

THE HAIL MARY.

CATHOLIC ANECDOTES

CHAPTER IV.

THE ANGELICAL SALUTATION.

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I. - THE HAIL MARY AND THE ANGELUS.

507. *The "Hail Mary" Engraved on a Ring.* -

St. Edmus, or Edmund, who became Archbishop of Canterbury, in England, had been brought up with a great devotion to the Most Holy Virgin. When sending him to Paris to make his studies, his mother recommended to him to never let a day pass without having recourse to his divine protectress. That virtuous mother often wrote to him to avoid bad company, and to frequent the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist; often, too, she sent him instruments of penance, to repress, she said, the bad inclinations that might injure his virtue. The holy young man, docile to the counsels of his mother, always showed himself most zealous for the glory of the Virgin Mary. He went several times a day to prostrate himself before one of her statues, and to mark his engagement in the service of the Queen of Angels, he placed on the finger of one of her statues a ring; on which he had caused to be engraved the whole of the Angelical Salutation. You shall see how agreeable that devotion, so

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sincere and so persevering, was to the Blessed Virgin. After the death of the blessed Edmund, it was remarked that the same prayer was engraved on his episcopal ring, to which that prayer communicated a virtue so efficacious and so miraculous, that this ring was subsequently used to operate a great number of cures. It was sometimes sufficient to make the sick touch it and they were instantly cured. If we do not engrave the words of the *Hail Mary* on a ring, my dear friends, let us engrave them on our hearts, and that will be still better.

- NOEL, *Cat. Hist.*, III., 201.

508. *The "Hail Mary" Recited by an Impure Mouth.* -

One must be in a state of grace, my dear friends, to say his prayers well. At least, one must desire to be in a graced state. Hence, it is not fitting that the holy words of the *Hail Mary*, the *Ave Maria*, for instance, should pass through impure lips without, at least, the hope that the Blessed Virgin would obtain the grace of repentance and purity for the soul to whom the lips belong. It is with a heart free from sin that we ought to pray to the Blessed Virgin, who never committed the least fault. So we ought, I say. St. Peter Celestine relates that a certain military man was accustomed to address, every day, some prayers to the Blessed Virgin, although he was given up to all sorts of crimes. It was a custom he had from his mother, and from which he never departed. This praiseworthy custom was eventually to reap great and unexpected fruit, so I would urge each of you, dear children, to persevere in the good habits you have learnt from your your earthly mothers, as well as from holy Mother the Church. I would urge you to continue to pray, even when, may it never happen, other areas of your life fall short of the Christian standards. God is a good shepherd who longs for the return of the sinner like the good father longs for the return of the repentant prodigal son. One day, after a

bloody battle, having been obliged to fly, this soldier found himself alone in a desert, deprived of all assistance, and even on the point of dying with hunger. He took a notion to address himself to Mary, that she might come to help him in his extreme misery. The Blessed Virgin deigned to appear to him, and presented him some delicious food, but on a plate so

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foul, so disgusting, that he dared not touch it. "Take this food," said the Queen of Saints to him. "Oh! I cannot - I cannot even look at it in that filthy vessel."

"What!" said the Holy Virgin, "you are unwilling to take this meat out of the vessel in which I offer it to you, and you would have me receive your prayers which proceed from a heart defiled with iniquity and from a mouth full of lies, blasphemy, and obscenity?"

"Go, unhappy man, commence by purifying yourself of your crimes, by a sincere confession, and then you may come to offer me your prayers." The soldier, ashamed and confused, then understood the meaning of that vision; he took courage, left the desert, was blessed with food and drink, confessed his sins with tears of repentance, and persevered till death in his pious practices. Never neglect to pray that wonderful verse:

"Holy Mary, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death."

- NOEL, *Cat. de Rodez*, III., 219.

