

A Legend of Our Lady.

As once the Blessed Lady
Did walk across the land,
The young St. John beside her
Held close with tender hand.
She sat her by the wayside
To pause awhile and rest,
In joy of that first Fair one
That lay upon her breast.
Beside the dusty pathway,
Through hush and stony ground,
Where not a word of flower or bird
Made glad with sight and sound.
Set down the Queen of Heaven,
His King upon her knee,
Nor heeded she how delicate
The lovely spot might be.
Then John spoke out—so softly,
For that his heart was fond—
"Wherefore wait here, thou Mother dear,
When fields are bright beyond?"
But she in holy silence,
With gravely smiling lips,
Did bend above her Star of Love
And kiss his finger tips.
Until the babe awaking
Did smile again, to see
The sweetest face of all the earth
That watched so patiently.
And to his wide he opened
Those eyes of love divine,
"Canst thou to sing and bloom to spring
And merry sun to shine?"
Till all the darkness morning,
And all the dreary way,
Grew sweet with heavenly music
And fragrant as the May.
Full glad then Our Lady
The sturdy boy addressed:
"And didst thou think my little Son,
Wherever he might rest?"
"Wouldst thou for blithesome service
From those life creatures dear,
The happy wild flowers in the grass,
The birds that chirp clear?"
"Nay! for the springs of glory
Forever must they flow,
When for a space in any place
Child Jesus rests below."
Then homeward hasty evening
To him upon her breast,
She turned, with John beside her,
To Nazareth the best.
—Indep. Adent.
Boston, Mass.

A GUARD OF HONOR.

By MAURICE F. EGAN, LL. D.

What a queer little fellow Claus was!
He had a round, fat face, and rosy cheeks of a color you never see in America. Perhaps you would have called him a stupid little fellow, if you had known him. He could say his prayers well and serve Mass, and read a little and recite "The Eri-king." He was never tired of hearing stories. Sometimes dear old Father Jasper, the parish priest, came to visit his mother. Then Claus was happy. Father Jasper would walk along the village street, speaking to everybody, young and old, but saying much more to the little children who ran after him, and out of every house to meet him. How happy Claus was, when the kind old priest let him kiss his hand and asked him how he was getting on with his catechism! Ah! those days! It was a fine sight to see the kind priest taking his evening walk among his people, loving them and beloved by them.
On the great feasts of the Church, Claus and his sister, Agatha, used to ask their mother, "What was a red-letter day?" He told them many stories—stories of Barbarossa, of St. Elizabeth, of the great saints and of old wars, of the Crusades, and he let Claus look at an old missal he had, full of brightly-colored and gold-ornamented pictures of heroes and saints.

Claus had a special devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. When Father Jasper told of the Holy Grail and of all the noble old legends, Claus would cry out:
"I want to grow up and be a knight of the Blessed Sacrament!"
Father Jasper would pat the boy's flaxen head and say:
"Wait, Claus, you will have many opportunities of fighting for our dear Lord, but not with the sword. If you go away across the sea, or your brothers and uncles leave you, and—no—he added with a sigh—"as so many of my people have gone, you will often have to defend the Blessed Sacrament, for the greater number of the people over there do not believe that Our Lord is with us in the tabernacle."
Father Jasper often said this, but Claus and Agatha could scarcely believe that there were people in this world who did not adore the Blessed Sacrament.

"And," asked Claus in wonder, "are there also little children there who never make their First Communion?"

"Yes—unhappily, yes."
Agatha told the other children of this dreadful thing, and for a long time afterwards Father Jasper was asked by many little village children to tell them about it. They could not believe, for they had been taught to look on their First Communion as the crowning act of their lives.

Suddenly the thine rose one night, and kept rising till death and desolation faced the village. The beautiful river became all of a sudden wild with rage. The villagers knew what was coming, and they fled to higher ground.

It was a sad sight. Cheerful homes were suddenly dismantled. The comfortable hearth was made cold and wet by the rushing waters. In all directions people might be seen running, carrying children, clothes, or furniture. There was much grief and loud lamentations.

Father Jasper had been obliged to go far across the country to visit a dying man on the night before the great flood. The storm arose and he could not get back the next day. No one dared to lend him a boat; he would have started alone down the river to his beloved people, if he had had one.

There had been great confusion on the high ground all day, and so many children were absent from their parents, that Claus was not missed. His father thought that he was safe with some of the neighbors.

The church was the only building not yet buried out of sight by the flood. The waters were gaining rapidly, and the villagers thought in sorrow of the beautiful Stations of the Cross and the exquisite decorations. But nobody on the high ground remembered that only Father Jasper had the key of the tabernacle. Claus, however, had thought of it.

