay and handsome Lilian. How is she to be saved? Is the future happiness of that promising child worth the sacrifice—the sacrifice of the substantial profits of that one department?

This is the perplexing question she is endeavoring to solve when her attention is drawn to a wretched specimen of manhood who, standing on the curbstone, is gazing with a stare that startles her at the group of young people on the lawn. She recognizes him. It is Richard Downing, one than whom, a few years ago, no one was more welcomed at the Bowdin. Downing was the graduate of a leading University, who afterwards took up the study of law, was admitted to the bar and, thoroughly equipped with a bright intellect, a liberal education and a well balanced legal mind, opened an office in Forfar five years ago with every prospect of a brilliant career in his chosen profession. His first two years in practice were most successful, he was steadily coming to the front and his business was becoming more extensive every day. He moved in the best society, but then came the turning point in his career he became a frequent visitor at the Bowdin. Just in proportion as the numbers of these visits increased and there duration lengthened his attention to the business of his clients was withdrawn. The down grade was easy and when he looked back to retrace his steps, he realized it was too late. His clients abandoned him, he was helplessly in debt and now he was rejected and spurned by associates who received him with open arms at the gambling table and the bar when he first sought their comradeship. He stood for a moment and, with a steadfast gaze on the players, he approached the side of the lawn. Raising his arm and steadily holding his hand on high he spoke in a clear and firm voice that claimed from his listeners the attention they would deny his tattered and much soiled raiment. "Pardon me, ladies and gentlemen," he said, "if I remind you that while you are enjoying your pastime you are swimming dangerously close to the whirlpool of misery of which I am a victim, the maelstrom that has already swallowed up the bright prospects of hundreds of young people who were as anxious as you are to retain their honored places in society and had mapped out for themselves brilliant careers of future usefulness. As they partook of their first wine the flavour was as delicious as it is to you to-day, these surroundings were to them the charming paradise which you believe now you have discovered, but gradually, yet swiftly they were being carried towards the centre and there they perished. It is here, surrounded with pleasures of every variety, convival associations and enticing companionship that many a young man began his downward career; it was here he was put on the highway to destruction, and as soon as he became the "drunkard," the inevitable goal he must reach sooner or later if he continues to frequent the bar, he was relegated to the slum and the dive there to appease the thirst and craving created within the precincts of this beautiful mansion, a mansion built and maintained by the tear of the widow and the wail of the orphan. Time was when I was a welcomed visitor here, an honored guest on that lawn and in that drawing room. To-day I am an outcast as the result of my visits here, unworthy of even a passing recognition from those who not only robbed me of my earnings, but also of my ability to earn, and this because I have become the finished product of the very institution over which they preside with such splendour. I am not free from blame as I allowed myself to enter and continue my career of recklessness and I am reaping the reward. That which gave me and hundreds of others misery and wretchedness gave them affluence, but will they be immune?—that is a question we shall leave to be decided at the judgment seat by a just God. I am done, I have sounded my note of warning, and in doing so I have discharged a duty I owe you my God."

The words of the unfortunate man who felt so keenly his position when it was too late were not listened to with the strictest attention by the group of players, as they were at the time too much engrossed with the pleasures of their newly discovered paradise. The words so truly spoken, however, did not fail to receive the patient hearing of the lady on the piazza, towards whom Mr. Downing turned his eyes occasionally during the deliverance of his remarks and the scenes of sorrow she allowed herself to dwell upon in the reverie from which she was aroused by his appearance, prepared her in an especial manner to permit every word spoken to sink deep into her very soul. They were words that brought to her eyes tears of anguish, and yet they were true, alas, too true.

On a slight eminence near the centre of the town of Forfar was situated the Catholic Church, a structure sufficiently large to accommodate the one-third of the population that was Catholic. The good old Father Connell had been the pastor for over fifteen years and was beloved by all his people. During all these years nothing gave him greater concern than the number of young people going to ruin every year through drink, and he continually exhorted his people to avoid the saloons. The Carter family were not the strictest in church attendance, merely fulfilling the precept of going to Mass on Sunday when it was convenient to do so, and the old gentleman was particularly careful in selecting his pew near the door, as he explained, he might not attract attention in leaving when Father Connell began talking temperance. It was, therefore, somewhat surprising on Sunday morning following the visit of Richard Downing to the lawnside of the Bowdin to find Mrs. Carter at Father Connell's confessional, and at the first Mass among those who, with great devotion, approached the Holy Eucharist. It was at that burning furnace of peace and happiness that she found her soul tranquil after the torments it suffered during the long hours of the preceding night, as she pondered over her share of the responsibility for the ruin of so many. Then followed the resolution that the bar of the Bowdin would close. She realized that to make this an accomplished fact she would have to enter upon a long and fierce struggle. Her husband had been in the liquor business all his life, and often expressed himself firmly convinced it was impossible to successfully conduct a hotel without a bar. The liquor he sold, he contended, never led to drunkenness, it was procured elsewhere when he had refused any more to those showing any signs of intoxication. It would be a struggle, and yet fortified with that spiritual energy received by a devout soul when in union with Christ in the Adorable Sacrament of the altar she was determined to bring it to a successful issue.