509. *The Tepidity of Thomas a Kempis.* -

Let us persevere, dear friends, in our devotion towards the Blessed Virgin, because, if we forget her, she will herself forget us. It is related that the pious Thomas a Kempis, - whom some authors regard as the author of that admirable book *The Imitation of Christ*, - was a faithful servant of Mary; above all, he had the pious custom of saluting her often with the angel by the *Hail Mary*, the *Ave Maria*. When he passed an image of his divinely appointed protectress, he said to her from the bottom of his heart: "Hail Mary!" By this means he obtained many graces for his soul, and became a child of benediction. Nevertheless, some companions, with whom he was not sufficiently on his guard, having by little

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and little turned him away from his devotion to the Blessed Virgin, he soon felt it slacken; he had no longer the same ardour for prayer, for communion, for study. It required, in his case, a miraculous vision to bring him back to his study. One night, in a dream, he thought he saw Mary, who was pleased to shed a thousand graces on several of his fellow-students. He anxiously awaited his turn to receive the same favours, but the Blessed Virgin presenting herself before him: "What do you expect," said she in a stern voice, "you who have ceased to salute me? What has become of those *Aves* you used so often to address to me? Go, ingrate, you no longer deserve my protection!" Thomas awoke, (remember, it was only a dream,) and immediately resumed his accustomed prayers. He long wept his past tepidity, and shunned, with particular care, the company of young people who did not love Mary, and who turned others away from her devotion: there is nothing but ruin to be met with those unfortunates. Thomas increased the fervour of his prayers *for their conversion*.

- DEBUSSI, *Nouveau Mois de Marie*.

510. *The Victory of Belgrade.* -

You all know what the *Angelus* is, dear friends, but, perhaps, you are not acquainted with its origin. The custom of ringing it in the middle of the day is due, in part, to a remarkable event which I am going to relate to you. In 1456, the city of Belgrade, on the Danube River, was, at the time, on the very frontiers of Turkey, and was besieged by the Turks, who kept battering its walls for four months without avail. The Sultan, desperate at seeing so many efforts remain unfruitful, resolved to make a general assault. For

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twenty hours they fought with unequalled fury, and those who defended the city were exhausted and overcome by a long and obstinate resistance. At that moment there was seen advancing a pious and courageous Franciscan, St. John of Capistrano; he presented himself to the soldiers, crucifix in hand, and prayed God and the Blessed Virgin to come to their assistance. This was his prayer: "Alas! powerful Queen of Heaven, will you abandon your children to the fury of the infidels, who never cease to insult and outrage

your Divine Son? Where is now the God of the Christians?" And praying thus, St John de Capistran shed a torrent of tears. Animated by the prayers and tears of the holy man, the Christians darted, with prodigious impetuosity, on the Turks, who were already penetrating into the city, massacred several thousands of them and put the rest to flight. This victory, as glorious as it was unexpected, could only be attributed to the assistance of Heaven, and especially to the intercession of Mary. At the news of this success, Pope Calixtus III. ordained that in all the churches of Christendom solemn thanksgivings should be made to God and the Blessed Virgin. To perpetuate forever the memory of this great benefit, and to inflame more and more the courage of Christians, the same Pope ordained that, in all the Catholic countries, the bell should be rung for the recitation of the *Angelus*, between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, the time when the victory of Belgrade had been obtained over the Turks. In

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after times, this signal was transferred to the hour of noon, the better to divide the day, but the memory of the miraculous protection of the Blessed Virgin was ever associated with it.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat Hist.*, I, 523.

511. *The Last Mercy of a "Hail Mary."* -

One would never come to an end, dear children, were they to relate all the prodigies wrought by the Angelical Salutation. At the time when St. Francis Borgia was in Rome, a great sinner presented himself before him. He found the man in such a disorderly state, that he dared not take on himself the charge of his conscience; he sent him to Father Acosta, who was very enlightened in the direction of souls. Here is what he was told by that unhappy man, who permitted the confessor to make it public in order to show forth the divine mercy. "Father, since my earliest years, I have always had religion; I prayed to Mary; I saluted her unceasingly; I went often to communion; but, in the depth of my heart, I was bad and base, and had the misfortune to conceal my worst sins in confession; I thus heaped crime on crime, sacrilege on sacrilege.

