

PALMS
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"TAILED PATHS," "MAY
BROOKE," ETC., ETC., ETC.

passants in holiday attire, bringing home the grapes from the vineyards to the wine-vats, with Bacchic songs and choral lays, accompanied by the music of double flutes, zithers and pipes of reed, their wagons loaded with baskets, in which the great red and purple clusters of the delicious fruit of the vine were heaped up, covered with blossoms; while the sleek oxen, garnished with scarlet poppies, vetches, and corn-flowers, moved lazily along—the end drew near, and the events that followed, given in the "Acts of the Martyrs" and by tradition, succeeded each other with such rapidity that we may not linger. One gloomy, lowering night Nemesius had left his underground "City of Refuge" to carry aid and consolation to certain sick and destitute Christians, who were living in the old southern cellar of a hotel in the suburb of Rome. Having accomplished his charitable purpose, he was returning, his thoughts so absorbed by celestial meditation that he did not observe the direction he had taken, until a strong light suddenly glared athwart his eyes. Startled, he halted, looked around, and saw that he was at the Temple of Mars, where at that moment Quirinus and Maximus, with others, were offering their idyllic and unworldly prayers to the marble statue of holy worship to the marble statue of the god. His soul revolted at the imposture, which was an insult to the supreme and only true God. Single-handed he had no power to stay the impure rites; but, knowing the efficacy of faith and charity, he knelt on the stone-flagged road, and, lifting up his heart in strong appeal, he besought Our Lord by the operation of the Holy Ghost to enlighten the minds of these idolaters, that they might know they were worshipping devils instead of divinities; and so bring them to the knowledge of the Faith as it is in Christ. At this moment, while Nemesius is beseeching God's mercy on their benighted souls, the Consul Maximus, a cruel persecutor of the Christians, was possessed by the evil spirit, and suddenly cried out, in the hearing of all present: "The prayers of Nemesius are burning me!" The Cypriot who had been stealthily creeping behind Nemesius for some short distance, having accidentally caught sight of his majestic figure at a moment when, for a wonder, he was not thinking of him, and convinced when the light from the Temple shone out upon him that it was indeed he, ran in and informed the Consul Quirinus that Nemesius had fallen into his hands, and was outside invoking his Deity, and working Christian sorceries against his destruction. They rushed out to seize him, but had no sooner laid hands upon him, than Maximus gave forth a shriek such as lost souls in the depths of perdition may be supposed to utter, and to the horror of all present, was lifted several feet in the air, then hurled down upon the stone pavement, dead. (It is so related by the Rev. A. J. O'Reilly, D. D., in his "Victims of the Mamertine.") This swift judgment of God on the hardened persecutor of His suffering Church, was but one of many manifestations of His almighty vengeance on His enemies; but they did not compute them to Him, but to the sorceries and magic arts of the Christians. Nemesius made no attempt to escape in the temporary panic and confusion caused by the terrible death of Maximus, but suffered himself to be bound and led away to the Mamertine, where he was cast into one of the lower dungeons. When his capture was reported to the Emperor, the latter cried out: "Now shall the gods be avenged! Torture and death will be nothing to this man; we will reach him and rend him through his child, the pretty, dainty maid! Bring him before the tribunal in the morning, and if he refuses to sacrifice to Jupiter, give her in charge to the courtesan Lippa, and remand him to the Mamertine." Then he returned to his wine and feasting and his lewd pleasures. Fabian had confidential agents in his pay employed to find out and report to him everything they might learn concerning Nemesius; and the morning after his arrest the first news he heard on leaving his bath was that the commander of the Imperial Legion had been taken and cast into the dungeons of the Mamertine. The sun was barely risen, but, ordering his horse, he dressed quickly, and, without breaking his fast, was soon galloping along the road to the Aventine. The scene that greeted him when he reached the villa, although not entirely unexpected, verified his worst forebodings, and kindled in his breast a concentrated fire of rage and grief which for the moment held him speechless; for on the portico, surrounded by rough soldiers, who had been sent to bring her away, stood the beautiful child, attired in a dainty, silver-broidered tunic and white silken robe, with her face like porcelain marble, her fine abundant hair falling in golden ripples over her shoulders. A clasp of pearls adorned her tunic on the shoulder, and around her neck she wore the fine chain of gold to which was suspended the crystal medallion of the Virgin Mother, *Advocata Nostra*, that now lay close against her wildly-throbbing heart. This was the first scene of violence Claudia's innocent eyes had ever beheld. Did she think, as she gave one frightened look at the stolid, coarse, merciless faces of the soldiers, of what Fabian had once said to her when she was blind—that there are in the world human monsters and beings so frightful as to make one rather wish to have been blind than to see them? If she did, it was but a flash of memory; for her heart swiftly turned towards the divine Christ who at the moment he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies, and she remembered her words to Camilla when she heard how they took Him away to crucify Him: "If I had been there, I would have asked them to kill me, and spare Him; and now she did not falter, but offered herself again to Him, although shrinking in all her nature from the cruel, brutal wretches in whose midst she stood. Zilla and Symphonius had pleaded and wept in vain for her release, but were driven away with curses and threats, and now from a distance watched through their fast-falling tears for the end, which they were powerless to avert. The soldiers were preparing to lead their victims away, when Fabian, dismounting from his horse, pushed way through them, and, reaching her side, took her hand and drew her to him. "What does this mean?" he cried, his voice stern, his countenance frowning. "Lay not a touch upon her, ye base hounds! or there'll be but a short step between ye and hell!" They hesitated, for as soldiers they were accustomed to yield instant attention to the voice of authority; but their lieutenant, an old, grizzled veteran, commanded them to close in and obey orders. "Whose orders?" demanded Fabian. "The Emperor's. And who mayest thou be to gainsay them?" was his angry reply. "A friend of the Emperor's," was Fabian's quick response. As a Roman, well versed in the laws, he knew the weight of an imperial order, and the penalties attached to disobedience. "There is some mistake. Why should the Emperor order the arrest of a child like this?" "She is a Christian," answered the lieutenant, with a grim laugh. "Yes," cried Fabian, "I am a Christian," outspoke the child, in clear, sweet tones. "Oh! foolish lamb, to run thy head into the shambles!" he whispered, knowing but too well how helpless he was to save. "How wilt thou convey her hence?" he asked the officer. "Our prisoners walk." "What are thy instructions in this case?" "We have none." "Then it will not matter, Symphonius," he cried, "come hither, old man, and bring out thy dead lady's litter for her child. And here, ye fellows, I will give ye silver for a carouse when of o'ard to night," he said, with a furious scorn, as he threw his purse among them. The once elegant litter, its rich silken curtains now faded and dust-covered, its splendors of gilding and fine decorations milled and nibbled to tatters by rain, was brought forth, and after arranging the cushions for comfort, Fabian tenderly lifted Claudia in, leaned over and kissed her forehead, drew the curtains together, and moved away. "If questioned," he said to the astonished soldiers, "as ye go through the city, answer that ye are conveying a noble Roman virgin to be sacrificed to the gods, and guarding her as Roman soldiers now guard innocence." TO BE CONTINUED.

