

TALES OF THE JURY ROOM

By Gerald Griffin
THE STRANGER'S TALE

THE RAVEN'S NEST

"I shall learn, my lord, I hope, as aptly as my predecessors. Ere I am twice lord deputy I shall amend."

"And now," said the earl, "to thy chamber, and prepare to meet the Geraldine at evening. In a few days he makes formal submission to the king before the lords of council at Kilmahinham Castle, and to-night he must here be entertained as becomes a Geraldine of his birth and breeding. Farewell!"

Spirited, lively, and yet filled with generous affections, the young knight was no less calculated to attract admiration in the hall than in the field. He was early at the festival, and met the Geraldine in his father's presence. The latter was a swart, stout-built man, with a brow that spoke of many dangers braved, and difficulties withstood, if not overcome. Unaccustomed to the polished railway of a court, the stubborn chief was somewhat disposed at first to be offended with Sir Ulick, who addressed him in a tone of ironical reproach, and upbraided him in eloquent terms with the unreasonable selfishness of his withholding from the conquerors, possessions and immunities which he and his ancestors had now so long enjoyed, and which it was but fair that they should yield at least to those poorer adventures, whose services the Tudors had no other means of rewarding. "Did the Geraldine, the Tudors owed those men to whom they were indebted for the subjugation of so large a province? and would they be so ungenerous as to withhold from the sovereign the means of recompensing so palpable a public service?" &c.

The Geraldine, who did not understand irony, was observed two or three times to bend his brows upon the youth, but had his ire removed by some gracious turn in the harangue, introduced with timely promptitude. The hall of the festival was now thrown open; and Sir Ulick, standing at the farther end, summoned to his side his favorite attendant, Thomas Butler, from whom he inquired the names and quality of such guests as, in entering, had attracted his attention.

"I pray thee, gentle Thomas," said Sir Ulick, "what man is that with a cast in his right eye, and a coulan as thick and as bushy as a fox's tail, and as carry-red withal; and a sword that seems at deadly feud with its owner's calves?"

"Who? he my lord? That is O'Carroll, who thrashed Mac Murrough, at the Boyne, for burning his cousin's castle and piking his children in the bog."

"And who is she who hangs upon his arm?"

"His daughter Nell, my lord, who eat the tip of Mac Murrough's liver, with a flagon of wine, for dinner, on the day after the battle."

"Sweet creature! And that round, short, flashy, merry little man, with his chain?"

"That is the mayor, my lord."

"And the lofty lady who comes after, like a grenadier behind a drummer?"

"The lady-mayress, my lord, who took her husband upon her shoulders, and ran off with him to the city, when he would fain have fought, single-handed, with an enormous O'Toole, who sat upon them as if they were taking a morning walk to Cullinstown."

"Her stature stood him in good stead. And who are they who follow close behind?"

"Burke of Clanricard and O'Moore, who hanged and quartered the four widows in Offally for speaking against the cosherings of the poor."

"And the ladies?"

"Their wives and daughters, who were by at the quartering."

"A goodly company. But hush!"

"What is it, my lord that you would ask?"

"Hush! hush! Canst thou tell me, Thomas, what lady is that in yellow, as far beyond the rest in beauty of person as in the graceful simplicity of her attire?"

"That, my lord," said the attendant, "is your cousin, Margaret Fitzgerald, and the only daughter of the Geraldine."

"Fame, that exaggerates all portraiture, fell short in hers. My cousin Margaret! Away good Thomas, I care not to learn more."

Approaching the circle, of which the fair Geraldine formed a chief attraction, Sir Ulick was introduced to his young relative. The evening passed happily away in her society; and before many days they were better friends than perhaps, themselves suspected, or the parents of either could have readily approved. Both freely communicated their thoughts and wishes on the condition of their families and country. Both mourned the divided interests that distracted the latter, and the wretched jealousies which seemed destined to keep the well-wishers of the island for ever disunited in themselves, and therefore utterly incapable of promoting her advantage. Such themes as these formed the subject of conversation one evening, while the dance went gaily forward, and the hall of the banquet seemed more than usually thronged with brilliant dresses.