"Sometimes I promised to correct myself; but, as soon as opportunity offered, I fell again into my shameful crimes. Several times when I went to Communion, Jesus Christ deigned to reveal Himself to me, and said: "Why, oh unhappy man! do you use Me so ill, I who have done so much good for you? Is it not enough to have been crucified by the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem? must I find a new Calvary in

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your heart?" Habituated to sin, I was insensible to so many warnings. Here is the last proof of many on the part of my God: This morning, I thought my guardian angel appeared to me; he presented me with a consecrated host and said to me: "Know you this Saviour God who has loaded you with blessings and whom you profane for so many years? This is the punishment of your ingratitude!" Saying these words, he seized a sword to put me to death. I was, as it were, beside myself, and seeing that I was about to be lost forever, I cried out: "Hail Mary! you alone can save me!" The angel answered: "It is the last mercy of God in your regard; God, in consideration of the protection of our Queen, allows you to live some time longer on earth to expiate your sins". Having finished this recital, the unhappy sinner was silent; the reverend Father Acosta consoled him the best he could, but he made him so sensible of his position, that he took upon himself a severe penance to last as long as his life would allow.

- NOEL, *Cat. de Rodez.*, III., 203.

512. *A Missionary Six Years Old.* -

I never read any missionary story that impressed me so much as the following. I am going to tell it to you, my dear children, just as I read it: In a voyage of exploration and discovery on the coast of Africa, landing on a little island, near that which is mentioned on the charts by the names of Fernando Po and Annobon, near the Equator and the Congo mouth, some missionaries met on a rock, not far from the shore, a cross rudely constructed, and all around, in

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the attitude of prayer, a group of negro children, directed by another white child. They were nearly all of the same age, and were reciting, in bad Spanish, the Angelical Salutation or *Hail Mary*. Great was the surprise of

the Catholic missionaries to meet in those regions, where they thought the idea of the cross was unknown, an altar raised to the cross. On seeing those good priests wearing their soutanes, the child cried out in Spanish: *Priests! here are priests!* and all the little negroes turned towards the missionaries. The latter approached the child and asked him to conduct them to the house of his parents. "I have none," answered the child, sadly.

Then he told how being cast on that shore by a shipwreck, he was separated from his parents, whom he never saw again. Picked up by some negroes, who had brought him up with their children, he had taught the latter the prayer his mother taught him to say morning and night on his knees, and they came all together to kneel before that cross. "They are, then, Christians?" demanded the missionaries. "Christians!" repeated the child, much amazed; "I cannot tell you; they see me kneel down, and they do the same. They repeat the words of the prayer I have taught them; but I do not know whether they fully understand it, as I do not fully understand their language. Still I have taught them to make the sign of the cross, and they never fail to do it when they pass before the cross." - "And that cross - who raised it?" - "It was I; I remembered those I had seen from place to place in my own

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country." Finishing his recital, the poor child could not restrain his tears and sighs. The missionaries asked his name; he remembered neither his own name nor that of his country; neither did he know the name of the shipwrecked vessel. One thing only he had not forgotten: his *Hail Mary!* Well, dear friends, when will it be that little missionaries such as this charming child of whom I have told you may be found amongst you?

- MULLOIS, *Mois de Marie de tout le Monde*, 114.

II. - ON THE ROSARY AND BEADS.

513. *First Origin of the Beads.* -

The institution of the beads is generally attributed to St. Dominic, nevertheless, children, the custom of repeating several times the Lord's Prayer (*Pater Noster*) and the Angelical Salutation (*Ave Maria*) is much more ancient. Thus, in the first ages of the Church, those who could take no part in the ordinary prayer, and especially in the singing of the Psalms, were exhorted to recite instead thereof the *Our Father (Pater)* and *Hail Mary (Ave)* a certain number of times. Speaking of this, Palladius and Sozomenes (Church writers of the fourth and fifth centuries) relate that St. Paul, a celebrated abbot of Libya, who lived in the time of St. Anthony of Egypt, repeated the same prayer a hundred times in the day, and that he made use of small stones to count them. In like manner, St. Benedict, founder of the Order of Benedictines, was accustomed to recite, during work, instead of the Hours of the Ecclesiastical Office, *Paters* and *Aves*.