The genial proprietor of the Bowdin, while a good citizen, was of the type of the lukewarm Catholic in whose soul waxes strong the spirit of worldliness that creates a love and esteem for riches and honors and pleasures, and Mrs. Carter's first care was to have this supplanted by a love of God, that "the tepid soul should become fervent." It was two weeks later that Archibald Carter approached the sanctuary rails on a Sunday morning, and on the following Monday, to the great surprise of his patrons and the joy of his wife and good Father Connell he made the announcement that the bar of the Bowdin was closed forever.

Years rolled by. Forfar became a model town of sobriety, the "low" places, failing to secure the patronage of the "high class" and with no recruits coming from a "respectable house," could not thrive on the pittance of the old time drunkards and were forced out of business. The Carter family became zealous church workers. The old lady turned her attention to Richard Downing, through whose instrumentality she had entered upon her temperance crusade, with the result that he was again rapidly coming to the front in his profession.

Close so-called respectable barrooms, and temperance work is easy.

SERMON ON THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

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"And the Lord God said to the Serpent: I will put enmities between them and the woman." (Gen. III, 14.)

1. The aim of Holy Church in appointing solemn festival days is to increase our knowledge of the "wonderful works of God," and thereby to evoke from us a more heartfelt hymn of praise, a more profound act of "our rational worship." This aim is wonderfully attained by setting aside this day for the worthy commemoration of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, which, after the union of the Eternal Word with the human nature of Christ, was the most elect work of the Spirit of God. We are invited to-day to dwell on the comprehensive significance of this work. Accordingly, we shall in large part omit the history and theological demonstration of the dogma formulating it, as also on account of the controversies, to which it gave rise, however interesting such a detail otherwise might be. We shall begin where controversial literature and theological demonstration end. Reverently and thankfully we shall take from Holy Church the truth at length after long and fierce conflicts finally acquired and endeavor to realize as fully as possible its meaning. In other words our first object will be, in the light of the Church's decision, to conceive the excellence of that Holy Virgin, who, in a celebrated vision, gave a worthy description of her own personality in the terms of the dogma itself, "I am the Immaculate Conception."

II. The promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, almost in our own times, has immensely improved our position for the contemplation of Mary's excellence. Not only have we no longer that dim vista of Origen, of Basil, of Chrysostom; who contrary to all the other Fathers of the Church, admitted shadows of doubt, disbelief, or ambition in Mary; but we are equally free from the alleged prejudice of St. Thomas of Aquin, that by ascribing sinlessness to Mary we should derogate from the dignity of Christ. But now we should go further still and free ourselves from those interpretations of Scripture, which seem to be reminiscences and echoes of the age-long conflict, and which fail to draw light from the oracle of the Church's teaching. Error dies hard. If, as we have recently been told, the leaven of Jansenism has left traces in our spiritual works on Holy Communion, and on the practices of the faithful in many places, it is not surprising that in writing of Mary long ago commentators on Sacred Scripture would be more or less impressed by the misunderstandings, in which the truth of the Immaculate Conception was so long enveloped, or that more recent writers should retain traces of these misunderstandings. It shall therefore be our further purpose to give to the Sacred Scripture a tentative interpretation more in harmony with the great truth which the Church has at length declared to be revealed of God. In making this attempt we shall not contradict tradition but rightly apply it. In regard to Mary all the golden threads of doctrine scattered in the Fathers are woven into the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. In turn, this dogma reflects light on the interpretations of Scripture and enables us to set aside what is not in harmony with it.

