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A WREATH OF FEASTS

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"FEED MY LAMBS."

*Frontispiece.*



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# A WREATH OF FEASTS

FOR THE LITTLE ONES

X

BY

MARIE ST. S. ELLERKER

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# A WREATH OF FEASTS

## I

### “FLOWER OF BABIES WAS THEIR KING”

OF all the feasts in the year there is no feast for little children like Christmas, the day on which our dear Lord became one of them! Everything about it is easy to understand, and very delightful. In the church there will be a wonderful Crib with certainly the dear little Christ-Child in it, and our Lady and St. Joseph. Probably, too, there will be a donkey and a cow, possibly even some shepherds with nice woolly sheep.

Once I happened to go into a church

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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where there was just such a Crib, and what do you think I saw in it? . . . a real, live, little baby of about four years old, who had wandered in from the street, and, seeing the stable, had climbed over the rail in front, and was close up to the manger playing with one of the woolly lambs! I suppose it *was* a little naughty, but I could not help feeling rather sorry when someone came and lifted the poor babe out and sent it away.

One of the best ways to learn about Christmas is to go and kneel quietly in front of the Crib, look at it, and think for a little while. All kinds of thoughts and feelings will crowd into mind and heart. You will find yourself asking questions of your own soul. Who is the little Babe? Who are the people with Him? Where is He? Why is He

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## Flower of Babies was their King

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there? Does He like it? What is He doing? And to each question you know at least some of the answers, and the answer is like a key which unlocks the door of your heart, flings it wide open, and out of it come flowing all your love and gratitude, making you feel that you must give back something to the God Who is doing so much for you.

As the Crib remains in church for some time, you will make many visits to it, and as you like a good deal of change, you will perhaps like to know of other ways of spending your time near our Lord. One day you might take your New Testament, or, if you have not yet one of your own, then a penny copy of either St. Matthew or St. Luke. St. Luke, in his second chapter, tells you how it was our dear

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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Lord came to be in the stable in that uncomfortable little manger ; and about the angels who sang, letting the shepherds into the great secret, and telling them how they were to know the Babe Who was Christ the Lord. You can read there, too, what the shepherds did when the angels disappeared.

If in your Crib there are the Kings, you will have to go to St. Matthew to hear the story. St. Luke does not tell it, but you will find all about it in chapter two of St. Matthew's Gospel. The great St. Dominic loved this Gospel best of all, and I often wonder whether this story of the star-guided Kings, with their gold, frankincense, and myrrh, had anything to do with the preference. The adventure and the generosity are so exactly suited to appeal to a Saint descended from a line of knights. Ask



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## Flower of Babies was their King

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St. Dominic to teach you how to read your Gospel, so that it may help you to know and love our dear Lord as it helped him.

Sometimes when people are in church they like to say beautiful poetry which they know, and turn it into a prayer. Did you ever try that? It is rather nice, especially when our thoughts are like little birds hopping here and there, hardly two moments in the same place. A priest-poet, the late Father Tabb, has written some exquisite poems about Christmas. Do you know this one?

### “THE LAMB-CHILD.

“When Christ the Babe was born,  
Full many a little lamb  
Upon the wintry hills forlorn  
Was nestled near its dam.

“And, waking or asleep,  
Upon His Mother’s breast,

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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For love of her, each mother-sheep  
And baby-lamb He blessed."

There is another which will appeal, perhaps, still more strongly to boy readers :

“OUT OF BOUNDS.

“A little Boy of heavenly birth,  
But far from home to-day,  
Comes down to find his ball, the earth,  
That sin has cast away.  
O comrades, let us one and all  
Join in to get Him back His ball.”

Perhaps you love poetry, and would like to look for more for yourself. You will find that many poets have written about Christmas, and I will end with some lines written by Christina Rossetti :

“A Baby is a harmless thing,  
And wins our hearts with one accord,  
And Flower of Babies was their King,  
Jesus Christ our Lord :  
Lily of lilies He  
Upon His Mother's knee ;

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## Flower of Babies was their King

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Roses of roses, soon to be  
Crowned with thorns on leafless tree.

“A lamb is innocent and mild,  
And merry on the soft green sod :  
And Jesus Christ, the Undefined,  
Is the Lamb of God :  
Only spotless He  
Upon His Mother’s knee ;  
White and ruddy, soon to be  
Sacrificed for you and me.”

*From “Christmas Day.”*

“Angels and Archangels  
May have gathered there,  
Cherubim and Seraphim  
Thronged the air—  
But only His Mother,  
In her maiden bliss,  
Worshipped the Beloved  
With a kiss.

“What can I give Him,  
Poor as I am ?  
If I were a shepherd,  
I would bring a lamb ;  
If I were a Wise Man,  
I would do my part—  
Yet what I can I give Him,  
Give my heart.”

*From “A Christmas Carol.”*

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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If we said these poems before the Crib, I think we should have made a very nice little visit, and perhaps the Holy Child would grant us the grace to give our hearts to Him, never to be asked back.

## II

### THE NAME WE LOVE BEST

EVERY Sunday in my parish church I hear the following notice given out : “Baptisms at half-past three.” Have you ever seen a little baby baptized ? If so, did you notice that the priest, having asked someone what it was to be called, said the name—for instance, “Mary, come into the Temple of God.” In the name of the Church he calls her officially by the name she is to bear, and by which the Church will know her. The priest will call her by that name at the beginning of her life as a child of God, when he pours the water over her head and says : “Mary, I baptize thee in the

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." When she is dead and he is saying over the coffin the beautiful prayers of Holy Church, he will still call her by just that name.

The other day I was told a story about this; I have not made any inquiries to prove its accuracy, but it was interesting, and I tell it to you. When an Emperor of Austria is dead and his coffin is brought to the church to be laid before God's altar, the bearers find the church doors closed. Someone knocks; the priests ask who is there, and receive the answer that it is the body of the Emperor—all his high titles being given. He is refused entrance as one unknown to the Church. Again they make answer, but this time give only the names which he received in baptism, and the doors are thrown open.

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## The Name we love Best

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The day on which you received your name, together with that first great sacrament of baptism, should be very dear to you. Of course, you don't remember it like the day on which you made your first confession, but you should ask your mother when it was, and then keep it all your life as one of your holy days of thanksgiving. That is not a command, but I think it is the spirit of the Church. In any case, she does command us to keep the naming day of our Blessed Lord.

Looking through the list of holidays of obligation, you would come to one called the Circumcision, kept on the 1st of January ; that is the feast on which our Lord received the name by which we know Him best—the Holy Name of Jesus.

Whenever you want to hear anything about our dear Lord Himself, or about

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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any event in His life, one of the most interesting ways of doing it is to get your New Testament and see what you can find about it in the Gospels. Take it now with us, and let us see what we can discover about the name of Jesus.

In the first chapter of St. Luke, verse thirty-one, there is the story of which no one ever gets tired—the dear Angel Gabriel with our Blessed Lady. He tells her that she is to have a little child called Jesus. Then in the first chapter of St. Matthew we have the pretty story of the angel who came to St. Joseph while he was asleep and spoke to him. I wish St. Matthew had told us whether it was the same Angel Gabriel who had been before to the holy Mother herself. Perhaps, however, it is best as it is, because now we are quite free to imagine it *was* St. Gabriel, if we like.



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## The Name we love Best

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The angel told St. Joseph what name he was to give the Holy Child, and why. I like the angel particularly for this: it is always so nice and satisfying to be told why. Look at verse twenty-one, and you will read, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." This sending the angel to St. Joseph is an example of the beautiful courtesy with which God treats His creatures, for in those days little babies were not taken to the house of God to receive their names, but were given them at home by the father, and of course St. Joseph stood in place of a father to Mary's Child. In verse twenty-five St. Matthew tells us that what the angel commanded has been done—"and he called His name Jesus."

St. Luke, ii. 21, gives us another little detail: he tells us that our Lord was

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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eight days old when He received His name, and I expect you have noticed long ago, unless you are quite tiny, that the Feast of the Circumcision, which we call New Year's Day, is always just a week after Christmas.

At the beginning we noticed that the Church always calls us simply by our baptismal name when performing for us her last tender offices. Does that remind you of the title which Pilate put over the Cross: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (St. John xix. 19)? Some other time you may like to search again and find out the instances recorded of people who called our dear Lord by His name.

