

all things the faithful helper of the Apostolic See." Karolus, Dei gratia Rex: *Ecclesie defensor et in omnibus Apostolicis, sedis adjutor fidelis.*"

The office of the Catholic laity, in the circumstances which we are now considering, is that of *faithful helpers* of the Church. They are her arm—she is their guide. For, to the pastors of the Church, and expressly to him, who is His Vicar, Christ committed the government and the guidance of His Church.

The question of the relation of the Catholic laity to the State, when this is not so much in an attitude of pure negation to the Church, as of active hostility to her, is one which requires much consideration and ample treatment. It is a question which may form the subject of some comments upon a future occasion.

+ T. O'MAHONY,
Bishop of Eudocia.

SACRED LEGENDS.

Of the two, I would rather have to maintain that we ought to begin with believing everything that is offered to our acceptance, than that it is our duty to doubt of everything.—CARDINAL NEWMAN.

The legends connected with the life of Our Lord and of His Blessed Mother are singularly beautiful, and if gathered together would form delightful reading for old and young. I am not aware of any such collection, though of course it is not difficult to find out where a dozen or so legends are related. In the following the reader will find what he might have to search a good deal to collect otherwise; and he will probably also escape some things, that if he be very young, it were as well for him to avoid. For, besides the Christian legends, there are many beautiful stories in the Talmud and in the Koran, not to mention the sacred books of the East. The order here attempted will be the legends of Our Lord, then of the Blessed Virgin, then of the Saints, and a word or two for the Jewish and other legends. The literature of these in the meagrest form would fill a thick volume, but here it will occupy a column or so in a couple of numbers. This is for the simple and innocent, so let the learned and the critical read elsewhere.

I. HOLY INFANCY.

The legends connected with the Mother naturally come before those of the Son, but the nativity of Our Lord can be made a convenient starting place. That of the Three Kings is well known in the Feast of the Epiphany or the Manifestation to the Gentiles whom these Magi represented. The Magi—sometimes improperly translated the Magicians—meant wise men and they came from some Eastern country, but from what place is not stated. They were Gentiles, however, Chaldeans or Persians possibly, and among them was inherited the tradition of a Star, as mentioned in the Book of Numbers. When these Eastern sages beheld this Star they set out at once on their long and perilous journey—the star going before them—and arrived at length with their retinue in Jerusalem. The Star, said by some to be in the form of a radiant child bearing a sceptre or cross, directed them till it stood over Bethlehem. They brought gold to signify that the expected One was King, incense that He was God, and myrrh that He was man and doomed to death. Sometimes the names and nationalities of these Kings are set out—Caspar is King of Tarsus and offers gold—Melchior, the King of Arabia (a negro) offers frankincense, and Balthasar, King of Saba, an offering from the land of spices. It is narrated that the presents of these wise men supported the Holy Family in Egypt; though it is elsewhere stated that these offerings were of small value and intended only as tribute to their sovereign. During the sojourn in Egypt the Holy Family were reduced to the extremest poverty. The Blessed Virgin, indeed, is described as begging from door to door the flax out of which she afterwards made the seamless garment for her Son. The Magi it is said were baptised by Saint Thomas

and subsequently suffered martyrdom in India. Their tomb or shrine is pointed out in the Cathedral at Cologne, and they are the same personages known in Western Europe as the Three Kings of Cologne.

These Shepherd Kings are not to be confounded with the Shepherds to whom the Angels announced the coming of the Prince of Peace. The Shepherds are the shepherds of the neighbouring country—were Jews—and their adoration has that mystical significance. They are represented as bringing Pastoral gifts. There is an old legend that Simon and Jude, afterwards Apostles, were among the Shepherds. The stable at Bethlehem was said to be on the spot where Jesse, the father of David, once lived and where David pastured his sheep. Some say the stable was in a cavern. The ox and the ass kneel in adoration as they are yet said to do on every Christmas; and there is an old Latin poem to the effect that they kept warm the Divine Infant with their breath. There is a tradition that these two animals accompanied the Holy Family in the flight into Egypt.

At the birth of our Lord the vines of Engaddi blossomed, the temple of Concord at Rome fell, and the Pagan oracles became dumb. It is related that at the flight into Egypt—all the idols of Heliopolis tumbled to the ground when the Holy Family entered the gates of the city. At the death of our Lord we read that all the trees withered and died, and the facts of the sun being darkened and the earthquake are of course in the Gospel narrative.

The legend of Simeon who was permitted to take the Holy Infant in his arms is very beautiful and is traced in this way:

About 260 years before Christ Ptolemy Philadelphus wishing to enrich his celebrated library by a Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures procured a number of learned Rabbis to repair to Alexandria and execute the task. The High Priest Eleazar selected six out of each of the twelve tribes of Israel, and amongst them was Simeon, a learned priest. The latter had the book of Isaiah to translate, and when he came to that verse in the 7th chap., "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son," he began to doubt in his own mind how that could be possible. Finally he translated the Hebrew word for *virgin* into the Greek word for *young woman*, and no sooner had he it written down than an angel effaced it and the proper word appeared in its place. This happened three times, and while he doubted the miracle was revealed to him. As he doubted, he was sentenced to tarry on earth till he had seen the Lord. He came to the temple on the day of the Presentation, and taking the child in his arms, exclaimed, "Lord, now thou dost dismiss thy servant;" in the words of the Canticle, *Nunc dimittis*.

There is a beautiful legend of the Holy Infancy that in the flight the Holy Family took refuge in a robber's cave; that the bandit who sheltered them was afterwards the person known as the good thief whom Our Lord pardoned on the Cross. On the road, being pressed with hunger, the Blessed Virgin asked a countryman who was sowing seed to give something for the support of the child. He refused, giving as a reason that it was not seed but stones he was sowing. Such indeed they proved to be when harvest time came; the traveller in the East to this day is pointed out a barren hillside where small pebbles the size and color of peas whiten the surface of the ground.*

It is narrated too that in the Flight another husbandman sowing wheat, and more worthy of the sight of Our Lord, was anxious to save Him from the wrath of Herod. He was told by the Blessed Virgin to say: "If any one shall ask you whether we have passed this way, ye shall answer, 'Such persons passed this way when I was sowing this corn.'" When the officers of Herod came and inquired next day, they found the amazed husbandman reaping what was sown the previous day, and hearing his answer they returned and gave up the pursuit of the Holy Child. During the heat of the day the willows leaned over to form a shade for the Holy Travellers, and the shape of its branches is poeti-

*At the Indian Monastery at Cross Village, Michigan, the reader can see a handful of these gathered in Palestine some years ago by the Superior of the Convent.