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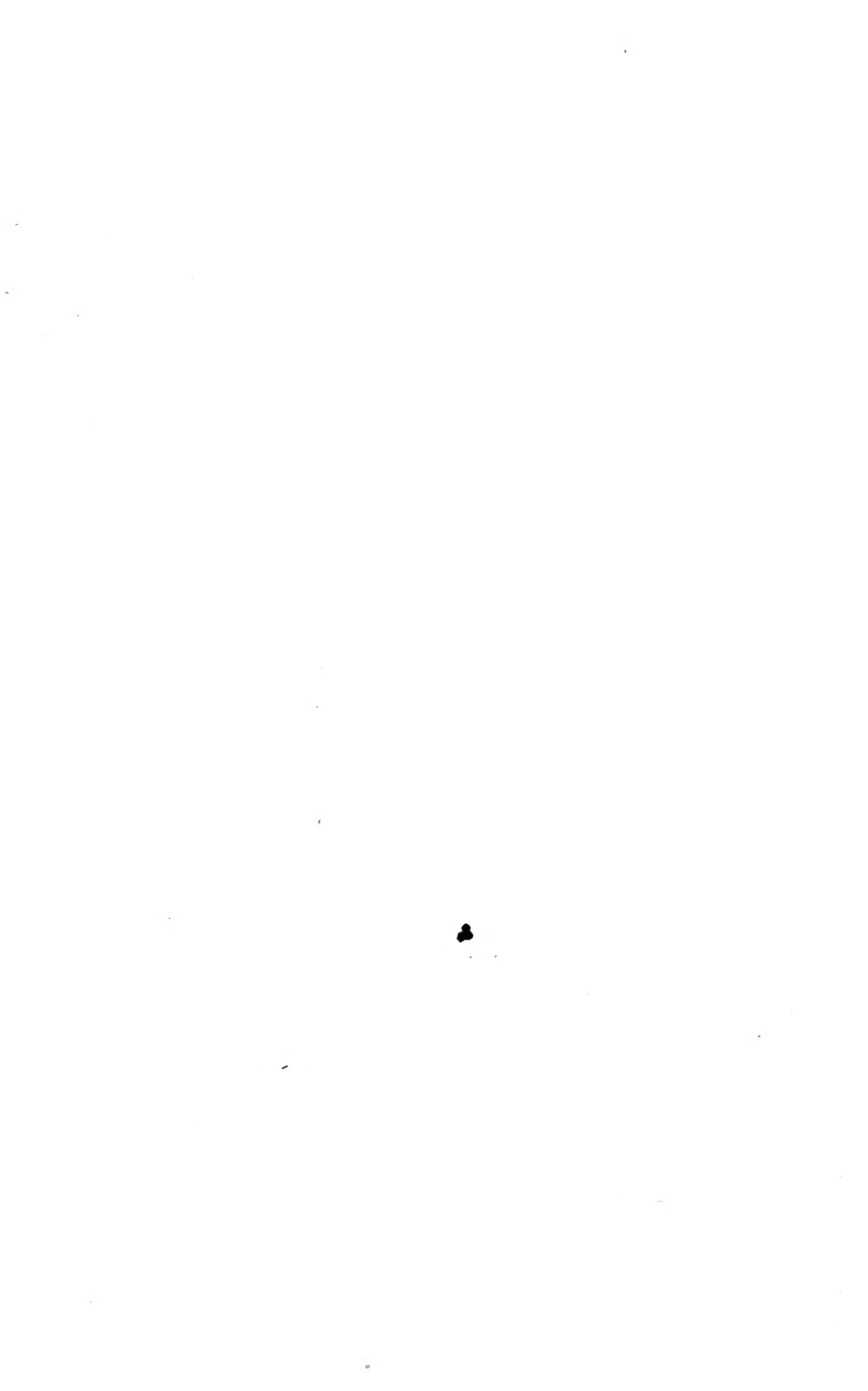
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The Heart o' Mary

*'Tis for the brutes to blindly follow Nature,
But man, in whom has flamed a bit o' God,
Must fight with her to gain still higher things,
And thwart the importunate clamors of the flesh
That he may keep his heart inviolate.*

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*TO THE MEMORY OF MY BEAUTIFUL
MOTHER AND TO ALL WHO LIKE HER
ARE WORTHY OF THE NAME OF
MARY, THIS LITTLE BOOK IS LOVING-
LY DEDICATED : : : : : : :*

