

Shrines OF OUR Lady

Written for the CARMELITE REVIEW by the Rev.
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NAZARETH.

CONTINUED.



It was the degradation to which christian pilgrims were subjected that in a great measure brought about the Crusades. The Holy Land fell into the power of the Crusaders, and pilgrimages to the holy shrines, amongst others to Nazareth, were freely resumed. We read of many knights, princes and kings who considered themselves happy in being able to pay homage to Mary in the home of her ancestors. The last christian prince of whom we know, that thus visited Nazareth, was St. Louis IX, king of France, in A. D. 1251. Soon after this Palestine again fell into the hands of the Moslems, who under the leadership of the famous Saladin reconquered all the countries until then in possession of the christian princes. Persecution and oppression took the place of tolerance, and in places where formerly were heard the prayers and chants of the faithful, were now heard the blasphemies of the infidels.

Suddenly, the Holy House of Nazareth had disappeared. God would not permit that the house which had witnessed the greatest miracles of His love should be exposed to the profanation of unbelievers. He commanded His holy angels to remove the sacred shrine, and bring it to a spot where that honor which was its due would be rendered to it.

It happened on the 10th of May, A. D. 1291, Nicholas the IV being Supreme Pontiff, that some laborers going after their usual avocations noticed on the shores of the Adriatic a strange building which had not been seen there before. People from the neighborhood flocked around to view it; they noticed its strange architecture, entirely different from what was in vogue in their own country. When they found courage to force an entrance, they found

that the interior had evidently been used as a chapel, the proofs for this supposition being the altar, statues, candelabras and other paraphernalia usually found in a place of pilgrimage, and as the people were still gazing at the whole apparition in amazing wonder, Bishop Alexander, of a neighboring town, made his appearance. It was a well known fact that for several years he had been confined to his room suffering from an incurable disease, hence the astonishment when his people beheld him sound and safe in their midst. Then he told them of the desire he had always nourished to visit if possible the holy house of Nazareth, of how in his agony Mary appeared to him, telling him that that holy shrine was now in his own country, and that to enable him to bear testimony to the fact, she would restore him to perfect health, which accordingly happened.

Well, to be envoys, commissioners were sent to the Holy Land to make investigation with the result that the house, so miraculously found on the shores of the Adriatic in Dalmatia, was declared to be truly the house of the Holy Family of Nazareth, which had been transported by angels from its ancient resting place, evidently to escape the desecration which would likely have been its sad lot in Nazareth.

The Holy House remained in this spot for upwards of three years, when it suddenly disappeared. It was again transported by the angels of God across the Adriatic to beautiful Italy, and after several vicissitudes it finally found a resting place in the spot where it has been venerated now for well nigh six centuries, and has since been called the Holy House of Loretto. We may well imagine what innumerable pilgrims have wended their way to this holy shrine, where Mary the Mother of God, would be venerated in the habitation made sacred by the indwelling of the Son of God Himself. This was the shrine of Mary, especially dear to the heart of the saintly Pope Pius the IX of blessed memory. The numerous favors granted to the clients of Mary at this her holy shrine simply go to prove what Holy Mother Church has ever affirmed, *v. c.*, that Mary is all powerful in her intercession before the throne of God.

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In the spiritual life all is wanting to him who believes that nothing is needed.—ST. BERNARD.