

THE SACRED HEART  
What would thou  
Strength for this  
That we call life.

Fears gather thick  
Shadows into arms  
Around me close.

What am I, frail as  
When griefs arise  
No help from thee  
Or the cold skies.

Le! I can find no  
No weapons but  
Shine alone  
Straight mighty son.

Courage, thou true  
Grief thou must  
Yet thou canst find  
Will which dost  
While thy Saviour  
Seeks for it.

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THE CATHOLIC RECORD.

PALMS

ANNA HANSON DORSEY,  
AUTHOR OF "COARINA," "FLEMINGS,"  
"TANGLED PATHS," "MAY  
BROOK," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.  
A ROMAN VILLA.

A rough road, which at certain curves overlooked the Tiber, wound steeply up the Aventine to a plateau, where it abruptly terminated in front of a double gateway of massive bronze, which, superbly wrought in open yet solid and graceful designs, admitted a view of the villa and gardens it protected. Not an unobstructed view, however; for great boughs of old chestnut and flex trees, which shaded the broad avenue, intervened here and there, allowing only glimpses of a marble facade, of a portico with clustered pillars, and some gilded balconies; while stretching away on every side, vistas of terraces all abloom with many-hued flowers, fountains tossing their spray in the sun, and fair statues gleaming out from the green shadows of tremulous vines, enlivened the eye.

The great bronze gates were thrown open, as if for the admission of illustrious guests who had come in state, in ivory-mounted and gilded chariots—such as the Roman patricians used to visit the lord of this fair estate. Distinguished they must be indeed, for even the porter was absent from his post; gone, doubtless, to snatch a glimpse of noble senators and jeweled ladies as they stepped from their chariots through the portico into the rich and lofty apartments, where the most honored guests were received.

A grassy expanse, profusely sprinkled with wild violets and yellow cistus, under the Roman sun, and yellow cistus, sloped away from the shady avenue to the garden terraces and winding walks, each one by the combined efforts of art and nature more beautiful than the last. Groups of pomegranates full of scarlet flowers contrasted with the cream-tinted blooms and dark waxen leaves of the magnolias that grew near them; the sweet olive and almond trees in full snowy blossom clustered together; here was a plantation of lime trees, there one of orange, filling the air with fragrance; and apart from all these, as if keeping watch and ward over the scene, more than one tall flex towered. Feathers, palms, fountain, and roses that rivaled in beauty and fragrance the far-famed roses of Paestum, surprised and delighted the eye at every turn; while on the confines of the grounds a grove of pines, cypresses, and mulberry trees climbed the rocky hill, giving a sombre charm to its ruggedness, and at the same time affording a background which threw out in stronger, brighter relief the lawns and brightly outspread before it. Through all the lovely space statues gleamed whitely, or seemed to tremble with life under the flickering golden shadows cast through the leaves above. A path of colored pebbles led along a curve of the hill to a cascade leaping from its source high up among the rocks—just where a stream of cypresses had fallen, as if it let in the sunshine upon it—into a moss-covered stone basin, so skillfully constructed that it looked like an accident of nature. In its swift descent, smiting the rocks with silvery music as it fell, it looked like spangled gallez lightly swayed by the summer breeze. The air was full of languorous fragrance; the flames of Nemesius lay dying. The couch on which she reposed, draped with gold-embroidered silk, had been drawn out into the middle of the room for air. The most lavish adornments and priceless treasures in ivory, lapis lazuli, and ebony inlaid with gold; hangings of Persian silks, and cunningly woven mats of rich dyes from the far East; completed the furnishing of the spacious apartment, mocking by their splendor and their sacred association with her brief dream of happiness the pale, recumbent figure in their midst, over whose features the white shadows of approaching dissolution were stealing without imperceptible, but rather rendering her more perfect in beauty, their rare classic outline. Those upon whom the shadow of death falls have strange, restless fancies, it is said; hers was to be brought here; and Nemesius, who denied her nothing, had her couch removed—himself assisting, lest the least jar should increase her sufferings. Clinging to his hand as he leaned over her, his face almost as white as hers, and set in lines of stern, unspoken grief—clinging as if so Fate could not separate them, she whispered: "I can not leave thee! Baseest the gods that they spare me."