1st Soldier.—*Now cruel Herod, sith we shall do this deed,
Your will needfully in this must be wrought.
All the children of that age, die they must need,
Now with all my might they shall be upsought.*

2nd Soldier.—*And I will swear here upon your bright sword
All the children that I find, slain they shall be;
That make many a mother to weep, and be full sore afeared,
In our armour bright, when us they see.*

Herod.—*Now you have sworn, forth that ye go
And my will that ye work both by day and night
And then will I for fain trip like a doe;
But when they be dead, I warn you, bring them before my sight.*

Angel.—*Mary and Joseph, to you I say,
Sweet word from the Father I bring you full right;
Out of Bethlehem into Egypt forth go ye the way
And with you take the king full of might,
For dread of Herod's red.*

Joseph.—*Arise up Mary, hastily and soon!
Our Lord's will needs must be done,
Like as the angel bad.*

Mary.—*Meehly, Joseph, mine own spouse
Toward that country let us repair,
In Egypt—some token of house,—
God grant us safe to come there.*

(Here Mary and Joseph goeth clean away)

*From the Coventry Nativity Play, performed by
the Company of Shearmen and Tailors. Text of
Robert Croo 1534.*

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1744A



THE HEART O' MARY

PREFATORY NOTE



WITH the political ascendancy of Christianity in the third and fourth centuries, the rotten fabric of the Roman stage began to totter and, by the year 400, St. Augustine was able to say that the theatres were falling on every side. The moral grossness and degeneracy of the latin *ludi* — long since divorced from their hellenic models — made them easy targets for the attacks of Christian asceticism and, with the coming of the germanic barbarians who were equally disdainful of the popular demand for *panem et spectacula* and of the ecclesiastical hatred of things, mimetic, the stage in the Western Empire ceased to be. The coup de grace was given it when Rome was sacked by the Goths under Alaric in 410, and for seven hundred years there was no drama worthy of the name in all Europe. The stage, as ever, had been but a mirror of its age and both had perished together. Salvian, in his *De Gubernatione Dei*, lib. vi., tells the story in a two-word epigram, "*Moritur et ridet.*"

The renaissance of the theatre, ironically enough, began within the bosom of its dearest foe, the Church. The necessity for a graphic presentation of scriptural story and church doctrine to a people innocent of books or the power to read them, led to the dramatic amplification of the Mass in the eighth and ninth centuries. Beginning with the injection of simple dialogue in the form of in-droit tropes—such as that introduced by the "*Quem quaeritis in sepulchro, O Christicolae?*"—it evolved gradually through a series of independent forms, the SEPULCHRO,

THE HEART O' MARY

STELLA and PROPHEAE, which merged at length to form the basis of those liturgical plays which we know as the MYSTERIES and the MIRACLES. This evolution may be said to have been completed by the twelfth century.

Historians of drama have made a distinction, nice rather than fundamental, between the two types of *ludus* in the mediaeval drama. To those plays in which the characters are scriptural, the term MYSTERY is applied, while the name MIRACLE is used to denote plays in which only non-biblical personages, as saints and fathers of the church, are figured. In origin, attributes, mode and aim, the forms are essentially the same and the folk who devised and played them used the terms indiscriminately.

The little play which follows is written in the religious spirit of the old Mysteries, but without any attempt to ape either the quaintness of their style or the delightful naïvete of their approach to the gospel story. The legend, if I may use the word in a technical sense, is, so far as I know, a new one and, while it follows the scriptural narrative in the main, I have not hesitated to exercise the artist's prerogative of imaginative selection, addition and order, coloring the facts with fancy as did those unnamed, cloistered brothers of my craft eight hundred years ago.

G. M. P. B.

University of Pittsburgh
December 1, 1917.