Perhaps because the name of Jesus gives us so much to think about, we have, soon after the Circumcision, another day dedicated to it called the Feast of the

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## The Name we love Best

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Holy Name of Jesus, which is kept in most places on the Sunday after the octave of the Epiphany. To show us the great reverence we should have for this Holy Name, we are taught to bow our head when we say it or hear it said. Indeed, very many things help us to understand the wonderful feelings of love and respect with which the Church regards it.

In your prayer-book you will find, for instance, a beautiful Litany of the Holy Name, but if you want to realize how beautiful it is, you must say it slowly and think. Once I went to say good-bye to someone who was dying, someone who knew she would never see me again. She asked me to say a prayer for the last time, and when I asked her what she would like best, she answered, "The Litany of the Holy Name." I

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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shall always remember the expression of love and confidence on her face as I repeated the beautiful invocations.

In many prayer-books there is a devotion called "The Jesus Psalter," which was once a favourite with English Catholics.

Some of you perhaps know the translation of a hymn in honour of the Holy Name which was written by the great St. Bernard, beginning, "Jesus, the only thought of Thee."

Knowing how powerful that name is against temptation, the Church advises us to get the dying to pronounce it if possible, and grants a plenary indulgence at the hour of death to those who do. If ever you are watching beside a person who is dangerously ill, perhaps you will remember this.

Their love for our dear Lord has

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## The Name we love Best

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given some saints the courage to cut His name above hearts which counted the pain as nothing for the sake of their love. I think it will interest you to know that there is a Religious Order which has the honour of bearing the Holy Name. Have you ever noticed the letters S.J. after the signature of a Jesuit? They stand for "Society of Jesus," which was the title St. Ignatius gave to his sons. There is also a confraternity of the Holy Name established, I think, in every Dominican church, the special object of which is to spread love to and respect for the name of Jesus, to which the Order of St. Dominic has always had a very special devotion.

What are you going to do during the coming year to increase *your* devotion to it?

### III

## THE KING'S FEAST

HAVE you ever seen a Crib, with the Kings far away in the distance, on Christmas night, but brought a little way down the mountain-path each day, until on the 6th of January they entered the stable where the Christ-Babe lay? The story of the Wise Men, or Kings, is one of the most beautiful told us in the Holy Bible. Have you got a New Testament of your own? If not, perhaps you could get, at the church door or the Catholic repository in your parish, a copy of St. Matthew's Gospel. You can get it for one penny, and most



OUR LADY OF THE STAR.

*To face p. 24.*





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## The King's Feast

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children have some pennies of their own at Christmas-time.

In the second chapter we find all about the Wise Men, who saw the wonderful star in the east and came to adore our Lord.

When we read any of the Gospel, we find that it is full of special messages for our very own selves, and that it gives us ideas for the most splendid plans and adventures. Did you ever play at being one of the Kings, for instance? Try; you will find there are no games more interesting than those that God plays with us. Moreover, I suspect that the reason why some children grow into saints, and some do not, lies hidden away in the secret that some children play with the good God, and some children play with sin.

I expect the Wise Men had rather a

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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bad time of it before they left their own country; some would try to persuade them to take no notice of the star; some would make fun of them; but perhaps they, like us, enjoyed a game best when the victory had not been too easy.

If we play the Game of the Kings, what will be our star to show the way?

Different people see different stars, I think; and it is a great help to finding our Lord if we follow the star which shines clearest in our part of the sky. For some people this is a virtue, like obedience, which leads them straight to Him Who was "obedient unto death." Others are led by love of our Lady, one of whose beautiful titles is "Star of the Sea"; and for all there is the star in our churches shining before the Tabernacle where the Heavenly

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## The King's Feast

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Babe lies nestled behind the white silken curtains.

The gifts, too, will require thinking about. The Wise Men took gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Gold, because the Baby was a King; frankincense, because He was God; and myrrh, because He was a man too. Our play-gold could be made of acts of love offered from a warm, loving heart to the Lord Who has said, "My child, give Me your heart." Have you never heard grown-up people speak of someone with "a heart of gold"? Let us say to the little King, "Come to me as You came to the stable in Bethlehem, and make a Throne within my heart," and let us make it a golden throne.

Every Sunday at High Mass, when the priest incenses the altar, and very often at Vespers, he says: "Let my

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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prayer, O Lord, be directed as incense in Thy sight." Perhaps that will give us a hint for getting our frankincense.

But what about the myrrh, which keeps things from corrupting, from going bad? Not long ago I knelt beside a sick person who was being professed as a Dominican Tertiary. I saw the priest take a Crucifix and put it into her hands, and I heard these words: "Let it dwell like a bundle of myrrh on your breast for ever: follow after this real pattern of penance." So we could make our myrrh out of little acts of mortification, and this will make us feel that it is really only a game that God is letting us play with Him, for all the tiny things we suffer and offer to Him are indeed "child's play" when we think of and compare them with what He suffered for us.

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## The King's Feast

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Lastly, the Wise Men went home another way. Could not we kneel by the Crib and promise the Christ-Child that we will come by another way than the one in which we have hitherto travelled, and which has often led us away from our Father's home in heaven instead of towards it ?

## IV

### CANDLEMAS DAY

A LITTLE girl I know was born on New Year's Day, and so, on the 1st of January, she keeps two splendid feasts—her own birthday and the birth of a new year—all the presents, parties, and pleasures of two days pressed into one. That sounds thrilling; don't you think so!

There is an exciting day like that which you and I can enjoy on the 2nd of February. It is I hardly know how many feasts pressed into one. Get your Gospel of St. Luke before you go on, turn to chapter two, verse twenty - two, and read until you come to verse thirty-nine.

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## Candlemas Day

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One name we give to this feast is "The Purification of the Blessed Virgin," and when I call it that, the baptism of our Divine Lord always comes into my mind.

You remember how Jesus went to St. John, as if He had been just an ordinary sinful man, and asked St. John to baptize Him. Well, on this day, Mary went to the Temple and went through the ceremony of purification, without telling anyone that she was the sinless Mother of God. Does not that make us feel ashamed of wanting to "show off?"

"The Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple" is another of this day's beautiful names. Mary took her little Child to offer Him to God; for the first time our Blessed Lord was officially offered up to God, and it makes me

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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think of the Holy Mass. It was His morning sacrifice at the beginning of His life, as Calvary was the evening sacrifice—life's close. We, too, should love to offer ourselves to God in the morning of our life, and so give Him our best. How happy it will make us when we come to die, if we are able to say that we gave our hearts to God in life's morning, and all through the heat of the day we have never taken them back.

Our feast has still another pretty name—it is called "Candlemas Day." The holy man Simeon, who came to the Temple that day, and held in his arms the Holy Child, called Him "a light."

Did you ever try to count by how many names our dear Lord has been called? This one should be, I think, a special



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## Candlemas Day

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favourite with children, who all love ‘ a light.’” Many a little one, fearless enough of danger, has a horror of the dark. Because our Blessed Lord is a light, the Church orders candles to be blessed at Mass, and we go to the altar rails and receive one from the priest, whose hand we kiss, as well as the blessed candle.

Not only children love this title—it has appealed to artist and to poet. A great painter, named Holman Hunt, has painted our Lord as “The Light of the World.” The picture is so often used on cards that I think you must have seen it. Edwin Arnold has written a long poem, to which he has given the same title, “The Light of the World.” I have not got it by me, and so I must give you the only lines I remember, which are not the ones you would love

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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best. The "Sea of Chinnereth" means the Sea of Galilee :

"Clear silver water in a cup of gold,  
Under the sunlit steeps of Gadara,  
It shines—His lake—the Sea of Chinnereth,  
The waves He loved, the waves that kissed His  
Feet,  
So many blessed days, O happy waves !  
Oh, little silver, happy Sea, far-famed,  
Under the sunlit steeps of Gadara."