"Now, at least, cousin Margaret," said Sir Ulick, in a gentle voice, "we may promise ourselves brighter times. Our fathers seem better agreed at every interview; and so

nearly do their tempers harmonize, that I am sure it needed but an earlier intimacy to render them as fervent friends as they have been strenuous—Hark! What is that noise?"

While he spoke, the sounds of mirth were interrupted, in a startling manner, by loud and angry voices at the end of the hall, which was occupied by the lord-deputy and other chieftains of every party. Before time was given for question or reply, the worldly clamour was exchanged for the clasp of weapons, and in an instant the scene of merriment was changed to a spectacle of horror and affright. The music ceased, the dance was broken up, the women shrieked, while of the men some joined the combatants, whom others sought to separate by flinging cloaks, scarfs, caps, and various articles of dress across the glancing weapons. A truce was thus enforced; and Sir Ulick learned with indignation, that the hot-blooded Geraldine had struck his father. The news soon spread into the streets where a strife began that was not so easily to be appeased. The followers of the Geraldine, whose hearts were never with the treaty of submission, seemed glad of the occasion given to break it off. They fell upon the citizens, who were not slow in flying to their weapons, and a scene of tumult, ensued which made the streets resound from the river side to the hills. The Geraldines were driven from the city, not without loss, and their chieftain found himself on horseback without the walls, and farther from the royal countenance than ever. He was with difficulty able to rescue his daughter, who, on the first sound of strife, had immediately placed herself by his side.

The war now recommenced with redoubled fury. The Lord Deputy received orders from London to have the Geraldine taken, dead or alive. The same day, according to the fashion of those times, upon the castle gate. In obedience to these instructions, which needed not the concurrence of his own hearty good will, Kildare marched an army to the south, and after several engagements, laid siege to the Geraldine in one of his strongest castles. The ruins still occupy a solitary crag, surrounded by a rushy marsh at a little distance from New Auburn. The place was naturally strong; and the desperation of the besieged made it altogether impregnable. After several fruitless efforts, attended by severe loss to the assailants, to possess themselves of the castle by storm, it was placed in a state of blockade, and the Lord Deputy, encamping in the neighbourhood, left famine to complete the work which his arms had failed to accomplish.

With different feelings, Sir Ulick, who held a subordinate command in the army of his father, beheld the days run by, which were to end in surrender, which was more probable from the well known character of the Geraldine, in the destruction and death of the besieged. Two months rolled on, and there appeared no symptom on the part of the latter that indicated a desire to come to terms. Such, likewise, was the fidelity with which those feudal chiefs were served by their followers, that not a single deserter escaped from the castle to reveal the real state of its defenders. They appeared upon the battlements as hearty and as well accoutred as on the first day of the blockade.

Meantime there was no lack of spirit in the castle. The storehouse was well supplied for a blockade of many months; and the Geraldine depended much on a letter he had sent beneath the wings of a carrier-pigeon to a distant part of Desmond. The days passed merrily between watching and amusement, and the frequent sounds of mirth and dancing from within, showed that the besieged were thinking of something else beside giving up the fortress.

One evening, Margaret, retiring to her chamber, gave orders to her woman to attend her. The latter obeyed, and was employed in assisting her lady to undress, when the following conversation passed between them.

"You have not since discovered by whom the letter was left in the east-bolt-hole?"

The woman answered in the negative.

"Take this," said Margaret, handing her maid a small wooden tablet, as white as snow, except where it was marked by her own neat characters. "Take this, and lay it exactly where the former was deposited."

Yet stay! Let me compare the notes again, to be sure that I have worded mine answer aright." "Sweet Margaret—Be persuaded by one who loves thy welfare. Let thy sweet voice urge the Geraldine to give up the fortress which he must yield to force ere long, and with sorer loss perchance than that of life and property. Thy friendly enemy unknown." "Well said, my friendly enemy, not quite perhaps so unknown as thou esteemest—now for mine answer." "Kind, friendly enemy. Thine eloquence will be much better spent on Kildare, in urging him to raise the siege, than my poor accents on the stubborn Geraldine. Wherefore I commend thee to thy task, and warn thee to beware of thy kinsmen's bills, which, how speedily they can do, none ought to know better than the Lord Deputy and his followers. Thy thankful foe."