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To reckon them he made use of little balls, fastened together by a thread. Finally children, to quote you another very curious fact, when they exhumed the body of the St. Gertrude, who died in 667, they found beside her in her tomb little balls strung together by a thin twine. This proves that even then Christians used, as they now do, a sort of rosary or chaplet, to determine the number of *Paters* and *Aves* they intended to recite. A custom so ancient and so pious should not then be regarded with indifference.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, I., 536.

514. *St. Dominic Institutes the Rosary.* -

The common opinion, dear friends, is that it was St. Dominic (sometimes spelt as Dominick) who instituted the rosary as it is now recited. This was the occasion. That great Saint, who died in 1221, had long preached, in the south of France, against the error of the Albigenses. Despairing of the success of his efforts, he had recourse to the Blessed Virgin, and never ceased praying and beseeching her till his prayer was heard. With this intent he set out for Toulouse, retired to a lonely forest, fell on his knees. and urgently besought God and the Blessed Virgin that they might help him to overcome the enemies of the faith. He passed three successive days and nights in prayer - at the end of that time, he fell down from weakness, and the holy Mother of God appeared to him, in an ecstasy, surrounded with glory and magnificence. She was escorted by three queens, and each of them surrounded by fifty virgins, as if to serve her. The first queen

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with her companions, was robed in white, the second in red, and the third wore a tissue of the most dazzling gold. The Blessed Virgin explained to St. Dominic the meaning of these symbols. "These queens," said she, "represent the three chaplets or sets of mysteries; the fifty virgins, who form the train of each queen, represent the fifty *Hail Marys* of each rosary; finally, the white colour reminds you of the joyful mysteries; the red colour, of the sorrowful mysteries, and the gold colour, of the glorious mysteries. The mysteries of the Incarnation, birth, life and passion of my Divine Son, together with those of His resurrection, and His glorification, are contained, and as it were enshrined, in the Angelical Salutation and the Lord's Prayer. That is just the rosary; that is to say, the crown wherein I shall place all my joy. Spread that prayer everywhere, and the heretics will be converted, and the faithful shall persevere and obtain eternal life." Consoled, and, as it were, ravished by such an apparition, St. Dominic quickly returned to the city of Toulouse and repaired to the church. During this time, as a pious legend relates, the bells began to ring of themselves. The inhabitants, astonished to hear bells at such an unusual hour, ran in crowds to the temple of the Lord, and asked what it meant. Then St. Dominic ascended the pulpit, and after having spoken with thrilling eloquence of the justice of God and the rigor of His judgements, he declared that, to avoid them, there was no means easier or surer than to invoke the Mother of Mercy, to do

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penance, and recite the rosary. He immediately gave an explanation of that beautiful prayer, and began to say it aloud. The effects of this devotion were soon felt. Many renounced their errors, did penance, and returned to the Catholic Church. St. Dominic afterwards established the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary, a practice which spread rapidly amongst Christians. Finally, Pope Sixtus IV., who was elected in 1471, and several of his successors, attached to it numerous and rich indulgences.

- Pere LACORDAIRE, *Life of St. Dominic*.

515. *A Parisian Converted by the Beads.* -

One of the first miracles obtained by the rosary, or the chaplet, was that which I am going to relate to you, children: About the year 1219, St. Dominic, with his accustomed zeal, was preaching at Paris the mysteries of the holy rosary, and thereby wrought a great number of conversions. One of the most remarkable was that of a lord, distinguished by his rank and his great wealth, but whose scandalous and disorderly life formed a painful contrast to the virtues of his wife, who enjoyed a great reputation for piety. In the trouble she had experienced, this pious lady felt herself inspired to consult St. Dominic, and the latter, according to his custom, had at first recourse to the new devotion of the rosary. He explained the virtue of it to this lady, promised her happy effects from it, and made her a present of the modest chaplet he had been using himself, exhorting her to recite it devoutly for the conversion of her husband.