You know, of course, the words which come in the Nicene Creed, "Light of light," but perhaps you do not know that in one of the Church's prayers, heaven is called "The Fatherland of light"—I did not know until the other day. And are these lovely texts new to you? They were written by St. John, our Lord's favourite Apostle :

"In Him was life, and the life was the *light* of men. And the *light* shineth

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## Candlemas Day

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in darkness. . . . That was the true *light*, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world" (St. John i. 4, 5, 9). Speaking of heaven, he says: "And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon to shine in it. For the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the *lamp* thereof."

When England was Catholic, this feast was kept with great devotion, and a little account of it has been left to us by Ælfric, one of our Saxon forefathers, with which we may end: "Be it known also to everyone," he says, "that it is appointed in the ecclesiastical observances, that we on this day bear our lights to church, and let them there be blessed; and that we go afterwards with the light among God's houses, and sing the hymn that is thereto appointed. Though some men cannot sing, they

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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can, nevertheless, bear the light in their hands ; for on this day was Christ, the true Light, borne to the Temple, Who redeemed us from darkness, and bringeth us to the eternal Light, Who liveth and ruleth for ever.”

## V

### THE GIFT OF A POPE

A PRECIOUS gift was given to children of all time when the late Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII., named a saint to be their friend and helper in their studies. The gift will be dear to you as coming from the hands of a Pope, even before you know anything of the saint. Perhaps you think that since you are only young things, he will have chosen an obscure saint, little known even in his own times, and devotion to whom has never been very widely spread. Well, if this is a guessing game, I can only say "Cold, very cold." The Pope chose for you one of the most

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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glorious and best-loved saints of the Catholic Church, when in 1880 he named St. Thomas Aquinas Patron of all Schools. St. Thomas was one of the greatest intellects the world has ever seen; in his own day all Europe rang with his fame, and so lovable is he that it is impossible to get to know him at all without losing your heart to him.

After receiving such a gift from the Holy Father, it would indeed be a shame if we knew little or nothing of the saint thus given us as our very own. Don't you think so?

Let us begin by fixing him in time and place. He was born about the year 1225 in a castle perched high upon a rock in Southern Italy. The castle of Rocca Secca was near the little town of Aquino, from which he takes the second name by which we know him.

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## The Gift of a Pope

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He belonged to a noble family. You and I have often played games in which we were king or queen, or if someone else had this envied part, then, at least, we were nearly related, we were of blood royal. Is not that true? But I wonder if any of us have ever pretended that the Pope was our godfather? This was not, however, "a pretend" with St. Thomas, whose godfather really was Pope Honorius III., the friend of St. Dominic, while the great Emperor Frederic II. was his cousin. This did not make him a bit proud; he was one of the humblest of saints. While we are talking of Popes and humility, shall I tell you a story all in its wrong place?

St. Thomas was in St. Peter's Church in Rome one day, and as he passed the statue of the saint he bent down, kissed the foot, and then placed his head

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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beneath it. While he was humbling himself thus, a poor woman who was ill kissed *his* habit and was cured immediately.

We have several pretty stories about the childhood of this great saint, who was later to have so much to do with the reading and writing of books. When your baby cries, perhaps you give it a doll or a rattle. When little Thomas cried, his nurse gave him a book, and he was quite happy.

Before he could walk he got to the chest in which all the family papers were kept, and began to put them in order. It was just an ordinary thing to do, but I am glad the little incident has come down to us. When the saints do ordinary, simple things don't you think it makes them feel nice and near? If you often get scolded for being untidy



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## The Gift of a Pope

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it might be a good thing to ask St. Thomas to remind you to put your things away.

One summer night, when the child was about three years old, the castle was struck by lightning. The poor mother rushed to the room where her children slept, to find her little daughter dead but Thomas quite safe. From that time, however, he was always afraid of lightning. We are told that sometimes during a thunderstorm he would fly to the church, and there, his head pressed close to the door of the tabernacle, try to conquer his fear. Once during a storm he took refuge in a cave, where he traced an invocation in form of a cross upon the wall. Crosses, with this inscription on one side and the figure of the saint on the other, are blessed against lightning; so if you are afraid when the

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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thunder peals and the lightning flashes across the sky, you could get one. Certainly, if you tell him of your fear, he will be very tender, and not even think too hardly of your weakness.

When St. Thomas was five years old he was sent away to the Benedictine Abbey of Monte Cassino, which was only a few miles distant from his home, and the monks remembered many interesting details about their famous pupil, which they afterwards told his Dominican brethren.

He was a quiet, serious little child, who spent a good deal of time in church and did not care to play. Are you beginning to think you would not have liked him very much? In that case you would not have been at all like his companions, who loved him very dearly; for, though he was quiet, he was not

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## The Gift of a Pope

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dull, and he was so kind and so ready to help that when any boy was in difficulty or trouble he went to Thomas as a matter of course.

He was hardly ever seen without a book in his hands, and often went away into the woods to think. One day his master asked him: "What are you thinking about?" He must have been surprised when an eager little face was raised to his, and he was asked the great question, "Master, tell me, what is God?"

Like all the saints, Thomas loved the poor, and a very beautiful story is told in connection with this. The steward of the castle complained that the boy gave away the rood required for the household. His father watched and surprised him as he was carrying some bread to the poor at the gate, and asking him

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what he had under his cloak, pulled aside the folds. A shower of roses fell to the ground at his feet.

At ten he left his school for the University of Naples, where his wonderful talents developed rapidly. Here again he was a universal favourite, and this is another proof of his loveliness, for his teachers were always holding him up as a model to his companions. Every boy will understand how winning he must have been to be popular in spite of that.

He often went to pray in the Dominican church at Naples, and when only fifteen he begged to give himself to God and St. Dominic, but the Prior advised him to wait for three years. How long the time must have seemed! But at last it was over, and one glorious summer day, probably on the Feast of St. Dominic himself, he was clothed in

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## The Gift of a Pope

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the dear white habit for which he had waited so long.

His parents were very angry, and there began for St. Thomas a series of adventures and escapes as thrilling as anything you have ever read in your story-books. You must get a life of our saint and read about them : you will find a store of exquisite stories, each as beautiful as a poem. I will only tell you that he was taken prisoner by his own brothers, shut up in a tower for more than a year, and treated very harshly. But God, for Whose sake he bore this, took care to spoil him in His own beautiful way. You would be surprised how God can spoil a person who is really brave about suffering for Him.

One day He sent to that great gloomy prison two glorious angels bearing a white cord, which they put round the saint's waist ; they put it on so tightly

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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that, brave as he was, he gave a little cry of pain. Then they told him that God gave him for always the beautiful virtue of purity, and that not even a temptation against it should come to him all his life. St. Thomas never told that secret to anyone until he was dying, and then he told the priest who was his friend and confessor. He had worn the cord and borne the pain all his life for the sake of God's beautiful gift, which the saints seem to find is kept whitest by pain. Just as some people who have a great dread of lightning carry the cross of which I told you before, so Dominican Fathers bless a white cord which is worn by many persons who have a great dread of sin.

Shall I tell you that this story of the angels was the very first thing I ever heard of a saint ?

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## The Gift of a Pope

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One thing more must close our talk about this dear saint. St. Thomas loved our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament with his whole heart. I should want a very long chat to tell you all about that. He wrote the office for the Feast of Corpus Christi. All our most beautiful hymns to the Blessed Sacrament are his. Some day, I hope, you will know them all. Could you not learn the one which begins, "Adoro Te," to say after Holy Communion? It was what he said after his last Communion, when he lay dying.

The most beautiful verse he has written is said to be in the hymn, the first line of which is, "Verbum supernum prodiens." One translation of the verse into English is :

"Our Fellow, in the manger lying,  
Our Food, within the banquet-room,  
Our Ransom, in His hour of dying,  
Our Prize, in His own kingly home."

## VI

### EASTER

I HAVE often asked children, "Which is your favourite feast?" but only once have I received the answer, "Easter"; and then I was so surprised that I could not help inquiring, "Why?" The reason was most characteristic: "Oh, the Pharisees were so *had*."

Do you like stories on a feast-day? On certain great feasts, a priest generally pays a visit to some little children I know, and long before the day arrives I hear, "I wonder if Father N—— will come on our feast, and if he will tell us some stories as he did last time?"



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## Easter

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And then there is a chorus of, "Oh, I *do* hope he will!"

I wonder if you know all the Easter stories I like. When I tell a story to several children together, I find I am very often put through this catechism:

"Is it nice?" (This is always a little girl.)

