

## Genealogy, Birth, and Marriage of St. Anne

The ancestors of St. Anne were Essenians. These extraordinarily pious people were descended from those priests who, in the time of Moses and Aaron, carried the Ark, and who received precise rules in the days of Isaias and Jeremias. They were not numerous in the beginning. Later on in Palestine they lived in communities occupying a tract about forty-eight miles long and thirty-six wide.<sup>1</sup> Some time after, they migrated to the region of the Jordan where they dwelt chiefly on Mount Horeb and on Mount Carmel.

In early times, before Isaias gathered them together, the Essenians lived scattered as pious, ascetic Jews. They neither changed nor repaired their garments until they actually fell to pieces.

They married, but observed great continence in the married state. With mutual consent, husband and wife frequently lived apart in distant huts. They also ate apart, first the husband and on his departure the wife. Even in those early times some of the forefathers of Anne and of other members of the Holy Family were found among them. From them sprang those that are called the children of the Prophets. They dwelt in the desert and around Mt. Horeb. There were many of them likewise in Egypt. For a long time war drove them from Mt. Horeb, but they were gathered together again by their Superiors. The Machabees belonged to this sect. They greatly revered Moses. They had a piece of his garment. He had given it to Aaron, and through the latter it came into the possession of the Essenians. They preserved it as a sacred thing, and I had a vision in which I saw that fifteen of the Essenians had perished in its defense. Their Superiors knew of the Mystery, the Holy Thing, in the Ark of the Covenant. The unmarried among the Essenians formed a special congregation like a religious order. They had to undergo a probation of long years before being admitted to it, and then they were received for a longer or a shorter time as the prophetic inspiration of Superiors might dictate. The married Essenians, who exercised strict vigilance over their children and household, bore to the real Essenian Community the same spiritual relationship that the Franciscan Tertiaries do to the Franciscan Order. In all affairs they were guided by the counsel of their spiritual Superior on Horeb.



The unmarried Essenians were unspeakably chaste and devout. They wore long white garments, which they kept scrupulously clean. They received children to educate. The aspirant to their rigid life had to be fourteen years old. Postulants of advanced piety were kept only one year on probation; others, two years. They lived in perfect chastity and carried on no kind of business; they exchanged their agricultural products for the various necessities of life. If anyone of their number were so unfortunate as to sin grievously, he was excommunicated, which excommunication was followed by consequences such as attended St. Peter's malediction against Ananias—he died. The Superior of the Essenians knew by divine inspiration whenever anyone had fallen into sin. I saw also some who lived only to do penance; one, for instance, stood in a sort of stiff coat, with outstretched, inflexible sleeves, lined with prickles.

They had caves on Mt. Horeb which served as cells. Attached to them by wicker-work was a large cave for general assembly. At the eleventh hour all met here for a meal. Each had before him a small loaf and cup. The Superior went around and blessed the loaf of each. The meal over, all returned to their own cells. In the large hall was an altar upon which lay blessed loaves. They were covered and intended for distribution to the poor. There were numbers of tame pigeons around which fed out of the hand. The Essenians used these doves for food, also for religious ceremonies. They uttered some words over them, and they let them flyaway. I saw them also performing the same ceremony over lambs; they spoke some words over them and then let them run into the wilderness.

I saw that they went three times every year to the Temple of Jerusalem. They had among them priests, whose special care was the preservation of the sacred vestments; they cleaned them and prepared new ones, to the purchase of which they had contributed. I saw these people engaged in agriculture, in cattle raising, and especially in gardening. That part of Mt. Horeb which lay around their cells was covered with gardens and fruit trees. I saw many of them engaged likewise in weaving and plating, and in embroidering the sacerdotal garments. I saw that they did not manufacture the silk themselves. It came in bundles for sale, and they exchanged their products for it.

In Jerusalem, they had a special dwelling place, also a particular part of the Temple assigned to them. They were objects of dislike to the other Jews. I saw them sending offerings to the Temple for sacrifice, huge bunches of grapes that two men carried between them on a pole, and lambs. But these lambs were not slaughtered; they were allowed to run. I never saw them bringing offerings for slaughter. Before going up to the Temple, they

prepared themselves by prayer, rigid fasting, disciplines, and other penitential exercises. He who, with unatoned sins, ventured to the Temple, might fear a sudden death; and indeed, this happened to some. If on their way to the Temple they met a person sick or helpless, they paused and went no further until they had in some manner assisted him. I saw them gathering herbs and preparing teas. They healed the sick .by the imposition of hands, or by stretching themselves upon them with extended arms. I saw them also exerting their healing power at a distance. If a sick person could not go himself to the Essenians, he sent to them another as his representative. All that would have been done for the sick person himself, had he really been present, was done for his representative, and the sick man was cured at the same hour.