"Sacrifice is being offered for thee at this moment," he said, biting back the fury of his grief, while the veins of his forehead stood out like cords; for he saw how vain it would be.

"On the other side of the couch knelt a pile, sorrow-stricken woman, who held a vase of pungent perfume, in which she wet a napkin to wipe of the cold sweat from the face of her dying mistress; for she was her favorite slave, also her faithful friend. The physician—the most skillful disciple of Aesculapius in Rome, who had brought with him from Egypt and Greece mysterious secrets of the healing art, and had performed some wonderful cures—stood near the dying Claudia, appalled to discover that all his efforts to save her were powerless; but a single one of the wild heart-throats that tore her breast. Then, just as the sun flung his golden flicker through the vines, making a tremulous glory over the wall opposite the wide-open window, the faint wail of a newborn infant was heard; the dying head, with its wealth of silky gold-tinted hair, sank back upon the pillows; there was a succession of agony, and the peaceful, august majesty of death diffused a wonderful calm over the white face, which but a few moments ago was wrung with pain. She drew her disordered robe across her bosom, and folded her long, beautiful hands upon it, and felt that she was dying, and she would pass to the shades as became the dignity of a Roman matron.

in, to the measures of soft instrumental music, and voices of song.

The villa, with its fair and picturesque surroundings, was the summer abode of a wealthy Roman patrician, named Nemesius (his *pænomen* tradition does not give), who had already distinguished himself in the military service of the Empire. When on duty in or near Rome, it was in this favorite spot that he and his young wife spent their happy hours in the realization of an almost idyllic life. She was not only beautiful and endowed with many noble qualities, but the blood of one of the Caesar, flowed in her veins, losing nothing of its fire and spirit, which, however, no untoward circumstances had aroused—happily for her—to disturb her unclouded life. People used to predict that in the future Rome would have another Cornelia, her virtues were so blended with a certain modest dignity, which was not the offspring of pride, but of an elevated nature. Her companionship lured Nemesius from the baser pleasures of the young patricians, and awakened in his mind the ambition to fill out her high ideal of a true matron. They both honored the gods; they burnt incense before them on their household altars, they offered libations to secure their favor, they crowned the statues of their Penates with fresh garlands daily, and attended the grand ceremonials held in the temples in honor of their duties. It was a faithful religion, but they knew no other; and, while practicing the maxims of the best pagan philosophy, they had no desire to indulge in the license it allowed its votaries.

Here in their summer retreat on the Aventine, Nemesius and Claudia passed their days so blissfully it seemed incredible that even the Fates could possess the power to penetrate their happiness; and Love around their home; and if such a suggestion ever presented itself to the mind of either, it was instantly banished to the shades. But even then, on that fair summer eve, while the birds sang and the fountains sparkled in the level sunbeams; while a luminous, infinite mystery seemed to veil the far-spreading and the flower-scented air brooded like a life-giving balm over all the strange silence, and long shadows began to steal along the slopes blue with violets, a nearer approach to the villa exhibited signs not only of human occupation, but of some impending woe. The numerous slaves of the household moved noiselessly about, with pale, frightened faces, speaking only in low whispers to each other as they passed to and fro on hurried errands; the women who were the personal attendants of their mistress suppressed their sobs, but did not restrain their tears, as they crouched listening and expectant on the broad marble staircase leading to the upper apartments; and hand roused by labor, stood about in silent groups, amongst them the porter, whose duty it was to keep the great bronze gates at the entrance of the avenue. He had left them wide open, as if illustrious guests in their chariots of ivory and gold had passed through; but only one visitor had entered the villa, not through the bronze gates, nor seen of any—a king having power that no mortal might withstand, be he high or low, powerful or weak; his brow was crowded with asphodel and poppies, and his name was Death.