"Is your story true?"

"Is it exciting?" (From a boy.)

"Is it in a book?" (The bookworm's question.)

"Can you get it to read?"

Perhaps some of you are asking these questions already, and you will, I know, feel ever so much more comfortable if I begin by answering them.

My stories are quite true.

I think they are just lovely.

If you don't find them exciting, well,

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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you simply don't know what real adventures are.

They are in a book.

You can get it to read, and I will put the name and the price at the very end.

The first story is for girls ; the second mostly for boys.

It was Easter Morning, and this is what someone who was living then and knew all about it tells us :

Mary Magdalen cometh early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre ; and she saw the stone taken away from the sepulchre. . . . But Mary stood at the sepulchre without, weeping. Now, as she was weeping, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre. And she saw two angels in white, sitting, one at the head, and one at the foot,

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## Easter

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where the Body of Jesus had been laid.

They say to her: "Woman, why weepest thou?" She saith to them: "Because they have taken away my Lord; and I know not where they have laid Him."

When she had said this, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing; and she knew not that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, "Woman, why weepest thou! Whom seekest thou?" She, thinking that it was the gardener, saith to Him, "Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away."

Jesus saith to her, "Mary." She turning, saith to Him, "Rabboni" (which is to say, "Master").

Jesus saith to her, "Do not touch Me for I am not yet ascended to My Father.

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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But go to My Brethren, and say to them, “I ascend to My Father, and to your Father, to My God and your God.”

Mary Magdalen cometh and telleth the disciples, “I have seen the Lord, and these things He said to me.”

Sometimes little girls get quite sad because our Blessed Lord said to St. Mary Magdalen, “Do not touch Me.” They think He did not love her as much as before. Now, I do not think it sad a bit, and I think our Lord treated her more like a friend than He had ever done before—He was just going to trust her to do something very important for Him.

You know St. Mary Magdalen is Patroness of the Dominican Order, and I always like to think it was this verse

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## Easter

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which has a great deal to do with it. St. Dominic told his children first to spend a lot of time in praying and thinking, and then to go and work for others. Our Lord had given St. Mary Magdalen time to pray and think—you remember how she knelt at His Feet and washed them with her tears, and, again, how she just sat and listened to Him while her sister Martha was busy. You remember, too, I am sure, that our dear Lord would not have her scolded, because it was the time for her to be at His Feet to pray and look at her dear Master. Now, however, our Lord wants her to go and do work for others—ever such good work—so He tells her that it is no longer the time for contemplation but for action, and he sends her to be “The Apostle of the Apostles.”

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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All, but especially women, have to learn how to give up the joy of remaining at the Feet of Christ—for example, a long visit to the Blessed Sacrament—in order to serve others ; and our dear Lord's Easter gift to us is a lesson in spiritual unselfishness.

Now for the second story.

When it was late the same day, the first of the week, and the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be to you."

And when He had said this, He showed them His Hands and His Side. And the disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Lord.

He said therefore to them again,

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## Easter

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“Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you.”

When He had said this, He breathed on them, and He said to them, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.”

Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Except I shall see in His Hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His Side, I will not believe.”

And after eight days, again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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shut, and stood in the midst and said, "Peace be to you."

Then he said to Thomas, "Put in thy finger hither, and see My Hands, and bring hither thy hand, and put it into My Side; and be not faithless, but believing."

Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God."

Jesus saith to him, "Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed."

I can imagine that story makes some of you boys long to be priests in order to have the wonderful Easter gift our Blessed Lord gave to His Apostles, and make many sin-stained souls pure and white, and able to receive the dear Lord, Whom at the altar, you would



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## Easter

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hold in consecrated hands, your Lord and your God.

The book from which I got these two stories is called the Gospel of St. John, and it can be bought for a penny.

## VII

### THE CLOUD WITH THE SILVER LINING

“And when He had said these things, while they looked on, He was raised up: and a cloud received Him out of their sight.”—ACTS I. 9.

ASCENSION DAY ! What do we say about it in the Catechism ?—“By the words, ‘He ascended into heaven,’ I mean that our Saviour went up body and soul into heaven on Ascension Day, forty days after His Resurrection.” It is the day, then, of our dear Lord’s going back to His own home.

Now, I am going to tell you hardly anything of my own this time; I am

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## The Cloud with the Silver Lining

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going to tell you some of a sermon I heard! I can almost hear you saying, "I don't care for sermons *very much*." Wait until you have read—you will see.

This is a feast which has two sides: there is our Lord's side, the looking up to heaven side; and there is ours, the looking down to earth side. Every time a priest says Mass, he tells the people, "Lift up your hearts"; and on this day the Church says to us, "Lift up your eyes." You *remember*, don't you, I am telling you what the preacher of my sermon said?

Now, if we are going to get into heaven, even with our eyes, we must have somewhere to spring from, a sort of mental springing-board. As I know of no place so near to heaven as home, let us start from there.

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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I know some children whose mother once had to be abroad for many months, but at last she was coming home, and I was at the house on the very day she was expected. You never saw such excitement ! Everyone was talking at once ! The noise !! In such a din how anybody understood anybody else, I cannot tell you, but they did. They all wanted to do the same thing—to arrange the flowers in their mother's room, to lay her books ready. Such confusion ! Again, I cannot tell you how anything at all got done, but it did. Then they all—five of them—wanted to go with their father in the carriage to meet her. I thought they would all be killed by the horses or the wheels, but when the carriage had gone they were quite whole. When it came back you would have been quite sure that their pretty little

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## The Cloud with the Silver Lining

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mother must be crushed to death and all her clothes torn, but no. When I could get near to shake hands, there she was, happy and cool and smiling as if there had been no big girls and boys wrestling round her for the first kiss. What a banquet of joy and love it was to be sure ! Don't you think Ascension Day in heaven must have been something like that ? Can't you imagine each angel wanting to have everything to do with the preparations ? Wanting to be the first to welcome our dear Lord ? Of course, you understand that the preacher or my sermon did not say *these* things, don't you ?

Then, what splendid preparations I have seen made even in Protestant countries for the Feast of Corpus Christi, and what joyous processions when the Body of Christ is borne in such touching

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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triumph through our churches and convent gardens on that day ! What must it have been when the Son of God took into heaven for the first time that sacred Body He had assumed for love of us ? There were bright choirs of angels and the ranks of countless souls from Limbo to make the grand procession then, singing glorious songs, of which the Twenty-third Psalm seems an echo. Do you remember the words : “ Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates : and the King of Glory shall enter in.

“ Who is this King of Glory ? The Lord Who is strong and mighty : The Lord mighty in battle.

“ Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates : and the King of Glory shall enter in.

“ Who is this King of Glory ? The

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## The Cloud with the Silver Lining

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Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.”

There was indeed joy in heaven that day. You yourselves can think of all the wonderful happenings there, and how the feast could have been kept. That is one side of Ascension Day. Have you ever heard people say, “Every cloud has a silver lining”? Perhaps you have seen the words in a copy-book. Well, we have been looking at the lining first; now we must look at the cloud.

Think what the Ascension meant to our Lady. She had literally lived in the presence of her Divine Son from that hour when in the stable at Bethlehem she had held Him in her arms. There is a very beautiful verse in the Apocalypse (the last book in your New Testament), in which St. John, speaking of the New Jerusalem, says: “And the

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon to shine in it. For the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof." In some curious way I have always linked that verse up with my thoughts about our Blessed Lady on Ascension Day. Jesus Christ was the light of our Lady's life, and the world must have seemed very dark when He left her to go back to His Father's home.

Some of you are saying, "But she had the Blessed Sacrament." That is quite true; and no one has ever understood all that is, as she did; no one has ever loved the Holy Eucharist like Mary. But you know the words which the priest says when he changes the wine into the Precious Blood, do you not? The Church calls it "The Mystery of Faith." From the altar she



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## The Cloud with the Silver Lining

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did not hear the tones of His Voice ; she did not feel the clasp of His tender Hands, or the touch of His Lips as He gave her a son's kiss. Like us, she only knew He was there by faith, and she missed His sensible presence terribly.