The Superior at the time of Anne's grandparents was a Prophet named Archos. He had visions in the cave of Elias on Horeb, which visions referred to the coming of the Messiah. Archos knew from what family the Messiah would come and, when he prophesied to Anne's grandparents concerning their posterity, he saw that the time was drawing near. He knew not exactly how far off it was nor how it might still be retarded by sin; but he exhorted to penance and sacrifice.

Anne's grandfather, an Essenian, was before his marriage called Stolanus; but by his wife and in consideration of her dowry, he received the name Garescha, or Sarziri. Anne's grandmother was of Mara in the desert. Her name was Moruni, or Emorun, that is, She married Stolanus upon the advice of Archos, the Prophet, who was the Superior of the Essenians for about ninety years. He was a very holy man with whom counsel was always taken by those intending to enter upon the married state, that they might make a good choice. It seemed to me strange that this divinely enlightened Superior always prophesied respecting the female descendants, and that the ancestors of Anne, as well as Anne herself, always had daughters. It was as if the religious education of the pure vessels that were to conceive the holy children destined to be the precursors of the disciples, of the Apostles, and of the Lord Himself, devolved upon them.

I saw Emorun going to Archos before her marriage. She entered the hall on Horeb, passed thence into a side apartment, and conferred with the Superior through a grating like that of a confessional. Then Archos went up a long flight of steps to the summit of the mountain where was found the cave of the Prophet Elias. The entrance was narrow, and a few steps led down into the cave, which was neatly hollowed out. The light fell through an opening in the vaulted roof. I saw by the wall a small stone altar, upon which was the rod of Aaron and a shining chalice as of one precious stone. In this chalice lay

a portion of the Ark of the Covenant. The Essenians had come into possession of it at a time when the Ark had fallen into the hands of the enemy. The rod of Aaron stood in a little tree as in a box. The tree had yellowish leaves wreathed in spirals. I cannot say whether this little tree was really growing or whether it was artificial. It was, for instance, something like a root of Jesse. If the Superior prayed concerning a marriage, he took the rod of Aaron into his hand. If the union in question would contribute to Mary's lineage, the rod put forth a bud from which sprang one or more blossoms bearing the sign of the choice. The forefathers of Anne were legitimate descendants of this lineage, and their chosen daughters had been by such signs designated. New blossoms burst forth whenever a chosen daughter was to enter the married state. The little tree with its spiral leaves was like a genealogical table, like the root of Jesse, and by it could be seen how far the advent of Mary was distant. There were on the altar, also, some small bunches of herbs in pots. Their flourishing or withering denoted something. I saw all around on the walls grated compartments wherein were preserved ancient holy bones very beautifully encased in silk and wool. They were the bones of Prophets and holy Israelites who had lived upon the mountain and in its vicinity. I saw such bones in the cells or caves of the Essenians. They used to place lighted lamps and flowers before them, and there offer prayers.

When Archos prayed in this cave, he was vested precisely like the High Priest in the Temple. His clothing consisted of about eight pieces: First, he placed upon his breast a kind of broad scapular such as Moses used to wear next to his person. It had an opening in the middle for the neck and fell in equal length before and behind. Over this, he wore a white alb of twisted silk bound by a cincture that fastened also the wide stole which, crossing on the breast, reached down to the knee. Over the alb was a kind of chasuble of white silk. It reached to the ground behind, and had two little bells at the lower edge. Around the neck was a standing collar buttoned in front. The beard was parted over this collar. Last of all came a small, shining mantle of white untwisted silk. It was fastened in front by three stone clasps upon which something was engraved, From either shoulder toward the breast ran a row of six precious stones, upon which also signs were engraved. On the back of it and in the center, was a shield upon which were inscribed some letters. This mantle was also adorned with fringes, tassels and artificial fruit. On one arm he wore a short maniple. The headdress was of white silk rolled in puffs one above another and ending in a silken tuft. Over the forehead was a plate of gold set with precious stones.

Archos prayed prostrate on the earth before the altar. I saw that he had a vision of a rose tree with three branches springing from Emorun. On each

branch was a rose, and that of the second was marked with a letter. He saw also an angel writing letters on the wall. In consequence of this vision, Archos told Emorun that she should marry her sixth suitor, that she should bring forth a chosen child who would bear a sign and who would be a vessel of the approaching Promise. The sixth suitor was Stolanus. The married pair did not dwell long in Mara; they removed to Ephron. Again I saw their daughters, Emerentia and Ismeria, consulting with Archos. He commanded them to embrace the married state, for they also were cooperating vessels of the Promise. The elder one, Emerentia, married a Levite named Aphras, and became the mother of Elizabeth, who gave birth to John the Baptist. A third daughter was named Enue. Ismeria was the second daughter of Stolanus and Emorun. She had at her birth the mark that Archos, in his vision of Emorun, had seen on the rose of the second branch. Ismeria married Eliud, of the tribe of Levi. They were wealthy, as I judged from their great household. They owned many herds, but they kept nothing for themselves, they gave all to the poor. They dwelt in Sephoris, four leagues from Nazareth, where they possessed property. They had property also in the valley of Zabulon whither they used to remove in the warm season. After Ismeria's death, Eliud took up his abode there permanently. Joachim's father with his family had likewise settled in the same valley.