The Heart o' Mary

*A Mystery Play
Done In English
Verse*

By
George M. P. Baird



*In Pittsburgh At
The Aldine Press
MCMXVII*

DAKAR
RUSSE
A29H7

THE HEART O' MARY

PERSONAE LUDI

MARY and the infant CHRIST

JOSEPH of NAZARETH

ELISABETH, *kinswoman to Mary and mother of John*

MIRIAM, *a young girl of Bethlehem*

CHRYSEIS, *a Greek Girl*

A WOMAN



THE HEART O' MARY

The Place of the Nativity in Bethlehem, Judah. The room is really an ancient cave, shored with rough-hewn timbers and littered with barley straw. The entrance, a wide, low, open doorway, is in the rear to left of center. To the right of it is a heap of straw covered with several homespun blankets and evidently used as a bed. Just above it is a rude forage rack with whisps of hay protruding between its grape-wood bars. Down stage left, is a low bench and near it, a lighted brazier upon which a copper pot is steaming. Opposite, on the extreme right, are two carpenter's trestles with planks across them. A primitive saw, plane and wooden maul indicate that Joseph continues to ply his trade even while sojourning in a strange village. The room is dimly lighted by the glow of a lamp suspended near the brazier, and through the doorway comes the soft blue radiance of an oriental night. Forty-two days have elapsed since the birth of Jesus.

The rising curtain discovers Miriam and Elisabeth. The former is standing in the doorway and is engaged in spinning woolen thread from a distaff; the latter is stirring some savory thing in the cooking pot.

MIRIAM

They promised to return by folding-time
But that's long passed. Before the sun went down,—
A scarlet pomegranate behind the crest
Of Ephrath — from the valleys, Ramaward,

THE HEART O' MARY

I heard the shepherds singing home their flocks,
And caught the little music of the bells
Above the drum of hoof-taps on the trail
That climbs to Bethlehem.

ELISABETH

Jerusalem

Is six long miles away; the road is rough
Across the Plain of Rephaim, and from thence
Toilsome and all up-hill to David's town.
One day is far too short for what they planned:
They'd many things to do, offerings to make,
Devotions in the Temple, prayers to say,
And all the solemn rites of dedication
Demanded for a man child in our Law.
Let you be patient, lass.

MIRIAM

Worried, I am!

That road bears no good name;
For, when the night comes down, black panthers crouch
Among the rocks that overhang the track,
And sometimes a gaunt lion, hunger driven,
Slinks from the wilderness to find a prey,
While human beasts more cruel than the brutes —
Fugitive slaves and felons, broken soldiers,
And brigands who'd do murder for a penny —
Await the luckless traveler. Oh, if they * * * *

ELISABETH

Peace, Miriam! Doth not Yahweh guard his own?

THE HEART O' MARY

MIRIAM

Yea, but what keeps them?

ELISABETH

They're delayed in town,
A hundred things might keep them: they have friends
Who would not let them leave wanting a bite
Of supper; they had goods to buy too, times
Are hard and one must haggle long and well
Or leave the market place with empty hands.

MIRIAM

A talent now-a-days will buy no more
Than did a farthing before Caesar sent
His wolves to plague us.

ELISABETH

May the curse of Yahweh
Fall upon Rome and on the recreant Jews
That league with her!

MIRIAM

Soft! that is called sedition.
Herod's eyes and ears are everywhere; some spy
Might hear you.

ELISABETH

Nay. I fear no more: the time
Of Israel's deliverance draws nigh,
For one is born who shall ascend the throne
Of David and, beneath his wrathful heel,
Grind the proud power of Rome to stinking dust.

THE HEART O' MARY

*Miriam comes down stage eagerly and
takes Elisabeth's hands in hers.*

MIRIAM

You think that Mary's child, the little lad
They consecrate to Yahweh's work today,
Is what the shepherds called him on that night
Of glory when the skies flamed white and rose
And angels walked the earth; you think that he's
The one for whom we wait, the promised king?

ELISABETH

I knew it long before the shepherds came;
For Gabriel, who foretold the fruitfulness
O' me — an old and withered, barren vine —
Spoke to my man of it and prophesied
The present coming of the Christ: my son,
My little John, he said, should go before
To herald Him and to make straight His path.

MIRIAM
(*musingly*)

That little babe a king and I the first
To serve him, Mary's child a king * * * *
That's what they said, those noble gentlemen
Who followed the strange star and brought him gifts.
"King of the Jews", they called him, "King of Men",
And knelt to worship yonder in the straw.

ELISABETH

Verily, they spoke truth: he is Messias,
The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, sent

THE HEART O' MARY

To slay the eagle and the cockatrice,
The Prince of David's House who shall restore
Thy glory, Israel, and rear anew
The broken walls of Zion for all time!

MIRIAM

If harm should come to him! * * * They are so late!