In a lesser degree this was also true of the Apostles. Think how frightened St. Peter must have felt when he realized that our Blessed Lord was gone, that *he* now took His place as Head of the Church, that there would be no voice now of the Master to settle their difficulties, and that in future the others would look to *him* for guidance and support. He had faith in the promises of our dear Lord ; but faith itself must ever be something of a trial.

I cannot think that to the Apostles the Ascension Day seemed much of a feast. I should not be surprised if,

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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when we get to heaven, they tell us that they spent it in tears. Have you ever thought what a lot of questions we shall want to ask when we get there? I expect their greatest consolation on that day came from thinking of their Master's words, that He was going to prepare a place for them in His Father's house, to which He would soon call them, and with all their heart they longed for the glad moment when they would once more see Him face to face.

I think this feast ought to make the "home" feeling about heaven strong in our souls, too, and that while we are waiting we should remember the words of the Apostle, "Our conversation is in heaven."

## VIII

### A HOME OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

IN Leicester there is a church belonging to the Dominican Fathers, called Holy Cross, and in 1910 Holy Cross got a new Ciborium which has such a beautiful history that, since I heard it, it has seemed to become so woven into my heart that it now forms part of my thought about the Blessed Sacrament. I think even little children in far-off countries would love to know about this Ciborium.

Of course, you all know as well as can be that the Ciborium is the vessel looking like a chalice with a lid,

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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which holds our dear Lord's Body, and is kept in the Tabernacle. And, of course, you know just as well that the Church likes to give the best she has for the Blessed Sacrament, so that even in a poor place the *inside* of the Ciborium must be gilt. I am only saying this in case of what a little boy once called "a forget." Now, at Holy Cross the Ciborium was very small, and not very beautiful, and the parish priest, who, like all priests, loves the Blessed Sacrament very much, began to wish that he could give our dear Lord a nicer home.

He did not want to ask his people for money, because there were already so many things to which they had to give, and none of them were very rich; but sometimes he spoke of his wish.

One day a poor woman, a widow, asked to see the Father, and gave him

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## Home of the Blessed Sacrament

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two gold sovereigns and a half-sovereign, which were the savings of her whole life, and asked him to take them as the first offering towards the new Ciborium.

Now, I do not think anyone would like to take all the money which a poor widow had in the world, and least of all a priest; so that there was a great deal of talking between the Father and the would-be giver. But she had such good arguments as to why she should be allowed to give this money to our dear Lord that at last the priest gave way and took it. First, however, he promised that he would not tell the name of the person who had made this generous offering, but he was allowed to tell the story of how the money was given. When others heard it they wanted to give too—money and other gifts. Some

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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of the offerings were nearly as interesting as that of the poor widow.

Someone gave a ring one day—just a plain gold band. Only the priest knows the sad story which belongs to the little ring, and he always asks for prayers for the one who gave it. Next time you are kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament perhaps you will remember to ask our Lord to give to that person the grace to give Him her heart as well as her ring.

Some more money came from a convent in Ireland. The Father had been giving a retreat to the nuns, and had told them the story of the poor widow. Soon after he returned to Leicester he received a little parcel by post; inside he found fifteen sovereigns and a little note from a nun who signed herself “Sister X.” She had told the story to

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## Home of the Blessed Sacrament

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some other people, and they wanted to join in getting a new home for the Blessed Sacrament. In a few days a second little packet came with ten more sovereigns. At last the Father counted and found that he had seventy pounds; so he could begin to work. He had two special wishes about the Ciborium. One was that the cup-like portion in which the Body of Christ lies should be pure gold, and the other that it might be made in Leicester, the town in which it was to be used.

He sent a letter to the mint, and one morning received a round plate of gold in return for his money. Can you guess to whom he showed it first of all? It was taken straight to the High Altar and laid before the Tabernacle for our Lord Himself to see and bless. Then later it went to the silversmith at the Leicester

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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School of Art, and little by little it was made into a Ciborium. You can see the shape in the picture, but you cannot see all the beautiful little marks of the hammering, for it was hammered into shape by the workman's mallet.

If you begin at the lid to examine it, you will first notice a little cross—made out of a George sovereign which was given to the priest—which reminds us that the Ciborium is for Holy Cross church. Under the cross is a little globe of crystal representing the world, having, as it were, the banner of the Cross floating over it. Inside the lid is one of the very sovereigns given by the poor widow, and showing St. George and the dragon.

Then comes the bowl of pure gold—that is, as pure as it can be, for it had to have a little silver mixed with it to make it lasting. Round the knob you would





OUR FOOD WITHIN THE BANQUET-ROOM.



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## Home of the Blessed Sacrament

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notice vine leaves and grapes, reminding us of the wine changed during the Holy Sacrifice into our Lord's Precious Blood.

The Ciborium is ornamented with twelve stones, which have a wonderful meaning. To understand them you would have to turn to the twenty-first chapter of the Apocalypse—the last book, you know, in your New Testament—and read what is said there of the foundations of the city of heaven, by which we mean the twelve Apostles. The twelve stones are named in verses nineteen to twenty-one. Perhaps I should tell you that the jasper signifies our Blessed Lord and St. Peter.

Round the foot of the Ciborium is some reading which you would not understand. The letters are copied from a very old Greek text of the New Testament, and in English they

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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stand for: "This poor widow hath cast in more than they all." You know the story, do you not, told in the twelfth chapter of St. Mark, verses forty-one to forty-four? And even the youngest of you will easily guess why the priest chose those words to put there. Lastly, in Latin, there is the word Leicester, and the date of its making, 1910.

I hope it will make you very happy to read this story, as happy as it made me to hear it, and I must tell you just at the end that I have held this beautiful Ciborium in my hands, for, at the time I write, it has not yet held the Lord of Glory.

## IX

### THE SACRED HEART

JUST as we think of May as the month of Mary, in the same way to most of us June is the month of the Sacred Heart.

I remember, some years ago, finding myself in a bus with a nurse in charge of a small child. They were Catholics; the nurse was zealous and the small child looked decidedly angry. A discreet struggle was going on; at last a little hand was flung out, a small red badge fell to the ground, and the tiny conqueror said in a loud voice, "I don't want it." There was a low-toned explanation from the nurse, and the

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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answer, not low at all, was, "I don't know what Sacred Heart means."

At once I found myself sympathizing with the child; it is so disagreeable to have to do a thing you do not understand. There are two ways out of the difficulty. You can, of course, refuse to do things, but that most often means some naughtiness getting mixed up with the matter; or you can try to understand, which seems to me much better. Do you "know what Sacred Heart means"? Would you like to try to understand, for during the month of June, in the week following Corpus Christi, the Church keeps the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

Have you ever had to work out a problem in arithmetic dealing with millions of florins and millions of people? Did your governess try to explain it to

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## The Sacred Heart

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you? If so, I am sure she stated it in terms of three and four pennies and a few little boys and girls. She began with something familiar to you, and before you knew what was happening I expect you saw just what that sum meant. Begin with something familiar now. Perhaps some of you have made your first Holy Communion this year, and for a long time before the priest and your mother often talked to you about getting your "heart" ready for our Lord. You understood quite well what they meant, and tried to make it very full of love—a golden throne from which the little King could rule the empire of your soul.

You have, I am sure, some special friend, and you speak to her or him as having "the kindest heart" in the world. That is plain. Suppose you

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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were at school a long way from home and about the middle of term someone told you quite suddenly, "Your mother has come to see you." I can imagine your saying afterwards, "My heart jumped with joy." If you are a girl and a naughty little brother jumps from behind a door as you are going upstairs in the dark, would not your "heart almost stop with fear." If a friend has not acted quite fairly to you, or you are dreading some pain, you know that "your heart feels heavy"; indeed, if God has already allowed some great trouble to come to you, did you not think at the time that your "heart would break"? There is no difficulty at all in understanding this. It is quite simple; we are accustomed to speak in this manner, because in our minds that "heart" stands for all these ideas and



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## The Sacred Heart

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emotions, and we always think of it as united to some person. By this time, I am sure, some of you are saying : “ Oh yes ! I begin to see what that means.”

Our dear Lord is such a great subject for our little minds that we often, as it were, get hold of just one side of Him. We begin to think that He is the great God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, and in the process forget entirely that He became man. Now, devotion to the Sacred Heart corrects this, and makes us remember that He had a human heart capable of all our emotions. It could beat quicker when He thought of His Mother ; it could almost stop with fear ; could be crushed by unkindness, and expand with gratitude just like yours and mine.