III. Our first purpose then is to get a grasp of the positive good that was conferred on Mary in her Immaculate Conception. But we are hampered at once by the negative terms in which the dogma was declared. The definition of Pius IX., given in 1854, was that "the Blessed Virgin Mary in the first instant of her Conception, by a singular privilege and grace granted by God in view of the merits of Jesus Christ the Saviour of the human race, was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin." This definition means that original sin was not blotted out in the case of Mary but was excluded and with it was excluded all disability pertaining to original sin. The terms are indeed negative but as original sin is to a large extent the privation of the great positive endowments of our first parents, to be exempt from original sin means a positive grant of great supernatural good. To be exempt from the stain of original sin means to have that fullness of being which belongs to the supernatural man. It means, to say the least, that Mary was endowed with original innocence, sanctity, justice and integrity, and so that all that Eve was before the Fall, Mary was at her first entrance into being.

IV. The grasp of this positive excellence in Mary is peculiar to the Catholic mind. No Christian denies that Mary practiced exalted virtues, or that like the mothers of great men, she is worthy of a certain consideration on account of her Son. But other mothers receive no positive excellence because their sons turn out to be great statesmen, or scientists, or warriors, but only a pale reflected glory. So non-Catholics would have it with Mary that Catholic mind, on the contrary while justly holding that Mary's dignity is that of the Mother of God, has always been fixed on the excellence of her being, and has held it to be greater than that of any of God's other saints or His Angels. Newman quotes St. Augustine as saying, that Mary was more exalted by her sanctity than by her relationship with Our Lord. St. Ambrose says that Mary "was resplendent with purity, greater than which, under God, cannot be conceived." Such thoughts were not confined to a few writers, but were general, as is indicated in the received axiom: "Death through Eve, life through Mary." Nothing could be more significant than this saying. If indeed Mary is the new Eve, as Christ is the new Adam, since Christ as man, inconceivably transcends Adam, the parallelism demands that Mary's excellence would far transcend that of Eve in the state of innocence and grace. But Holy Church has gone further than the most devout writers in extolling the excellence of Mary. Yearning to find adequate expression for that which can scarcely be expressed by words, Holy Church has seized on the praises of Divine Wisdom and adjusted them to her, in whom above all creatures Divine Wisdom found its abode. Thus tradition, liturgy and the Catholic mind of ages, taught by the Holy Spirit, ascribe to the Holy Virgin a paramount, unique excellence. God indeed did great things to her because He was mighty to do so; greater, remaining as she was a human person, we believe that He could not do. As Mary was made immaculate in view of the foreseen merits of Her Son, it is impossible to separate for a moment the worth of her Immaculate Conception from the worth of her Divine Maternity. They are both indissolubly bound together. We see, therefore, the great treasure of supernatural riches, which the Immaculate Conception means.

V. How many passages of the Holy Scriptures, referring directly to Mary, are in harmony with the concept of her exalted excellence! She is the woman, whom the Lord God, Who is represented to us as summoning in anger the very limits of His Ommipotence, (as a man in anger calls on his extreme powers,) will call into being and into such glorious being, that there will be perpetual enmity between her and the serpent. "I shall place enmities between thee and the woman." She is the one, to whom the angel "sent from God,"—from God Who had foretold her ages before, carried the great title of the woman, "the most blessed among women." Christ, the Son of God, will ever bear in mind this title and address her by it. "Woman, what is that to Me and to thee?" "Woman, behold Thy Son." It is difficult at times to separate her influence on others from that of her Divine Son, Elizabeth meets her, and Elizabeth prophesies. Joseph is near her, and is illumined with heavenly dreams. Simeon and Anna see her, and speak of things to come. In the whole Gospel of the Infancy, about Mary shines a heavenly radiance. Angels and men venerate her. The Most High awaits her word; The Holy One is ever with her.

VI. Now can we believe that the Evangelists subsequently wished to dim this radiance, making her apparently the last of his daughters of Israel, and to dim it by the words of Christ Himself? Can we believe that He, arrived at man's estate, uttered no word regarding her prerogatives, set publicly no value on her exalted sanctity, but continuously reproved her maternal impetuosity reminded her to keep her place, warned her not to meddle with His theandric works? Can we believe that one so holy as Mary, so composed, so illumined, was capable of negligence or indiscretion however inculpable? Surely not. Belief in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception forbids us to follow authors and commentators, who seem to have in mind, after a human fashion, only that dignity which a son reflects on a mother, rather than that excellence, which made Mary worthy to be the Mother of such a Son! No! if we can enter into the mind of Christ, we shall find there the highest realization of His Mother's worth and we shall find that the words which fall from His lips, are a continuous panegyric, a transcendant, filial veneration of His Holy Mother.