THE CULTURE OF LILIES.

It was usually recognized by those qualified to judge that John Veridden had a complex nature, and this not only in the sense in which all human nature is complex, but in an unusual kind and degree. The man had certain theories of life, high sounding and far-reaching, and a lofty and certain average which raised him above the average mortal and caused friends to prophesy for him a brilliant and splendid career. Whereas, on the other hand, he permitted himself to be drawn into correspondingly low depths, amazing to his admirers. His forehead was massive, his eyes stern and self-centred under bushy brows, his mouth hardened into rigid lines, which told of thought and effort. His was a countenance, in short, which spoke of the fierce strifes of the years, of the storm and stress through which a strong nature, however, when the eyes were moments, however, when the eyes became, as it were, a luminous thought and a smile about the mouth grew at once human and tender, resembling that of a glacial flower of the Alps which blooms in untoward places and brightens amid all pervading desolation. Now it was that particular expression which John Veridden's face wore when Father Harvey first encountered him. The place was foul with odors, blended from many sources; the close rooms on either side of narrow passages fairly swarmed with human beings, who passed day after day up and down the creaking stairs; too often with evil words on their lips and evil thoughts behind the mask of heavy and stolid countenance. Yet here John Veridden, forever seeking amongst the dark places of great cities, had found a lily. Snowy white it gleamed through the gloom, and the slender was the heart within as the stem of that queenliest flower. On the top floor of that tenement, truly a "bad eminence" in the darkest and most squalid of its apartments, this young girl, Belinda Morris, existed. For she lay upon a couch crippled. Her delicate, pearly skin was framed in shining hair; her eyes were blue, and should have been, in John Veridden's opinion, tragically mournful blue. They should have been weighed down by the sorrows of humanity, by a life and such surroundings; instead of which there was a deep calm in their luminous depths and a joyousness, as of sunny childhood, in their smiling. As Father Harvey entered, John Veridden sat beside the invalid's couch, reading from a poet, the poet of nature, who has the magic gift of turning the blue of the cornflower, the yellow of the primrose, the tints of an evening sky, or the glint of sun on a quiet pavement, into words that burn. He had what John Veridden called a message for humanity; and most certainly the crippled girl's pale face was aglow with pleasure. Perhaps its light was reflected in part from that which shone in the aspect of the man beside her. John Veridden was at his best, and his rugged countenance was transfigured. Father Harvey paused and regarded the two with astonishment. He knew

