

Miraculous Stories of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of Her Intercession

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[679] Some persons, boasting of being free from prejudices, take great credit to themselves for believing no miracles but those recorded in the holy Scriptures, esteeming all others as tales and fables for foolish women. But it will be well to repeat here a just remark of the learned and pious Father John Crasset, who says that the bad are as ready to deride miracles as the good are to believe them; adding, that as it is a weakness to give credit to all things, so, on the other hand, to reject miracles which come to us attested by serious and pious men, either savors of infidelity, which supposes them impossible to God, or of presumption, which refuses belief to such a class of authors. We give credit to a Tacitus and a Suetonius, and can we deny it without presumption to Christian authors of learning and upright life? There is less risk, says Father Canisius, in believing and receiving what is related with some probability by honest persons, and not rejected by the learned, and which serves for the edification of our neighbor, than in rejecting it with a disdainful and presumptuous spirit.

1ST EXAMPLE. A certain man in Germany had [680] committed a great sin, and was ashamed to confess it, yet on the other hand he could not endure the remorse which he felt, and went to

cast himself into the river; but just as he was on the point of doing so, he stopped, and bursting into tears, prayed God to pardon him without confession. One night in his sleep he felt someone waking him, and heard a voice saying: "Go and make your confession." He went to the church, but yet did not make his confession. He heard the same voice a second night; again he went to the church, but after he had entered it, said that he would rather die than confess that sin. He was about to return home, when he thought he would go and recommend himself to the most holy Mary, before her image which was in the church. He had hardly kneeled before it, when he felt himself entirely changed. He immediately arose, called for a confessor, and weeping bitterly, through grace received from the Virgin, made a sincere confession; and he afterwards said that he felt greater satisfaction than if he had gained all the gold in the world.

2. A young nobleman was reading one day, while at sea, an obscene book, in which he took great pleasure. A religious said to him: "Now come, would you give something to our Lady?" "Yes," he answered; and the other said, "I wish that, for love of the holy Virgin, you would tear that book in pieces and cast it into the sea." "Here it is, Father," said the young man. "No," [681] said the religious, "I wish that you yourself would make this offering to Mary." He did so, and when he returned to Genoa, his native place, the mother of God so inflamed his heart with the love of God that he became a religious.

3. A hermit of Mount Olivet had in his cell a holy image of Mary, and frequently offered up prayers before it. The devil could not endure such devotion to the holy Virgin, and tor-

mented him continually with temptations against purity; and the poor old hermit finding himself still pursued by them, notwithstanding all his prayers and mortifications, said one day to the enemy: "What have I done to you, that you will not leave me in peace?" And the demon appeared to him and answered: "You torment me more than I torment you;" and then he added: "Now come, and swear secrecy to me, and I will tell you what you must cease to do, if you wish me not to molest you any more." The hermit took the oath, and then the devil said to him: "I wish you never again to approach that image that you have in your cell." The hermit was greatly perplexed, and went to take counsel of the Abbot Theodore, who told him that he was not bound by his oath, and that he must not cease to recommend himself to Mary before that image, as he had done before. The hermit obeyed, and the devil was put to shame and conquered.

4. A woman who had been guilty of a criminal connection with two young men, one of [682] whom had killed the other, came one day in great terror to Father Onefrio d'Anna, a pious missionary in the kingdom of Naples, to make her confession. She told the Father that in the same hour in which that wretched youth had died, he appeared to her, clothed in black, loaded with chains, and cast fire on every side. He had a sword in his hand, and raised it to cut her throat. In terror she exclaimed: "What have I done to you, that you wish to kill me?" And in a rage he answered: "Wretch, do you ask what you have done to me? You have caused me to lose God." Then she invoked the blessed Virgin; and that damned soul, on hearing the most holy name of Mary pronounced, disappeared and was seen no more.

5. When St. Dominic was preaching at Carcassone, in France, an Albigensian heretic, who was possessed by demons, was brought to him, because he had publicly spoken against the devotion of the most holy Rosary. The saint then ordered the demons, in the name of God, to declare whether those things which he had said concerning the most holy Rosary were true; and howling with rage they said: "Hear, oh Christians, all that this our enemy has said of Mary and of the most holy Rosary is entirely true." They added, moreover, that they had no power against the servants of Mary; and that many who at death invoked Mary were saved, contrary to what they deserved. And finally they said: "We are constrained to declare, that [683] no one is lost who perseveres in devotion to Mary, and in the devotion of the most holy Rosary, for Mary obtains for sinners a true repentance before death. St. Dominic made the people immediately repeat the Rosary; and, oh miracle! at every "Hail Mary," many devils went out from that wretched man, in the shape of burning coals, so that when the Rosary was finished, he was entirely freed from them, and many heretics became converted.

6. The daughter of a certain prince had entered a monastery, where the discipline was so relaxed, that, although she was a young person of good dispositions, she advanced but little in virtue. By the advice of a good confessor, she began to say the Rosary with the mysteries, and became so changed that she was an example to all. The other religious, taking offence at her for withdrawing from them, attacked her on all sides, to induce her to abandon her newly-begun way of life. One day while she was repeating the Rosary, and praying Mary to assist her in that

persecution, she saw a letter fall from above. On the outside were written these words: "Mary, mother of God, to her daughter Jane, greeting;" and within : "My dear child, continue to say my Rosary ; withdraw from conversation with those who do not help you to live well ; beware of idleness and vanity ; take from your cell two superfluous things, and I will be your protectress with God." The abbot of that monastery soon after visited it, and attempted to reform it, but he did [684] not succeed ; and one day he saw a great number of demons entering the cells of all the nuns except that of Jane, for the heavenly mother, before whose image he saw her praying, banished them from that. When he heard from her of the devotion of the Rosary which she practiced, and the letter she had received, he ordered all the others to repeat it, and it is related that this monastery became a paradise.

7. There lived in Rome a woman, called Catherine the beautiful, who led a very sinful life. Hearing St. Dominic once preach on the devotion of the most holy Rosary, she had her name inscribed in the book of the confraternity, and began to recite it, but did not abandon her sinful life. One evening a youth, apparently a noble, came to her house, whom she received courteously. When they were at supper, she saw drops of blood falling from his hands while he was breaking a piece of bread, and then she observed that all the food he took was tinged with blood. She asked him what that blood meant? And the youth answered, that a Christian should take no food that was not tinged with the blood of Jesus Christ, seasoned with the memory of his passion. Amazed at this, she asked him who he was. "Soon," he answered, " I will show you"; and when they had withdrawn into another apartment, the appearance of the youth changed,

and he showed himself crowned with thorns, his flesh torn, and said to her: Do you wish to know who I am? Do you not know me? I am your Redeemer. Catherine, when will you cease to offend me? See how much I have suffered for you. You have grieved me enough, change your life." Catherine began to weep bitterly, and Jesus, encouraging her, said: "Now begin to love me as much as you have offended me; and know that you have received this grace from me, on account of the Rosary you have been accustomed to recite in honor of my mother." And then he disappeared. Catherine went in the morning to make her confession to St. Dominic; and giving to the poor all she possessed, led so holy a life that she attained to great perfection. The Virgin often appeared to her; and Jesus himself revealed to St. Dominic, that this penitent had become very dear to him.