The eminent chastity and mortification of Stolanus and Emorun had descended to Ismeria and Eliud. Ismeria's first daughter was called Sobe. She married Solomon, and became the mother of Mary Salome who married Zebedee and gave birth to the future Apostles, James the Greater and John. When at Sobe's birth, the sign of the Promise was not found on her, her parents were greatly troubled. They journeyed to the Prophet on Horeb. He exhorted them to prayer and sacrifice, and promised them consolation. For about eighteen years they were without children, and then Anne was born. Both father and mother had the same vision one night upon their couch. Ismeria saw an angel near her writing on the wall. On awakening she told her husband, who also had had the same vision, and both still saw the written character on the wall. It was the letter M. At her birth Anne brought with her into the world the same sign upon the region of the stomach.

Anne was especially dear to her parents. I saw her as a child. She was not strikingly beautiful, though prettier than some others. Her beauty was not to be compared with Mary's, but she was extraordinarily pious, childlike, and innocent. She was the same at every age, as I have seen, as a maiden, as a mother, and as a little old grandmother. Whenever I happened to see a very childlike old peasant woman, I always thought: "She is like Anne."

When in her fifth year, Anne was taken to the Temple as Mary was later.

There she remained twelve years, returning home in her seventeenth year. Meantime, her mother had had a third daughter, whom she named Maraha, and Anne found also in the paternal house a little son of her eldest sister Sobe, who was called Eliud. Maraha afterward inherited the paternal property of Sephoris and became the mother of the subsequent disciples, Arastaria and Cocharia. The young Eliud was afterward the second husband of Maroni, of Naim.

One year later, Ismeria fell sick and died. She called her household around her deathbed, gave them her parting advice, and appointed Anne as their future mistress. Then she spoke alone with Anne, saying that she must marry, for that she was a vessel of the Promise. About eighteen months after, Anne, then in her nineteenth year, married Heli, or Joachim, This she did in obedience to the spiritual direction of the Prophet. On account of the approach of the Saviour's advent, she married Joachim of the House of David, for Mary was to belong to the House of David; otherwise she would have had to choose her spouse from among the Levites of the tribe of Aaron, as all of her race had done. She had had many suitors and, at the time of the Prophet's decision, she was not yet acquainted with Joachim. She chose him only upon supernatural direction.

Joachim was poor and a relative of St. Joseph. Joseph's grandfather Mathan had descended from David through Solomon. He had two sons, Joses and Jacob. The latter was Joseph's father. When Mathan died, his widow married a second husband named Levi, descendant of David through Nathan. The fruit of this marriage was Mathat, the father of Heli, or Joachim. Joachim was a short, broad, spare man. St. Joseph, even in his old age, was very handsome compared with him. However, in disposition and morals, Joachim was a superior man. Like Anne, he had something very distinguished about him. Both were true Israelites; but there was something in them that they themselves knew not, a yearning, a wonderful earnestness. I have rarely seen either of them laugh, although in the early part of their married life they were not particularly grave. Both possessed a calm, uniform disposition; even in early youth, they were something like sedate old people.

They were married in a small town that possessed only one obscure school, and only one priest presided at the ceremony. Courtship in those days was carried on very simply. The lovers were very reserved. They consulted each other on the subject and regarded their marriage merely as something inevitable. If the young girl said yes, her parents were satisfied; if no, and could she give good reasons for her refusal, they looked upon the affair as ended. First the matter was settled before the parents, and then the promises were made before the priest in the synagogue. The priest prayed in

the sanctuary before the rolls of the Law, the parents in their accustomed place, while the young couple in an adjoining apartment deliberated in private over their intention and contract. When they had taken their determination, they declared it to their parents. The latter again conferred with the priest, who now went to meet the couple outside the sanctuary. The nuptial ceremony was celebrated the next day.

Joachim and Anne lived with Eliud, Anne's father. There reigned throughout his household the severe usages and discipline of the Essenians. The house lay in the environs of Sephoris. It formed one of a group of houses of which it was the largest. Here Joachim and Anne dwelt seven years.