If we begin at the other end, and, in thinking that Jesus Christ is truly man,

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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are in danger of forgetting His Divinity, the devotion to the Sacred Heart pulls us up with a kind of spiritual jerk, by the demand for our adoration.

Of course, when we pray to the Sacred Heart all our devotion is offered to our Blessed Lord Himself, Who has taken our human nature and united it to His own Divine Person in such a wonderful way that we adore the Sacred Body as the Body of the Son of God. Why do you genuflect each time you pass before the Blessed Sacrament? Is it not because it is the Body of Christ? Each part of that Body is adorable because united to the Divinity—the dear Hands that caressed the little children, and are raised over us so often in blessing and absolution; the Feet so wearied in seeking for sinners; the Face so insulted and dishonoured during

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## The Sacred Heart

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the Passion : but in a special manner the Church draws our attention to the pierced Heart, for the very reasons of which we spoke above, and which makes us single out the heart to stand for so much in life. The statue of the Sacred Heart which I like best is in the church at Haverstock Hill, London. At the end of the long altar rail is a white statue of our Blessed Lord, one hand rests upon His Heart, but the other points to the Tabernacle to remind us that there behind the tiny door is that loving Heart, not cut in stone or painted on canvas, but really living for us, waiting for our visit and longing to find a home in *our* heart.

Do you know who first spoke of devotion to the Sacred Heart ? If you were with me I quite expect I should hear many voices say, "Blessed Margaret

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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Mary," and perhaps a few, "St. Gertrude;" but I want you to look in your New Testament, St. Matthew, chapter eleven, verse twenty-nine, and you will find our dear Lord Himself saying these words: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of Heart." That is the real test of true devotion, you know. Do you learn the lessons it is meant to teach? The Church, thinking of that text, has given us the beautiful invocation, "Jesus, meek and humble of Heart, make my heart like unto Thine."

## X

### THE PRINCE OF THE APOSTLES

ON the 29th of June we keep the Feast of the great Apostles SS. Peter and Paul. It is a day of obligation; we have but few of these, and each of them commemorates something of very great importance. No other Apostle has his feast kept as a day of obligation—not even St. John, the dear “disciple whom Jesus loved.” Of course we feel quite sure that the Church must have had many and good reasons for choosing these two great saints of whom we are going to chat together for a little while. We know

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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so much about St. Peter that the difficulty is where to begin. He was brought to our Blessed Lord by his brother Andrew, and it was on this occasion that Christ changed his name from Simon to Peter (the rock). Look at the first chapter of St. John, verses forty to forty-two; the story is told there so shortly and yet so beautifully. Perhaps some of *us* have to thank a dear brother for some great and wonderful thing which once came to our soul. One of my favourite texts in the Old Testament is this: "A brother that is helped by his brother is like a strong city" (Proverbs xviii. 19). Have *you* many favourite texts?

We cannot think of this meeting with its significant change of name without the other scene coming immediately to the mind, and with it the words: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will

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## The Prince of the Apostles

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build My Church" (St. Matthew xvi. 18). Catholic children often know that our Lord made St. Peter the Head of the Church almost before they know anything else about him. Did you ever try to imagine how he felt when those words were said to him? Probably, however, he did not realize their meaning at the time, but after the Ascension, during the retreat in the Upper Room, where he was waiting for the coming of the Holy Ghost, I think he must have thought of them with something very like panic.

I wonder, one wet afternoon when you do not know what to do and are *almost* going to be naughty, whether it would not be very interesting to take your New Testament, a piece of paper and a pencil, and make a list of all the places in which you find St. Peter

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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mentioned? I like that kind of game; but, of course, you may not be made like me, or perhaps you have never played it. At the end you would be able to write quite a nice life of St. Peter, if you wished!

In Catholic days England was noted for its devotion to St. Peter. Do you think it was because his character appealed in a special way to Englishmen? It may have seemed to them that he shared some of the qualities which are supposed to be characteristic of our countrymen—his bluntness, his downrightness, his loyalty. After our Blessed Lady there were more churches dedicated to him in England than to any other saint. Is there an old "St. Peter's" near your home?

After the words of Jesus Christ Himself, the words of St. Peter form our



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## The Prince of the Apostles

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favourite texts, and perhaps our favourite little prayers. Do *you* not love all these?

“Lord, Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love Thee” (St. John xxi. 17).

“Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life” (St. John vi. 69).

“Thou art Christ the Son of the living God” (St. Matthew xvi. 16).

“Lord, save me” (St. Matthew xiv. 30).

“Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee upon the waters” (St. Matthew xiv. 28). You will learn to love this one better when you are older.

Do you know of any others yourself?

Perhaps, too, we feel drawn towards St. Peter because he fell into a big sin, and denied his Master after he had made such grand promises, which is just what

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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we do, not three times but over and over and over again. We feel he understands how weak our poor human nature is. He is one of the models of perfect contrition. The Gospel tells us that he went out of the High Priest's Hall weeping bitterly over his sin, and a legend says that his sorrow did not pass away as soon as he was forgiven, as ours so often does, but that he could never hear a cock crow without shedding tears, and in old age his cheeks were furrowed by their course. How we wish he would get us the grace to weep over our sins, instead of shedding tears perhaps only because we are not allowed to have our own way.

I am sure you know that St. Peter was a martyr. He was crucified, and, feeling himself unworthy to die like our dear Lord, he asked to be nailed to the

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## The Prince of the Apostles

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cross with his head downwards; but do you know the pretty story, "*Quo Vadis?*"? St. Peter was escaping from Rome when our Blessed Lord, carrying His Cross, met him on the way. The Apostle, astonished, asked, "Whither goest Thou, Lord?" And Jesus replied, "I am going to Rome to be crucified again." St. Peter understood, returned to Rome, and laid down his life for his Master.

You all love St. Peter? Of course! Have you ever thought that a real devotion to him means devotion and loyalty to his successor, to our Holy Father the Pope? This, too, was characteristic of England in Catholic times, and as you learn your history you will continually come across examples from the days of St. Augustine until England was torn away from Catholic unity. At the time

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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of the Great Schism—the little ones will know nothing of that yet—when nearly every nation in Europe was hopelessly divided, England had the glory of remaining loyal to the true Pope. Many of our martyrs, like Blessed Thomas More and Blessed John Fisher, died in defence of the rights of the Holy See. On this feast Catholic boys and girls should try to offer up Mass and Holy Communion for the Holy Father. They will no doubt have a very special love for the present Vicar of Christ, Pius X., because he has granted to children such special privileges; more than once I have heard him called “the children’s Pope.” You can prove your gratitude in many ways—by obeying his wishes and going often to Holy Communion, and by doing all you can to spread devotion to the Blessed Sacra-

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## The Prince of the Apostles

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ment. You should also join with great devotion in the prayer dedicating England to St. Peter, which is read at Benediction on the Sunday after his feast.

If you have a statue of St. Peter in your church you can kiss the foot as a little act of respect and submission. It will probably be a copy of the one in the great Church of St. Peter at Rome, which was kissed by St. Thomas Aquinas. Do you know that story? One day when he was in St. Peter's the Saint stopped before the statue, kissed the foot, and then bent his head beneath it. A poor woman, suffering from an incurable disease, saw him, and bending down at the same moment kissed the hem of the white habit he wore. God rewarded the humility of both by healing the sick woman.

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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It is, however, at the Church of San Clemente in Rome that you would find the oldest known statue of St. Peter, and I think you would love it dearly. It is St. Peter as the Good Shepherd. He is carrying a sheep on his shoulders—not bearing the keys in his hands—and there seems a strange meaning in the fact that the little lamb is less maimed and broken than the shepherd.

We have said nothing about St. Paul, but in this we have, to a great extent, followed the example of the Church, who seems to forget him in favour of St. Peter on this their joint feast, making it up by keeping the “Commemoration of St. Paul” on the next day, the 30th of June, and you remember that we kept the beautiful feast of his conversion on the 25th of January.