*She goes outside and shading her eyes
with her hand, peers anxiously down the
road, left. Elisabeth joins her.*

Look! something moves far down the road * * * * I can't
See clearly. * * * * They are! * * * no there is but one,
A solitary traveler and on foot.
O, Mother Ilse, I'm afraid for them.

*Elisabeth takes the girl's arm and gently
pushes her into the house. She too is
beginning to be worried, but tries to re-
assure Miriam with cheerful words.*

ELISABETH

Are they birds, lass, that they should fly so swiftly?
A mother with a six weeks babe must travel
At Sabbath pace, and Mary's far from strong;
Her's was no easy bearing.

MIRIAM

'Twas not, surely.
God keep me from the like! The first's the worst,
They say; and many a time I feared she'd die
I' the burning agony.

THE HEART O' MARY

ELISABETH

I have borne a son
And know the death-pang travail of the flesh,
But she knew more, the rending of her soul.

MIRIAM

How do you mean, "the rending of her soul"?

ELISABETH

The weeks before her hour were cruel weeks,
Fanged with incertitudes and barbèd fears,
A lashing welter of embattled thoughts,
Days of foreboding, nights of marvelous dreams,
And, with it all, the dread unwonted play
Of cosmic forces in the frame of her.

MIRIAM

The angel promised that 'twould all be well.

ELISABETH

Was that enough to calm her, being human,
This girl who tip-toe scarce touched womanhood?
Just put yourself in her place; imagine, lass,
That you grow great with child, yet know yourself
A virgin. You can feel beneath your heart
A new life stir, your child, the Son of God;
Yet no one will believe you when you say
That you are innocent of man. Just think
What it must mean to face the knowing looks,
The lifted brows, the spiteful tongues of folk
Who shrill with dirty laughter when you tell

THE HEART O' MARY

Of Gabriel's visit, wag their heads, spit, sneer,
And mock you with, "So you've had God for spouse?"
Think how 'twould be to feel the eyes you love,
The jealous, doubting, smoldering, troubled eyes
O' your man, burn day by day into your heart;
With never a word to show he understood
And never a sign of what he meant to do.

MIRIAM

But knowledge came to Joseph in a dream
And, waking, he forgave her everything,
And sealed his faith with marriage.

ELISABETH

Aye, he did,
Though not before she'd suffered like a soul
Untarnished, which some angel by mistake
Had thrust in hell. 'Twas long before his love
Had overcome the hot man pride of him,
And all too late to ease her bitter bearing.
Lass, there be things a woman can't forget.

MIRIAM

The men are cruel.

ELISABETH

We are cruel too.

The man and woman love in different ways,
And blindly wrong in different ways to work
The selfsame perfect purpose for the race.

MIRIAM

I never shall forget the way she looked
That night o' the borning, the drawn face of her,

THE HEART O' MARY

And the hot hands that seemed to clutch at Death
As one yearns for the lover in a dream.
And yet she had a strength, an exaltation,
A mystical power I could not understand;
For though she trod the black abyss of pain,
There was a strange joy in her grievous travail
And in her torture, high beatitude.

ELISABETH

Our most transcendent pangs and joys are one;
We are not truly women 'till we've walked,
Sorrowing, by the bitter flood in that dark valley
Where Death sits, like a potter, molding life.
Ours is the world, since we must buy it dearly;
Ours is the race, since we must mother it.

MIRIAM

Hark! Some one comes.

*Chryseis†appears on the threshold. Her
manner is excited.*

ELISABETH
(to Miriam)

It is the Greek, Chryseis.

CHRYSEIS
(rapidly)

The blessings of the gods upon this house.

†Chryseis = Krī-sē-is

THE HEART O' MARY

ELISABETH

And upon you, the peace of the One God.

CHRYSEIS
(*anxiously*)

Where are the woman and her child?

MIRIAM

We're waiting them.

The goodman took them to Jerusalem
This morning and * * *

CHRYSEIS
(*praying*)

Jerusalem? Woe! Woe!
Grant, ye immortal gods, he be not slain!

ELISABETH

Slain? Tell it out! You speak as one who knows
Some evil thing.

MIRIAM

Speak! Tell us all!

CHRYSEIS

King Herod
Commands his death.

MIRIAM

You mock us!

ELISABETH

Herod? Why?

THE HEART O' MARY

CHRYSEIS

Fear for his kingdom. The star-guided ones,
The three philosophers, told him that the child
Should be a king.

ELISABETH

How do you know this, lass?