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Happy in possessing so rich a treasure, the lady returned home full of joy, and began to recite the rosary with all imaginable fervour. The Mother of Mercy soon heard her prayers; for, during three successive nights, her husband, who had hitherto remained callous and indifferent, was cruelly disturbed in his sleep, having continually before his eyes the terrible chastisements reserved in the other life for libertines and scandalous sinners. Recognizing in that singular impression a warning from heaven, and inwardly touched by grace, he entered into himself and deplored his sins; then, throwing himself all in tears into the arms of his pious wife, he promised her to lead a more Christian life for the time to come. This was not all: he came to St. Dominic, made at his feet a general and sincere confession, in which he gave every mark of perfect contrition. Soon after he even asked to be admitted into the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary, and there so distinguished himself by his zeal and fervour, that his example contributed much to spread that beautiful devotion in Paris, and throughout all France. Finally, after several years passed in the practice of the Christian virtues, he gave up his soul to God, on the same day as his virtuous wife, and they were buried in the same grave.

- DES BILLIERS, *Manuel du Saint Rosaire*, 39.

516. *The Slave Carried off by Algerian Pirates.* -

You all have a rosary, dear friends; so much the better, it is a treasure the full value of which you do not

know. Listen: In 1522, a young man of Spanish

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origin, and much devoted to the Blessed Virgin was carried off by sea-rovers, whilst on his way to Genoa in Italy. The pirates took him to Algiers, where, for three years, he had to undergo all the hardships of the most barbarous captivity. During all this time, he was no less zealous than before in discharging, as far as possible, his religious duties; but, above all, he let no day pass without reciting the whole chaplet, that is to say, five decades of the rosary. He thought, and with good reason, that it was a most efficacious means of recovering his freedom, and working out his soul's salvation. He knew that his parents were not in a state to pay the enormous price which the barbarous tyrant, whose slave he was, demanded for his ransom; so, deprived of all human succour, there only remained to him that of the Blessed Virgin, who is the common mother of Christians. He ceased not to ask her for his deliverance, principally on account of his faith, which he saw every day assailed by false promises and by threats. The fear of becoming an infidel overwhelmed him with sorrow, and inspired him with the liveliest desire of again beholding his country, where he might freely practise his religion. Continually occupied with these thoughts, he at length forms, with one of his companions in slavery, the project of escaping. They succeed in unfastening their chains, notwithstanding the vigilance of the guards, and set out together on a dangerous and unknown way. Without provisions, having no other food than the grass, nor drink other than the water

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they might chance to meet, they lay concealed during the day and travelled only in the night. At last, without any other support than the rosary, and the assistance of Mary, who protected her two servants, they escaped the armed men sent in pursuit of them, swam across two rivers, and, amid the greatest dangers, arrived in safety at a city on the North African coast inhabited by Christians, whence they could return to Spain. They hastened to tell how they owed their deliverance to the devotion of the rosary, which they strove to spread with all the zeal which gratitude inspires.

The young Spaniard even composed some verses in praise of the Mother of God, which were read by many persons who have cherished the remembrance of this so miraculous fact.

- DES BILLIERS, *Manuel du Saint Rosaire*, 41.

517. *The Battle of Lepanto.* -

The most extraordinary fact in relation to the holy rosary, dear friends, is, unquestionably, the following: In 1571 the Christians, under the command of Don Juan of Austria, engaged with the Turks under Admiral Hali in a naval combat near Lepanto, in Greece. There was at that time a crusade against the Mussulmans or Moslems. From the departure of the fleet, the holy Pope, Saint Pius V. ceased not a single moment to implore the Blessed Virgin, and address the Lord in fervent prayer, that He might deign to grant the Christians a victory over the enemies of the faith. He ordered the same to be done in all the monasteries, and all Christendom followed the example of the monks. The holy rosary, especially, was frequently and fervently recited. At length, on the 7th of

