

between labor and prayer which mitigated its rudeness and sanctified it. According to an ancient custom still observed among the Arabs and over the greater part of the East, Joseph worked at his trade in a building at a short distance from his house. This was the same shop in which Our Lord afterwards worked in company with His foster father. Outside the door was a stone bench on which the tired passer by might rest, sheltered from the scorching heat of the sun by a palm leaf matting. There the laborious workman made ploughs, yokes and rustic cars. Sometimes he constructed the cabins of the valley, and at times his arm, still sinewy and robust, hewed down the lofty sycamore and the black turpentine tree of Mount Carmel. His pay for such heavy toil was very scant, and even that he shared with the needy.

On her side, Mary lived as the humblest of women. At her marriage she had clothed herself with poverty as with a garment bestowed on her by God. She became what she ought to be in the obscure condition to which Providence had reduced her. The gay and delicate work of elegant life was laid aside and was replaced by the coarse and heavy work of a poor household the mistress of which can employ neither slaves nor servants. Her hands, hitherto accustomed to contact with silken tissues, now plaited with date leaves or reeds from the banks of the Jordan, the mat which covered the earthen floor of her poor cottage. She spun the coarsest flax and turned the little hand mill which ground the wheat and barley from which she made the bread used as the food of her class.

Like the shepherdess of old, the wives of the early patriarchs, Mary covered herself with her veil and went to carry water for her family from the adjacent fountain, returning with her pitcher poised on her head. The women of the East still observe the customs extant in Mary's time, and many of them, in carriage and feature, resemble the descriptions and portraits of the Blessed Virgin which have come down to us.

Our Lord Jesus Christ witnessing the toilsome life of His Blessed Mother doubtless alluded to it in the parables of the New Testament. He speaks of a careful housewife mixing leaven in three measures of meal, sweeping her