CHRYSEIS

My lover, Marius, captain of the guard,
Showed me a writing with the seal of Herod
Like blood on it.

MIRIAM

Yahweh defend us!

CHRYSEIS

“Search
Bethlehem, Rama, and the country 'round,
Slay every male child two years old or under:
Spare at your peril. — Herod”, thus it ran.
The words are branded on my brain with fire!

ELISABETH

The time?

CHRYSEIS

Tonight, i' the second watch.

MIRIAM

How shall we save him?

Tonight!

THE HEART O' MARY

CHRYSEIS

It may be too late.
The guards are zealous; they may watch the road,
And

MIRIAM

No, no, do not say it!

ELISABETH
(to Miriam)

Come with me.
We must go meet and warn them.

CHRYSEIS

' I've been feigning
Coldness of late: I'll to the wine-shop now,
Find Marius, let him fondle me a bit,
And flatter him so he'll forget his task
Till you'll have warned them. He's a silly sheep;
He'll never guess that he is being fooled.
There's nothing like a kiss to gain one time!

*She goes out. Miriam accompanies her
to the door and looks off stage, left.*

MIRIAM

It's grown too dark to see far down the road.

*Elisabeth takes a shawl from a peg, goes
to the door and puts the shawl over Mir-
iam's head.*

THE HEART O' MARY

ELISABETH

We'll take the path across the barley fields —
'Twill save us half a mile of twisted road —
And make the highway at the Shepherds' Tower.
God grant we're not too late!

MIRIAM

Make haste, make haste!

They go off toward the left. At this point, the curtain may be lowered for a moment to indicate the lapse of a quarter of an hour.

* * * * *

Off stage left, is heard the slow, dust-muffled tread of a burdened ass and the tinkle of a bell. Then the deep, deliberate tones of a man's voice.

THE VOICE OF JOSEPH

Woah, Chamor, *** steady, *** so-ho, *** rest you now,
We're home at last.

THE VOICE OF MARY

I think she's swooned again.

THE VOICE OF JOSEPH

Let you go in; I'll lift her from the beast
And follow you.

THE HEART O' MARY

Mary, with the sleeping Christ Child in her arms, comes through the doorway. She looks lovingly upon him as she speaks.

MARY
(softly)

Still sleeping, little lad?

Sleep on and do not waken; sleep, my babe,
Safe on your bed of scented hay; sleep on.

She lays the Child on the bed, right and near the wall. Joseph enters bearing the limp figure of a woman in draggled raiment. Mary goes to help him and together they carry her to the bed and lay her on it.

MARY

That's good. Some water, while I raise her head.

Joseph brings a gourd of water from an earthen jar in the corner. Mary takes the head of the prostrate woman in her lap and pours a few drops of the water upon her brow and lips. The woman stirs and moans.

She's coming 'round. (to the woman) There, never mind.
Drink this.

The woman lifts herself slightly, takes a sip, pushes the gourd away with feeble hand, and sinks back weeping. Her cry-

THE HEART O' MARY

ing is the rhythmic, monotonous, automatic kind which continues to express a suffering of which the subject is no longer consciously aware. Mary smooths the tangled hair from the brow of the sufferer and croons to her as if she were a troubled child.

There, there, don't cry, poor thing; there, there, don't cry.

JOSEPH

Why should she take on so, and none to harm her?
Ask her again how she is called.

MARY

My sister,
What is your name?

The woman moans, but does not reply.

She does not understand.

JOSEPH

It's stubbornness, I'm thinking. Ever since
We found her all a-huddle in the road
Out there by Kubbet Rahil, she's refused
To answer us.

MARY

She's weak, her mind's a-wander.

JOSEPH

She's possessed; there is some devil in her,
And that's what ails her.

THE HEART O' MARY

MARY

You've a man's mind, surely!
Can you not see she's close upon her time?
Two weeks or less to go. * * * Ah, how she's bruised!

JOSEPH

Even a man can see the marks on her
And guess what made them: even I can tell,
To look on her, that she has felt the stones.

MARY

You mean * * * ?

The woman becomes quiet.

JOSEPH

The Holy Law names stones for such a one.

MARY

The Law is harsh!

JOSEPH

Nay, it is just, and we
Sin when by helping her we cheat the Law
Of righteous vengeance.

MARY

Yet you brought her here.

