

Return of the Holy Family to Nazareth

I saw the Holy Family returning to Nazareth by a much more direct route than that by which they had gone to Bethlehem. On their first journey, they had shunned the inhabited districts and seldom put up at an inn; but now they took the straight route, which was much shorter.

Joseph had in his cloak pocket some little rolls of thin, yellow, shining leaves on which were letters. He had received them from the Holy Kings. The shekels of Judas were thicker, and in the form of a tongue.

I saw the Holy Family arrive at Anne's, in Nazareth. The eldest sister of Mary, Mary Heli, with her daughter Mary Cleophas, a woman from Elizabeth's place, and that one of Anne's maids who had been with Mary in Bethlehem were there. A feast was held such as had been celebrated at the departure of the child Mary for the Temple. Lamps burned above the table, and there were some old priests present. Things went on quietly. Though there was great joy over the Child Jesus, yet it was a calm, inward joy. I have never seen much excitement among those holy souls. They partook of a slight repast, the women as usual eating apart from the men. I can remember no more of this vision, although I must have been present in a very real way, for I had to accomplish in it a work of prayer.

The early Christians. In Anne's garden, notwithstanding the season, I saw numbers of pears, plums, and other fruits still on the trees, although the leaves had already fallen.

I have always forgotten to say a word about the weather in Palestine during the winter season, because being so accustomed to it myself, I think that everyone else knows it, too. I often see rain and fog, and sometimes snow, but it soon melts away, and I see many trees upon which fruit is still hanging.

There are in the year several harvests, the first in what corresponds to our spring. In the present season, winter, I see the people on the roads wrapped up in mantles which are thrown over the head also. On the sacred night of Christmas, I always see everything green, blossoming, and full of flowers, the animals frolicsome, the vineyards laden with luscious grapes, and I hear the sweet caroling of birds; but immediately after, it is again quiet and just as it



usually is there at this season. The tree outside of Bethlehem and under which Mary stood while Joseph was seeking an inn was, as long as she remained under it, quite green. It afforded ample shelter. But when she left it, it resumed its wintry nakedness. This was perhaps only a mark of reverence; but the Blessed Virgin was fully conscious of it. The shepherd field was, however, already green at this season, for they watered it.

The road from Anne's house to Joseph's in Nazareth was about one half-hour's distance, and ran between gardens and hills. I saw Joseph at Anne's loading two asses with many different things, and going on before with Anne's maid to Nazareth. Mary followed with Anne, who carried the Child Jesus.

Mary and Joseph had no care of the housekeeping. They were provided with all things by Anne, who often went to see them. I saw her maid carrying provisions to them in two baskets, one on her head, the other in her hand. I saw the Blessed Virgin knitting, or crocheting little robes. To her right side was fastened a ball of wool and she had in her hands two short needles of bone, I think, with little hooks at the end; one was about half an ell long, the other shorter. The stitches were arranged on the needles above the hooks, over which in doing the work the thread was thrown, and the stitch thus formed. The finished web hung between the two needles. I saw Mary thus working, either standing or sitting by the Child Jesus, who lay in His little basket cradle.

I saw St. Joseph, out of long strips of bark—yellow, brown, and green—plating screens, large sur-faces, and covers for ceilings. He had a stock of this woven board-like work piled under a shed near the house. He wove into them all kinds of patterns, stars, hearts, etc. I thought as I looked at them that he had no idea how soon he would have to leave all.

I saw the Holy Family while at Nazareth visited also by Mary Heli. She came with St. Anne, bring-ing with her her grandson, a boy of about four years, the child of her daughter Mary Cleophas. I saw the holy women sitting together, caressing the Child Jesus, and laying It in the little boy's arms; they acted just as people do nowadays. Mary Heli lived in a little town about three hours east of Nazareth. She had a house almost as large as her mother's. It had a courtyard surrounded by a wall, and in it a well with a pump. On pressing with the foot at the base of the pump, the water flowed out into a stone basin before it. Mary Heli's husband was named Cleophas. Their daughter Mary Cleophas, who had married Alpheus, lived at the other end of the town.

That evening I saw the holy women praying together. They were standing in front of a little table, which was fastened to the wall and covered with red

and white. On it lay a roll which Mary unfolded and hung up on the wall. A figure was embroidered on it in pale colors; it was like a corpse entirely enveloped in a long, white mantle. It had something in its arms. I saw a picture like it at Anne's during the festival before Mary's departure for her Presentation in the Temple. A lamp was burning during their prayer. Mary stood a little in front of the table with Anne and Mary Heli on either side. At certain times, they crossed their hands upon their breast, folded them together, or stretched them forth. Mary read out of a roll that lay before her. They prayed in measured and steady tones; it reminded me of choir chanting.