

**THE ROD, THE
ROOT, AND
THE FLOWER**

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The rod, the root, and the flower by Coventry Patmore

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"There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root."

"My covenant shall be in your flesh."

LONDON
GEORGE BELL AND SONS, YORK STREET
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1895

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PREFACE

IF St. Augustine found it necessary to publish fourteen books of "Retractions," it is not likely but that I have, in the following pages, erred in some points, at least verbally; but I am the more likely to be exempt from considerable error inasmuch as I make no ridiculous pretence of invading the province of the theologian by defining or explaining dogma. This I am content with implicitly accepting; my work being mainly that of the Poet, bent only upon discovering and reporting how the "loving hint" of doctrine has "met the longing guess" of the souls of those who have so believed in the Unseen that it has become visible, and who have thenceforward found their existence to be no longer a sheath without a sword, a desire without fulfilment.

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The steam-hammer of that Intellect which could be so delicately adjusted to its task as to be capable of either crushing a Hume or cracking a Kingsley is no longer at work, that tongue which had the weight of a hatchet and the edge of a razor is silent ; but its mighty task of so representing truth as to make it credible to the modern mind, when not interested in unbelief, has been done. I only report the cry which certain "babes in Christ" have uttered: "Taste and see that the Lord is sweet." And far be it from me to pose as other than a mere reporter, using the poetic intellect and imagination so as in part to conceive those happy realities of life which in many have been and are an actual and abiding possession ; and to express them in such manner that thousands who lead beautiful and substantially Catholic lives, whether outside or within the visible Church, may be assisted in the only true learning, which is to know better that which they already know.

I should be horrified if a charge of "originality" were brought against me by any person qualified to judge whether any of the essential matter of this book were "original" or not. Mine is only a feeble endeavour to "dig again

the wells which the Philistines have filled." I am quite aware that many readers, zealously Christian, will put aside this little volume with a cry of "Ugh, ugh! the horrid thing; it's alive!" My book is perhaps open to this objection, but there is no help for it.

It may also be objected that there is no particular reason for the limits I have set myself in this volume. There might just as well have been three volumes as one, or thirty as three. I have not written more, simply because, in some matters, a part is greater than the whole, a little more than much; and the thoughts which the reader may be induced by what I have written to think for himself, will be a hundred-fold more valuable to him if so learned than if they were learned from me.

A systematic Philosopher, should he condescend to read the following notes, will probably say, with a little girl of mine to whom I showed the stars for the first time, "How untidy the sky is!" But who does not know that all philosophies have had to pay, for the blessing of system, by the curse of barrenness? Sensible people will feel shocked at my "paradoxes," which, however, are not mine, and are, as