8. The blessed Alan de la Roche relates of a lady, named Dominica, who was accustomed to recite the Rosary, that she gave up this devotion, and afterwards became so poor, that in desperation she stabbed herself in three different places. But just as she was breathing her last, and the devils came to take her to hell, the most holy Mary appeared to her, and said to her: "My daughter, you have forgotten me, but I have not been willing to forget you, on account of that Rosary which you have for a time recited in my honor. And now," she added, "if you will continue to recite it, I will restore life to you, and also the possessions you have lost." Dominica was restored to health, and continuing the practice of reciting the Rosary, recovered [686] her possessions, and at her death was again visited by Mary, who commended her fidelity, and she died a holy death.

9. There lived in Saragossa a certain noble, a very bad man; his name was Peter, and he was a relation of St. Dominic. One day when the saint was preaching, he saw Peter enter the church, and he prayed the Lord that he would make known to the audience the condition of that miserable sinner. And, behold, Peter then appeared like a monster from hell, surrounded and dragged along by many devils. The congregation fled, even his wife who was in the church, and the servants who accompanied him. Then St. Dominic directed him, through one of his companions, to recommend himself to Mary, and to begin to recite the Rosary which he sent him. Peter received the message, humbled himself, sent to thank the saint, and received himself the grace to see the demons that surrounded him. He afterwards went to make his confession to the saint himself, from whom he received the assurance that he was already pardoned, and continuing to recite the Rosary, he attained to so happy a state that one day the Lord made him appear in church, in the presence of the whole congregation crowned with three crowns of roses.

10. In the mountains of Trent lived a notorious [687] robber, who, when he was one day admonished by a religious to change his course of life, answered, that for him there was no remedy. "Do not say so," said the religious ; "do what I tell you ; fast on Saturday in honor of Mary, and on that day do no harm to any one, and she will obtain for you the grace of not dying under the displeasure of God." The obedient robber followed this advice, and made a vow to continue to do so. That he might not break it, he from that time went unarmed on Saturdays. It happened that on a Saturday he was found by the officers of justice, and that he might not break

his oath, he allowed himself to be taken without resistance. The judge, when he saw that he was a gray-haired old man, wished to pardon him ; but, through the grace of compunction which he had received from Mary, he said that he wished to die in punishment of his sins. He also made a public confession of all the sins of his life in that same judgment-hall, weeping so bitterly that all present wept with him. He was beheaded, and buried with but little ceremony, in a grave dug nearby. But afterwards the mother of God appeared, with four holy virgins, who took the dead body from that place, wrapped it in a rich cloth embroidered with gold, and bore it themselves to the gate of the city; there the blessed Virgin said to the guards: "Tell the bishop from me, to give an honorable burial, in such a church, to this dead person, for he was my faithful servant." And this was [688] done. All the people of the place thronged to the spot, where they found the corpse with the rich pall, and the bier on which it was placed. And from that time, says Cesarius, all persons in that region began to fast on Saturdays.

11. A devout servant of Mary, who lived in Portugal, fasted on bread and water every Saturday of his life, in honor of Mary, and chose for his advocates with the blessed Virgin, St. Michael and St. John the Evangelist. At the hour of his death the queen of heaven appeared to him, with those saints, who were praying for him, and the holy Virgin, looking upon her servant with a joyful countenance, said to those saints: "I will not depart from here without taking this soul with me."

12. In one of our missions, after the sermon on Mary which it is our custom to preach, a very old man came to one of the Fathers of our

congregation, to make his confession. He was full of consolation, and said : "Our Lady has done me a favor." "And what favor has she done you?" asked the confessor. "For thirty-five years, Father, I have made sacrilegious confessions, because I was ashamed of one sin, and yet I have passed through many dangers, and have been several times at the point of death, and if I had died then I certainly would have been lost; and now our Lady has done me the favor to touch my heart;" and when he said this he wept so bitterly, that he seemed to be all tenderness. After the Father had heard his confession, [689] he asked him what devotion he had practiced, and he answered that he had never failed on Saturday to keep a strict fast in honor of Mary, and therefore the Virgin had taken pity on him, and he gave the Father permission to publish the fact in his sermons.

13. In the country of Normandy a certain robber was beheaded, and his head was thrown into a trench; but afterwards it was heard crying: "Mary, give me confession." A priest went to him and heard his confession; and questioning him as to his practices of devotion, the robber answered that he had no other except that of fasting one day of the week in honor of the holy Virgin, and that for this our Lady had obtained for him the grace to be delivered from hell by that confession.

14. There were two young noblemen living in the city of Madrid who encouraged each other in their sinful life. One of them saw one night, in a dream, his companion seized by some Moors and carried to the shore of a stormy sea. They were about to do the same with him, but he had recourse to Mary, and made a vow that he would become a religious at once, and thus

he was rescued from these Moors; then he saw Jesus seated on a throne, and as if in anger, and the holy Virgin supplicating and obtaining mercy for him. When his friend came to visit him he related to him the vision, but he laughed at it; and shortly after was stabbed with a dagger and died. When the other youth saw the [690] vision verified he made his confession, and was strengthened in his resolution of becoming a religious. In view of that, he sold all that he had, but instead of giving the money to the poor, as he had intended, he spent it all in debauchery. He afterwards fell ill, and had another vision; he thought he saw hell opened and the divine Judge in the act of condemning him. Again he had recourse to Mary, and Mary again delivered him. He was restored to health and led a worse life than before. He went to Lima, in South America, where he fell ill, and in the hospital of that place was again touched by the grace of God. He confessed to Father Francis Perlino, a Jesuit, to whom he promised to change his life, but went back to his evil courses. At length the same Father, visiting one day another hospital in a distant place, saw that wretched man extended on the earth, and heard him exclaim: "Ah, I am lost; and for my greater torment this Father has come here to witness my punishment. I came here from Lima, and am brought to this end by my vices, and now I am going to hell." With these words on his lips he died, before the Father had time to give him any assistance.

15. There was once in Germany a certain criminal condemned to death; but he was obstinate and refused to make his confession, though a Jesuit father did his utmost to convert him. He entreated him, he wept, he cast himself at his feet; but seeing that all was in

[691] vain, he finally said: "Let us recite a Hail Mary." No sooner had the criminal recited it than he began to cry bitterly, made his confession with much compunction, and wished to die clasping the image of Mary.¹

16. In a city of Spain there lived a sinful man who had given himself to the devil, and had never been to confession. He did nothing good but say a "Hail Mary" every day. Father Eusebius Nierembergh relates that when this man was at the point of death the most holy Virgin appeared to him in a dream and looked on him; her kind eyes so changed him that he immediately sent for a confessor, made his confession with a voice broken by sobs, made a vow to become a religious if he should live, and then died.

17. A devout servant of Mary always inculcated it upon her daughter that she should often recite the "Hail Mary," especially when she was in any danger. One day when this girl was resting after a ball, she was attacked by a demon, who in a visible form, bore her off with him. He had already seized her, but she began "Hail Mary," and the enemy disappeared.

