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VISITATION

JULY 2ND. A young woman runs lightly and alone along the dangerous bridle paths of the plain, up on to the frightening tracks of the hill country. What does prudence say? A youthful, unprotected girl in a land where passions and lusts run strong, along roads where later women would only pass hidden behind veils and in the company of their menfolk? What proud audacity tempts this child here? Poor and unprotected and surpassingly attractive in her gentle modesty, almost any evil might visit her on these roads.

Yet she who has always shunned the company of men, who set aside even the traditions of her own people in her determination to live in virginity, and who only a few hours ago was startled by the entry of a strange person into her house, she walks fearlessly. Her haste is not driven by suspicion of her surroundings, but by the very power which gives her the assurance of her courage. Her step is full of strength, undaunted by the roughness or steepness of the road because the power of the most High has overshadowed her, and in that power she can never be in danger from enemies. It is not, therefore, that there is nothing to fear. The enemies of chastity and virginity lurk behind every crag in every age. But she has no fear of any such foe because her heart is burst open by this power of God's spirit. 'My soul doth magnify the Lord'. Her heart has been made great by grace, and by grace enfleshed, so that it could not

contain evil; it could no longer be constrained by evil. Her heart magnified by incarnate God can only magnify the infinite breadth and depth of God. So her steps are the steps of the Good News, the Evangelium: they are not the timid steps of flight.

The Visitation is as true today. Through Mary's *fiat* the Word of God is made flesh in men, the Mystical Body is conceived. Yet the steps we take are so often the steps of fear. We are guided continually by human prudence and our haste is nearly always the haste of flight. Most public words of men are today foreboding evil, outlining the horrors of Communism, wallowing in analysis of the decrepitude of a degenerate age. Why are things so bad? is the principal question of the day. The answers are unnumbered, but they speak always of faults and fallacies, dangers and darkness. This is almost more true of Catholic public pronouncements than of any others; and it is a great paradox.

The Good News has not lost its power. The Most High does still overshadow us. Evil and enemies are still rendered powerless by the Word which can burst our hearts to make us magnify the Lord. Yet we behave as though we have only the natural law to depend upon; and experience has taught us how vulnerable that is. Catholics seem often more gloomy than other men in their growing sense of disasters ahead. They realise how tender and unprotected the human soul has been made and they dread the enemies which can and are deflowering her. From a hatred of the Communists' ideas Catholics are apt to descend to a disgust with and a terror of the men themselves. There is little sign of magnanimity. Souls will praise the Lord in Church but they do not *magnify* the Lord because their hearts remain small, constrained by evil and its menaces. No wonder people think that the Church leads to small-mindedness and an insistence on the unimportant. Catholics do not magnify the Lord if they restrict their 'witness' to God to the moments of the celebration of Mass. The Mass is the sacrifice of the Word made flesh, of the Mystical Body, the reality of which resides in the hearts of all true Christians. Its effect is to give the strength of love of God, to send Christians into the world with courage and joy to gather men to God, to go out as Mary did full of the Good News which can still delight men of all ages and tribes.

No wonder the present age is being constantly recalled by spiritual manifestations to the importance of our Lady. Chastity in the family will never flourish without her fearlessness and instinctive trust in Providence. The liberties and cultures we struggle to preserve will be ravished from among us unless we can go forward in the same confidence, our hearts bursting with the news that the Word is made

flesh, and compelling us to magnify the Lord. The more unarmed and helpless Christians are, the surer will their step be, and their haste will be the haste of those who have heard great news. 'He hath showed might in his arm. . . . He hath put down the mighty from their seat. . . . He hath filled the hungry with good things'. A trust of this sort will make it possible for Christians to love all men, to wish to open the hearts of the enemies of the Church rather than to constrain them by force. Christians should no longer behave as timid virgins alone in a hostile world. The power of the Most High has overshadowed us and overshadows us still.

THE EDITOR.

FRUSTRATION

ITS CAUSE AND CURE

HAS there ever been such a general sense of frustration as the world is suffering from today? I think not. In Pagan times this state of mind was certainly unknown. People had bad luck, no doubt quite often, and keenly regretted it: but they never felt frustrated, for there was no basic, fundamental expectation which had got the bottom knocked out of it. Pagans knew that the gods were jealous and that a run of good luck and success was sure to break sooner or later. Or else, as the Hindu would put it, if he had a rough time, it was just his bad *Karma*; he was now merely paying in this life for the ill deeds he had committed in a previous one. Bad luck or bad *Karma* in neither case admitted of a sense of frustration.

In Christian times obviously there was no room for frustration either. What was this life but a vale of tears, a pilgrimage to one's true home in another world? And if one did not expect anything better, how could one feel frustrated? Even when Christendom came to pieces and life became more and more secularized and paganized, the concept of frustration was absent. The eighteenth century witnessed the discovery of steam power and the ushering-in of the machine age: soon God was declared to be a hypothesis which was no longer required, and man, instead of waiting for a better world beyond the grave, now began with his newly discovered powers to construct a better world right here. Steam, then electricity, then oil, were harnessed to become man's willing slaves, who would whisk him through space, would turn night into day, would make a thousandfold quicker and better the things he had hitherto been doing laboriously with his hands. Faith in progress and