VII. To that limited extent, in which Christ revealed His mind, we may without irreveaence, guided by the decisions of Holy Church, attempt to enter it. The Gospels are a partial epiphany of the mind of Christ. Now from the Gospels, for our purpose, we gleam two rules for interpreting the Divine Mind. First we find that Christ's revelation of the mysteries of Kingdom was made gradually, step by step, and that the final revelation throws light on all that went before. How gradually the Primacy of Peter is unfolded from the time, when his name was changed from Simon to Peter, up to that memorable moment by the lakeside, when the risen Saviour and the Chief Shepherd said: "Feed My lambs; feed My sheep! See how the multiplication of bread led to the promise of the Eucharist, and how the eating of the paschal lamb led to the Eucharistic feast? Baptism, Confirmation, Penance, receive the same gradual development. The reason for all this is, not merely because Christ followed the best didactic method, but because the revelation of the mysteries of His Kingdom could go hand in hand only with the revelation of His divine personality and this revelation had to be gradually so that, when fully and finally made, His work would be done and He would die for its truth. You are aware how delicately and circumspectly He approached the great truth of His Divinity, indicating it on manifold converging lines, drawing its confession from friends and foes, asserting indeed its most intimate consequences, but resting its final vindication on the apodictic fact of His resu rection from the dead. In the meantime, to reveal openly Mary's excellence would have precipitated this divine economy, and therefore words regarding her had to be such as would "not be understood then but would be understood afterwards." But the revelation of Mary was made, publicly, from His first recorded words, when He was twelve years old, to His last on the cross.

VIII. Before verifying this statement we must take into account another thing regarding the mind of Christ, which we glean from the Gospels. The mind of Christ is the mind of the Seer, in one flash of vision taking in the past, forecasting the future. "I saw Lucifer like a thunderbolt falling from heaven." "As the lightning cometh out of the East and appeareth even into the West so shall the coming of the Son of Man be." The mind of Christ joins to this apocalyptic vision the most delicate, poetic fancy, over discerning spiritual truths in the objects about Him. The barren fig-tree, the rocky highway, the thorns, the lilies, the light, the seed, the birds of the air, are to Him not merely realities, but symbols of impressive truths. His metaphors are as rich in meaning as they are natural in obviousness. He speaks with examples and comparisons. His figures run into allegories as we read: "He spoke to them in parables and without parables He did not speak to them." His deeds take on the same symbolic character. The multiplication of bread, the prodigious draught of fishes, the cleaning of lepers, the raising of the dead, are as much dogmatic demonstrations of something else as testimonials of His divine power. His institutions likewise, or the sacraments, are cast in that forceful form, which lifts the mind from the visible to the invisible from the maternial to the spiritual. In fact, Jesus Christ is the great poet of the world, the creator of that Christian cast of thought which "the loftiest of poets" borrowed from Christian theology, and which all modern poets directly or indirectly have borrowed from the Florentine. Thus while the poetry of Israel consisted in oracular utterances and the poetry of Greece in beauty of form, the poetry of Jesus Christ is, always in view of "the Kingdom," a sacred interpretation of nature, which throbs with and speaks of that divine wisdom which is poured out upon it. Now truth and virtue ever set this divine mind astir with symbolism, aflame with visions of the future. Instance the confession of Peter, the faith of the centurion, the repentance of Magdalene, when He foresees Peter making laws for the world, many coming from the East and the West and sitting down with Abraham while the children of the kingdom are cast out, the act of homage done by the sinful woman being preached in the whole world. And shall we say that this mind so enthusiastic for truth, so moved by virtue, would remain inert and impassive when Mary was mentioned, whom He knew far better than we know now, to have been the truest and the most virtuous of all creatures? Surely not. Therefore from Him, in her presence, we are to look for pronouncements in the highest order of Scriptural, sacramental and prophetic truth. We shall not go astray, therefore if, in reference to Mary also we take Christ's last words as a guide to His former utterances. [If we apply this rule to the cryptic words (John 20 17) "Do not touch me for I am not yet ascended to my father," we shall have an easy interpretation of a most difficult passage. When Christ was asceneded to His Father, He sent the Holy Ghost upon His apostles and on Mary Magdalen among others, spiritualizing a love that in her, as in the apostles, was as yet too earthly. As He allowed the other women to embrace His feet in reverence, His words here are a most chaste warning to the impetuous Magdalen, and at the same time an astounding revelation of the reality of His divine presence in flesh and blood. The imperfection of Mary's love, like the imperfection of Thomas' faith, is utilized by the same Evangelist to prove the reality of the risen Lord] and if we find in all his words concerning her sublime reference to the oracles of the past and the mysteries of the Kingdom to come.