18. A woman of Cologne who had criminal intercourse with an ecclesiastic, found him one day hanging in her room dead. After this she entered into a monastery, where the devil assailed her in a bodily form, so that she knew not what to do in order to be delivered from him. A companion suggested to her to say the "Hail Mary;" and when she did so the demon said: "Accursed may she be who has taught you this," and appeared no more.

19. A certain baron who led a very sinful life was accidentally visited in his castle by a re-

religious, who, enlightened by God, begged him to assemble together all his servants. They all came except the chamberlain. He at last was forced to come in, and the Father said to him: "Now, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to tell who you are." And he answered: "I am a devil from hell, who for fourteen years have served this villain, waiting until some day he should omit those seven "Hail Marys" which he is in the habit of reciting, that I might then strangle him and take him to the flames of hell." The religious then commanded the devil to depart. He obeyed, and disappeared. The baron then threw himself at his feet, was converted, and led a holy life.²

20. The blessed Francis Patrizii, who greatly loved the devotion of the "Hail Marys," recited five hundred every day. Mary made known to him the hour of his death. He died as a saint; and after forty years a most beautiful lily sprung from his mouth, which was then transported into France, and on the leaves of it was written the "Hail Mary," in letters of gold.

21. Cesarius relates that a Cistercian lay-brother could say no other prayer but the "Hail [698] Mary," and recited it continually with the greatest devotion. After his death there sprung up from the place where he was buried a tree, on whose leaves were written these words: Hail Mary, full of grace: "*Ave Maria, gratia plena.*"

22. Three devout virgins, by the advice of their confessor, recited one year, for forty days, the whole Rosary, as a preparation for the feast of the purification of Mary. On the vigil the heavenly mother appeared to the first of these three sisters with a rich garment, embroidered with gold, thanked her, and blessed her. Then she ap-

peared to the second with a simple garment, and also thanked her. But she said to her: "Oh Lady, why have you brought my sister a richer garment?" "Because she has clothed me," said Mary, "more richly than you have done." She afterwards appeared to the third with a canvas garment, and she at once asked pardon for her tepidity in honoring her. The next year all three fervently prepared for the same feast, saying the Rosary with great devotion, when behold, on the evening preceding the festival, Mary appeared to them in glory, and said to them: "Be prepared, for tomorrow you shall come to paradise." And, in fact, the next day they went to church, related to the confessor what had occurred, and received communion in the morning. At the hour of compline they saw again the most holy Virgin, who came to take them with her, and amid the songs of [694] angels, one after the other sweetly expired.

23. Father Crasset relates that a certain military officer told him, that after a battle he found a soldier on the battle-ground who held in his hand a Rosary and the scapular of Mary, and asked for a confessor. His forehead had been pierced by a musket-ball, which had passed through the head and came out behind, so that the brain was visible and protruded through each opening, and he could not live without a miracle. He however raised himself, made his confession to the chaplain with great compunction, and after receiving absolution, expired.

24. The same author adds that this very captain told him of being present when a trumpeter of his company received a pistol-shot from some one near, and when he examined his breast where he said that he had been hit, he found that the ball had been stopped by the scapular

of the Virgin, which the man wore, and that it had not even touched the flesh. He took it and exhibited it to the whole company.

25. A noble youth, named Eschylus, being sent by the prince, his father, to Hildesheim, a city of Saxony, to study, abandoned himself to a dissolute life. He fell ill, and was near dying, and while in that state he had a vision. He saw himself shut up in a furnace of fire, and believed himself to be already in hell; and then he escaped from it through a hole and took refuge in a great place, where he found the most holy Mary [695] in the hall, and she said to him: "Rash man, do you dare to appear before me? Depart from here and go to the flames which you merit." The young man besought the Virgin to have mercy on him, and then turned to some persons who were near, and implored them to recommend him to Mary. They did so, and the heavenly mother answered: "You do not know the sinful life he has led, and that he had not even thought of saying a Hail Mary in my honor." But his advocates answered: "Oh Lady, he will change his life;" and the youth added: "Yes, I promise really to amend, and I will be your servant." Then the Virgin's anger was appeased, and she said to him: "Well, I accept your promise, be faithful to me, and meanwhile with my blessing, be delivered from hell and death." When she had said this, the Virgin disappeared. Eschylus came to himself, and blessing Mary, related to others the grace he had received. He led ever after a holy life, always preserving a great affection towards the blessed Virgin, and was made Archbishop of the Church of Lude, in Denmark, where he converted many to the faith. Towards the close of his life, being old, he resigned the archbishopric and became a monk of Clairvaux,

where he lived four years, and died a holy death. Hence he has been numbered by some writers among the saints of the Cistercian order.

26. A member of the brothers of the confraternity of Mary was invited one morning by [696] a friend to dine with him. He promised to go but went first to the meeting of the confraternity, and after that he forgot his promise. His friend was so much offended by this, that one day when he met him he attempted to kill him; but, by a just judgment of God, he killed himself. His friend was immediately taken before the court, found guilty of the murder, and was condemned to death. He recommended himself to the Virgin, and, inspired by her, begged to be led into the presence of the dead body, and then asked him how he had died. He confessed that he died by his own hands, and his friend was set at liberty.

27. In the year 1604, at Dola, a member of the same confraternity was very ill. On a feast-day he said to himself: "At this hour my brothers are assembled and occupied in praising Mary, and am I here"? He rose from his bed and went to the assembly, when suddenly the fever left him, and he was restored to health.

28. A fisherman, belonging to the same confraternity in Naples, had been ill for several days through the severe discipline he had practised in the meeting of the confraternity. Being somewhat better, as he was poor and had a family, he returned to his fishing, saying to the most holy Virgin: "Oh, my Lady, for you I have suffered this evil, do help me;" and our blessed Lady allowed him to take as many fish as he would have taken in all the time he had lost.

[697] 29. Another member was going to be imprisoned for debt; he recommended himself to Mary, and the most holy Virgin inspired his creditors to release him from his debt, and so they did.

30. A young man who had been a member of the confraternity of the Virgin, left it, and abandoned himself to a dissolute life. One night the devil appeared to him in a frightful form. He began to invoke the blessed Virgin. "In vain," said his enemy to him, "do you invoke her whom you have abandoned; your sins have made you mine." The youth in terror fell on his knees, and began to recite the formula of the brothers: "Oh most holy Virgin mother," etc. Then the mother of God appeared to him, at whose presence the demon fled, leaving behind him a great stench, and an opening in the wall. And Mary then turned to the youth, and said: "You did not merit my help, but I wish to take pity on you, that you may change, and return to the confraternity."

31. In Braganza there lived another youth who left the confraternity and abandoned himself to such vicious ways, that one day in despair he was going to throw himself into a river. But first he turned to our Lady and said: "Oh Mary, I have served you in the confraternity, will you help me?" The most holy Virgin appeared to him and said: "What are you doing? Do you wish to destroy both soul and body? Go, make your confession, and return to the confraternity." [698] The youth, encouraged by this, thanked the Virgin, and amended his life.

