

The Flight into Egypt

When Herod saw that the Kings did not return, he thought they had failed to find Jesus, and the whole affair seemed to be dying out. But after Mary's return to Nazareth, Herod heard of Simeon's and Anna's prophecies at the Presentation of the Child in the Temple, and his fears were reawakened. I saw him in as great disquietude as at the time of the Kings' stay in Jerusalem. He was conferring with some aged Jews who read to him from long rolls of writings mounted on rods. He had given orders for a number of men to be gathered together in a large court, and there

provided with weapons and uniforms. Things went on as they do with us when soldiers are recruited. I saw that he sent these troops to various places around Jerusalem, from which the mothers were to be summoned to the Holy City. He caused their numbers to be everywhere ascertained. He took these precautions in order to prevent the tumult that would necessarily follow if the news of the projected slaughter of the children was spread. I saw those soldiers in three different places, in Bethlehem, in Gilgal, and in Hebron. The inhabitants were in great consternation, because not able to divine why a garrison was placed in their towns. The soldiers remained about nine months in those places, and the murder of the little ones began when John was about two years old.

Anne and Mary Heli were still at the home of the Holy Family in Nazareth. Mary, with her Child, slept in the apartment to the right behind the fireplace; Anne, to the left; and between hers and that of St. Joseph, Mary Heli. These rooms were not so high as the house itself, and were cut off from one another only by wicker partitions. The ceiling also was of wickerwork. Mary's couch was surrounded by a curtain, or screen. At her feet, in His own little bed, lay the Infant Jesus within Mary's reach when she sat upright. I saw a radiant youth standing at the side of Joseph's couch and speaking to him. Joseph sat up, but overcome by sleep, again lay down. Then the youth caught him by the hand and raised him up. Joseph, now thoroughly aroused, stood up and the youth vanished. Then I saw Joseph going to the lamp that burned in the center of the house, and getting a light. He proceeded to Mary's chamber, knocked, and asked permission to enter. I saw him going in and



speaking to Mary who, however, did not open her screen. After this he went out to the stable for the ass, and returning, went into a room wherein were stored all kinds of household goods. He was getting things ready for a journey. Mary arose, quickly clothed herself for travelling, and went to arouse Anne, who got up at once along with Mary Heli and the little boy. I cannot express how touching was the trouble of Anne and the sister. Anne embraced Mary over and over again with many tears, clasping her to her heart as if she were never again to see her. The sister threw herself flat on the floor, and wept. Only just before setting out, did they take the Infant Jesus from His little bed. They all pressed the Child to their heart, and It was given to the little boy to embrace. Mary then took the Child upon her breast, resting It in a strip of stuff that fastened over her shoulders. A long mantle enveloped both Mother and Child, and Mary wore over her head a large veil, which hung down on both sides of her face. She made but few preparations for the journey, and all she did was done quietly and quickly. I did not see her even swathing the Child afresh. The holy travelers took only a few things with them, far fewer than they had brought from Bethlehem, only a little bundle and some coverings. Joseph had a leathern bottle filled with water and a basket with compartments in it, in which were loaves, little jugs, and live birds. There was a cross seat for Mary and the Child on the ass, also a little footboard. They went forward a short distance with Anne, for they took the road in the direction to her house, only somewhat more to the left. When Joseph approached with the ass, Anne again embraced and blessed Mary, who then mounted and rode off. It was not yet midnight when they left the house. The Child Jesus was twelve weeks old. I had seen three times four weeks.

I saw Mary Heli going to her mother's house in order to send Eliud with a servant to Nazareth, after which she returned with the boy to her own home.

I next saw Anne in Joseph's house packing everything up for Eliud and the servant to remove to her own house.

The Holy Family passed by many places that night, and not till morning did I see them resting under a shed and taking a little refreshment.

I saw them taking their first night's lodgings in the little village of Nazara, between Legio and Mas-saloth. The poor, oppressed people of this place who lodged the Holy Family were not, properly speaking, Jews. They had to go far over a mountainous road to Samaria to worship, for their temple was on Mt. Garizim, and they always had to work like slaves on the Temple of Jerusalem and other public buildings. The Holy Family could go no further. They were well received by these outcasts with whom they remained the whole of the following day. On their return from Egypt, they again visited those poor

people. They did the same both going and returning from the Temple the first time that the Child Jesus made the journey to it. The whole family at a later period was baptized by John, and they afterward joined the disciples of Jesus.