IX. His last words to Mary were, "Woman, behold thy son." The form of this expression does not indicate that He thereby constituted her the mother of his son as Newman and others would have it, but that He revealed her spiritual motherhood. In either case, by the confession of all, Mary is made or declared the spiritual mother of the children of the Kingdom. ['In Joanne autem, quod perpetuo sensit Ecclesia, designavit Christus personam humani generis corum in primis qui sibi ex fide adhaerescerent." Leo XIII, Encyc. Adjutricem populi, Sept. 5, 1895.] As Eve is the mother of the sons of men, Mary is the mother of the Sons of God. St. John, who heard and recorded these words, is the same who disclosed to us the vision of "the woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars . . . And she brought forth a man child who was to rule all nations with an iron rod." (Apoc. 12:1.) This evidently is a vision of Mary and her Son, conceived after the fashion in which heaven is a new Jerusalem and the worship of heaven a new Mass. It is also a vision of the Church and her children. In other words just as the Church is our mother so Mary is our mother. By conceiving Christ, as Pius X. has explained in his encyclical on the Immaculate Conception, she conceived all that Christ was and was to be—His real body and His mystic body. She conceived Him by her Immaculate Conception and by her maternity. For says St. Leo, she conceived the word in mind before she conceived the word in body. This vision of Mary's spiritual motherhood, as it was at last clearly asserted and recorded, on the strength of the first rule of interpretation laid down was always in the mind of Christ, and with it all that it involved. It justifies a careful revision of all His previous words concerning her.

X. His first act on arriving at the age of twelve, when the Child of the Law could first plead before the Doctors of the Law, was to vindicate her honor. She, found to have been a mother before she was yet a wife, had escaped the cognizance of the courts, because Joseph, perplexed, had been unwilling to give her up, and when instructed of heaven, he had understood it was no longer necessary to do so. But the law had never been publicly justified, and Mary for twelve years had humbly born the position of being *ad litteram* a transgressor of the law. Her purification shows us that she demanded no exemptions. Happy the day when her Divine Son, within the precincts of the temple, before the highest tribunal, as a most worthy advocate, could plead her cause! This He did, when having first publicly shown by His wisdom, for the time being, sufficient indications of the divinity dwelling within Him, He replied to her sweetly, knowingly, "Why have you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" His Father's business was not to perplex the admiring masters in Israel, or we must say that He strangely neglected it for the next eighteen years. It was then and always to proclaim who He was and therefore who she was. It does not matter that His other kinsfolk and the Doctors did not understand Him. It will not be the last time that they will fail to understand Him. The Hebrew source, which St. Luke literally translates in giving this episode, clumsily joins together several facts, leaving in confusion who they were, who did not understand the Divine Child, and who they were, to whom He was subject, and fails to bring out clearly the contrast between Mary and all the rest. But we know that there was one, who had over and over again during all these long years pondered the words of the angel. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee and therefore also the Holy, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God," and who therefore did understand Him. Hence it is twice explicitly stated that "Mary pondered all these words in her heart." (Luke 2, 19,51.) She had long inured herself to the position of an ordinary mother. She had even spoken the language of the people, "Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." Probably three days previously Christ had asked to attend "to His Father's affairs and she had sweetly dismissed Him to Joseph. Thus arose that misunderstanding, which the Divine Child seems to have had a share in causing, "Son, why has Thou done so to us?" But when now in the presence of Joseph, He speaks of another Father, she is filled with heavenly rapture. Her own Son, beyond all her humble expectation, vindicates her honor and her virginity before the mighty representative of the law. We certainly would miss all the joy of this mystery, if we imagined that Mary, in answer to her just expression of bewilderment, received only a reproof, which, according to Fouard, she did not understand.

