

BLACKFRIARS

GESTANT PUELLAE VISCERA

IS it He or is it she that most holds the eye, establishing a rhythm of the mind that moves between them? She moves after this night of bearing with the unbroken grace of girlhood. Unprostrate by what to the women of the world is heaviest labour she makes the little adjustments to smooth the harshness of the improvised cradle. Lightness she has, but she has decision also; for to no young mother has the talent of ministry come so readily as to her. It was for this she was made.

A bed from the clean fodder of domestic beasts receives the child. She is delighted to know now her baby is so wholly hers. The flesh she has dexterously cradled in the manger was formed in her under the shadowing of God the Holy Spirit by that same soul which in little vague movements now tentatively becomes expert in the hands. If she by the obvious movements of her ministry first takes the attention, it is herself, her very ministrations, that direct it further downward to the child. She is intent upon Him. He also upon her. The eyes which have not yet learned the little exercise of seeing give back in mirrors the movements of the mother. Palpably He is her son. By the living character of the features already marked in Him He is child of the house of David as is she.

This is her hour of possession. Prophecies crowding upon this moment, futurity weighing from it in its main sway keep the doors of the stable where Mary has given birth to her God. If they cannot invade the privacy of this hour who shall? *Virgo Deipara*, Godbearing virgin, she has made Him hers. He too, the Word made flesh, has confirmed the infrangible privacy of her possession. If she is happy now that her baby is born of her intimacy, flesh of her flesh, He also is happy, divine child, in a human parenthood.

Mary possesses her God: not as in the heavying months she possessed Him, herself a living ciborium: there is

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separation now, that possession may be explicit. And there is recognition. She sees that what He has taken from her was truly hers, hers the more wonderfully now that it is truly His. In the infant body of her child she sees her own privilege published: published to her own eyes first of all. But her hour is shortened to minutes. Already the shepherds are coming to adore Him.

Unnoticed until now that the hurry of the anticipated world trembles in the mind, the silence of the stable is like gold. This is the golden silence our proverb remembers, luminous and genuine: a moment to be current in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, in silences of contemplation that bear its image and superscription. Here is the mint house of the City of God; and Joseph, whom the centuries honoured by silence, we know to be its guardian.

They come. The living portals of prophets and futurity bear inwards upon Mary and her child. Before the shepherds the ages bend to them.

Content to underlie the little learnings of a human babyhood He gives them no gesture but His helplessness that throws them the more upon her. And she, who is nothing without Him, is become the monstrance of His divinity.

BERNARD KELLY.