## XI

### THE CHILDHOOD OF ST. DOMINIC

SOME children were once discussing lives of the saints in my presence, and I was listening attentively, for it always interests me to know a child's point of view. The conclusion at which they arrived was that lives of the saints were very "grown-up," that very little was said about them when they were "just so small as I," and that that little was put in long words.

Now, on the 4th of August we keep the feast of a saint who never makes you feel that he is very "grown-

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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up," not even when he is doing the most wonderful things, and about whose childhood we know quite a great deal.

Some saints we only begin to like when they are big, some only became saints then, but we love St. Dominic the very first time we see him—a little baby of a few days old carried to church in the arms of a great lady.

If any of you see a picture or a statue of a saint in a beautiful white habit with a black cloak, having a bright, shining star on his forehead, holding a lily and a book in one hand, while the other is raised to bless you, and if at the saint's feet you see a dog with a torch in his mouth, you may be quite sure that that is St. Dominic.

His mother, a holy Spanish lady, asked God to send her a little boy, and shortly afterwards she had a dream in





THE FRIEND OF CHRIST.

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## The Childhood of St. Dominic

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which she saw a black-and-white dog holding in his mouth a torch, which lighted up the entire world. She understood that this was a figure of the child God was going to give her. When St. Dominic grew up he was indeed like a beautiful hound—noble, devoted, and faithful. The black-and-white habit, of course, you have guessed; and he carried the light of God's word far and wide.

Very soon after the little boy was born he was taken to the church to be baptized; as the water was poured over his head and he received his glorious name of Dominic, the lady who held him at the font saw a beautiful star shining on his forehead, and many who knew him later speak of the light which shone on his brow.

He must have been a very dear little

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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baby, because people have kept for us so many pretty stories about him. We are told that one day when his father went to look at him, he saw a swarm of bees which had settled on those baby lips one day to speak words about God sweeter than their own honey.

Once his nurse found him lying on the ground, though she had tucked him safely into his little cot, and she could not tell how he had got out. This was remembered afterwards by those who knew St. Dominic later, for then he hardly ever slept in a bed, but most often took his rest in the church, lying down on the hard stone steps of the altar and sleeping quite near to our dear Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

What is the very first thing you can remember? I should not be surprised if St. Dominic's earliest recollection was

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## The Childhood of St. Dominic

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of a church and perhaps of a priest saying Holy Mass, for his mother, who was a saint, too—Blessed Joanna—went to daily Mass, and took her baby with her. Like all saints, she loved the poor, and used to put into his tiny hands what she wanted to give away.

These holy lessons were not lost. As he grew bigger he loved to be taken to a church and there repeat the prayers he had been taught by his mother. I am always reminded of the little Dominic when I see the children troop out from school, run across to the church, kneel down for a few moments, and then run away again; only perhaps he went in and out just a little more quietly, and perhaps sometimes he stayed a little longer. But, of course, I can't be sure.

Nor did he ever forget the poor. I know two beautiful stories about that,

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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but they belong to the boy St. Dominic, and not to the little child.

In those times (St. Dominic was born in 1170), when a boy was very young he was sent away from his home to be trained for his future life. Often he went to the castle of some great lord to be taught the duties of a page and later of a squire in the hope that he would one day become a brave knight. But St. Dominic was to be the knight of Jesus Christ, and so when he was seven years old he was sent away from home, not to any feudal castle, but to the house of his uncle, who was a priest. There he began to study just like you, to read and write ; amongst other things, he learned Latin and music, how to serve Holy Mass, and how to sing the beautiful Office of the Church.

Like all children he loved singing,

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## The Childhood of St. Dominic

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and over and over again we are told in his life that when he was tired or in pain he used to sing some beautiful hymn. I wonder if you ever tried that when something hurt you ?

He liked to take care of the sanctuary, to sweep and dust the chapel where the Blessed Sacrament was kept, to put flowers on the altar ; and every little duty was done with deepest reverence for love of the Lord Who dwelt there.

He stayed with this uncle for seven years, and at fourteen, when he went away to a great public school, one period of his life—his childhood—was over. It was not filled with extraordinary things, but, on the contrary, with the quite ordinary things which little Catholic boys and girls in England do, or could do, to-day. What was extraordinary was the *way* in which he

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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did them, and that way perhaps he would teach you if you asked him.

Even the tiny ones who only yet want a saint "to play with" would not find St. Dominic "too tall." They could say to him the words which a great poet puts on baby lips to St. Dominic's Master :

"Thou canst not have forgotten all  
That it feels like to be small."

And I know what he will answer, because I asked him about it myself once a long time ago.



## XII

### THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR BLESSED LADY

WHEN we are about to begin a new month I suppose one of the first things which Catholics do is to look and see what feasts the Church is going to let us keep during it, so that we may get our souls ready to enter into the spirit of them and get from them all the profit that we can, just as in another way we look forward to see if there is a birthday, or a party, or a picnic, coming, for which we want to be prepared. For as your own dear mother sees that you do not have too much work and study without breaks for pleasure, lest your body should feel

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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too great a strain, so our Holy Mother the Church spreads throughout the year her great feasts, lest our souls should get over-tired and weary in well-doing.

A day of obligation means a very special treat, and this month on the 15th we get such a day—the Assumption of our Blessed Lady.

When we love or even respect persons very deeply, we — sometimes quite unconsciously—take them as models in some way or another, and copy them; and the greater the love we bear them the more minutely we are likely to reproduce in ourselves certain features of their characters. You are scarcely old enough to have had any great experience of this yet, but I should not be surprised if you could think of at least one example. Perhaps some of you have copied the handwriting of a person you love, or you

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## Assumption of our Blessed Lady

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know a whole form who tried to get the same devotion as a teacher whom they respected.

To think of this for a few minutes will make you see more clearly how very like her Divine Son His holy Mother must have been. She loved Him as we have never loved anyone, and she made Him her model as we can never hope to do. It will not, therefore, astonish us to find His life reflected, as it were, in her feasts.

Not so long ago we were keeping the Feast of the Ascension of our Blessed Lord into heaven, and we felt that it was a very mixed sort of day. When we thought of Him, we wanted to rejoice because He had gone home, and Heaven was so glad, but when we thought of His Mother, the Apostles, and the world He had left, we wanted to cry : perhaps,

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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indeed, we did cry a little. Now we do not feel the same about the Assumption of our Lady ; at least, I do not. She had waited so long and so sweetly for the day when she would rejoin the Lord Who was also her Child. The waiting must have been so terrible to her that I can imagine the Apostles sometimes going to confession and accusing themselves of not trying hard enough to be good, and so, perhaps, being the cause of her long exile, beating their breasts and saying : "How long, O Lord, how long?" Of course, you understand, that is only a fancy of my own.

When at last the day came, and Jesus called her, I can only think of tears of gratitude in which loneliness and regret were drowned : and songs of thanksgiving so full and joyous that the sighs were lost in the great harmony. The

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## Assumption of our Blessed Lady

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Church seems to feel this too, for she reminds us only of the joy and gladness with which our Lady was welcomed to heaven.

She had wanted our dear Lord so much—I don't forget the Blessed Sacrament, but she was His mother—she longed for His sensible presence once more, for the sound of His Voice, and the touch of His Hand. I think the composer of the Assumption hymn who wrote—

“Her hand is clasped in His.  
See Jesus bears her up,”

must have had this in mind.

Though we may easily feel more devotion to other feasts of our Lady than to this, yet in many ways this is the greatest, the crown, as a finished work is more perfect than one only begun or still in progress.

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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How are we going to keep it? Of course you will like to offer her some of the prayers which the Church uses on this day. Amongst them you will find the hymn *Ave maris stella*. I think the English begins: "Hail, thou star of ocean." Or you could say the short antiphon beginning: "We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God." In prayer-books this is often printed at the beginning or the end of our Lady's Litany; and of course there is the *Magnificat*, of which we never grow tired.

Would you like to know what Gospel the Church has chosen for this feast? It is St. Luke tenth chapter, verses thirty-eight to forty-two: you will see how very suitable it is. There is nothing in the New Testament about the Assumption; it is a truth we know by the teaching of the Church.