"Surely," he said to himself, "somebody ought to wait in the church until Father Jasper comes to take our dear Lord away. It is not right that He Who loves us so much should be left all alone."

When the water had risen above the doorsteps nearest the church, Claus crept into the church, and nestled close up to the railing of the sanctuary. It was growing dark, but a glow of rich crimson fell on him from the mantle of St. Gertrude smiling on him, and the dear St. Nicholas raised his hands as if blessing him.

Claus felt happy. He heard the rush of waters outside. Distant shouts and cries told him that the river was rising higher, and the sounds of crashing walls and falling timber, as the water undermined foundations and swept away buildings, resounded like thunder through the church. The red lamp burned peacefully before the Blessed Sacrament, and little Claus, bathed in the fading crimson light, felt no less peaceful. The water rippled over the floor of the church. Claus crept within the sanctuary rail. It did not occur to him that it would be well to seek safety with his father, mother and Agatha on the high ground. He thanked the dear Lord that they were safe. As for him—he must stay until Father Jasper came.

The noise without became more turbulent. The high doors of the church had been burst open by rushing timber, and Claus could see before him a long waste of twilight water and the twinkling of far-away lights, like a starry crown on the horizon.

It never entered Claus's mind that he would die there at the foot of the altar. In fact, he did not think at all of what might happen. He was there, and it was his duty to stay there. How could he leave the Blessed Sacrament alone? Such a thought—the thought of deserting his post—did not occur to him.

As the darkness grew, the waters grew and swelled. They were washing angrily against the fourth step of the pulpit stair, and Claus was now on the highest altar step. The crimson flush had died away in darkness.

Why did not Father Jasper come? Claus wondered whether he could be sick. Soon the waters would put out the red light if he did not come—but "no," Claus said to himself confidently—"that would not happen. The angels would light it themselves, if it were possible for such a thing to take place."

The noises of the flood were made to appear loud as other sounds grew stiller with advancing night. Claus's love and the red light still burned peacefully. Claus drew out his rosary and began his prayer. Why was he alone? Why did they all leave the dear Lord in the darkness? Why?—but with treacherous and slow motion the waves washed through the nave: the gold flaxen head sank against the gold and white corner of the altar. The gold cherub with upraised hands looked down at the prostrate figure of the little boy. The water moved with the tide, all was silent except its swish-swash over the marble floor and against the walls. All was darkness below the spot where the red light burned.

Father Jasper had come down to his people, in spite of the flood—or, rather, borne on its bosom in a steam-yacht owned by an English traveller, who saw his sorrow and offered to take him. It was 9 o'clock in the evening when he reached the place where his flock had found shelter. He found great grief then; and Claus's parents were more sorrowful than all the rest, for Claus was missing. Father Jasper gave them such consolation as he could.

The flood had begun to subside some hours previously, and he hoped that the boy might have been carried off to another village by some kindly friend. He was taken by the Englishman to the church. The water was going down. He waded up the nave to the high altar. He thanked God that the red light still burned. He mounted the altar steps, and opened the tabernacle. He turned away with the Blessed Sacrament safe in his consecrated hands.

He had lit the big Paschal candle, for there was no other light to be had. Its soft radiance fell on the dazzling gold of the cherub at the corner of the altar, and on something under it. Father Jasper saw in the dim, mellow light the face of Claus. He uttered an exclamation.

Was the boy dead?
"Father Jasper," cried Claus, opening his eyes, "oh, I have waited for you so long. I was afraid Our Lord would be lonely."

"And so you formed yourself into a guard of honor for His protection," said the priest. "Be sure He will not forget it, my child; and as you have watched over Him, so may He watch over you."

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THE CHRISTIAN VOCATION.

I beseech you to walk worthy of your vocation in which you are called. (Eph. 4:1)

In the Gospel our Lord says that the perfect love of God and of our neighbor fulfills all the law and the commandments of God through the prophets. At another time he said: "Be ye perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect." It is plain that every Christian has a vocation—that is, is called to a Christ-like, a God-like life. Something more is expected of him because he has received grace how to do more. In general, we call that a higher, a more exalted spiritual state. Now, there are degrees even in this depending upon the particular grace it pleases God to give to one person or another.

One star differs from another star in brightness and glory, and so shall the glory of the Christians differ in heaven, according to the perfection to which they have brought their souls. While in this school of life, and yet not above what are called vocation, strict Christian laws, which one must obey or lose heaven, there are certain principles of Christianity called Evangelical counsels—namely, poverty, chastity and obedience. Some folk fancy these counsels apply only to monks, nuns, and priests. That is a great mistake. Monks, nuns and priests receive grace and are bound by their vocation to practise these counsels in a high degree, and yet not even all these in the same manner. A secular priest, for instance, is not called to practise poverty in the same manner as a priest of a religious order, although he or even a layman living in the world may practise that counsel, as he may the other counsels, too, just as perfectly as any monk ever heard of. All depends on the grace one has. His vocation and his responsibility and his position in heaven all hang on his fidelity to grace.

