

Chapter Six—Holy Mother of God

Let us go back now to that night in March and see Mary kneeling in her little room in prayer. Her heart is full, fuller to-night than ever with the thought that fills it always. When, when will He come? Why does He delay so long? Oh, that He would rend the heavens and come down! Her lamp burns low as she prays on. How reverent she is, how still. Her strong prayer is moving God Himself.

See! See! in the midst of a dazzling light, not of this world, an Angel stands before her. He comes near, and, kneeling, salutes her: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou amongst women!"

What glorious praise, and from one so high and holy! For this is Gabriel, one of the seven who stand before God. How will she answer him? There is no answer. A blush, a troubled look is on her beautiful face as she thinks within herself what manner of salutation this may be. She knows we cannot always trust those who speak to us in words of praise, and surely such words as these are not for her. Is this a messenger from God? She will be silent till he speaks again.

The Angel sees her trouble and says: "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father, and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end."

See her listening, coming to understand that she, the little handmaid of the Lord, is to be the Mother of the Messiah. Does she break forth into words of thanksgiving and praise? No, she has a question to ask, for she is not sure yet what God wants. Long ago she promised to belong only to Him, to be His little handmaid or servant all her life. She does not know if she can do this and be the Mother of the Messiah as well, and she will not break her promise to God for anything. She is quite calm and mistress of herself. Gabriel has told her that her Son shall be the Son of the Most High, that of His Kingdom there shall be no end—and she is not excited or overjoyed. She knows from the prophecies that the Messiah is to be a Man of Sorrows, and that His Mother will have to share His pains—and she is not frightened. All she wants is to know the Will of God.

The great Archangel beholds her with profoundest admiration. There is no holiness in heaven to equal this. He thought he knew how far the love of God and forgetfulness of self can go, but the little Maiden of Nazareth has taken him by surprise. He understands now the full meaning of those reverent words which God Himself put upon his lips: "Hail, full of grace!" He bows lower before her—see how low!

This is he who in words of majesty rebuked the aged priest of the Temple. But in Mary's presence, what a difference! He speaks to her as to one far above him; he waits while she ponders what he has said; he solves her doubts; he waits for her reply.

When at length she is satisfied that it is God's Will she should be the Mother of the Messiah, and that He wants her consent, thinking neither of the dignity nor of the pain this

will bring upon her, she bows her head and says: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word."

And the Word was made Flesh and dwelt amongst us.

And the Angel returned to God who sent him; and all Heaven was made glad that night.