

children. So it came about that her influence, in all that quarter could not be measured, nor the number of those she had brought to the Holy Table, and kept faithful to the best traditions of their race.

II

Now all this time, Maria had many suitors, for the men of that quarter, knew the value of such a woman as Maria who was capable and helpful, beside, being pious and good, and always in good humor.

She had too, her share of physical attractions that are common to the women of her country, the rich complexion and eyes that were dark and full of poetry and sympathy, and a mouth showing white and even teeth, in a laugh, that was full of good humor and kindliness.

Now of all her admirers, the one which in her heart she favored was Tomaso, who had steady work and excellent pay, as foreman of a gang of workmen. He was a tall, strong youth, as simple and full of faith as Maria herself. But the girl, by her influence over him, had made him, more devout and regular in his attendance at church and had induced him to become a frequent communicant. So that it was good to see, that stalwart, man in the prime of his years, advancing so often to the Holy Table. But though Tomaso, having good wages, and the prospect of being able to keep a comfortable home, was anxious that Maria should marry him, the girl remained undecided, telling him that he must wait, since she was not quite sure what was the will of the good God.

It seemed to be decided for her, when Tomaso met with an accident, which threatened to render him helpless; for then all her heart cried out for him, and she longed to be giving him the devoted care and attendance, that a wife alone could give. She went to see her pastor, and told him how she had been waiting, and how uncertain she had been hitherto of vocation, for sometimes it seemed to her that she was called to go away to some holy house of religion and there work for that cause dearer to her than anything on earth making the will of the Holy Father and the desire of Christ himself, known to his people.

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