The tablet was laid on the window and disappeared in the course of the night. On that which followed, while Margaret and her maid were occupied as before, in preparing for rest, a noise at the window aroused

the attention of the mistress, and struck the woman mute with terror. Dismissing the latter into the sleeping chamber, which lay adjacent, and carefully shutting the door, the daughter of the Geraldine advanced to the window, and unbarred the curtained lattice. A brilliant moon revealed the lake, in the midst of which the castle rose upon the summit of a rock, the guarded causeway by which it was connected with the shore, the distant camp of Kildare, and the tranquil woods on hills extending far around. Beneath her, on the rock, appeared a figure, the identity of which she could not for an instant mistake; but how it came thither, to what intent, and wherefore undetected, was more than she had skill to penetrate. Perhaps, like a second Leander, he had braved the waves with no other aim than his own vigorous limbs! But the stern of a little curragh, peeping from beneath the overhanging rock, gave indication that Sir Ulick (for he it was) knew a trick worth two of Leander's. Waving his hand to Margaret, he ascended the formidable crag which still separated him from the window of her apartment, and came even within whispering distance. He did but come to be sure that she at least was not in want of food. It so happened that this side of the rock alone was unguarded, being supposed impregnable from the steepness of its ascent, as well as that of the opposing shore. Sir Ulick, however, gliding under the shadow of a distant cliff, and only venturing to dart for the isle when the sky was darkest, had already visited it for three successive nights and seemed at every new venture, more secure of his secret. The alarm of Margaret, however, was excessive. The discovery of an intercourse would be certain death to one or both—for the Geraldine in a case of treason, whether real or apparent, would not spare his nearest blood.

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One night as she sat in her window, looking out with the keenest anxiety for the little wicker skiff, she observed, with a thrill of eagerness and delight, some dark object gliding close beneath the cliffs upon the opposite shore. The unclouded brightness of the moon, however, prevented the approach of the boat; and her suspense had reached a painful height, before the sky grew dark. At length a friendly cloud extended its veil beneath the face of the unwelcome satellite; and in a few minutes the splash of oars, scarce louder than the ripple of the wavelets against the rock, gave token to the watchful ear of Margaret of the arrival of the long-expected knight. A figure ascended the rock; the lattice is unbarred; their sufficient light to peruse the form and features of the stranger. It is not Sir Ulick; but Thomas Butler, the *fidelis Achates*, and only confidant of the youthful knight.

"What, Thomas, is it thou? Where is thy lord?"

"Ah, lady, it is all over with Sir Ulick!"

"How sayest thou?"

"He is taken, lady, by the Lord Deputy's servants, and stands condemned in the article of treason."

These dreadful tidings, acting on spirits already depressed by a sudden disappointment, proved too much for Margaret's strength, and she fainted away in the window. On reviving, she obtained from Thomas Butler, the details of the circumstances which had occurred to Sir Ulick since his last appearance at the island, and the cause in which they had their origin.

About a week before, the Lord Deputy was sitting at evening in his tent, when a scout arrived to solicit a private audience. It was granted; and the man avowed that he had discovered the existence of a treasonable communication between the inhabitants of the island and the shore. In his indignation at this announcement, Kildare made a vow, that he would cast alive into the Raven's Nest, and appointed a party to watch on the following night on the shore beside the cliffs for the return of the traitor from the rock. Having given the men strict injunctions to bring the villain bound before him the instant he should be apprehended, he ordered a torch to be lighted in his tent, and remained up to await the issue.

Towards morning, footsteps were heard approaching the entrance of the tent. The sentinel challenged, and admitted the party. The astonishment of Kildare may be conceived, when, in the fettered and detected traitor, against whom he had been fostering his liveliest wrath, he beheld his gallant son, the gay and heroic Ulick! The latter did not deny that he had made several nightly visits to the island; but denied with scorn, the imputation of treasonable designs, although he refused to give any account of what his real motives were. After long endeavouring, no less by menace than entreaty, to induce him to reveal the truth, the Lord Deputy addressed him with a kindness which affected him more than his severity.

"I believe thee, Ulick," he said; "I am sure thou art no traitor. Nevertheless, thy father must not be thy

judge. Go, plead thy cause before the lords of council, and see if they will yield thee as ready a credit. I fear thou wilt find it otherwise; but thou hast tried to blame."