Anne's parents were in good circumstances. They had numerous herds and a house handsomely furnished with beautiful carpets, table furniture, etc. The servants, men and women, were many. I never saw them engaged in agriculture, but herding cattle on the pasture grounds. Ismeria and Eliud were pious, devout, charitable, and just. They frequently divided their herds and other possessions into three parts: one part for the Temple, whither they drove it themselves and where it was received by the servants of the Temple; a second part they gave to the poor or to their needy relatives, some of whom were generally present to receive it; and the third part they reserved for their own use. They lived very frugally and gave to all that asked help. When I saw all this, even in childhood, I thought: Giving lasts long. He who gives gets back double, for I perceived that the third part again rapidly increased. It was soon so large that it could be again divided into three parts as before. They had many relatives who upon all solemn occasions assembled at their house. But I never even on those occasions saw much feasting. Food was indeed distributed among the poor, but grand entertainments I never saw. At these assemblies the guests generally reclined in circles on the ground, and conversed of God with earnest expectancy. It frequently happened that some of these relatives were bad people. They looked angry and displeased when Eliud and Ismeria, full of heavenly longing, glanced upward as they spoke of God. But to these evil-minded people, the holy couple were ever kind; they never omitted to invite them to their reunions, and they gave twice as much to them as to others. I used to see that they, with bitter feelings, impatiently coveted what Eliud and Ismeria gave them with so much good will. It was no uncommon thing for the holy couple to give sheep, sometimes one, sometimes more, to the poor belonging to them.

Here in her father's house, Anne gave birth to her first daughter, who was called Mary. I saw her full of joy over her newborn babe. It was a lovely child. I saw it growing stout and strong. It was gentle and pious, and the parents

loved it. But yet, there was something about the child that I could not understand, something that indicated that it was not the one looked forward to by the parents as the fruit of their union. There was always a shade of trouble and anxiety about them, as if they had offended God, therefore they did penance, lived in continence, and multiplied their good works. I often saw them going apart to pray.

They had lived in this way with their father, Eliud, seven years (which I could guess by the age of their first child), when they resolved to withdraw from the paternal house. Their design was to live in privacy, to begin their married life anew and, by performing actions pleasing to God, to draw down His benediction upon their union. I saw them take this resolution in the paternal home and I also saw Eliud setting aside a portion of his riches for them. The herds were divided, oxen, asses, and sheep set apart for the new household. The animals named were much larger than those of our country. On the asses and oxen were packed all kinds of movables, furniture and clothing. The good people were as skillful in packing as were the animals ready to receive and carry away their loads.

We do not pack our goods so skillfully on our wagons as these people could upon their beasts. They had beautiful vessels, all more highly ornamented than those of the present day. Beautiful, fragile, curiously-shaped pitchers, upon which were all kinds of ornamentation like carving, were stuffed with moss, enveloped in wrappings, fastened to the ends of a strap, and hung over the back of the animals upon which were laid bundles of colored covers and garments. Some of the covers were embroidered in gold and were very costly. Father Eliud gave the departing couple a small, but heavy lump of something in a bag; it was like a lump of gold, of precious metal. When all was ready, the servant men and maids formed in procession and drove the herds and beasts of burden before them toward the new dwelling, about five or six leagues distant.

The house stood upon a hill between the vale of Nazareth and the valley of Zabulon. A terebinthine walk led to it. In front of it, on a bare, stony foundation, was a courtyard surrounded by a low stone wall, upon or behind which grew a hedge. On one side of this courtyard were sheds for the cattle. The door of the house, which was tolerably large, was in the center of the building and hung upon hinges. Through it one entered a kind of anteroom, which extended the whole breadth of the house. Right and left of the hall were small apartments cut off by lightly woven partitions, or screens, that could be removed at pleasure. It was in this hall that the principal meals were laid on feasts as, for instance, when Mary was taken to the Temple. Opposite the entrance, a light wicker door led from the hall into a passage

upon either side of which were four apartments lying right and left. They were separated by movable wicker partitions, the upper part ending in gratings. These partitions were so placed as to form a rounded, or rather a kind of triangular space, in the middle of whose central side, just opposite the door, was the fireplace. Behind the two oblique sides, right and left, were other chambers. In the center of this kitchen there hung from the ceiling a many-branched lamp. Around the house were fields and orchards.

When Joachim and Anne entered their new abode, they found everything in order, owing to the diligence of the domestics who had preceded them. They had unpacked all things as nicely and carefully as they had packed them, and everything was in its place. Anne's servants were so handy, they did everything quietly and intelligently. They were not like the servants of our day, who have to be told every single thing.

And now the holy couple began here a new married life. They made a sacrifice to God of all the preceding years, and began again as if they had only just now been united. Their only aim was by a life pleasing to God, to attract upon themselves that blessing for which alone they sighed. I saw them both going to and fro among their herds. They divided them into three parts, and drove the best to the Temple. The poor received the second part, and the worst was retained for themselves. They acted in the same manner with all that belonged to them.