JOSEPH

Because you begged it. It was folly in you
To put her on the beast and trudge afoot
Yourself for all that weary hour o' climb,
You being frail and with the lad to carry.

THE HEART O' MARY

MARY

You'd not have had her die beside the road?

JOSEPH

Her kind is better dead and I'm not pleased
To have her in this decent house with you.

MARY

(affectionately)

Man Joseph, you're but putting words together
That come not from your heart.

JOSEPH

I know the right,
But when I look on you I cannot hold it.
Ah, Mary, Mary, you've bewitched my wit!
I'm but a morsel of wet barley meal
You mold at will in those small hands of yours.

MARY

Nay, nay, it's but the great heart in you, dear.
You're like a sheep-dog growling while he guards
The flock for which he'd gladly give his life.

The Woman begins to speak in a rational but low and colorless voice.

THE WOMAN

I have been listening. * * * The man is right.
I've sinned and suffer for it. * * * Where am I?

THE HEART O' MARY

MARY

In Bethlehem, Joseph of Nazareth's house.

THE WOMAN

Bethlehem? I have heard the name somewhere.
Is it upon the road that leads to Egypt?

JOSEPH

Nay, for at Kubbet Rahil, where we found you,
The road divides: one branch goes down the valley
Toward Egypt, and the other climbs up here.

THE WOMAN

I must go * * must go to Egypt!

She attempts to lift herself from the bed.

MARY

(gently restraining her)

Rest awhile.

You are too weak to walk.

THE WOMAN

(making another effort to rise)

Nay, I must go

Before Hushai* finds me.

*Hushai = Hoo-shā-ī

THE HEART O' MARY

JOSEPH

Who is he?

THE WOMAN

My husband — cursèd be his tribe! He bought me,
A slave-wife, down in Egypt. How I loath him! * * * *
There came another and we loved. * * * Hushai
Learned all and gave me to the death-by-stones. * * * *
A soldier saved me, * * * helped me to escape. * * *
Hushai will not rest till he has fed
His balked revenge. * * * I must go on to Egypt!

MARY

You are exhausted; it will kill you.

THE WOMAN
(*pleadingly*)

Help me!
My mother's down in Egypt. * * * I must find her
Before the child comes and I die. * * * She'll rear it
When I am gone.

MARY

Rest, rest until to morrow.
You'll be the stronger for it.

THE WOMAN

There's no strength
Left in the world to me save the strong will
To save my coming child! * * * If I delay,
That too may weaken. * * * * * You've been good to me,
Too good for what I am. * * * You've vexed your man

THE HEART O' MARY

And brought a taint into your house. * * * The gods —
If there be any gods for broken women—
Reward you for it! * * * * * Let me put my hands
Upon your shoulders. * * * * * Help me up!

The Woman makes a desperate but vain attempt to rise and sinks back unconscious.

MARY

She's fainted!

Mary applies the water as before. The Woman moves and her troubled moaning begins again. She tosses about and Mary, fearing for the Child, lifts him from the bed. Elisabeth and Miriam appear at the door.

MIRIAM

They're here.

ELISABETH

They must have passed the Shepherd's Tower
Before we reached it. (*Advancing into the room*) Mary,
peace upon you.

MARY

And upon you.

ELISABETH
(*to Joseph*)

All's well, my kinsman?

JOSEPH

Aye.

THE HEART O' MARY

MIRIAM

The Child! Has he been harmed? Is he still safe?

MARY
(*puzzled*)

How should he not be safe? He was asleep
Here at my breast or in my man's strong arms
The live-long day.

MIRIAM

Yahweh the Merciful be praised!

She kisses the hand of the sleeping Child.

ELISABETH

We worried that you were so long in coming
And took the path across the barley fields,
Thinking to meet with you upon the road.

JOSEPH

We'd have been home an hour or more ago
Had we not found yon woman by the way.
She's very ill: we had to travel slowly.

MIRIAM

You met no soldiers?

MARY
(*apprehensively*)

Nay. Why do you ask?

MIRIAM
(*to Elisabeth*)

How shall we tell her?

THE HEART O' MARY

MARY

You have evil news!

ELISABETH

(*rapidly*)

Herod would slay your child and you must flee
Tonight.

MARY

(*stunned*)

My little lad, he'd slay my little lad?

MIRIAM

Aye, and to make his bloody purpose sure,
All males in Bethlehem two years or under
Will fall beneath the sword i' the second watch.
The time is almost here. You must make haste.

