

## Lillie Tower

The Queen was in the garden!

By J. J. GALVIN

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**W**OODS HOLE is a little seaside town set like a dimple right in the elbow of Cape Cod. I went there on a Saturday afternoon a few years back, as I was to say Mass next morning at the little church of St. Joseph for the summer visitors. The pastor assured me there would be no confessions until after supper, so I went for a stroll about the town. Now I've been to many towns in New England and New York and in tropical Puerto Rico, but I still remember Woods Hole as though it were but last week-end that I were there.

To the casual visitor Woods Hole is like some toy town whittled from whalebone and sealed in a glass bottle; it is that quaint! Huge elms shelter the cool streets and hardly stir their shadows when a breeze clips in from the Sound. People seem almost to walk on tiptoe. Children patter softly on bare feet. Down at the wharves you'll see old salts mending their nets in silence like monks bending over their rosaries. Even the seagulls, catching the spirit of the place, wheel noiselessly over

the quiet red buildings of the U. S. Marine Biological Laboratory. And on nearby cottages pink roses go quietly about their business of rambling up shingled walls and half-way over the low-pitched roofs. You may hear occasional voices at Sam Cohoon's Market where people buy black lobsters and quohoags and all sorts of sea-food caught fresh that morning, but the voices are always subdued. In short, except for the train that bustles down from Boston twice daily, and the tootle of the boat from Martha's Vineyard that comes to meet it, there is no noise to speak of at all. It is perhaps the quietest town in the whole world.

However, there was another sound I recall; and perhaps it was the general quiet of the town that made it such a surprise! I was skirting a small inlet on the way back to the rectory when suddenly out of nowhere two bells began to ring; one high and brittle, the other deep as slow thunder. Looking up and across the quiet inlet I saw a stone tower at the water's edge. Somehow I had not no-

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ticed it before . . . but now it dominated the whole scene; and on second look I saw that the Church was right behind it. The two bells continued their melodious rebuttal with a teasingly familiar rhythm. And suddenly I knew. It was the Angelus. Six o'clock and time for supper.

Over the supper-table the pastor told me how the donor: a lady from Chicago who spends her summers at Woods Hole, had built the tower and donated it to the parish. Back in 1933 the Bishop had come down from Fall River on a Sunday afternoon to bless the bells and dedicate the Tower. The bells were christened *Pasteur* and *Mendel*, after the two eminent Catholic scientists. And for the occasion the Choral society of the Marine Biological Laboratories came over and sang Latin and Orthodox hymns in the little garden nearby. For the lady it was a dream come true; for the whole idea was her own; the stone bell-tower, the lending library; and the Lady-garden nearby. Just why she chose a bell-tower, and why *Mendel* and *Pasteur* ring the Angelus three times a day in the quiet little town is best expressed by herself: "It was to remind the scientists who study at the Marine Biological Laboratory across the inlet that there is another and valid aspect of life."

Next morning after Mass I strolled across the street to the Tower; pushed open the rustic gate and walked into the little garden. It was not large. A hedge of yew shielded it from the street and passersby, so that you felt completely cut off from the world. It was like a dream-world. You could hear the seawater supping gently at the stone blocks of the outer wall. Beyond was the quiet inlet with yachts at anchor, and perhaps a boy skippering a row-boat across the placid water. A stone statue of Our Lady stood among the flowers close to the sea, and two small birds with carillions in their gullets, hopped on the crown of the madonna's head and sang.

It was no ordinary garden, though at first glance you might think so. It teemed with red roses, orange marigolds, campion, fuchsia and blue forget-me-nots. Many called it an old fashioned garden. But actually it was much more. It was intended to be a *Lady-garden*: perhaps the first of its kind in the New World! It was to cater only to such flowers as bore the name of Mary, or suggested some trait or mystery in our Lady's life.

Posted on a convenient placard was a list of the flowers the lady hoped some day to assemble here between the bell-tower and the



stone madonna. Names culled from the merry days when England was Mary's England . . . when all the flowers of the field were named after her! Scanning the list, you suddenly realized that even the flowers you could name, were actually parading under false colors. Forget-me-not and campion and fuchsia were not their names at all. It came as a revelation that foxglove and honeysuckle were our *Lady's Fingers*. And what a world of difference between a name like white campion and our *Lady's Candles*; between forget-me-nots and *Eyes of Mary*! Who would ever think of calling morning glories our *Lady's Mantle*? or spiderwort, our *Lady's Tears*? It struck you that somewhere between Shakespeare's England and today some shameful thing had happened: that even the flowers should disown the Mother of God to barter their common Baptism for a new name.

Somehow about this little patch of soil there was something of a battle-cry. It was like the launching of some shining new crusade; to win back for our Lady the flowers of the field. For in this garden the flowers were to be known and called by their Christian names. Would you believe it, there is a list of over five hundred flowers named after the

Mother of God! So far but a small number of them were growing here. But it was a beginning. And brightly the lady looked forward to a day when "the right man" would turn up . . . a gardener who would make it the passion of his life to choir our Lady's glories in blossoms, so that with each week a new crop of lady-flowers will open from the mid-weeks of March till the first frost. Lady's Lace and Mary's Fan. Lady Cushion, Lady Smock and Lady's Mantle. St. Mary's Seed and Lady Never-fade. Lady Comb, Madonna Lily, Lady's Ear-drops, Lady Pins and Lady's Looking-glass. The casual visitor could all but pray the litany of Loretto, simply by naming the flowers at his feet!

I walked over to the stone tower at the other end of the garden. A bronze door was open, leading into a small room that might almost have been the cell of some hermit monk from Lerins or Iona. The stone floor clean-swept, with three small windows to let in sunlight and a glimpse of the sea. On the wall were the miniature original models of the Stations of the Cross done by Alfeo Faggi for the Church of St. Thomas the Apostle, Chicago. Behind the door was a kneeling bench. It was as though the monk who dwelt there had just gone



into the garden to pick some herbs, or had rowed across the water to some island to visit a brother hermit and discuss the things of God.

By a happy anachronism there was also a rack of books there; and a table inviting you to sit and read. A sign assured you that it would be permissible to take home a book you liked . . . but to return it before the end of summer . . . (before the monk returned). Here were the choicest of the Christian classics: St. Augustine and Pascal and Abbot Columba Marmion. Bernard of Clairvaux and Thomas of Aquin and Hilaire Belloc. Chaucer and Gilbert Chesterton, Dante and Maritain; John of the Cross, Paul Claudel and Teresa of Avila.

What surprises awaited the curious who would pick up these books . . . what sparkling glimpses of Christian truth! I was thumbing through the poems of Francis Ledwidge, the peasant-poet of Ireland when a strange racket sounded in the stone vault. *Mendel* and *Pasteur* were beginning their musical arguments. Twelve noon. The two bells were ringing the Angelus again: the tidings of the Angel to our Lady . . . and reminding the quiet town of Woods Hole and the Marine Biological Laboratories that God had become a man to save us all. After the Angelus, I hurried out of the Tower, through the Lady-garden, and back across the street.