All Christians should practise the counsel of poverty. Yes, both rich and poor. The spirit of poverty is detachment from created things. One's heart must not be set on them. One must not love riches for their own sake. One must feel obliged to share with the poor. One must not despise the poor, but love them for Christ's sake. One must give a good deal for religious purposes. One must keep his baptismal vows to renounce the devil and all his pomps. One must, therefore, deny himself in many things that savor of the pride of riches, and of the pride of life. Why? because he is a monk, nun, or priest, but because he is a Christian.

Every Christian must practise the counsel of chastity. Heaven help us! In these degraded times, to judge by the fashionable indecencies sanctioned by so-called society people—the horrible abuses of the holy state of marriage, the filthy accounts appearing every day in the newspapers—one would think that even the Sixth Commandment was abolished. Now I need not enter into particulars, but you know, without further argument or illustration, that every Christian man, woman and child would be unworthy the name if they did not, almost every day, make many sacrifices and struggles against temptation—all of which mean practising the counsel of the Christian perfection of chastity.

So also of obedience. One must obey the Ten Commandments and the laws of the Church. Oh! yes. And have we not also to obey the special decrees of the Holy Father, our Bishop and our pastor? What sort of a Christian is he who is his own shepherd, or one who is always "standing up for his own rights," as they say, submitting just within law and only when he cannot help himself? And does Christian humility mean nothing in act? That is a narrow road of obedience and a long one, as you all know; and blessed is he who joyfully walks therein. Instead of wanting to shirk these counsels, put all upon the shoulders of religion, every one ought to be praying hard that God will give him the grace to give up, to men and women living in the world, more and more grace to practise all that our worldly condition will allow us to do, convinced by faith that he is most truly happy here, as he will certainly be hereafter, who is filled with high Christian aspirations, striving to "walk worthy of his vocation" and realize in himself the picture of a perfect Christ-like life.

THE DEARTH OF CHRISTIAN MODESTY.

London Catholic News, Aug. 19.

At the Church of the Sacred Heart, Camberwell New Road, on Sunday evening, the Very Rev. Canon McGrath preached to a very large congregation on "Christian Modesty." The preacher based his sermon on the text: "How beautiful is the chaste generation with glory, for the memory thereof is immortal because it is known to God and to man." In the 5th chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, he said there was described a very beautiful and impressive scene. Our Blessed Lord ascended a mountain followed by thousands of people and by His disciples. Sitting down He preached the sermon which was known as the Sermon of the Mount—the Sermon of the eight Beatitudes. But in one of these beatitudes does Our Blessed Lord promise the vision of God, when he said: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God;" as much as to say: "Blessed are the pure, blessed are the chaste, blessed are the modest, for to them it

was the glory in a special manner to see the face of God Himself." There was no virtue which the Church was so anxious to impress upon her children, and by every means in her power to induce them to practice, as this virtue of Christian modesty. And, therefore, in harmony with the spirit of the Church, he thought it would not be out of place to say a few words on Christian modesty. What was Christian modesty? It was the most beautiful, the most noble, the most perfect of all virtues of religion. One of the great saints, St. Ephraim, said:

"It is an ornament of all beauty and the glory of religion. Christian modesty is that innocence and purity which surround our hearts, our thoughts, our affections." It is the badge of the true Christian, a virtue which makes us belong in a very special manner to Christ, according to the teaching of St. Paul. He said—and they were words they should bear in mind—"You who are Christ's crucify the flesh with its lusts and concupiscences." In other words, they belonged to Christ because they put to death, and nailed, as it were, to the Cross, the lusts and concupiscences of the flesh. The Holy Fathers were loud in their praises of Christian modesty. St. Ambrose says: "Chastity makes angels, and who preserves it is an angel." St. John Chrysostom says, "To live in the flesh without the flesh is not an earthly but a heavenly life." He would even add after the teaching of St. Bernard, that a chaste life was in a sense more wonderful than the angelic life. That the angels should be chaste without the body was not wonderful, but that man clothed in corrupt flesh, and having a fallen nature, should live the chaste life of an angel was worthy of admiration, and he would add it made them like Christ Himself. No one during his life ever dared attack his modesty.