A court was formed in the course of a few days, consisting of Kildare himself as president, and a few of the council, who were summoned for the purpose. The facts proved before them were those already stated; and Sir Ulick persisted in maintaining the same silence with respect to his designs or motives as he had done before his father. It seemed impossible, under such circumstances, to acquit him; and having received the verdict of the court, the Lord Deputy gave orders for the fulfilment of his dreadful vow.

On the night after his sentence, his attendant Thomas Butler, obtained permission to visit him in his dungeon; and received a hint from Kildare, as he granted it, that he would not face the worse, for drawing his sword from his scabbard, Sir Ulick, however, was inflexible. Fearing the danger to Margaret's life, no less than to her reputation, he maintained his resolution of suffering the sentence to be executed, without further question. "The Lords of the Council," he said, "were as well aware of his services to the king's government, as he could make them; and if those services were not sufficient to procure him credit in so slight a matter, he could take no further pains to earn it."

Disappointed and alarmed, on the eve of the morning appointed for the execution, Thomas Butler, at the hazard of his life, determined to seek the lady Margaret herself, and acquaint her with what had occurred. The daughter of the Geraldine did not hesitate long about the course she should pursue. Wrapping a man's cloak around her figure, with the hood for in those days, fair reader, the gentlemen wore hoods over her head, she descended from the window, and succeeded in reaching the boat. A few minutes' rapid rowing brought them to the shore. It was already within an hour of dawn, and the sentence was to be completed before sunrise. Having made fast the curragh in a secret place, they proceeded amongst crag and cove in the direction of the Raven's Nest. The dismal chasm was screened by a group of alder and brushwood, which concealed it from the view, until the passenger approached its very brink. As they came within view of the place, the sight of gleaming spears and yellow uniforms amongst the trees, made the heart of Margaret sink with apprehension.

"Run on before, good Thomas," she exclaimed, "delay thy horrid purpose but a moment. Say one approach which can give information of the whole."

The letters, designed no more to be unbound, were already fastened on the wrists and ankles of the young soldier, when his servant arrived, scarce able to speak for weariness, to stay the execution. He had discovered, he said, the whole conspiracy, and there was a witness coming on who could reveal the object and the motive of the traitors, for there were more than one. At the same instant Margaret appeared, close wrapped in her cloak, to confirm the statement of Butler. At the request of the latter, the execution was delayed while a courier was despatched to the Lord Deputy with intelligence of the interruption that had taken place. In a few minutes he returned, bringing a summons to the whole party to appear before the Lord of Council. They complied without delay, none being more perplexed than Sir Ulick himself at the meaning of this strange announcement.

On arriving in the camp, the unknown informant entreated to be heard in private by the council. The request was granted; and Margaret, still closely veiled, was conducted to the hall in which the judge sat. On being commanded to uncover her head, she replied:

"My lords, I trust the tale I have to tell may not require that I should make known the person of the teller. My Lord Deputy, to you the drift of my story must have the nearest concern. When you bade the Geraldine to your court of Dublin, he was accompanied by an only daughter, Margaret, whom your son Ulick saw and loved. He was not without confessing his affection, and I am well assured that he was not unrequited. On the very evening, my Lord Deputy, before that most unhappy affray, which led to your disunion, and to the dissolution of our—of Sir Ulick's hopes, a mutual avowal had been made, and a mutual pledge of faith (modestly, my lords) exchanged, always under the favor of our—the noble parents of the traitor. My lords, I have it under proof that the visits of Sir Ulick were made to the lady Margaret—that to no other individual of the castle were they known—and that no weightier converse ever passed between them, than such silly thoughts of youthful affection as may not be repeated before grave and reverend ears like those to which I speak."

"And what may be thy proof, stranger?" said the Lord Deputy, with a tenderness of voice which showed the anxiety her tale excited in his mind.

"The word of Margaret Fitzgerald," replied the witness, as she dropped the mantle from her shoulders.

The apparition of the Geraldine's daughter in the council chamber, gave a wonderful turn to the proceedings. Kildare was the first to speak. He arose from his seat, and approaching the spot where the spirited young maiden stood, took her hand with kindness and affection.