32. There was once a religious in Spain, who in a fit of passion killed his superior. After committing this crime he fled into Barbary,

where he renounced his faith and married, leading afterwards so bad a life that he did nothing good but say a "Hail, Holy Queen," daily. One day, being alone, he repeated this devotion, and behold Mary appeared to him, rebuked him, and encouraged him to amend his life, promising him her assistance. He then returned to his house, and was so sorrowful that his wife questioned him as to the cause, and he in tears told her his condition, and the vision he had seen. She took compassion on him, gave him money to enable him to return to his own country, and also consented that he should take one of their children with him. He returned to the monastery, where he shed so many tears of compunction that he was again received, together with his son. He persevered in his holy life, and died with the reputation of a saint.

33. A pupil had been instructed by his master to salute the most holy Virgin in these words: "Hail, oh mother of mercy." When he was at the point of death Mary appeared to him, and said: "My son, do you not know me? I am that mother of mercy whom you have saluted so many times." Then this servant of the Virgin extended his arms as if to follow her, and gently breathed his last.

[699] 34. There was once a sinner who was so abandoned, that he practiced no other devotion than that of reciting daily "To your patronage...", "*Sub tuum presidium...*" The Virgin one day so greatly enlightened him, that he abandoned his sins, entered religion, led for fifty years an exemplary life, and thus died.

35. In the year 1610, there lived in Turin an obstinate heretic, who even on his death-bed would not be converted by all that was said to

him by the various priests who were with him for eight successive days. At length one of them, almost by force, brought him to have recourse to Mary, with these words: Mother of Jesus, help me: "*Mater Jesu, assiste mihi.*" And the heretic, as if awakened from sleep, exclaimed, "I will die a Catholic;" and indeed he became reconciled to the Church, and died in two hours.

36. Another infidel, who was living in India, was about to die, abandoned by all, but as he had heard the Christians so much extol the power of Mary, he had recourse to her, and the blessed Virgin appeared to him, and said: "Behold I am she whom you invoke; become a Christian." He was immediately restored to health, and baptized, and many were converted by the prodigy.

37. There lived in Madrid, in the year 1610, a very devout servant of Mary, who had a special devotion to an image of her called "Mary of Antioch." He married a woman, who through suspicion and jealousy left him no rest. Every [700] Saturday he went barefoot, and early in the morning, to visit that image; but his wife, who suspected him of going elsewhere, once in particular, attacked him so violently, that blinded by impatience, he took a rope and hung himself. But just as his soul was departing, when he could no more help himself, he invoked the help of Mary; and behold a most beautiful lady appeared, who approached him and cut the rope. The people without saw this, and then he narrated the fact. By this the wife was so filled with compunction, that ever afterwards they lived in peace, and devoted to the heavenly mother.

38. Another person, of Valentia, in 1613, committed a great crime, which he was ashamed to confess, and therefore made sacrilegious con-

fessions. But, being troubled with great remorse of conscience, he went one day to visit the altar of Our Lady of Halle, that he might obtain relief. When he arrived at the door of the church, which stood open, he felt himself thrust back by an invisible power. Then he determined to make his confession, and immediately entered. After making a general confession, he went home entirely consoled.

39. The blessed Adam, a Cistercian, went one evening to visit an altar of the most blessed Virgin in a church; but finding the doors closed, he knelt outside to make his devotions. He was hardly on his knees when he saw the door opening of itself, and he entered. There he beheld the [701] Queen of Heaven, in the midst of great splendor, and she said to him: "Adam, approach; do you know who I am?" Adam answered: "No, Lady; who are you?" "I am," she said, "the mother of God. Know, that as a reward for your devotion to me, I will always take care of you." And then she placed her blessed hand upon his head, and cured him of the great pain he was suffering there.

40. A servant of Mary went one day to visit a church of our blessed Lady, without the knowledge of her husband, and she was prevented by a severe storm from returning that night to her own house. She felt a great fear lest her husband should be very angry with her ; but she recommended herself to Mary, and when she returned home, her husband was very kind and gracious to her. Upon questioning him, she found that the evening before, the heavenly mother had taken her form, and attended to all the little affairs of the household like a servant. She then related the occurrence to her husband, and they both afterwards practiced great devotion to the

blessed Virgin.

41. A certain cavalier, of the city of Doul, in France, named Ansaldo, received in the battle a wound from an arrow, which entered so deep into the jaw-bone, that it was not possible to extract the iron. After four years of suffering, the afflicted man could endure the pain no longer, and being besides very ill, he thought he would again try to have the iron extracted. He [702] recommended himself to the blessed Virgin, and made a vow to visit every year a sacred image of her which was in that place, and make an offering of a certain sum of money upon her altar if she granted this request. He had no sooner made the vow than the iron, without being touched, fell into his mouth. The next day, ill as he was, he went to visit the image, and scarcely had he placed the promised gift upon the altar, when he felt himself entirely restored to health.

42. There was once a Spaniard who held sinful intercourse with a relative. A devout virgin, while she was at prayer, saw Jesus on his throne, who was on the point of sending that criminal to hell; but his holy mother obtained thirty days grace for him, because he once had honored her. By the command of the heavenly mother herself, his female companion told the whole to her confessor, who made it known to the young man, and he at once made his confession, with many tears and promises of amendment. But because he did not remove the temptation from him, he fell again into sin, went again to confession, again made a resolution, and again relapsed. As he did not go to see the Father again, the Father went to his house to find him, but was very rudely dismissed. The last of the thirty days had arrived, the Father went to the

house again, but in vain ; he desired the servant, however, to give him notice if there was any accident; and indeed at night that miserable sinner [703] was attacked with violent pains. The Father was called, and endeavored to relieve him, but the unhappy man exclaimed : "My heart has been pierced with a lance, and I am dying. Then giving a groan of despair, he expired.

43. There lived once in Milan a man named Masaccio, so addicted to gambling, that one day he lost at play the very clothes he wore. In a violent rage at his loss, he took a knife and struck an image of the blessed Virgin, and blood burst forth from it into his face. He was so much moved that he burst into tears, and offered thanks to the Virgin that she had obtained for him time for repentance. He afterwards entered a Cistercian monastery, and led such a holy life that he even received the gift of prophecy; after being forty years a religious, he died a holy death.

44. A very sinful man, once kneeling in tears at the foot of the cross, prayed that he might receive a sign of pardon. But when he found that his prayer was not granted, he turned to an image of the sorrowful Mary, who then appeared to him, and he saw her present his tears to her Son, saying: My Son, shall these tears be lost? "*Fili, istae lacrymae peribunt?*" And then he was given to understand that Christ had already pardoned him, and from that time he led a holy life.

45. A man of advanced age, during one of our missions, after the usual sermon on the powerful [704] intercession of Mary, which it is our custom always to preach in the missions, came to make his confession to one of our Fathers, named

Father Cesar Sportelli, who lately died in the fame of sanctity, and was found uncorrupted many months after his death. Kneeling at the feet of his confessor, he said: "Father, our Lady has had pity on me." "This is her office," answered the Father. "But you cannot give me absolution," said the other, "for I have never made my confession." And, in fact, although he was a Catholic, he had never made his confession. The Father encouraged him, heard his confession, and gave him absolution with great consolation.