In her favorite sitting-room, where she had passed so many of her happiest days, the beautiful young wife of Nemesius lay dying. The couch on which she reposed, draped with gold-embroidered silk, had been drawn out into the middle of the room for air. The most lavish adornments and priceless treasures in ivory, lapis lazuli, and ebony inlaid with gold; hangings of Persian silks, and cunningly woven mats of rich dyes from the far East; completed the furnishing of the spacious apartment, mocking by their splendor and their sacred association with her brief dream of happiness the pale, recumbent figure in their midst, over whose features the white shadows of approaching dissolution were stealing without imperceptible, but rather rendering her more perfect in beauty, their rare classic outline. Those upon whom the shadow of death falls have strange, restless fancies, it is said; hers was to be brought here; and Nemesius, who denied her nothing, had her couch removed—himself assisting, lest the least jar should increase her sufferings. Clinging to his hand as he leaned over her, his face almost as white as hers, and set in lines of stern, unspoken grief—clinging as if so Fate could not separate them, she whispered: "I can not leave thee! Baseest the gods that they spare me."

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She raised her head, and looked at him, and he saw that she was dying, and she would pass to the shades as became the dignity of a Roman matron.

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"Keep the babe, Zilla; keep it in your heart or never give it to another's care," she whispered; "my faithful Zilla!" The words sounded like a caress, and the promise was given in a few sentences broken by sobs,—a promise which the dying young mother knew would be sacredly kept. Then, turning to Nemesius, she said, with a look of love fading eyes, while a smile irradiated her countenance: "Nemesius, we have loved. Farewell!" That was the last; one long, soft sigh, and all was still forever.

Nemesius clasped the lifeless form in his arms, and, lifting her face to his, called her by all those endearing names that when no answer came, and he noted the film that already dimmed her beautiful eyes, he laid her back on the pillows—she was his no longer—and, covering his face with his hands, went away to his own private apartments to wrestle alone with his grief, a grief without hope, for to the sensuous pagans death ended all. It was only transfigured to them when it made gods and heroes.

The apotheosis of men who perished crowned with glory and renown was a divine triumph over death, the renewal of a life that bestowed immortality and throne them among the gods. It satisfied the proudest ambition of the living to be able to offer divine honors to a deceased kindred, as it gave them brotherhood with the deities they worshipped; otherwise the thought of death was one of such inexpressible horror that in speaking of their departed they said "he has lived," and not that he had died.

In a few moments, as if whispered by the air, the sorrows she had learned that the gentle and noble wife of Nemesius had ceased to breathe; that she who had protected them from the sometimes oppressive and cruel exactions of their task-masters, and had ever been generous and considerate of them, was no more. Then the pent-up emotions of their warm southern hearts burst forth in the walls of sorrow; they wept for the loss of their own loss, forgetful of him whose loss was far greater, and whose grief was more sacred than theirs; whether their cries would annoy or distress him did not enter their minds, until the old steward Symphonius, himself nearly distracted, drove them out of hearing, and enforced silence upon those whose duties required them to remain.

And now, while the short twilight deepened into the purple star-spangled night, the silence of the beautiful gardens, one hour ago steeped in golden sunshine, was broken; low sounds of weeping and plaintive cries of lament echoed through the shadowy alleys, as the sorrowing slaves fled to the more distant recesses and groves, where they might vent their grief unobserved.

The days passed on, and Nemesius, stern and silent in his grief, asked no question about his child. The steward Symphonius, who had been his faithful servant since his earliest recollection, was the only one of the household admitted to his presence, and he understood without words that silence on his part was expected. The family notary was summoned two or three times to receive instructions relating to the obsequies, which Nemesius delivered in brief terms, then dismissed him.

