

HERMAN JOSEPH.

In the ancient and celebrated city of Cologne, upon the Rhine, stands a magnificent temple of God, shaded by lime trees, called St. Mary of the Capitol, because on its site the Roman Capitol is supposed to have stood. On the south-eastern side of this building, there is an elegant door of gothic architecture, surmounted by four niches, in which the adoration of the three holy kings is represented in ancient sculpture. Near this gate, called by the people *Dreikönigenthorchen* (the wicket of the three kings), there lived, in former times, a poor but good and pious family. The husband, a shoemaker, sought to support

his little family to the best of his ability by the labour of his hands. The greatest delight of the parents was their only son Herman Joseph; a pious, good and virtuous child, who endeavoured, by obedience and filial affection, to repay all that their anxious love had performed for him.

Herman Joseph was sent by his parents to school, and never did he go thither without first offering up his infant prayer before a stone-image of the holy Virgin in the neighbouring church. On holydays, when the other boys were playing about in the streets and public places, he hastened to the image, and communicated to the heavenly child, which she bore in her arms, all that he had learned and still wished to learn. The infant Saviour listened to his narration with a kindly ear, and often invited him to come up and play with him, but it was always too high for the boy to reach the place where the image stood. When, therefore, he looked up with a sorrowful countenance, the holy mother consoled him by saying that he would one day be bigger, and would then be able to play with her blessed son.

One day, when his mother gave Herman a beautiful apple, he hastened with great joy to the sacred image, and offered it to the child, saying: "There, there is my apple for you." The blessed image then stretched forth its hand to him, and with an expression of marvellous kindness, took the apple.

Inexpressible was the delight of Herman Joseph; so that whenever he received presents either of fruit

or cakes, his first thought was to carry them to the image of the infant Jesus, who always accepted them with thanks and kindness.

Herman Joseph was now to become a shoemaker, for his parents could no longer afford the expense, and were, therefore, obliged to withdraw him from school. With a heavy heart, for he was still desirous to acquire knowledge, he stole, one afternoon, into the church to make known his sorrows to the infant Christ. And as he now looked up with tearful eyes to the child and its holy mother, our most blessed Virgin addressed him, saying : “ What ails thee, Herman Joseph ? ” Thereupon he related the cause of his grief, and stated how gladly he would continue to attend school, but that it was too great a burthen for his parents, and that he must consequently become a shoemaker.

“ That shall not be, Herman Joseph, ” answered the Virgin consolingly. “ Go to the cross-passage, there thou wilt see on the left hand of the door a stone, lift it up, and thou wilt find what thou needest. ”

With tears in his eyes, Herman Joseph thanked his protectress, and hurried to the stone, which, although somewhat ponderous, he removed without difficulty, and beneath it found what he sought. He could now continue his studies, without being any burthen to his poor parents, for whatever he wanted he found under the stone.

Never did he cease offering up thanks to his patroness, and the statue of the blessed Virgin, in S^t Mary of the Capitol, continued to be his favorite place of resort.

Herman Joseph now studied very diligently and succeeded in every thing which he undertook through the assistance of the Virgin.

When he had arrived at an age to make choice of a career, he determined to devote himself to the church, and to enter the Benedictine order. He chose the monastery of Steinfeld in the Eifel; where the pious youth was received with joy. He now applied with great assiduity to the study of Philosophy and Theology, and neither desisted day or night from his pursuit, so that he almost forgot his former patroness the holy Virgin. But some how or another all his exertions were fruitless: notwithstanding his ardent application he was unable to make any progress in the sciences. He therefore, again had recourse to prayer. Whilst, overwhelmed with the toil of the day, he lay prostrate one night before the altar in earnest supplication, a sweet sleep came over his eyes, and he dreamed a most exquisite dream.

He found himself in a garden of wondrous beauty, in which the most delightful herbs exhaled a delicious fragrance: beautiful fruits, such as he had never before beheld, glittered in profusion upon the trees, the branches of which were enlivened with birds of the most variegated plumage and melodious song. Strange music resounded through the air, intermingled with hymns of praise to the glory of the Lord, chanted by voices of heavenly sweetness, whilst refreshing rivulets meandered thro' the flowry meads. At length, the blessed Virgin of S^t Mary of the Capitol appeared before him,

leading the infant Jesus by the hand, who invited Herman with a friendly mien to come and eat with him, in return for the fine apples and other delicious things with which Herman had so often presented him.

Herman Joseph thankfully accepted the invitation, and whilst he sat at the costly table, attended by Cherubim of exceeding beauty, enjoying the heavenly repast, he awoke and the vision also vanished. But he felt himself wonderfully strengthened and completely changed in his inmost nature. His studies now proceeded at a rapid pace. Universally beloved and respected and above all celebrated for his learning, Herman Joseph continued long to live in the Abbey of Steinfeld, where he died, and where his tomb continues to be shown to this day.

In the church of *St. Maria im Capitol*, at the end of the southern aisle, is a stone relating to Herman Joseph, who was afterwards canonized, representing him as a school-boy, offering his apple to the infant Saviour. It was placed there to serve as an everlasting monument of this pious man.