"In truth, sweet kinswoman," he said, "thou hast staked a sufficient testimony. And to be sure that it be so with all as it is with Kildare, I promise thee to back it with my sword; and it shall go hard but thy honest-hearted speech shall save the Geraldine his lands and towers to boot. My lords, I think I see by your countenance that you deem the lady's tale a truth. Then summon Ulick hither, and let a flag of truce be sent to the Geraldine, to let him know that his child is in safe keeping. The Raven's Nest has taught me what he feels."

The chroniclers of New Auburn conclude their story by relating that the promise of the Lord Deputy was fulfilled—that the affection of the heroic pair received the sanction of their parents—and that whenever afterwards in their wedded life a cloud seemed gathering at their castle hearth, the recollection of the day when the father-in-law brought sunshine to the hearts of both.

If the merit of the several stories told during the night were to be estimated by the loudness and continuance of the applause which followed the stranger's was beyond all comparison the best. Each juror viewed with the others in expressing his gratification, and silence was restored only when the Foreman reminded them, that the gentlemen had yet to favour them with a song, which he had no doubt, they would find quite as entertaining as his interesting story.

"I cannot, gentlemen," said the stranger, "better acknowledge your very great indulgence and kindness than by at once complying with your wishes, so far as my ability enables me. I will attempt a song, which as a composition of my wooing days, long gone by, I yet remember, perhaps, with at much interest as an Irishman could. Smiling as he uttered these few words of preface, the stranger began:

I love my love in the morning,
For she like morn is fair,
Her blushing cheek, its crimson streak,
It clouds her golden hair,
Her glance its beam, so soft and kind,
Her tears its dewy showers
And her voice, the tender whispering wind
That stirs the early bowers.

I love my love in the morning,
I love my love at noon,
For she is bright as the lord of light,
Yet mild as Autumn's moon.
Her beauty is my bosom's sun,
Her faith my fostering shade,
And I will love my darling one
Till even that sun shall fade.

I love my love in the morning,
I love my love at even,
Her smile's soft play is like the ray
That lights the western heaven,
I loved her when the sun was high,
I loved her when he rose,
But best of all when evening's sigh
Was murmuring at its close.

No sooner had the stranger concluded his song than all declared with one voice that he merited his liberty, and they according began to devise means of procuring him that valuable boon. The window was raised, and it was soon found that by lowering him no further than their arms might reach, he could reach a projection in the building from whence his descent to the pavement was but an easy fall. Shaking hands warmly with each of the jurors in succession, and thanking them with the liveliest gratitude, both for the entertainment he had derived from their narratives, and for the kindness with which they condescended to his escape, the stranger, having ascertained by a previous glance of inspection, that there was no person within sight, suffered three or four of the jurors to grasp his wrists and lower him from the window, and in a few seconds found himself in the little street with no other injury than a slight momentary inconvenience from the concussion, and stiffness in the limbs occasioned by his having been so long in one position. Waving his hand again and again to the jurors, who stood looking from the window to see that he had reached terra firma in safety, he hastened to his hotel, where he found the Boots already stirring and commencing his daily avocations. The stranger hurried to bed, where he soon lost all recollection of the jurors and their stories, and slept so soundly that he was only awakened some hours after by the trumpeters who preceded the judges on their way to the court-house.

The instant he heard the sound of the trumpet, our traveller was seized with an irresistible desire to learn, and, if possible, to witness the issue of the trial which had already awakened so lively an interest in his mind. Dressing with all possible speed, he was able to make his way into the court just as the jury entered the box to give his lordship an account of the proceedings since the previous evening.

To the traveller, who knew so much more than the rest of the spectators of the manner in which the jurors had been passing their time, it was amusing to observe the gravity with which they took their seats and prepared to answer the questions of the judge.

"Well, gentlemen, have you agreed to your verdict?"

"No, my lord."

"You have considered the evidence?"

"We have fully considered it, my lord," (the traveller groaned.)

