

Blessed, indeed, would it be for the Virgin-Mother to steal away from the turmoil of the world, and in the quietness of uninterrupted contemplation await in calm ecstasy the first vision of her Babe. But He does not wish that it should be so, and the will of her unborn child being the inspiration of her pure young heart is sweet to her whithersoever it may lead her. Her union with her Babe can be as unbroken amid the jar and fret of travel over hill and dale through town and village as though she knelt alone in the peaceful surroundings of her own quiet garden. Gladly, therefore, she hastens and abides for "about the space of three months" in Zachary's home. The field around it are covered with wild flowers which breathe forth their fragrance as if in homage to her whose gentle footsteps scarcely shake the dew off their fragile petals. Elizabeth marvels as the "Mother of her Lord," becomes her nurse; no care too wearisome, no service too menial for her immaculate hands. She gazes with awe upon that Virginal face with its look ineffable. The awful purity of Him she bears touches with unspeakable grace each feature. Zachary "dumb," for having doubted the glad tidings that his wife should, in her old age, bring forth a son who would convert "many of the children of Israel," looks with mute wonder upon the loveliness of her whom an archangel greeted as "full of grace."

Lovingly Mary abides with her aged kinswoman and when the appointed time has come, her embrace is the Baptist's welcome in the world—as though her tenderness at that moment were to compensate him for the years of future loneliness in the desert. Jesus' Precursor in his Virgin-Mother's arms! Not even the inspired genius of an angel could depict the loveliness of that picture. The dignity of the divine maternity touches with mature beauty her youthful grace. John smiles as her loveliness overshadows him. He recognizes the music of the voice at which the fetters of sin fell from his soul, clothing it in an innocence that almost rivals her own. Our privileges are similar to his. We do not, indeed, enjoy Mary's visible embrace, but that her love shelters each of the redeemed we cannot doubt. Her voice, as it pleads in prayer, is still the instrument through which grace flows