Zilla waited day after day, hoping to be summoned to her master's presence; but he made no sign, and, girding up her courage, she determined to go to him unbidden, having upon her mind something which caused her great anxiety about her infant charge, toward whom her heart went out with tenderness and pity. The apathy and neglect of Nemesius hurt and exasperated her; but, reasoning that a woman, she thought, if it would not only remind him of the existence of his offspring, but arouse the natural instincts of affection toward it; this accomplished, she felt sure that he would soon recognize it as a living link between himself and her who was beyond recall, by which a new hope might be kindled, and the thorns of his heart be softened.

Alas for Zilla's sanguine hopes! Symphonius had in vain tried to dissuade her from seeking an interview with his master; he swore by all the infernal gods that she would never see him, and to lose it if she persisted, to which she quietly and firmly replied: "When Nemesius hears what I have to tell him he will pardon the intrusion. He is a noble gentleman, and I can not believe that he has been transformed to a fury. His own child, too—you forget, Symphonius." She brushed by him as he stood in the doorway of the chamber, and, having passed through several darkened rooms, she at last found her master in the smallest one at the end of the suite. He saw her as she entered and stood before him, her head bowed, her hands crossed upon her breast; the sight of her recalled in all its vividness that sad scene when Claudia breathed her last, and his face grew white and more rigid.

"What brings thee here unbidden?" he asked, in low, hoarse tones. She began to explain, but at the very first intimation of her errand, he seemed to be seized with a transport of fury. He told her that he would hear nothing of the child, and wished never to see her; he had hoped that it had perished, for it had cost the life of the only being on earth that he loved. Then he ordered her from his presence.

Zilla, who had the hot blood of the South in her veins, felt it going with a wild rush to her head; her eyes flashed, and her heart beat madly, while words of hot indignation rose to her tongue, which might have cost her dear had she uttered them. But, remembering her promise to her dying mistress, and seeing from his thin, haggard face and bloodshot eyes, what havoc grief had made in Nemesius, she held her peace, and, bowing her head, again crossed her hands on her bosom, and left his presence, thinking: "It is only time that can do it; but oh how bitterly will I grieve for not having listened to me to-day!"

"It is best to try for one's self once; the next time one listens to advice," said Symphonius—who had heard all that passed—as Zilla went by. If she had raised her eyes, she would have discovered an expression in the old steward's yellow face which meant: "You got no more than you deserved for your willfulness. But she did not look up, so he missed his little triumph.

After the pompous funeral rites, in which nothing was spared to make them magnificent, Nemesius sought an interview with the Emperor, and asked to be appointed to service in Gaul, where the imperial eagles were advancing to fresh conquests. His request was granted with reluctance, for the Emperor disliked detaching him from service in Rome, which frequently brought the brave young captain in personal relation with himself. As true as steel in his loyalty in those days when treachery and conspiracies were common, faithful and brave in his services; but when no answer came, and he noted the film that already dimmed her beautiful eyes, he laid her back on the pillows—she was his no longer—and, covering his face with his hands, went away to his own private apartments to wrestle alone with his grief, a grief without hope, for to the sensuous pagans death ended all.

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CHRISTIANITY THE HIGHEST PHILOSOPHY.

MOST REV. JOHN IRELAND.

A notable discourse was delivered on Sunday morning at St. Patrick's Church by the Most Rev. John Ireland, Archbishop of St. Paul. The words of the eminent divine were based on the Gospel of the day. He said: "The lesson conveyed in this morning's Gospel is most important. It reveals as by a lightning flash a whole philosophy. We are told that 'Jesus, then, seeing that they wished to make Him king, fled into the mountains.' Hacked Jesus fled because the time for the full manifestation of His power and dignity had not yet arrived. Furthermore, the Jews had not understood the true character of the royalty which He claimed. They imagined a worldly kingdom; Christ's kingdom is spiritual; He reigns over souls, over minds, over hearts. We recognize the true character of His kingdom, and we say to Him, 'Jesus, be our King.'