"Is there any point—" his lordship began, but before he could complete the sentence one or two persons hastily entered the court, and an extraordinary commotion was presently observed amongst the gentlemen of the long robe, which soon extended itself through the body of the court. A general whispering and tittering commenced, which soon became so loud as to call for the attention of the bench. In answer to a question from his lordship one of the defendant's counsel arose, and with a voice half broken with laughter, said:

"My lord, you may remember I gave your lordship and the gentlemen of the jury to understand that there was some influence connected with this cause, foreign to the inclinations and judgment of both the parties immediately concerned. The defendant, my client, was, I grieve to say, led against his will, to give cause for this action by the instigation of his friends, who are of one political party, and the plaintiff, I understand, was persuaded against her will to institute this action in compliance with the wishes of her friends, who hold political principles of a different kind. Both parties were thus made to sacrifice their own happiness to the prejudices of others; but now I have the satisfaction to inform your lordship, that they have this morning saved your lordship and the gentlemen of the jury the trouble of proceeding further with the case. They have very wisely taken their own business out of their friends' hands, and taken it into their own. In a word, my lord, not to keep your lordship and those respectable gentlemen any longer in suspense, I have just learned that the plaintiff and defendant have decided the case by running away with each other, after being legally married by special license at 5 o'clock this morning (loud laughter), and are now actually on their way together to the Lakes of Killarney, leaving us old fools with wigs on our heads (roars of laughter, in which his lordship heartily joined,) to pore through spectacles over our briefs, while they have done more in half an hour to bring the litigation to a satisfactory close than all our law could effect for a whole term together."

The scene which followed was such as one does not often witness in a court of law. The counsel threw up their briefs amid roars of laughter; the jurors, who had entered heartily into the general mirth, were immediately discharged, and the traveller as he took his way from the court could not help suffering a sigh to mingle with his mirth as he murmured a wish that party spirit might never lead to worse consequences than it had on this occasion, when its utmost activity had led to no more injurious result than the imprisonment of an over-curious stranger, during, one night in the corner of a Jury Room.

THE END

THE MONTH OF MARY

The opening sermon of a course for the month of Mary delivered in the Church of St. Vincent Ferrer, New York, by the Very Rev. Thomas M. Burke, O. P.

We are commencing this evening the devotions to the Blessed Virgin, to which the Church invites all her children during the month of May. The faithful at all seasons invoke the mercy of God through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mother. But more especially during this beautiful year, does our Holy Mother invite our devout thoughts and prayer to the Mother of God, and put before the Blessed Virgin's claims and titles to our veneration and love. Guided by this Catholic instinct and spirit we are assembled here this evening my dear brethren and it is my pleasing duty to endeavor to unfold before your eyes the high designs of God which were matured and carried out in Mary. And first of all I have to remark to you as I have done more than once before, that in every work of God we find reflected the harmony and the order which is the infinite beauty of God Himself. The nearer any work of His approaches to Him in excellence, in usefulness, in necessity, the more does that work reflect the beauty and harmony of God Who created it. Now, dearly beloved, the highest work that ever God made—that it ever entered into His mind to conceive—or that He ever executed by His omnipotence—was the sacred humanity, the human nature of Jesus Christ; and next to Him in grandeur, in sanctity, in necessity, is the institution of or the creation of the holy Catholic Church of God. When, therefore, we come, as pious children of the Church, to examine her doctrines, to meditate upon her precepts, to analyze her devotions, we naturally find ourselves at once in the kingdom of perfect harmony and order. Everything in the Church's teaching harmonizes with the works of the human intelligence: every thing in the Church's moral law harmonizes with the wants of man's soul. Everything in the Church's liturgy, or devotions, harmonizes with man's imagination and sense, in so far as that imagination and sense help him to a union with God. And so, everything in the Church's devotion harmonizes with the nature around us, and within us, and with that reflection of nature in its highest and most beautiful form, which is in the spirit and in the genius of the Blessed Virgin Mary. I remember, once, speaking with a very distinguished poet—one of a world-wide reputation and honorable name—a name which is a household word wherever the English language is spoken—and he said to me: "Father, I am not a Catholic; yet I have no

keener pleasure, or greater enjoyment, than to witness Catholic ceremonial, to study Catholic devotion, to investigate Catholic doctrines—nor do I find," he said, "in all that nature or the resources of intellect open before me, greater food for poetic and enthusiastic thought than that which is suggested to me by the Catholic Church." And so, it is not without some beautiful reason—some beautiful harmonious reason—that the Church is able to account for every iota and every title of her liturgy and of her devotions.