own opinions as I to mine," laughed the priest, "and though I dissent from almost every one of your views, an honest foe can be met with respect and deference." "Are you an honest foe?" queried the cynic. "Idle to say that I am no foe at all to you as an individual," smiled the priest, "and as to my honesty, why, if I be an honest man, in the words of the world poet, God keep me so." However, the subject of our discourse was to be lilies, their treatment and their care. "Well, then!" cried John Veridden, "putting aside metaphor, I say and repeat that that girl yonder has a beautiful nature, capable, if taught, of attaining the highest flights. I mean to educate her and place her where she belongs—in the aristocracy of intellect." "She has, I agree with you, a beautiful nature," observed the priest, "in the highest degree of grace. And I mean, Mr. Veridden, as her pastor, and so responsible for her, to place her where she belongs—amongst the chosen of God." The two men stood and regarded each other under the pitiless glare of the sun, with the sickening, fetid atmosphere of the crowded thoroughfare about them. There was defiance on the one part, a calm earnestness on the other. "She is like," said the priest, breaking the stillness, "the snow as it falls from heaven, unsullied and free from sin as human nature may be." "Do not mention sin, sir, in her connection," growled John Veridden. Father Harvey laughed as he said quietly: "Your poet of nature styles the Virgin Mother 'Our tainted nature's solitary boast,' and he is right. But the question I wanted to ask you, Mr. Veridden, is simply this: How do you account for the marvellous preservation of her in this life?" He waved his hand and the cynic was aware that this gesture included not only the all-pervading squalor and low level of living, but the drunken father and the slovenly stepmother. Yet he answered boldly. "By nature's laws, preserving her highest products." "Wrong, Mr. Veridden, wrong," cried the priest. "This exquisite nature has been preserved by the faith and the virtues springing from the faith of her Irish mother, dead a little more than a year ago, and by her own fervent practice of religion." "You mean that she has been preserved by the iron restraints of your Romish Church, which have kept her in fetters, imposed iron restraints, restricted her already limited life into narrow bounds?" questioned John Veridden. "Which has rather taught her bright soul to soar above bonds into the eternal regions," corrected the priest; "has shown her the light beyond the prison gates." He paused, and even the cynic before him was struck with the expression of his face. "Think you, Mr. Veridden," he went on, "that without the living grace of the Sacraments, of prayer, of faith and practice, this girl (and mark you, numberless others) could breathe this atmosphere without becoming vitiated, to take lower ground altogether, could Belinda Morris have ever comprehended your flights of poetry had she not been prepared for it by the divine poetry of the Church?" John Veridden was silent, unconvinced, but perplexed and too honest to deny what he could not controvert. "One thing I ask of you before we part," asked the priest earnestly, "and this has been my chief reason for desiring this conversation with you; that you will not by word or glance seek to unsettle the girl's untroubled faith. Believe me, it is her only comfort and solace in all misfortunes, but it is her safeguard. Remember the awful responsibility you would incur, and for which, be certain, you would have to answer at the bar of divine justice." John Veridden glared. He was conscious at first of a furious anger against the priest's imperiousness. Then he rather liked his chief reason for desiring to come in on Saturday afternoon to hear her confession and to bring her Holy Communion early on Sunday morning. The priest then followed his ungracious companion down stairs and out into the street. At the door stood Mrs. Morris, the crippled girl's stepmother, in conversation with a group of women, as a rowdy and untidy as herself. A silence fell upon them and there was an intense deference in their manner towards the priest, an uneasy, deprecating self-consciousness which made John Veridden secretly indignant. But Father Harvey had a word for everyone of the group, calling them by name and addressing a few pleasant sentences to each upon the weather or the children or some local happening in the neighborhood. When the two men, priest and cynic, had passed on for a few moments upon the pavement, and looked about them, the high tenement houses arose on either side of the street, shutting out the light of heaven. Old clothes shops, taverns or cheap groceries, with half rotting fruits and vegetables, aided the garbage barrels in polluting the air. Grungy human beings swarmed at the windows, children in all stages of rags and filth sprawled over the sidewalks, drunken men reeled past in doorways, kept women gossiped and coarse speech, "Our Lily then, sir, as the avowed enemy of all priest-craft, and all reputable bonds by which men are held, you meet me on terms of courtesy, even of friendliness." "You are in one sense as free to your