46. The blessed Bernard Tolomeo, founder of the Olivetan Fathers, who, from his childhood, had a great devotion to Mary, was one day greatly tormented in his hermitage at Accona, called Mt. Olivet, with the fear that he would not be saved, and that God had not yet pardoned him; but the heavenly mother appeared to him, and said: "What do you fear, my son? Take courage; God has already pardoned you, and is pleased with the life you lead; go on, and I will help and save you." The blessed religious continued to lead a holy life till he died a happy death in the arms of Mary.

47. There lived in Germany a young girl, called Agnes, who had been guilty of incest in the first degree. She fled into a desert, and there gave birth to a child. The devil, in the form of [705] a religious, appeared to her, and persuaded her to throw the child into a pond. But afterwards, when he proposed to her to throw herself in also, she said: "Mary, help me," and the devil disappeared.¹

48. A soldier once made a compact with the devil, that he would sell his wife to him for a certain sum of money. He was taking her to a

wood to fulfil his promise, when he passed before a church dedicated to the Virgin. His wife begged him to allow her to pay her devotion to Mary in that church; but as she entered it, Mary came forth from it, and taking the form of the woman, accompanied the husband. When they reached the wood, the demon said to the man: "Traitor, why have you brought me, instead of your wife, my enemy, the mother of God?" "And you," said Mary, "how have you dared to think of injuring my servant? Go, flee to hell." And then turning to the man, she said: "Amend your life, and I will aid you." She disappeared, and that wretched man repented, and amended his life.

49. A very sinful woman who lived in Mexico, having fallen ill, repented of her life, and made a vow to Mary, that if she would restore her to health she would present her with her hair. She was cured, and she cut off her hair, making an offering of it to the statue of the Virgin. But the woman again fell into sin, again fell ill, and died impenitent. Then Mary [706] one day afterwards spoke from that statue to Father Giaramaria Salvaterra, and said: Take those locks from my head, for they belong to a lost and sinful soul, and are not befitting the head of the mother of purity. The Father obeyed her, and threw them himself instantly into the flames.¹

50. A Saracen, named Petran, made captive several Christians in Spain, who recommended themselves to the holy Virgin. Mary appeared to the Saracen, and said to him: "Petran, how dare you to hold my servants slaves? Release them immediately - obey." And the Moor answered: "Who are you whom I am to obey?" "I am," said she, "the mother of God; and

because they have had recourse to me, I wish you to give them their liberty." Then the heart of Petran was changed, he set the Christians free, and presented himself to the Virgin. She first instructed him, and then she herself baptized him in a fountain, near which a church was built, and a Benedictine monastery.

51. A certain canon, while he was repeating some devotions in honor of the heavenly mother, fell into the river Seine and was drowned, and being in mortal sin, the devils came to take him to hell. But Mary appeared at the same time, and said to them: "How have you dared to take possession of one who died praising me?" Then turning to the sinner, she said: "Repent, and be particularly devout to my Conception." [707] He was restored to life, became a religious, and never ceased to thank his deliverer, and everywhere to propagate the devotion to her immaculate Conception.

52. Whilst the monks of Clairvaux were reaping in the fields, and praising the queen of heaven, most holy Mary was seen caressing them, and two other saints wiping their sweat.

53. The brother of the King of Hungary recited every day the office of Mary. Once when he was very ill, he made a vow of chastity to the Virgin, if she would restore him to health: and he immediately recovered. But his brother having died, he was about to be married, and just as the nuptials were to be celebrated, he retired apart to recite his accustomed office. When he came to the words: Thou art fair and comely, etc. : "*Quam pulchra es et decora,*" etc., he saw Mary, who said to him: "If I am fair as you say, why do you leave me for another spouse? Know, that if you leave her, you shall

have me for a spouse, and the kingdom of heaven instead of the kingdom of Hungary." After this the prince withdrew into a desert near Aquileia, where he lived a holy life.

54. St. John Climacus relates that there was a devout religious, named Carcerio, who was accustomed often to repeat little songs in praise of Mary, and always saluted her images with a "Hail Mary." He was once afflicted with so painful a malady, that in the paroxysms of his [708] suffering he bit his lips and tongue. He lost his speech, and was at the point of death. While the religious were recommending his soul to God, the mother of God appeared to him and said: "I have come to cure you, for I do not wish that mouth should suffer with which you have so often praised me. Arise, you are healed, continue to praise me. Having said this, she sprinkled him with some drops of her milk, and immediately he was cured, and never ceased to praise her, until, visited again by his Lady at his death, he sweetly expired in her arms.

55. When St. Francis Borgia was in Rome, an ecclesiastic came to speak with him; but the saint being much occupied, sent Father Acosta to him. The ecclesiastic said to him: "Father, I am a priest and a preacher, but I live in sin, and distrust the divine mercy. After preaching a sermon one day against the obstinate, who afterwards despair of pardon, a person came to me to make his confession, who narrated to me all my sins, and at length told me that he despaired of the divine mercy. In order to do my duty, I told him that he must change his life, and trust in God; then that penitent rose to his feet and reproached me, saying: And you, who preach thus to others, why do you not amend, and why do you distrust? Know,

said he, that I am an angel come to your aid; amend and you will be pardoned. And when he had said this he disappeared. I abstained for several days from my sinful practices, but when [709] temptation came I again returned to my sins. On another day, as I was celebrating Mass, Jesus Christ sensibly spoke to me from the host, and said: 'Why do you thus maltreat me, when I treat you so well?' After this I resolved to amend, but at the next temptation fell again into sin. A few hours ago, a youth came to me in my apartment, and drew from under his mantle a chalice, and from this a consecrated host, saying: 'Do you know this Lord whom I hold in my hand? Do you remember how many favors he has done you? Now behold the punishment of your ingratitude', and saying this he drew a sword to kill me. I then cried: 'For the love of Mary do not kill me, for I will indeed amend'. And then he said: 'This was the only thing that could save you: make a good use of this grace, for this is the last mercy for you'. When he had said this he left me, and I came immediately here, praying you to receive me among you." Father Acosta consoled him, and the priest, by the advice also of St. Francis, entered another order of strict observance, where he persevered in holiness till his death.

56. In the year 1228, while a priest was celebrating Mass on a Saturday, in honor of the most holy Mary, some Albigensian heretics came and cruelly cut out his tongue. In this condition he went to the monastery of Cluny, where the good religious received him with much charity, greatly compassionating the suffering he endured from the loss of his tongue. But what [710] caused the greatest suffering to this devout priest was that he could no longer say Mass and recite the divine office, and that of the blessed

Virgin, as he had been accustomed to do. The feast of Epiphany having arrived, he begged to be carried into the church, and before the altar of the holy Virgin prayed her to restore the tongue which he had lost through love of her, that he might sing her praises as he did before. Then Mary appeared to him with a tongue in her hand, and said to him: "Since you have lost the tongue for the faith, and for the honor you have paid me, I give you in return a new one." Having said this, with her own hands she placed the tongue in his mouth, and immediately the priest, raising his voice, recited the "Hail Mary." The religious quickly assembled, and the priest wished to remain with them, and to become himself a religious, that there he might always praise his benefactress. The mark of the scar was always seen on his tongue.