And, now, we find the Church upon this, the first of May, calling all her pious and spiritual-minded children, and telling them that this month is devoted, in an especial manner, to the Blessed Virgin Mary. What month is this, my dearly beloved? It is the month in the year when the Spring puts forth all its life, and all the evidences of those hidden powers that lie latent in the world of ours. You have all seen the face of nature at Christmas-time, during Lent, even at Easter-time, this year—and looking around you, it seemed as if the earth was never to produce a green blade of grass again. You looked upon the trees; no leaf gave evidence there of life. All was lifeless, all was barren, all was dried up. And to a man who opened his eyes but yesterday, without the experience of past years and of past summers, it would seem to him as if it were impossible that this cold, and barren, and winter-stricken earth could ever burst again into the life, the verdure, the beauty, and the promise of Spring. But the clouds rained down the rain of heaven and the sun shone forth with the warmth of Spring, and suddenly all nature is instinct with life. Now, the cornfields sprout and tell us that in a few months they will teem with the abundance of the harvest. Now, the meadow, dried up, and burned, and withered, and yellow, and leafless, cloaks itself with a green mantle, robing hill and dale with the beauty of nature, and refreshing the eye of man and every beast of the field that feeds thereon. Now, the trees that seemed to be utterly dried, and sapless, and leafless, and motionless, save so far as they swayed sadly to and fro to every winter blast that passed over them, are clothed with the fair young buds of Spring, most delicate and delightful to the eye and to the heart of man; promising in the little leaf of to-day the ample spread and the deep shade of the thick summer foliage that is to come upon them. Now, the birds of the air, silent during the winter months, begin their song. The lark rises on his wing to the upper air, and, as he rises, he pours out his song in ether until he fills the whole atmosphere with the thrill of his delicate and melodious notes. Now, every bud expands, and every leaf opens, and every spray of plant and tree sends forth its Spring-song, and hails with joy, the summer, and all nature is instinct with life. How beautiful is the harmony of our devotion and our worship—how delicate, how natural, how beautiful the idea of our holy mother, the Church, in selecting this month—this month of promise—this month of Spring—this month of gladness—of serenity, and softened temperature—this month, opening the summer, the glad time of the year, and dedicating it to her who represents, indeed, in the order of grace, the Springtime of man's redemption; opening the summer of the sunshine of God, the first sign of the purest life that this earth was able to send forth under the eyes of God and man! Oh, how long and how sad was the winter! The winter of God's wrath—the winter of four thousand years, and softened the sunshine of God's favor was shut out from this world by the thick clouds of man's sin, and God's anger! How sad was that winter that seemed never to be able to break into the genial spring of God's grace, and of His holy favor and virtue again! No sunbeam of divine truth illumined its darkness. No smile of divine favor gladdened the face of the spiritual world for these four thousand years. The earth seemed dead and accursed, incapable of bringing forth a single flower of promise, or sending forth a single leaf of such beauty that it might be fit to be culled by the loving hand of God. But, when the summer-time was about to come—when the thick clouds began to part—the clouds of anger, the clouds of sin—the cloud of the curse was broken and rent asunder, and gave place to the purer cloud of mercy and of grace, that bowed down from heaven overlaid with the rain and dew of God's redemption—then the earth moved itself to life in the sunshine, and the first flower of hope, the first fair thing that this earth produced for four thousand years, in the breaking of winter, before the summer, in the promise of Spring, was the immaculate lily, the fairest flower that bloomed upon the roof of Jesse, and in its bloom, sent forth pure leaves; and so fragrant were they, that their sweet odor penetrated heaven, and moved the desires of the Most High God to enjoy them! according to the word of the prophet, "Send forth flowers as the lily, and yield a sweet odor, and put forth leaves unto grace." So bright in its opening was the spiritual flower—the first flower of earth—that even the eye of God, looking down upon it, could see no speck or stain upon the whiteness of its unfolding leaves. "Thou art all fair, my Beloved!" He exclaimed, "and there is no spot or stain upon thee." And this flower—this Springflower—this sacred plant—that was to rear its gentle head, unfold its white leaves, and show its petal of purest gold,