and Heaven knows what besides. She's as full of mysticism as an ancient solitarary." "Yet with all John Veridden's sharpness there was a whimsical gleam of humor in his eyes as he spoke. "And pray, Mr. Veridden, what has been the effect on Belinda's mind?" asked the priest calmly. "The effect of a narcotic!" cried John Veridden. "She bore pain, she smiled through tears of agony, she answered her drunken brute of a father like an angel and bore with that fault-tormented stepmother, because, as she said: 'What does it matter if we're happy in heaven one day?'" "And what does it matter, John Veridden?" asked the priest. "Why, I say, what do you mean," blustered the cynic. "Simply that I ask you, with your experience of life, of its light places and its dark, its so-called pleasures and intellectual enjoyments—what does it all matter compared with something that is stable and permanent and that something complete happiness?" "Are you trying to entangle and confuse me with your sophistry?" roared John Veridden. The priest shrugged his shoulders. "Go home and think it all over," he said: "take every possible argument for and against my theory and tell me if I am doing wrong in striving to bring Heaven into the lives of the poor and miserable." "If you believed it, sir, it might be different," sneered John Veridden. A crimson flush arose from Father Harvey's chin to his very forehead, but he spoke quietly. "I pass over the insult; the Catholic priesthood take that as their daily bread, but I ask you as man to man, here face to face and eye to eye, do you believe that I am living that I falsehood? Do you suppose that I have sacrificed home, friends, comfort, some measure of wealth, the career that I might have followed in order to teach systematically what I know to my goal, no country of perpetual gladness to solace me for the heart-breaks of this?" It was a strange scene, that squalid and dingy parlor, and those two of widely different views standing thus confronting each other. John Veridden eyed the priest for an instant or two of intense silence, then he exclaimed in a broken voice: "I spoke hastily; I believe you are sincere in your belief." From that moment, when his belief in man was reconstructed, became possible a still more tremendous resolution—his ability to believe in God. He went home, his whole nature in chaos, but with his dark places prepared for the great light that was approaching. All that night John Veridden wrestled, prostrate on his face, upright, pacing restlessly, kneeling at length in supplication. The faint of that terrible vigil was a hasty line to the priest: "I was wrong and you were right. You best understand the culture of lilies." In a convent chapel was seen at length the climax of this simple story of life. A solemn impressive service taking place was the investiture of a novice with the habit of religion. The novice was fair and slender, with eyes of luminous blue, and the hair that fell under the sacerdotal scissor of John shining gold. A large slice of John Veridden's nature had gone to a surgeon of international repute, who had made the infirm whole and transformed the cripple of the east-side tenement into the prospective nun. While the choir intoned the "De Profundis" and arose triumphant in the "Te Deum," the strong soul of a willow cynic was wrung with a fierce, human pain, which perhaps but one spectator guessed. John Veridden had given up the girl, the education of which he had once dreamed, Christianized under the guidance of Father Harvey, and perhaps in return he had hoped to keep her always with him, to give her a home and a name and a measure of earthly happiness. But, following the path traced out for her by her spiritual guide, Belinda had found her way into that closed garden where the lilies bloom forever, awaiting their transplanting to the eternal meadows. Despite his conversion, it was not easy for John Veridden at first to understand the meaning of vocation, but he was very humble in the ordeal and freely acknowledged that he was unworthy of Belinda and that she was secure in a sheltered home. "She is safe now," whispered Father Harvey, when the ceremony was over, "and believe me, for her it is best. Our Lily will bloom now forever in the eternal gardens." "But what will become of me? How shall I ever find her there," groaned the former cynic in deep anguish of spirit. "In our father's house there are many mansions," said the priest solemnly, "and in one of them, through faith and love and through what you have done for these, my little ones, you will some day find your Lily."—Anna T. Sadtler, in The Pilgrim.

How Mary Loved God.

St. Bernardine asserts, that Mary, while she lived on earth, was continually loving God. And he adds further, that she never did anything that she did not know was pleasing to God; and that she loved Him as much as she knew He ought to be loved. Hence, according to Blessed Albertus Magnus, it may be said that Mary was filled with so great charity that a greater was not possible in any pure creature on this earth (L. de laud. Virg. c. 39.). For this reason, St. Thomas, in his treatise on the Virgin, by her hard charity, was made so beautiful, and so enamored with God that, captivated as it were, by love of her, He descended into her womb to become man (Conc. 5, in Nat. Dom.). Wherefore, St. Bernardine exclaims: "Behold a Virgin who by her virtue has wounded and taken captive the heart of God." (Tom. 2, Serm. 61.)