

## The Holy House of Nazareth

The little house at Nazareth which Anne fitted up for Mary and Joseph, belonged to Anne. From her own dwelling, she could, unnoticed, reach it in about half an hour by a cross path. It lay not far from the gate. It had a small courtyard in front and nearby was a well, a couple of steps leading down to it. It was near a hill, but not built on it. A narrow path dug out of the hill separated it from the back of the house, in which there was one little window. It was darker on this side of the house than on the other. The back part was triangular and built on higher



ground than the front. The foundations were cut in the rock; the upper part was a light masonry. Mary's sleeping compartment was in the back, and there it was that the angelic Annunciation took place. This chamber had a semicircular form, on account of the movable partitions placed around the walls and which were of coarser wickerwork than that ordinarily used for the light screens. The patterns in which these screens were woven were similar to wafers, and the colors used were designed to bring the figures out. Mary's sleeping place was on the side just behind a wicker screen. On the left was a little closet with a small table and stool. This was the Blessed Virgin's oratory.

This back room was separated from the rest of the house by a fireplace, which consisted of a graded wall from whose center over the slightly raised hearth, a chimney rose up to the roof and ended in a tube above it. Over the opening through which the tube projected was built a little roof. On top of the chimney, I saw in after years two little bells hanging. To the right and left of the chimney and opening into Mary's rooms were doors up to which three steps led. In the chimney wall were all kinds of nooks in which stood the little vessels that I still see at Loretto. Behind was a rafter of cedar wood, upon which the wall of the chimney rested. From this upright rafter ran a crossbeam to the center of the back wall, and into this there were others dovetailed from the two side walls. These beams were of a bluish cast with yellow ornaments. Between them one could see up through the roof, which was hung with large leaves and matting, and in three places, namely in the three corners, adorned with stars. The star in the middle corner was large like the morning star. Later on the ceiling was adorned with numerous stars. Over the horizontal rafter, which extended from the chimney to the back of the wall, was an opening in the center for the window, and under this was

hung a lamp. There was a rafter under the chimney also. The roof was not high and pointed, but so level that one might walk around the edge. It was flat on top, and there rose the chimney with its tubes, protected by the little roof.

When after Joseph's death the Blessed Virgin removed to the neighborhood of Capharnaum, the Holy House was left beautifully adorned like a sacred shrine. Mary often went from Capharnaum to visit the scene of the Incarnation and to pray there. Peter and John, whenever they went to Palestine, visited the House of Nazareth and celebrated Mass in it. An altar was erected where the fireplace used to be. The little cupboard once used by Mary was placed as a tabernacle upon the altar.

I have often in vision witnessed the transporting of the Holy House to Loretto. For a long time, I could not believe it, and yet I continued to see it. I saw the Holy House borne over the sea by seven angels. It had no foundation, but there was under it a shining surface of light. On either side was something like a handle. Three angels carried it on one side and three on the other; the seventh hovered in front of it, a long train of light after him.

I remember that it was the back of the house, the part that contained the fireplace, the altar of the Apostles, and the little window, that was transported to Europe. It seems to me when I recall it that the rest of the building was in some danger of falling. I see in Loretto the Crucifix also that the Blessed Virgin had when in Ephesus. It was formed of different kinds of wood. Later on, it came into the possession of the Apostles. Many miracles take place before that Crucifix.

The wall of the Holy House of Loretto is entirely the original one. Even the rafter under the chimney is still in its place. The miraculous picture of the Mother of God stands on the altar of the Apostles.