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October, the two naval armies came together; it was about four in the afternoon. The Christians were not long without perceiving that an invisible hand protected them, for the sun and the wind which had before incommoded them soon became to them a perfect means of safety. Gradually the sun turned full on the eyes of the infidels, and the wind, suddenly changing, sent the smoke of the artillery full in their faces. The combat lasted four hours. On every side, as far as the eye could reach, the surface of the sea was seen covered with blood, dead bodies, sails, and fragments of vessels; the defeat of the Turks was general and complete. They lost thirty thousand men, and three thousand five hundred others, twenty-five of whom were of high birth, were taken prisoners. One hundred and thirty vessels fell into the power of the Christians; the rest were either broken to pieces against the rocks, devoured by the flames, or sent to the bottom; a very small number succeeded in escaping. Onboard the vessels seized by the conquerors were found fifteen thousand poor Christians, reduced to slavery, but whose chains were, of course, broken that instant.

During that glorious battle the Pope never ceased praying; he also followed in spirit the phases of the

combat; and, by a prophetic spirit, he knew the same evening that the Christians were victorious (this in an era when news of the victory could only be transmitted by the swiftest sail-boat, a process in that season that took at least two weeks to reach Rome). In thanksgiving, he ordained, to perpetuate the memory thereof, that for all future time the feast of Our Lady of Victories should be celebrated, and that these

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words should be added to the Litany of the Blessed Virgin: *Help of Christians, pray for us!* And as the devotion of the rosary was one of the means employed by the holy pontiff to implore the assistance of the Blessed Virgin in this circumstance, he decreed that, on the day of the feast of Our Lady of Victories, that of the rosary should likewise be celebrated. Under his successor, Gregory XIII., the feast of the Rosary was definitively fixed for the first Sunday of October, and so it still is throughout the whole Christian Church. [St Pius X authorized the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary to be commemorated on the 7th of October again, and Vatican II re-established the principle that Sundays were primarily to be given to the commemoration of the Lord and his Resurrection. Our Lady, Help of Christians has her feast-day on May 24th.]

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, I. 527.

518. *Great Men Saying Their Beads.* -

It is sometimes said, my dear friends, that the beads is a devotion only fit for women. You are about to see how true that is: The illustrious Bossuet, one of the greatest geniuses of the time of Louis XIV., not only recited the rosary assiduously, but also had himself enrolled in the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary, at the Dominican Convent, in the Rue St. Jacques, in Paris, on the 10th of August, 1680. In his train we may range all the institutors or reformers of modern congregations: St. Francis de Sales, St. Vincent do Paul, the Venerable [now canonized] Jean Baptiste de la Salle, the learned Cardinal de Berulle, the pious Olier, founder and first Superior of the Seminary of St. Sulpice, with a crowd of others. Better than that, dear children, the kings and the great ones of the world have imitated these celebrated men.

I can quote for you Edward III., King of England, the Emperor Charles

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the Fifth, Sigismund and Casimir, Kings of Poland, St. Louis, Francis the First, Louis XIV., Louis XVI. and several other Kings of France, who made public profession of that devotion. Father de la Rue, a learned religious of the Company of Jesus, relates that one day being admitted to an audience by Louis XIV., he found him saying his beads. The religious could not help showing his surprise. "You appear surprised," said the King, " to see me saying the rosary; I glory in saying it; it is a pious custom which I have from the Queen, my mother, and I should be very sorry to miss a single day without discharging that duty." How beautiful is this! how admirable, dear friends! Let us not be ashamed, then, of a devotion which has been that of so many great men.

- DES BILLIERS; *Manuel du Saint Rosaire*, 47

- GUILLOIS, *Nouv. Explic. du Cat.*, 453.

519. *What use is the Rosary to a Sinner?* -

Oh! dear friends, how happy we should be, if we were faithful in passing no day without doing something to honour the Blessed Virgin! She would reward us well. One of the most celebrated preachers of the 18th century was called by night, in Paris, to hear the confession of a young gentleman who had been struck with apoplexy. At the dawn of day he celebrated to his intention a Votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin. Just as he was finishing, word was brought him that the patient's consciousness had returned. He goes to him in all haste, and finds him penetrated with the liveliest sentiments of penance and compunction,

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generously offering up his life in expiation of his sins.