XI. As Christ's first act on attaining legal manhood was a public vindication of Mary's virginity and divine maternity, so His first act after inaugurating His public ministry was a revelation of Mary's exalted place in the Kingdom, and a manifestion of the power of her intercession. It took place at the wedding feast of Cana in Galilee. Throughout the sacred writings the love of husband and wife, which makes them equal and one, had been more or less cruelly employed to symbolize the union of the soul with God. This symbol, St. John, before penning his Gospel, had used again and again in his Apocalypse; St. Paul had developed it at length in his epistles; St. John the Baptist in referring to Christ had called himself the friend of the bridegroom. Christ Himself, so delicate in His sense of virginity, used it only in quoting John's words, or in a mystic manner in parables and on this occasion. "The wine failing," says St. John, "the mother of Jesus saith to Him: "they have no wine." He answered, "Woman, what is that to Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come." We note at once that this question is parallel with the previous one, "Why have you sought Me?" which in all probability was likewise penned by St. John. As in that question revelation to Mary was intended, not reproof, so it is here. The interpretation of this passage largely depends on what we understand by the words "My hour." They cannot refer to His public ministry for He had already inaugurated His ministry. The hour of His public ministry had come. Neither can they refer to the time when He would do miraculous deeds, for after performing numerous miracles, He still repeated "My time is not yet come." (John 7, 6) or the evangelist asserted "His hour was not yet come" (John 7, 30; 8, 20) St. John evidently gives us the meaning when he says, Jesus, knowing that His hour had come that He should pass out of this world to the Father." This was the hour for which Christ yearned, "His hour," when sleeping in death upon the cross, He would be pierced with the lance, blood and water would issue from His side, and with them His Spouse, the Church. In His resurrection, this new Adam arose from that sleep of death, and in the words of St. Paul speaking of Christ's mystic body, as in the words of Adam speaking of the mother of men, He could say of the Church, "This is now the flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone." Christ's mind, then, ever seeking the spiritual and the heavenly in the material and earthly, is soaring aloft from the earthly wedding of Cana to the spiritual nuptials of the kingdom. His question reveals that Mary, the Immaculate woman foretold of God, is associated with Him in that vision of the "children of the resurrection," "Woman, what is that to Me and to thee?" is an anticipation of the words, "Woman, behold thy son," an echo of those other words, "I shall place enmities between thee and the woman, between her seed and thy seed." The petitioner is complimented before her request is granted. What is more natural? But if in His lofty musings He has for her eyes slightly unveiled the future, He evidently by look and gesture manifests the return of His spirit to the realities about Him and His unwillingness to accede to her tacit prayer. She gives orders accordingly, His subsequent miracle changing water into wine is the confirmation of this inference as well as a manifestation of the power of her intercession. When the faithful are united through the Holy Spirit to the Son of God, they are branches of the true vine. On the other hand, in the symbolism of St. John "waters," according to the Council of Trent, (Sess. 22, C. 9,) represents the nations. The change of water into wine, the fruit of the vine, then, forecasts the elevation of marriage to the dignity of a sacrament, after the transformation by baptism of the children of wrath into the adopted children of God. The miracle is but His previous thought symbolized. The prodigality of the six measures of miraculous wine may indicate the multitudes of the elect in six working epochs of the Redemption mystically corresponding to the six scriptural days of creation, but has nothing to do with the question of the use or abuse of wine itself. Indeed the misuse of that wine would only too clearly symbolize a misuse made subsequently of the means of grace.

XII. Thus Christ's view point was so exalted above the ordinary conceptions of the crowd, that His answers concerning Mary do seem at times brusque, do give reason for misunderetanding. But we must recall that, on one occasion He spoke of the temple of His body and the crowd understood Him to speak of the temple of Herod. He left them to their misunderstanding and afterwards the evangelists call them in this regard "false witnesses." We have the decisions of the Church concerning Mary's prerogative to keep us from misunderstanding the Saviour when He answers in one sense to the remark put to him in another. Thus the exclamation of the woman in the crowd: "Blessed is the womb that bore thee" (Luke 11, 57.) He answers "Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it." He passes at once beyond the material maternity which the woman had in mind, to the higher merit of the Blessed Virgin, who conceived Him spiritually before she conceived Him corporally and associates with her—in blessedness—all who thus spiritually conceive the Word of God. Again there is reported to Him: "Thy mother and brethren stand without, desiring to see Thee." (Luke 8 20.) He answered: "My mother and my brethren are they, who hear the Word of God and do it." This strong statement does not show how far Mary is from His burning charity, but how near they are who imitate her example.

XIII. But the great prerogative of Mary is her Immaculate Conception. Did Christ nowhere imitate this prerogative, which was to be above althings the rich purchase of His future

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