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## Assumption of our Blessed Lady

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There are Religious Orders dedicated to the Blessed Virgin under almost every invocation. Do you know the Assumption nuns? The ones of whom I am thinking were founded in France during the last century, their special work being the education of children in secondary schools. They wear a very pretty habit made of purple stuff, with a large white cross in front, and white veils. On great feasts, they also wear in choir a long white cloak with a purple cross on the left shoulder, which always makes me think of the Crusades. In their chapel at Kensington Square there is Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament every day, and I think I am right in saying that the nuns undertook this for the conversion of England. If you live in London, perhaps a visit to this chapel would be a nice little pilgrimage to offer to our Lady on her feast.

## XIII

### OCTOBER ROSES

OCTOBER is the month of the Rosary, and you would perhaps like to hear a story which was told to me by a dear old Irish nun. The first question, of course, is : "Is it true?" It might be—that is all I can say, and I always thought this the very nicest kind of story, because when people begin by saying, "It is all quite true," you can't change anything however much you wish, and you can't be in the story yourself. Now, when it is not quite sure, you can imagine the most lovely things for yourself.



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## October Roses

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This, then, is the story which might be true:

After St. Dominic had been travelling about and preaching all day he usually passed the night in the church. When he was too tired to pray any longer, he lay down on the altar step to sleep, and one night he had a wonderful dream.

Our Blessed Lady appeared to him, and round her in groups of tens were fifty beautiful angels in shining white robes, carrying lilies in their hands and singing. As St. Dominic listened the music was sometimes glad, and sometimes seemed to be glad but with tears very near. The words seemed familiar to him, and as he listened more closely he distinguished the Archangel's greeting to the Blessed Virgin—the "Hail! full of grace!"—then our Lady's sweet *Magnificat*. They sang their own

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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special *Gloria in Excelsis*, then, very softly, the *Nunc Dimittis* of holy Simeon, and, lastly, verses which he knew came from St. Luke's Gospel: "Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing."

"How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

With these words the white angels spread their silver wings and were quickly out of sight.

The Blessed Virgin was not left long alone; fifty other angels soon surrounded her, but they were clothed in scarlet robes, their purple wings seemed to trail upon the ground, and they carried many symbols—there was a chalice, a cruel scourge, a crown of sharp thorns, a cross, nails, and a spear. St. Dominic could not bear the sight of these terrible

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## October Roses

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emblems, and prostrated, with his face on the ground. The music they sang was the saddest he had ever heard ; like, but far sadder than, the solemn music of Holy Week. It nearly broke his heart to listen to it, and the words the angels sang filled his eyes with tears. They began with "Thy will be done," and the words fell from the angel lips as something falls drip, drip to the ground. Then the words were lost, and St. Dominic trembled all over as the awful music drowned them with a clang which sounded like blows being struck. After a little time he heard : "Hail ! King of the Jews," and "Behold the Man !" Then the angels formed a long procession and moved away chanting some of the old sad verses from the Psalms. Their faces were covered with their purple wings, but he could just

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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make out the words : “ They have dug My Hands and My Feet, they have numbered all My Bones.”

It was a long time before St. Dominic dared to look up, but at last he raised himself to catch the sounds of music in the distance—music so grand and so joyful that it drove away the pain and filled his soul with gladness. Already he could hear the “ Alleluia,” and the words from the Twenty-third Psalm : “ Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in.” The angels were getting nearer now ; St. Dominic could see their robes all of shining cloth of gold, and their sparkling crowns. As they advanced they were singing his own favourite *Veni Creator* ; they grouped themselves around their Queen, and sang in praise of her and the saints glorious

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## October Roses

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hymns such as he had never heard before. Then they, too, disappeared, and left St. Dominic alone with the Mother of God.

Very humbly and very lovingly he begged her to tell him the meaning of what he had seen, and she, so my story tells, taught him what you have been already taught—the Rosary, with its fifteen mysteries, Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious, and its one hundred and fifty *Aves*.

St. Dominic went back to his work ; he preached the Rosary of our Blessed Lady, and by means of it he converted very many sinners. And you, too, even the smallest, if you try this month to say your “ Hail ! Mary ” well, and offer it for the conversion of sinners, will do what St. Dominic did—you will win souls for Christ, our Lord.

The whole of October is the month

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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of the Rosary, but it is, as it were, brought to a point on Rosary Sunday. If you go to a Dominican church to the High Mass on that day, you will see piles of roses brought to the altar—roses, white and red and yellow; roses which are only buds, and roses which are just ready to scatter their beautiful petals at the foot of the Tabernacle. The priest will bless them, and then give them to the people in honour of our Blessed Lady, one of whose beautiful titles in the Litany is “Mystical Rose.” Which is your favourite title for her?

Some children are shy and always forget what to do when there is any little ceremony of this kind, and so do not enjoy it. Try to remember to take off your gloves before it is time to leave your place. Then, when you get to the altar, you will take and kiss the rose

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## October Roses

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which is offered to you ; you do this out of respect because it has been blessed. The priest who gives you the rose will hold his hand so that you may kiss it too, and a little Catholic child will do this with utterest reverence, for a priest's hand is one of the holiest things on earth, holding, as it does, each day within its clasp the Sacred Host—the dear White Rose of pure delight.

When the priest has passed you, get up and go to your place, in order to make room for others. While you are waiting for Mass to begin, you might look at your rose and see what you could learn from it. I wish you all lived here, and could tell me what lessons it taught you ! I wonder what colour you will get ? Last year, I heard someone say : “ Yellow rose for faith, white rose for purity, and red rose for love.”

## XIV

### THE PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

MANY hundred years ago, if you and I had been walking along the road leading to God's holy Temple in Jerusalem, we might have seen a tiny maiden of about three years old with her parents. We should have watched the three, I am quite sure, and have realized at once that they were not ordinary people. The little girl was the fairest of all God's creatures—Mary, who is later on to become the Mother of God. The Church, wishing to make us feel how beautiful she is, gives her such titles as



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## Presentation of Blessed Virgin

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“the Rose of Sharon,” “the Lily among thorns.” Her parents are St. Anne and St. Joachim, both of them old, and beautiful with the beauty of holiness.

Holy people have always attractive faces, because their souls shine in them. They are very calm, but I think the tears must have been in the eyes that looked so bravely first down upon the little maid and then up to the Temple’s gilded roof, for they were going to present her to God and leave her there. In the evening they would go back to their home along that road without the baby feet pattering along beside them.

The face of the child is shining with love and eagerness ; as they near the Temple she loosens the gentle clasp of her mother’s hand and mounts the marble steps alone. The priests, perhaps, came forward to meet them, and then with

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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some simple ceremony consecrated to God the future Mother of His Son.

You know that it is sin which darkens our intelligence, and the Blessed Virgin's soul was always whiter than the snow on the mountain tops. She understood what she was doing, and so was able to join with the priest in offering herself entirely to God. "Once for all—now and for ever," perhaps she said, in the words of a beautiful prayer which was written for first communicants.

It is a day very dear to children who hope one day to give themselves to God and walk in our Lady's footsteps, and even for those who will not have this honour it is a good time for renewing good resolutions and beginning again to be good and to love God. Our Lady made the sacrifice of all she loved best, and perhaps when we kneel at her altar

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## Presentation of Blessed Virgin

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she will whisper to us some little thing we could give her Son, and get us the courage to do it generously.

A holy and learned monk of the Benedictine Order has told us the history of this feast in a book called "The Veneration of the Blessed Virgin." The people in the East kept this day for nearly four hundred years before it was kept in the West, and called it by a different name. The Greeks speak of it as "The Introduction of the Blessed Virgin into the Temple," and the Arabs as "The Progress of the Intercession into the Temple." A French nobleman had seen the feast kept by the people in the island of Cyprus, and had been so touched by it that when he got back to his own country he begged the King to obtain permission from the Pope for it to be celebrated in France. I think it is

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## A Wreath of Feasts

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kept there to this day more solemnly than in our own land.

I have seen in a French prayer-book a beautiful prayer to our Lady for the 21st of November, and I remember that it began with the words: "O Mary, who on the day of your Presentation in the Temple gained the title of Queen of Virgins, obtain for me a great love of the virtue of holy purity."

It is a nice petition to make to our Lady this day and every day throughout your lives.



"THAT I MAY DWELL IN THE HOUSE  
OF THE LORD."

*To face p. 120.*





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