57. It was in 589 that the famous plague prevailed in Rome, when men were attacked with sneezing, and fell down dead. St. Gregory the Great, when he was carrying in procession through the city an image belonging to the church of St. Mary Major, in the place now called the Castle of St. Angelo, saw an angel in the air, who was replacing in its scabbard a sword dripping with blood. Then he heard the angels singing: Oh, Queen of heaven rejoice, Alleluia; for he whom you didst deserve to bear, Alleluia, is risen again, [711] as he said, Alleluia: "*Regina coeli, laetare, Alleluia; quia quærm meruisti portare, Alleluia; resurrexit, sicut dixit, Alleluia.*" And St. Gregory responded: "*Ora pro nobis Deum, Alleluia.*" Immediately the plague ceased, and they then began to celebrate the greater Litanies every year on the 25th of April.

58. A city of France, called Avignon, was once besieged by enemies. The citizens prayed

to Mary to defend them, and placed an image of her which they had taken from the church, at the gate of the city. One of the citizens having concealed himself behind the image, a soldier shot an arrow at him, saying: "This image shall not save you from death." But the image presented her knee, and the arrow remained fixed in it, and may be seen there even to this day; and thus she saved the life of her servant. And the enemy, moved by this prodigy, raised the siege.

59. There was in Naples a Moor, a slave of Don Octavius del Monaco, who, although he had often been exhorted to leave his Mahometan sect, remained obstinate, but yet never failed every evening to keep lighted, at his own expense, a lamp before an image of Mary which was in the house. And he said: "I hope that this Lady will grant me some great favor." One night the blessed Virgin appeared to him and told him he must become a Christian. Still the Turk resisted, but she placed her hand upon his shoulder, and said to him: "Now no longer resist, Abel; [712] be baptized and called Joseph." In the morning he immediately went to be instructed, and was baptized August 10th, 1648, with eleven other Turks. Let it be observed that when the heavenly mother appeared to him, after she had converted him, she was about to depart, but the Moor seized her mantle, saying: "Oh Lady, when I find myself afflicted, I pray you to let me see you." In fact she one day promised him this, and when he was in affliction he invoked her, and Mary appeared again to him, saying: "Have patience," and he was consoled.

60. A certain parish priest of Asella, named Baldwin, became a Dominican, and when he was in his novitiate there came to him the temptation that he could do greater good in the

world in his parish, and he resolved to return. But going to take his leave of the altar of the Rosary, Mary appeared to him with two vessels of wine ; she gave him to drink of the first, but the novice had hardly tasted it, when he turned away his mouth, for although the wine was good, yet it was full of dregs ; the second he pronounced good, and free from dregs : "Now," said the most holy Virgin, "there is the same difference between the life in the world, and the life in religion, which is under obedience." Baldwin persevered, and died a good religious.

61. Another novice, also overcome by temptation, was about to leave his monastery, but stopping to say a "Hail Mary" before an image [713] of the Virgin, he felt himself nailed, as it were, to the floor, from which he could not rise. He repented, and made a vow of persevering. He then recovered his liberty, asked pardon of the master of novices, and persevered.

62. The blessed Clement, a Franciscan, one morning delayed going to the common table, that he might stop and recite certain accustomed devotions to the most holy Virgin; but she spoke from her image, and directed him to go with the others, because obedience pleased her more than all other devotions.

63. While Angela, a daughter of the King of Bohemia, was in a monastery, Mary appeared to her, and an angel said to her: "Arise, Angela, and fly to Jerusalem, for your father wishes to give you in marriage to the prince of Hungary." The devout virgin immediately set on her journey, and again the heavenly mother appeared to her and encouraged her to continue her journey. She was received in Jerusalem among the Carmelites, and afterwards was commanded by the

blessed Virgin herself to return to her own country, where she lived a holy life till her death.

64. St. Gregory relates that there was a young woman named Musa, who had great devotion to the mother of God; but being, through the evil example of her companions, in danger of losing her innocence, one day Mary appeared to her with many saints, and said to her: "Musa, [714] do you too wish to be one of these? " Musa answered, "Yes;" and Mary added: "Withdraw from your companions, and prepare, for in one month from now you shall come with me." Musa retired from her companions, and related the vision. On the thirtieth day she was at the point of death, and the most holy Virgin again appeared to her and called her. She answered: "Behold, Lady, I come," and sweetly expired.

65. Anna Caterina Gonzaga was married to Ferdinand I, Archduke of Austria, but her husband dying, she entered the religious order of the Servites, and had a crown made, on the globes of which were carved the sorrows of the Virgin. She said that for this crown she renounced all the other crowns of earth; and, in fact, refused marriage with the Emperor Rodolph II. When she heard that her younger sister had been crowned empress, she said: "Let my sister enjoy her imperial crown; for these garments with which Mary my queen has clothed me are to me a thousand-fold dearer." The most holy Virgin appeared to her many times during her life, and at last this good religious died a holy death.

66. A young clerical student playing one day at ball with other young men, and fearing he should lose a ring in his play, which had been given him by a lady, he placed it on the finger

of an image of Mary which was near; and he immediately felt impelled to make a promise to the Virgin to quit the world and choose her for his spouse. He made the promise, and Mary [715] pressed his finger in token that she accepted it. But after some time he wished to marry another, and Mary appeared to him and reproached him for his infidelity; wherefore he fled into a desert and led to the last a holy life.

67. About the year 850, Berengarius, Bishop of Verdun, in Lorraine, having entered a church where a certain priest named Bernerio was saying the office of Mary prostrate before the choir, stumbled against him, and in his vexation struck him with his foot. In the night the most holy Virgin appeared to him, and said: How is it that you struck with your foot my servant who was engaged in praising me? Because I love you," she added, "you must pay the penalty." Then his leg became withered, but he lived and died a saint; and after many years his body, except that leg, remained uncorrupted.

68. A young man who was left wealthy at the death of his parents, by play and dissipation with his friends, lost all that he had, but always preserved his chastity. An uncle, who found him reduced to such poverty by his vices, exhorted him to say every day a part of the Rosary, promising him that if he would persevere in this devotion he would procure for him a good marriage. The youth persevered, and having amended his life, he was married. On the evening of his nuptials he rose from the table to go and recite his Rosary, and when he had finished it, Mary appeared to him and said: Now I will reward you for the honor you have paid me: I do [716] not wish that you should lose your chastity; in three days you shall die, and shall come to me

in paradise. And this really happened, for immediately a fever attacked him. He related the vision, and on the third day died in perfect peace.

69. The devout author of the book in honor of the most holy Rosary, entitled, "The Secret of every Grace," relates that St. Vincent Ferrer once said to a man dying in despair: "Why will you ruin yourself when Jesus Christ wishes to save you?" And he answered, that in spite of Christ he would be damned. The saint replied: "And you, in spite of yourself, shall be saved." He began to recite the Rosary with the persons of the house, and behold, the sick man asked to make his confession, made it weeping, and then died.