What are His credentials? I might quote the miracles which He wrought, one of which is the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, as narrated in the Gospel of this day; but, to understand the far-reaching force of those for one, but in their entirety and in their own perspective. We must see back of them the personality of Jesus; we must see, too, the sequence of them in the work of Jesus throughout history. Whatever the attacks of unbelief against the miracles of Christ, His historical personality and life of Jesus are unthought, undisfigured by criticism," says Mr. Harneck, himself. "It is enough for us, 'Christ,' Mr. Harneck admits, 'is the only religion, the only moral law that ever will be.' 'Christ,' says Renan, 'will remain unparalleled.'

He is the Son of Man, the best that ever went forth from the womb of humanity. He is the Son of God, the most perfect manifestation of the Divine that the world has ever seen. How different from all other men! We know men, and we know that there is ever in them shortcomings, defects, obliquities. Christ was sinless. All the perfections of the highest moral nature were His. He spoke as no other man had spoken—the religion preached by Him is the loftiest that could be imagined by man. Philosophers has grasped one, one truth, another, another truth—but side by side with truth there were the errors. Christ summed up all that was best, added truths of His own, gave lucidity to what hitherto has been vague. The gospels telling of His teachings and portraying His personality are sufficient proofs; either the authentic description of what really was or so high are their concepts that they demand a supernatural authorship.

The sequence was no less supernatural. With Christ and His apostles there entered into the world a power utterly unknown heretofore, utterly unequalled since. There is an abyss between the world before Christ and the world since Christ. With Christ the individual, the family, society were lifted heavenward. In the individual there was created the personal conscience; this is essentially a Christian product—the conscience of the Christian being the divine revelation to him of righteousness for righteousness' sake—being the echo of the voice of a Supreme Legislator.

With this consciousness new virtues sprang into existence—charity for the poor, equality among men—purity as tender as the petals of the rose were the flowers decorating humanity. The family, through the unity and indissolubility of the marriage tie, became the shrine of saintly love and all other virtues. The woman was the queen of the household, reflecting Mary of Nazareth in herself; the child told of the Babe of Bethlehem; society throbbed with a new life; the dignity of manhood was recognized; despotism became impossible; the shackles fell from the limbs of the slaves, and then took root all the great principles which make for civilization, for progress for social rights and social elevation. Civilization is Christianity. This is the fact of history.

That the Christian religion has not taken within its embrace the whole world, that its growth is gradual, that even under its standard there is vice and sin is no adverse argument. God's ways are slow and gradual in their advance. He places germs in the world which develop with time; and we must remember that He is dealing with free-willed men, who are able to set at naught the best and the most powerful. We judge Christianity not by what it has not done, but by what it has done and what it is able to do where no resistance is made.

And so we ask the question, Is not Christ the highest personification of moral grandeur that the world knows? Is not Christianity the most vital moral principle that has ever been implanted in the bosom of humanity? Is not the divine in Christianity so transparent that all the efforts of adverse criticism have not been able to darken it? And if this is so, we ask, either Christianity is what it professes to be, from God; or it is a fraud, is not the moral power that rules the universe responsible? If Christianity is not divine, all is chaos, all is confusion and despair. Furthermore, it is not plain that there is a divine principle at work in Christianity?

It has been said by a pagan speaker of the day that the objection to Christianity is that it is too much above human weakness. Very well; but as a matter of fact, Christianity has taken hold of men and of heights to which otherwise they could never have aspired. Is it not because the force in Christianity is divine? Yes, Jesus, be our King! To whom else could we go? Not indeed, to the science of the day, which makes so much promise and which is such a failure when it steps beyond its true confines, the phenomena of nature. It is Tyndal who says, 'Let us go as far as we can to the very rim of nature, and still what is there beyond?'

Yes, what is there beyond? That is what the soul is anxious to know; for, with all that nature has or can give, there is within us all an emptiness which nothing in nature can fill. When men of science venture beyond their confines, they know not what they say. Spencer tells us that there is nothing but the "unknown and the unknowable."

