


The Eve of Mary's First Communion.

 I had dined early that evening in order that my wife and little daughter might be in good time to assist at the closing exercises of the retreat for first communicants. Left alone with my aged mother, we chatted about old times, and the moments passed so quickly that we were more than surprised when the door opened to admit Mary and her Mamma once more.

Little Mary seemed like a being come down from heaven: her radiant expression just tinged with sadness, her buoyant happiness toned down by an inexpressible subdued peace... the very atmosphere round the innocent child whispered that already the dear Lord Jesus had taken possession of her heart. As she advanced towards us looking like one of Giotto's Virgins, I longed to see into her heart to behold the angelic emotions of that maiden soul wherein the most pure love was about to enter for the first time.

I could not keep my eyes off the child. It seemed to me she was not herself, that in her sweet face shone an ideal world that had not been there yesterday, that was a sealed book to me and that awoke in me sentiments of surprise, tenderness, admiration and I might as well say it, of respect also. She made me think half sadly of those beautiful transparent morning lilies we scarcely dare look caressingly upon in fear of tarnishing their lustre.

She came close to me, stood on her tip-toes, put her little arm around my neck and kissed me quietly, gently, without any of her usual noisy glee. After a moment she approached my mother and with burning cheeks and full heart said softly: "Grandma, and you my dear Father and you also dearest Mother I... beg your pardon for all... for every time I caused you pain or sorrow;" then with greater emotion she knelt and joined her little