70. The same author also relates that a poor woman, who was buried by an earthquake under the ruins of a house, was found alive and uninjured, with her children in her arms, by some persons who were employed by a priest to remove the stones. When she was asked what devotion she had practised, she said she had never failed to say the Rosary and visit a chapel of the most holy Mary.

71. He also relates that another woman who led a wicked life because she thought it the only means by which she could gain a livelihood was counseled to recommend herself to Mary by saying the Rosary; she did so, and behold one night [717] the Blessed Mother appeared and said to her: "Quit your sinful life: as for your support, trust in me, and I will think of that." The next morning she went to confession, and Mary most holy provided for her wants.

72. A person of impure life who had not the courage to quit his sins, began to say the Ro-

sary, and was delivered from his vices.

73. Another person who maintained a sinful friendship was seized with abhorrence of his sin by saying the Rosary. He yielded again to temptation, but by means of the Rosary finally freed himself from it.

74. A good priest who was attending a woman on her death-bed, who bitterly hated her husband, not knowing by what means to convert her, withdrew to say the Rosary, and at the last moment that woman saw her sinfulness, repented, and forgave her husband.

75. Finally, the same author relates, that once making a mission to the convicts in the galleys of Naples, he found some who obstinately refused to make their confession. He suggested to them that at least they should have themselves enrolled in the confraternity of the Rosary, and begin to recite it. They consented to do so, and they had no sooner recited one than they desired to make their confession, and did so, the first time for many years. These modern examples serve to revive our confidence in Mary, seeing that she is at the present time the same that she always has been towards those who have recourse to her.

[718] 76. St. Gregory relates (*Dial. Bk. 1, ch. 9*) that a holy Bishop of Ferento was from childhood devoted to relieving the poor. It happened one day that a certain priest, his nephew, sold a horse for ten crowns of gold, and took the money and locked it up. The bishop not having anything to give when some poor persons came to beg of him, broke open the chest and distributed the money to them. His nephew made such a disturbance when he discovered it, that the holy prelate, not

knowing what to do, went for help to a church dedicated to Mary. When behold, he saw ten crowns lying on the drapery of the statue; he took them and gave them to his nephew.

77. A Lutheran lady of Augsburg in Germany, who was a very obstinate heretic, happening to pass one day a small Catholic chapel, went in through curiosity. She saw there an image of Mary with the infant Jesus in her arms, and felt moved to make an offering to it. She accordingly went home, took a silk cloth, and brought it to the altar of the Virgin. When she had returned home the most holy Virgin enlightened her to see the errors of her sect, and she went immediately to seek some Catholics, abjured heresy, and was converted to God.

78. In the city of Cesena there lived two very bad men who were friends. One of them, named Bartholomew, in the midst of all his vices practised the devotion of reciting everyday the "Stabat Mater" in honor of the sorrowful Mary. Once when he was repeating this hymn [719] Bartholomew had a vision, in which he seemed to stand with his sinful companion in a lake of fire, and saw the most holy Virgin, moved to pity, offer her hand and take him from the flames. She directed him to seek pardon from Jesus Christ, who showed himself willing to pardon him through the prayers of his mother. The vision ended, and Bartholomew at the moment heard the report that his friend had been mortally wounded and was dead. Then he knew the truth of the vision, and quitting the world, entered the order of Capuchins, where he led a most austere life, and died in the fame of sanctity.

79. The blessed Jerome, founder of the Som-

maschian Fathers, being governor of a certain place, was taken by the enemy, and confined in the dungeon of a tower. He recommended himself to Mary, and made a vow to make a pilgrimage to Treviso in her honor, if she would rescue him. Then the most holy Virgin appeared to him surrounded by a great light, and with her own hands undid his chains, and gave him the keys of the prison. He fled from the prison, and, setting out for Treviso to fulfil his vow, he found himself immediately surrounded by the enemy. Again he had recourse to his deliverer, and she again appeared to him, took him by the hand, and led him safely through the midst of his enemies, accompanying him even to the gates of Treviso, where she disappeared. He made the visit, deposited his [720] chains at the foot of the altar of Mary, and then devoted himself to a holy life, by which he has merited recently to be ranked by the holy Church among the number of the blessed.

80. A priest who had a special devotion to the sorrows of Mary often remained alone in a chapel to commiserate the sorrows of his Lady, and, moved by compassion, was accustomed with a little cloth to wipe, as it were, the tears of a statue of the sorrowful Virgin which was in that place. Now this good priest, in a severe illness, when he was given up by his physicians, and was going to breathe his last, saw a beautiful lady by his side, who consoled him with her words, and with a handkerchief gently wiped the sweat from his brow, and with this cured him. When he found himself well, he said: "But, my Lady, who are you who practice such charity towards me?" "I am she," answered Mary, "whose tears you have so often dried," and she disappeared.

81. A noble lady, who had an only son, was informed one day that he was killed, and that his murderer had by chance taken refuge in her own palace; but when she called to mind that Mary pardoned the executioners of her Son, she wished also to pardon that criminal for love of the sorrowful Mary; and not only did she pardon him, but provided him with a horse, money, and clothes, that he might make his escape. Then her son appeared to her, and told her that he was saved, and that for her generous act [721] done towards his enemy, the heavenly mother had delivered him from purgatory, where he should otherwise have had to suffer for a long time, but that he was then already entering paradise.

82. The blessed Bionda performed a similar heroic act. Some enemies also killed her only son, though he was innocent, solely by reason of the hatred they bore to his father, who was dead; and with unheard-of cruelty gave the heart of the murdered youth to his mother to eat. Now she, according to the example of the most holy Mary, began to pray for her son's murderers, and to do them all the good she could. These acts so pleased the heavenly mother, that she called her to join the third order of the Servites, where she merited to lead so holy a life, that both before and after her death many miracles were performed through her.

83. St. Thomas of Canterbury, when he was a young man, found himself one day in conversation with several other youths, each of whom boasted of some foolish love affair. The holy youth declared that he, too, loved a great lady, and was beloved by her, meaning the most holy Virgin. Afterwards, he felt some remorse at having made this boast; but behold, Mary ap-

peared to him in his trouble, and with a gracious sweetness said to him: "Thomas, what do you fear? You had reason to say that you loved me, and that you are beloved by me. Assure your companions of this, and as a pledge of the [722] love I bear you, show them this gift that I make you." The gift was a small box, containing a chasuble, of a blood-red color, as a sign that Mary, for the love she bore him, had obtained for him the grace to be a priest and a martyr, which indeed happened, for he was first made priest and afterwards Bishop of Canterbury, in England, where he was at one time persecuted by the king, and fled to the Cistercian monastery at Pontignac, in France. While he was there, wishing one day to mend his hair-cloth shirt that he usually wore, which was ripped, and not being able to do it well, his beloved queen appeared to him, and, with especial kindness, took the hair-cloth from his hand, and repaired it as it should be done. After this he returned to Canterbury, and died a martyr, having been put to death on account of his zeal for the Church.

