

Christmas Narrative

December 23, 2017

The following highpoint from a narrative certainly suitable for Christmastide is placed in the mouth of the Mother of God as she re-enters the sacred cave in Bethlehem to describe to friends the human birth of God in the very place where it happened. It is a brave writer who undertakes to describe the scene, and to put words into the mouth of the Mother. Not all readers of these "Comments" may agree that this attempt has been successful. No matter. Other readers may find great delight in the scene, which truly happened, and must have happened in some such way, and for such readers it is presented here:—

"Mary gets to her feet again and enters the cave: "Everything is just like it was then. Only then it was night-time Joseph struck a light as I entered. Then and only then, getting down from the donkey, did I realise how tired and frozen cold I was. We were greeted by an ox. I went up to it to feel a little warmth, to rest on the hay . . . where I am standing now Joseph spread out the hay to make me a bed, and he dried it out for the two of us, Jesus and me, at the little fire in that corner . . . because my angelic husband had for us the love of a true father . . . and he and I, holding one another by the hands like two brothers lost in the dark of the night, we ate our bread and cheese, and then he went over there to look after the fire, taking off his coat to block the cave entrance Actually he was veiling the glory of God about to descend from the heavens. With Jesus I stood on the hay between the warmth of the two animals, wrapped up in my coat and the woollen blanket. My dear husband! . . . In that anxious moment for me, facing alone the mystery of giving birth for the first time, an unknown for any woman but heightened for me by the uniqueness of my motherhood, and heightened still further by the prospect of seeing the Son of

God emerge from mortal flesh, he, Joseph was like a mother to me, an angel . . . my comforter . . . then and always . . .

“And then silence and sleep came down to enwrap the Just Man . . . so that he should not see what was for me the daily embrace of God And for me began the boundless waves of ecstasy, rolling in from a sea of paradise, lifting me up again on crests of light, higher and higher, carrying me upwards, upwards, with them, in an ocean of light, more light, peace and love, until I found myself lost in the sea of God, of the bosom of God A voice still reached up to me from earth; “Are you asleep, Mary?” Oh, so far away! . . . A bare echo, calling from earth! . . . and so faint as hardly to touch the soul, and I have no idea what answer I give him while I climb, I am still climbing in the abyss of fire, of infinite bliss, of the foreknowledge of God . . . until it is God, God Himself Oh, was Jesus born of me, or was I born of the splendours of the Holy Trinity on that night? Was it I who gave Jesus birth, or was it Jesus that drew me up to give birth to me? I have no idea . . .

“And then the descent, from Choir to Choir of angels, from layer to layer of stars, a descent as gentle and slow and blissful and peaceful as that of a flower being carried on high by an eagle and then dropped, falling slowly on wings of air, glistening in a pearl of rain with the fragment of a rainbow stolen from heaven, and landing back on its native soil And my jewelled crown: Jesus, Jesus upon my heart . . .

“Seated over here, after adoring Him on my knees, I loved Him. At last I could love Him with no barrier of flesh coming between us, and from here I stood up to carry him over to be loved by the Just One who deserved like me to be among the first ones to love Him. And here between these two rustic pillars, I offered Him to the Father. And here He rested for the first time on Joseph’s heart I rocked Him on my breast while Joseph dried out the hay at the fire and kept it

warm to place it on the Baby's chest, and then over there, for the two of us to adore Him and bend over Him just as I am bending over now, to drink in His breath, to marvel at just how far God's love can stoop down to love men, to weep the tears certainly being wept in Heaven for the inexhaustible joy of gazing on God."

Kyrie eleison.