What care we about that which we cannot know? Come and Harrison tell us that there is humanity. What is humanity but what Huxley himself declares it to be, "a herd of wild beasts." What is humanity to the individual? A grain of sand in the mountain pile when that individual throbs beneath the pressure of passion and is excluded from all the pleasures and promises of humanity. Huxley gives us "matter" as the first and last object of our worship. Matter! It is but the clay we tread upon; it will never satisfy our souls. And where in all this is there any inspiration for morals? The Unknowable is the doctrine of Nescience; it has never repressed passion. Humanity, the French novelist has told us, is suppressed. How impotent the thought of it is to the miserable being tempted to suicide! And so, if humanity is to live, if humanity is to prosper, if virtue is to be reality, we must invoke over us the reign of Jesus. Balfour and Mallock tell us that without the great principles that underlie human life, there is nothing for us but despair. And so we are driven by all the needs of society, to invoke over us the reign of Jesus. Let us pledge to Him our allegiance. Let us often visit His temples and then go forth into the busy world with the inspirations which they will give us. Let the life of Christ be the model of ours, and all is well.—New Century.

THOUGHTS ON THE SACRED HEART.

The devotion to the Sacred Heart should be the solace and comfort of all. St. Peter Damian says: "In this adorable Heart we find arms to defend ourselves against enemies, medicines for our healing, powerful assistance against temptations, the sweetest consolation in suffering and the purest joys in this valley of tears."

Do you wish your thoughts, words and actions during the day to be consecrated to God, or left to the world? It is so easy to give them to the Sacred Heart, who is waiting and suffering for souls like yours. If it so easy to make—that little offering of yourself in the morning—and yet you sometimes forget it, don't you? How badly you feel when one of your friends is apparently forgetful of you! Then you can understand low the Sacred Heart feels to be so often forgotten, so often slighted by those for whom He has suffered and died. Resolve then for the future, to be more mindful of that Heart that has loved men so much."

"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save the sinners; He suffered and died for them, and now His Sacred Heart is seeking them and pleading with them to return to Him once more. His most tender love is shown in this devotion which is so often full of forgiveness for all the past and promises to comfort, direct, protect and help all those who will give Him only some little return for His love.

How can we refuse His pleadings? How dare we hesitate any longer? Let us go to Him with love and confidence, and consecrate our lives to His service and strive now to commence and repair the injury we have done Him, and to love Him more and more; and to teach others to know and love Him by spreading the devotion of the League of the Sacred Heart.

KIND WORDS.

Kind words are the music of the world. They have a power which seems to play by medicines of any cause. There is hardly a power on earth equal to joy. It seems as if they could almost do what in reality God alone can do, namely, soften the hard and angry hearts of men. Even quarrels give way to kind words, for an unforgiving heart is a rare monster. Words have a power of their own for good or evil. Hence it is that an unkind word ripples longest in the heart than an angry gesture, nay, often than a blow.

Kind words are like revelations from heaven unravelling complicated misunderstandings and softening the hardest convictions of years. Why, then, are we ever else but kind? Kind in words? There are some difficulties. It is hard for the cleric man to be kind in his words. He has a temptation—a temptation bordering on the irresistible—to say clever things, and, somehow, clever things are hardly ever kind things. There is a drop ever of acid or bitter in them. And on the whole, to say clever things of others is hardly ever without sin. There is something in genius which is analogous to a sting. Its sharpness, its delicacy, its pain, its poison—genius has all these things as well as the sting. A man who says himself out to amuse is never a safe man to have for a friend or even an acquaintance. He is not a man whom any one would really love or respects. No one would ever draw nearer to God by a sarcasm. Our Lord's words in the gospel should be our model.—Father Faber.

In all the crosses that come to us, if we have absolute confidence in God, none of them will be able to make us lose our peace of heart.

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