He makes his confession, and receives the last Sacraments with the greatest piety. The confessor, equally surprised and penetrated with gratitude, knew not to what to attribute so great a prodigy of mercy, on behalf of a man whose excesses were, unhappily, but too well known. He interrogates the patient; the latter answers in a voice broken with sobs: "Alas! Father, I can only attribute that grace, so precious, to the mercy of God.

“He has, doubtless, had regard to your prayers and those of my poor mother. When she was at the point of death, she had me brought to her bedside, and, after expressing her apprehensions concerning the dangers I should meet in the world, she addressed me in these words: "I leave you under the protection of the Blessed Virgin; promise me, my dear son, that you will do the only thing I have to ask of you, as a pledge of your affection for me! - it is to say the beads every day." I promised, Father, and I faithfully kept my word; I said the rosary regularly every day. I confess it is the only act of religion that I have performed these ten years past." The confessor had, then, no doubt that his penitent owed to the powerful protection of Mary the lively sentiments of contrition which animated him on that occasion. He never left him till he breathed his last, and he had the happiness of seeing him die in the most touching dispositions. Behold, dear friends, how the recitation of some decades of the rosary, which takes only a few minutes in the day, will

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procure for us inestimable graces.

- GUILLOIS, *Nouv. Explic. du Cat.* 453.

520. *Assassins in Presence of a Rosary.* -

Here is one of the most striking stories I know concerning the rosary; listen to it attentively. Mr. Walter de Claubry, a medical doctor, had himself inscribed on the register of the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary in the Church of St. Thomas Aquinas in Paris; it was in 1805. He set out that same year for the army, as military surgeon, but resolved to fulfil on all occasions his duties as a Christian and an associate of the Holy Rosary.

Faithful to his engagement, amid all the perils of seduction, he was rewarded by receiving an assistance from the Blessed Virgin which may be truly called miraculous. In 1808, he was in Madrid, the capital of Spain, at the breaking out of that famous insurrection of the 2nd of May, in which the Spanish people massacred, without pity, for several hours, all the Frenchmen they could meet. The day before, which was the first Sunday of that month, Mr. Walter de Claubry, according to the custom of the fervent associates, had received Holy Communion in honour of the Blessed Virgin, in a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Loretto, and served by an emigrant French priest, Fr Don Ducos. On the morrow, the day of the insurrection, knowing nothing of what was going on, he leaves his lodgings to repair to his post. But he soon falls in with a furious band, armed with sabres, knives, and daggers; they recognize him for a French officer, they handle him roughly, and are even about to kill

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him. In this peril his first care was to recommend himself to God and implore the protection of the Blessed Virgin for that terrible moment of death from which no human means could save him. Nevertheless, having heard that the Spaniards were vociferating against the French, and treated them as sacrilegious and impious, quicker than lightning a thought presented itself to his mind: "Why, no," said he, "I am not impious! Here is the proof." And immediately he draws from his pocket the rosary he always kept about him, at the end of which hung a silver medal blessed by Pope Pius VII., when he came to Paris, in 1804. At the sight of that rosary the murderers stop as if by magic. Still some among them remained irresolute, when a man presents himself in the midst of these insurgents and seems to speak to them earnestly. It was the sacristan of the Chapel of Our Lady of Loretto, who, frightened by the tumult, had closed its door and was going home. It seems as though he were sent expressly by Heaven, for, having recognized the French officer, he runs to defend him; he protests to the most furious that he is a truly pious man, that he confesses to Don Louis Ducos, the emigrant priest of whom we just now spoke, and that he saw him at Communion the day before.

Then, the men who were before going to kill him, lead him with kindness, take his precious rosary, kiss it respectfully, make all present kiss it, then gave it back to himself; and you may think, dear friends, with what gratitude and fervour he

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kissed it; at length they conduct him to a place where his life was not likely to be in danger. "The more I reflect," said Mr. Claubry himself, "on the circumstances of this event, the more sensible I am that I owe my life to the protection of Our Lady of the Rosary." If this be not a miracle properly so called, it is, at least, a special proof of her powerful and gracious protection.

- DES BILLIERS, *Manuel du Saint Rosaire*, 48.