

**MARY THE MOTHER
OF JESUS, A POEM**

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Mary the Mother of Jesus, a Poem by Catharine Pringle Craig

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CATHARINE PRINGLE CRAIG

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OF JESUS, A POEM**

MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS.

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A Poem.

BY

CATHARINE PRINGLE CRAIG.



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Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

SCENE I.—IN THE HOUSE OF ZACHARIAS.

MARY, and her Cousin ELISABETH.

ELISABETH.

Why so faint-hearted, so depressed and sad?
Hast thou so soon forgot thy lofty song,
So rich in holy joy, so jubilant
In faith's deep trust, love's proud humility,
When all thy woman's heart was stirred to praise,
And in devoutest reverence thou didst own
The love which chose thee in thy lowliness,
And raised thee to a place of honour high
Above all human thought, so that thy name
Blessed among women ever shall remain?
Hast thou forgot the joy which moved thee then
When Israel's glory, by thy Child restored,

The bliss of generations yet unborn
By His strange birth secured, almost did seem
To overpower in thee the natural sense
Of personal delight in motherhood,
Cherished so fondly as the time draws near,
When in our face the unconscious babe shall smile,
And greetings fond break from the father's lips ?

MARY.

Break from the father's lips ! What mortal voice
With such a greeting can salute my Child ?
My Son, whose coming I no more can hide !
That great and mighty Lord, whose glorious reign,
Proclaimed so oft in prophecy and song,
Has filled with beauty all my earthly dreams :
That King, whose promised advent long denied,
Now in Love's power Divine fulfilled in me,
Thrills all my being with rapturous delight,
With fond desire, and love unutterable.
And yet from this deep joy strange sorrow springs.
Thou knowest of my betrothment lately held
With Joseph, son of Jacob ; like ourselves

Sprung from the royal line of Judah's kings,
Long had my youthful heart his love returned
With sweet affection, growing year by year
In happy friendship, kind companionship,
And mutual trust, to our glad bridal day,
A few short months, and sacred marriage rites
Should have secured me from all word of blame,
And underneath the shelter of his roof
Given me a wife's unquestioned claim to hold
A mother's sacred joy. Now bitter tongues
Are busy with my fame. My sisters mock
With harsh and scornful words my weak deceit.
My brother, in his pride of righteous zeal,
Rebukes with all the terrors of the law,
And mutters prayers that more like curses sound ;
Threatening me with the dreadful holy wrath
Of Great Jehovah, to confess my shame.
And I—I have not sinned ! I dare not speak
The words he bids me. I have told the truth !
And I am scorned as one who wilfully
Covers a falsehood with most impious fraud.
O cousin, hard it seems, and yet my heart

Tells me there is more sinful pride of place
Moving their anger, than the pure desire
Of honouring God, or working good for me ;
Affection makes excuse, and tries to find
The loved one blameless, when the world reviles.

ELISABETH.

And how does Joseph act ? Is he, too, changed ?
Knowing this mystery, does he hold thee true ?

MARY.

He knows, and in his sternness pitying still
What he accounts my youthful errors, minds
To break our bond, yet privately, so that
The punishment to me so justly due
For this dark sin—he doubts not of my guilt—
Fall not in harsher sentence on my head.
I have not seen him : by my sisters warned,
He comes not nigh our dwelling since the day,
When in my wondering joy I told the news
Of heavenly blessing by the angel brought,
And of my share in Israel's hope fulfilled.