JOSEPH

So that is what my dream meant! While we journeyed,
Came one in vision bidding me to take
The young Child and his mother into Egypt.

MARY

Why should they slay him; what harm has he done?

ELISABETH

He is the King and our Deliverer.
Herod, a-tremble for his throne, would save it
By slaying him.

THE HEART O' MARY

MARY

(to E and M)

Quick! Help me to make ready
Our little store of goods.

JOSEPH

I'll go, meanwhile,
For two fresh donkeys. Chamor is worn out
And we shall need a second for the load.

MARY

Haste! Do not tarry.

*Joseph goes out. The tap of hoofs and
the sound of the donkey-bell die in the
distance.*

MIRIAM

(to Mary)

Sit you down and rest.
Elisabeth and I will make the pack.

*Miriam and Elisabeth spread a stout
cloth in the center of the floor and be-
gin to heap household goods upon it.*

ELISABETH

(to Mary)

You'll need whatever strength this day has left you:
Egypt is far away.

THE HEART O' MARY

Mary sits down upon the edge of the straw bed. The Woman, who has been quiet for some time, speaks again.

THE WOMAN
(to Mary)

You go to Egypt?

MARY

Yea, to save my child.

THE WOMAN

The same as me.

Elisabeth brings forward a small casket.

ELISABETH
(to Miriam)

Here is the cedar box with all the treasure
The Magi brought.

MIRIAM
(looking into the box)

Turquoise and ruddy gold,
Myrrh and the precious incense gums of Saba!

The box is added to the heap and the women continue their work.

THE WOMAN
(to Mary)

Egypt! * * *

Oh, will you take me with you?

THE HEART O' MARY

MARY

You're too weak
And we must needs go swiftly.

MIRIAM

(placing cloths on the heap)

Weave of sesh
And cloth of flax.

ELISABETH

(to Mary)

What does she say?

MARY

She asks
To go with us.

ELISABETH

She's mad to think of it.

MIRIAM

You have your child to save. Don't heed her, Mary!

THE WOMAN

I too have a child, and I must save it,

ELISABETH

Well, that's your affair, not Mary's.

MIRIAM

(to Elisabeth)

Yon is a bad one.

THE HEART O' MARY

ELISABETH

Aye, a trull, I'm thinking.

THE WOMAN

(*to Mary*)

I will not trouble you or hold you back.
See, I am stronger now. Oh let me go!

ELISABETH

(*to the Woman*)

Leave off your pleading! Don't you understand
Your going would bring death upon this Child,
In whom the hope of all unfortunates
Is centered?

MIRIAM

(*scornfully*)

What's your nameless child to him?

THE WOMAN

(*pleadingly*)

Don't listen to them! Tell me I may go.

ELISABETH

(*indignantlly*)

You'd have us save the unborn fruit of you
And let Messiah perish?

MIRIAM

Shame upon you!

THE HEART O' MARY

THE WOMAN

(to Mary)

My child is innocent. He must be born
And live till all our wrongs have been avenged!

ELISABETH

Speak firmly, Mary; tell her, once for all,
She cannot go.

MARY

(distressed)

How shall I tell her that?
My heart is torn; I don't know what to do.

The sound of donkey bells outside. Joseph enters.

MIRIAM

Here is your man, he'll tell her straight enough.

JOSEPH

Tell what?

ELISABETH

Yon baggage clamors to be taken
To Egypt. Mary's heart's too easily moved
And the wench plays upon it.

JOSEPH

(striding to the bed)

Hark you, woman,
You cannot go, and that's the end of it.

THE HEART O' MARY

THE WOMAN
(*staggering to her feet*)

Why did you bring me here? 'Twould have been kinder
To let me die i' the road by Rahil's Tomb!

She kneels to Mary.

You are a mother, you can understand.
You will not leave my babe and me to die?
Oh take me with you! * * * I will be your slave,
Your hand-maid! * * * There is kindness in your eyes.
Pity me, mother of the King, O pity me!

*Weeping, she embraces Mary's knees.
Joseph seizes her roughly by the shoulder.*

JOSEPH

Up! Out of this, you wanton of the stones.

*Mary, holding the Child on her arm,
rises and lays her free hand protectingly
upon the Woman's head.*

MARY

Peace, Joseph, let her be. I was not stoned.