The Holy Family on their flight met only three inns at which to spend the night: here, at Nazara; again at Anim, or Enganim, among the camel dealers; and lastly, among the robbers. At other times, they rested during their tiresome wanderings in valleys and caves and the most out-of-the-way places. Further on from Nazara, I saw them hidden under the great pine tree near which Mary, on her journey to Bethlehem, had been so cold. The persecution of Herod was known in these parts and it was, consequently, unsafe for them. The Ark of the Covenant had once rested under this tree, when Joshua assembled the people and made them renounce their idols. Later, I saw the Holy Family by a well and balsam bush resting and refreshing themselves. The branches of the bush were notched, and out of them oozed the balsam in drops. The Child Jesus lay on Mary's lap, His little feet bare. To the left behind them, lay Jerusalem far up above the level of the country in which they then were.

When the Holy Family had passed the walls of Gaza, I saw them in the wilderness. No words can depict the difficulties of this journey. They always travelled a mile eastward of the ordinary highway and, as they shunned the public inns, they suffered the want of all necessaries. I saw them quite exhausted with not a drop of water (the little jug was empty) drawing near to a low bush some distance from the road. The Blessed Virgin alighted from the ass and sat down upon the dry grass. Suddenly there jetted high before them a spring of water, which spread over the plain. I witnessed their joy. Joseph dug a hole at a little distance, and led the ass to it. The poor beast gladly drank from it as it filled. Mary bathed the Child in the spring, and refreshed herself. The sun shone out beautifully for a short time, and the weary travelers were strengthened and full of grateful emotion. They tarried here for two or three hours. On the sixth night, I saw them in a cave near the mount and city of Ephraim. The cave was in a wild ravine, about one hour's distance from the grove of Mambre. I saw the Holy Family arrive, worn-out and dejected. Mary was very sad; she wept, for they were in want of everything. They rested here a whole day and many wonders were vouchsafed them for their refreshment. A spring gushed forth in the cave, a wild goat came running to them and allowed itself to be milked, and they were visibly consoled by an angel. One of the Prophets had often prayed in this cave. Samuel had once sojourned in it, David had guarded his father's sheep around it, and to it had often retired to pray. He had in this cave,

received through angels, the divine commands, among them that to slay
Goliath.

The last stopping place of the Holy Family in Herod's dominion was near its confines. The innkeepers appeared to be camel dealers, for I saw a number of camels in an enclosed pasture ground. The people were rude and wild, and they enriched themselves by thieving; still they received the Holy Family most graciously. This place was distant a couple of hours from the Dead Sea.

Once I saw Mary sending a messenger to Elizabeth, who then brought her child to a very concealed place in the desert. Zachary accompanied her only a part of the way. When they reached a certain body of water, Elizabeth and the child crossed over on a raft, while Zachary went on to Nazareth by the same route taken by Mary on her visit to Elizabeth. I saw him on his journey. Perhaps he was going to make some inquiries, for there were some friends at Nazareth distressed at Mary's departure.

On a starry night, I saw the Holy Family going through a sandy wilderness covered with low thick-ets. The scene was as vivid before me, as if I were really crossing the desert with them. Here and there under the copse wood, venomous snakes lay coiled. With loud hissing, they approached the path and darted their heads angrily toward the Holy Family. But they, shielded by the light that environed them, stepped securely along. I saw other animals with immense fins like wings on their blackish body, with short feet, and a head like that of a fish. They darted along, flying over the ground. At last, the Holy Family came behind the bushes to a deep fissure in the ground, like the walls of a narrow defile, and here they rested.

The last place in Judea by which they passed, had a name that sounded like Mara. I thought of Anne's ancestral place, but it was not it. The people were very rude and uncivilized, and the Holy Family could get nothing from them by way of refreshment.

Leaving this last place and scarcely knowing how to proceed, they pressed on through a desolate region. They could find no road, and a dark, pathless mountain-height stretched out before them. Mary was exhausted and very sad. She knelt with Joseph, the Child in her arms, and cried to God. And behold! Several large, wild beasts, like lions, came running around them, exhibiting friendly dispositions. I understood that they had been sent to show the way. They looked toward the mountain, ran thither and then turned back again, just like a dog that wants someone to follow it. At last the Holy Family followed them and, after crossing the mountain, arrived at a very dismal region.