They called him a disturber of the peace; they called him a blasphemer and said he threatened to destroy the temple, but they never dared say He was not pure. When Christ became man He selected a Virgin to be His Mother, and His birth was to be no detriment to Her virginity: she was to be a Virgin always. He chose a Virgin to be His guardian or foster father, St. Joseph. His prophet and precursor, John the Baptist, must be a virgin; and the last thing thing upon Christ's bosom, and drew sweetness from His Sacred Heart, was a Virgin; and He last words of His Mother to the care of the virgin disciple. So the Church wished her priests to be virgins because it was their great honor and privilege to handle the Sacred Body of Christ, and therefore it was becoming and proper that they also should be virgins and cultivate the highest virtue of purity. See what a lovely virtue is this Christian modesty! On the other hand consider the threats and the denunciations hurled against vice and impurity. St. Paul says, "Do not let either the fornicator nor adulterer shall possess the Kingdom of God;" and again he says: "Know you this and understand: no fornicator nor uncleanness person hath inheritance in the Kingdom of God and of Christ." And St. John in the Apocalypse cries out as it were with scorn "Foris comes et impudicus" (cast out the dogs, and the unchaste, for into the Kingdom of Heaven nothing unclean can enter). But some may say this was a very difficult virtue to practice, and others even said it was impossible to resist the strong passions of our nature. All men, they say, did these sort of things, and therefore it was not so bad after all. But the teaching of Christ was in the very opposite direction. It might perhaps be difficult, but it certainly was not impossible. By self-denial, by prayer, by frequenting the sacraments, they may easily be able to resist the most evil temptation, and God had given His word for it when He said, "You will not be tempted beyond that which you are able to bear." When people fell away from the faith, it was generally because they indulged in those sins which blotted out the light of God's faith, and hardened their hearts to His grace. If they practiced this virtue, then their faith would always be bright; their hearts would always be happy and full of peace and contentedness. Who were those mostly tempted? Generally, it was the young people. The passions were stronger, and they had not the experience of the terrible ravages of the awful vice, and one thought seemed to fill the hearts of young people—pleasure, self-indulgence and gratification. And not unfrequently at the cost of their health, homes, and friends, everything that was noble and beautiful in their nature was thrust aside for the sake of gratification of this all-absorbing vice, and young women—silly, foolish, empty-headed, seemed to ignore the terrible danger; and alas! the devil went about seeking whom he might devour. These silly young women did it for the devil to find them out, they went half way to meet him, they wanted to be devoured, and they were. How different was this improper company—night walking, this lightness of conduct verging almost on immorality of these young women—to the reserve and the modesty of Our Blessed Lady? When will these silly girls recognize the fact that a virtuous young man will not seek a wife in the dark roads or on the gas-lit pavements of the streets of London? There they would meet plenty of young scamps much more bent on their ruin than on their happiness. A good husband

would seek a wife where she should be found—under the parental roof, and under the care of her parents. A sensible man would not wander about the streets of London in order to find a wife; and, therefore, the proper place for a respectable girl was not night-walking, but under the care of their parents and friends. And especially was this so when they considered the class of young men of the present day. These young fellows considered their conduct at home, their bursts of ill-temper, their subordination, and their want of obedience and respect for their parents to be grand. See them in the streets with their cigars and canes. Follow them at night, listen to their conversation, see who they pick up with, where they go, what are their lives, and it would be admitted that they at least were not of the chaste generation of glory, and that Christian modesty was very little to do with them. What was the cause of this decadence which he feared they should bear in mind? There was no use in denying that there was a serious decadence at the present day, even in Catholic young men and women. There were many causes, but he would place two before them. The first was the want of appreciation of the beauty of the excellence and of the nobility of our nature, and of the virtue of purity. The young man had lost that high opinion which they as Catholics ought to have. He remembered the time when a young girl looked her character was so, so to speak, taboed by respectable girls. But not so now, and that showed a decadence or want of appreciation of the lovely virtue of Christian modesty. Another cause was neglecting to take proper precautions to preserve so tender, so delicate, so easily sullied a virtue. It was impossible for a girl who stayed out late at night, walking with this fellow and that fellow, to preserve the virtue of modesty, and it was almost certain that they would come to grief. They must not dally with temptation, but the moment evil thoughts came into their heads let them be cast out. It was very easy to shake off a spark from a dress, but if it became a flame it was almost impossible to extinguish it until it had done considerable damage. Let them also avoid sloth and idleness, and avoid bad reading and evil books. There were some people they did when they got their daily paper, turned over to the divorce court reports that they might find something "spicy." How very filthy and corrupt must those hearts be? Why not read some of the many Catholic papers, for in them they would find healthy reading, and certainly it was not literature that would corrupt and lower them. In addition to these precautions, let them pray to God, be regular in the frequentation of the sacraments, have a special devotion to Our Lady; and if they put these rules into practice they would be able to fight these temptations. They would belong to the chaste generation with glory, the memory whereof is immortal. They would sing the new canticle not given to others to sing, and follow the Lamb wheresoever He goes.

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