JOSEPH

You were no wanton!

MARY

Ah, there was a time
You thought me one, but loved me and forgave.

THE HEART O' MARY

JOSEPH
(to Elisabeth)

All packed?

ELISABETH

All but the cording.

She gathers the corners of the cloth preparatory to tying. Joseph takes his tools from the heap and places them in a linen bag which he carries slung over one shoulder.

JOSEPH

Not my tools.

I'll put them here. A maul's a handy weapon;
I may have need of it.

Chryseis enters breathlessly.

CHRYSEIS

Not gone yet? Fly!

I can't hold Marius longer. * *

A trumpet blares in the distance

Hark, the horn
Calls to the guard! Go! Go! You've little time.

JOSEPH

Come Mary. (to E and M) Help me put this on the beast.

*Joseph takes up one side of the pack,
Miriam and Elisabeth lift the other.*

THE HEART O' MARY

THE WOMAN
(*clinging to Mary*)

Oh do not leave me!

JOSEPH
(*sternly*)

Loose her, do you hear?
You cannot go. (*to Mary*) Come, Mary, come make haste.

MARY
(*quietly*)

I have been praying and my doubts are gone.
Put down that load and let a worthier burden
Be laid upon the beast.

JOSEPH
What do you mean?

MIRIAM
Leave all the hoard behind?

ELISABETH
You'll need the gold,
Linen and myrrh to buy you food in Egypt.

MARY
We've hands to earn us bread. Two lives are more
Than all the gold and incense in the world.

JOSEPH
Has worry crazed you?

THE HEART O' MARY

THE WOMAN
(*joyfully*)

Ah you will, you'll take me?

Joseph drops the pack and motions the woman back.

JOSEPH

Be off with you! (*to Mary*) Come, let me take the child.

MARY
(*repulsing him*)

Unless you grant this woman her desire,
I will not come,

The Woman kisses the hem of Mary's garment.

ELISABETH

You don't know what you're saying!

CHRYSEIS

They'll slay the little king!

JOSEPH

She shall not come.

MIRIAM

Is this one's life more precious than your child's?

ELISABETH

Must Israel's hope be lost because this trull,
This scarlet creature, whines to you for aid?

THE HEART O' MARY

MARY

What? Do you think this babe, if he could speak,
Would ask to have his life at such a price?
He is Messiah, the Deliverer!
Think you that he could do his work for men,
Were I to red his infant hands with blood
And rear his throne in slaughter.

JOSEPH

This is folly!

MIRIAM

You could not act thus if you loved your child.

MARY

Are you a mother that you know so surely
A mother's heart. I gladly risked my life
In bearing him. I'd give it gladly now
To keep him safe. We've greater things at stake,
My lad and I, for we must save our souls.

ELISABETH

Nature demands, a mother save her child
Though the world perish. Have you lost your heart?
Even the beasts are braver for their young.

MARY

(patiently as to a stupid child)

'Tis for the brutes to blindly follow Nature,
But man, in whom has flamed a bit o' God,
Must fight with her to gain still higher things,

THE HEART O' MARY

And thwart the importunate clamors of the flesh
That he may keep his heart inviolate.

(lovingly to the sleeping Babe)

O little lad, the God who knows I love thee,
The God whose son thou art, will keep thee safe
Till thou hast compassed His high will on earth.

* * * * *

*There is a moment of stubborn silence,
then Joseph's head sinks slowly on his
breast.*

JOSEPH

(humbly)

She's i' the right. * * * 'Tis God has spoken through her.

(in a kindly voice to the Woman.)

Lean on my shoulder, I will help you mount.

*The Woman presses Mary's skirt to her
lips in dumb gratitude, and goes out sup-
ported by Joseph. Mary, the Christ
Child in her arms, follows them, but
pauses at the door and turns to speak fare-
well to the women.*

MARY

Do not be vexed with me; I only do
That which God's Love puts in the heart o' me:
And fear not for the Child, but rather pray
For those who'd do him ill.

THE HEART O' MARY

ELISABETH
(*brokenly*)

May Yahweh guard you!

*A strange unearthly radiance lights up
the mother and child as with a golden
cloud. The women kneel in adoration.*

MARY

The blessing of my son upon you all!

Tableau.

CURTAIN

Date Due

CRAFTSMEN WHO MADE THIS BOOK

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Walter Underhill, Roy Deemer, Robert Hays,
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