

LEGENDS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

THE CHRISTIAN NAME,

“JESUS ET MARIA”—“JESUS AND MARY.”

IN ancient times there lived in a village in Hainault, between Valenciennes and Maubeuge (where,” says the old chronicle, “ God was loyally served, and his holy Mother worthily honored”), a simple country girl, whose youth and grace, candor and gentleness, attracted the general esteem of the villagers. She grew up little versed in worldly matters, but confidently walking before God in innocence and truth, not dreaming of evil.

Unendowed with the gift of memory, and still less with that of knowledge, the village maid knew but one prayer, which was JESUS AND MARY! And even when her lips ceased to move, the echo of these sweet names fluttered in her heart.*

Let us now follow the popular legend. The devil, whom our fathers-ignorant as we esteem them to have been -perceived to be at work at various times and in different circumstances in which we, with our pride of intellect, will not allow him to have any part, failing to recognize the demon who goeth about continually seeking whom he may devour - the devil then could not behold, without rage, the constant and simple piety of this poor maid, so confiding, so ingenuous, so simple, and so beautiful. He therefore sought her ruin. He enticed many amorous youths to court her. With her short and simple, but powerful prayer, she repulsed them without suspecting their object.

“ These peasants are dull, stupid fellows,” said the devil, who, like many others, judged of the talents of those employed by the success of his designs.

He roused the passions of the gallants at the court of Count William VI. The noblest of them, having heard of the charms of the young village maiden, came to the neighborhood gaily dressed, and offered her the homage of their praise. The powerful little prayer triumphed over the courtiers as it had done over the rustics. The humble heart breathed it with a firm hope. She had been told, and firmly believed, that JESUS was her God, and Mary her patroness.

“Well, this is astounding!” said the devil, “nothing remains now but for me to go and see what I can do.” He knew that innocence is defended by the Divine protection and that God guards simple hearts. He was enraged.

He then assumed human form, says the naive tradition, and presented himself before the maiden. He had the most seducing appearance and engaging manners and so lively was his conversation, that the maiden was delighted with him; and so overcome by the confusion he caused in her, that she forgot her holy prayer.

The demon secretly rejoiced; he redoubled his efforts, until believing he had secured his prey, carelessly asked the simple girl, “What is your name, fair maid ?”

Why did the devil ask this question? And what could have instigated the demand?

Mary! she replied.

At the sound of this name, the channel of grace and source of strength, the demon started, and disappeared.

Surprised and alarmed at his sudden disappearance, the poor girl felt the danger she had run. But she had been saved, and never afterwards was her short and sweet prayer “Jesus and Mary” out of her mind.