84. A young woman in the Papal States, who was very devout towards Mary, met in a certain place a chief of the bandits. Fearing some outrage, she implored him, for love of the most holy Virgin, not to molest her. "Do not fear," he answered, "for you have prayed me in the name of the mother of God; and I only ask you to recommend me to her." And, in fact, he accompanied her himself along the road to a place of safety. The following night Mary appeared in a dream to the bandit, and thanking him for the act he had performed for love of her, told him she would remember it, and would one day [723] reward him. The robber, at length, was arrested, and condemned to death; but behold, the night previous to his execution, the blessed Vir-

gin visited him again in a dream, and first asked him: "Do you know who I am?" He answered, "It seems to me I have seen you before." "I am the Virgin Mary," she continued, "who have come to reward you for what you have done for me. You will die tomorrow, but you will die with so much contrition that you will come at once to paradise." The convict awoke, and felt such contrition for his sins that he began to weep bitterly, all the while giving thanks aloud to our blessed Lady. He sent immediately for a confessor, to whom he made his confession with many tears, relating the vision he had seen, and begged him to make public this grace that had been bestowed on him by Mary. He went joyfully to execution, after which, as it is related, his countenance was so peaceful and happy, that all who saw him believed that the promise of the heavenly mother was fulfilled.

85. The blessed Joachim Piccolomini, who had a very great devotion to Mary, even from childhood, used to visit three times a day an image of the sorrowful mother, which was in a neighboring church, and abstained from all food on Saturday in her honor. Moreover, he rose at midnight to meditate upon her sorrows. But let us see how Mary rewarded him. At first she appeared to him when he was young, and directed him to enter into religion in the order [724] of her Servants, which he did. Towards the close of his life, she again appeared to him, with two crowns in her hand : one of rubies, as the reward of the compassion he had cherished for her sorrows; and the other of pearls, as the reward of his chastity which he had consecrated to her. Finally, at death she appeared to him again, when he asked of her the favor to die on the day on which Jesus Christ died, and the most holy Virgin consoled him by telling him : "Make

ready now, for tomorrow (Friday) you will die suddenly, as you desire, and tomorrow you shall be with me in paradise." And thus it happened, for while they were chanting in the church the passion according to St. John, at the words : There stood near the cross of Jesus his mother : "*Stabat juxta crucem Jesu mater ejus,*" he was attacked with the faintness of death; at the words : And bowing his head he gave up his spirit: "*Et inclinato capite tradidit spiritum,*" this blessed one also gave up his spirit to God; and at the same moment the church was filled with a great splendor, and a most sweet fragrance.

86. Father Alphonso Salmerone, of the Society of Jesus, being a most devout servant of the blessed Virgin, died saying : "To paradise, to paradise; blessed be the hour that I have served Mary! Blessed the sermons, the toils, the thoughts that I have had for you, oh my Lady! To paradise."

87. A youth named Guido, who wished to join [725] the order of Camaldoli, was presented to St. Romuald by the prince, his father, whose name was Farnulf. The holy founder received him with pleasure. One day Mary appeared to this good youth, her servant, with the infant Jesus in her arms. Esteeming himself unworthy of such a favor, he stood trembling, but the heavenly mother drawing near to him, said : "Why do you doubt? What do you fear, Guido? I am the mother of God, this is my son Jesus, who wishes to come to you;" and saying this, she placed him in his arms. Guido had not been three years in religion when he fell dangerously ill. St. Romuald saw the poor youth writhing and trembling, and heard him saying : "Oh Father, do you see all the Moors in this cell?" "My son," said the saint to him, "do you remem-

ber any thing you have not confessed?" "Yes, Father," he answered, " I remember having disobeyed the prior, by not picking up certain brooms, and now I confess it." St. Romuald absolved him, and then the scene changed; the devils fled, and the Virgin again appeared with Jesus, at the sight of whom Guido died in perfect peace.¹

88. A Cistercian nun in Toledo, called Mary, being at the point of death, the Blessed Mother appeared to her, and Mary said to her: "Oh Lady, the favor you do me of visiting me emboldens me to ask you another favor, namely, that I may die at the same hour that you died and entered into heaven. "Yes," answered [726] Mary. "I will satisfy you; you shall die at that hour, and you shall hear the songs and praises with which the blessed accompanied my entrance into heaven; and now prepare." When she had said this she disappeared. The religious who heard the nun talking to herself, believed her wandering in mind, but she related to them the vision, and the promised grace, and awaited the desired hour; and when she knew it had arrived, by the striking of the clock (the writer does not tell us what hour it was), she said: "Behold, the predicted hour has come; I hear the music of the angels; at this hour my queen ascended into heaven; rest in peace, for I am going now to see her;" and saying this she expired, while her eyes became bright as stars, and her face glowed with a beautiful color.

89. In the city of Sens, in France, there lived towards the eighth century St. Opportuna, the daughter of a prince of royal blood. This holy virgin, who had a great devotion to Mary, became a religious in a neighboring monastery, and being at the point of death, she saw St. Ce-

celia and St. Lucia standing beside her in the dawn of the morning. "My sisters, be welcome, she said to them; "what message do you bring me from my queen?" And they answered: "She is waiting for you in paradise." After this the devil appeared to her, and the saint boldly sent him away, saying: "Brute beast, what have you to do with me who am the servant of Jesus? " The hour of her death, which [727] she herself had predicted, having arrived, after receiving the holy viaticum, she turned towards the door, and said: "Behold the mother of God who comes to take me. Sisters, I commend you to her. Adieu, we shall see each other no more." Thus saying, she raised her arms, as if to embrace her Lady, and gently expired.

TWO OTHER STORIES

In India a young man who was just about to [559] leave his apartment in order to commit sin, heard a voice saying: "Stop, where are you going? He turned around and saw an image, in relief, of the sorrowful Mary, who drew out the sword which was in her breast, and said to him: "Take this dagger and pierce my heart rather than wound my Son with this sin." At the sound of these words the youth prostrated himself on the ground, and with deep contrition, bursting into tears, he asked and obtained from God and the Virgin pardon of his sin.

A young man in Perugia once promised the devil that if he would help him to commit a sinful act which he desired to do, he would give him his soul; and he gave him a writing to that effect, signed with his blood. The evil deed was committed, and the devil demanded the performance of the promise. He led the young man to

a well, and threatened to take him body and soul [576] to hell if he would not cast himself into it. The wretched youth, thinking that it would be impossible for him to escape from his enemy, climbed the well-side in order to cast himself into it, but terrified at the yought of death, he said to the devil that he had not the courage to throw himself in, and that, if he wished to see him dead, he himself should thrust him in. The young man wore about his neck the scapular of the sorrowing Mary; and the devil said to him: "Take off that scapular, and I will thrust you in." But the youth, seeing the protection which the Mother of God still gave him through that scapular, refused to take it off, and after a great deal of altercation, the devil departed in confusion. The sinner repented, and grateful to his sorrowful mother, went to thank her, and presented a picture of this case, as an offering, at her altar in the new church of Santa Maria, in Perugia.