

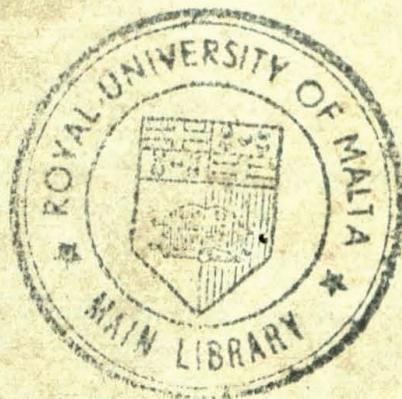
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THE ASSUNTA OF GOZO.

BY

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The Assunta of Gozo.

THE predilection which our Lady has always shown in her manifestations for the humble and obscure things of this world was strikingly illustrated by the story of the supernatural communications which she held some nine years ago with a peasant man and woman at the sanctuary *ta* (or of) *Pinu*, in the island of Gozo.

There is much in the history and character of the Gozitans to account for why our Lady should have thus singled them out for her favours. When we consider that for nearly a century the Maltese Islands have been exposed to all the evils attending garrison and seaport town life, the brightness of the faith and the goodness of the lives of the majority of their inhabitants is indeed something wonderful. Their immunity from corruption may be owing to an element in the lives of both Maltese and Gozitans, which does not exist in most of the other blessed countries where the Catholic Faith and traditions have remained untouched, and have been suffered to permeate the lives of their people. To the Maltese and Gozitans heresy is a living reality, a horrible monster dwelling at their very doors, meeting them at every turn, and which they detest with a passion

which rules their lives. They live in the midst of daily acts of irreverence, unconscious, indeed, on the part of the perpetrators, but none the less horribly real to those who witness them. It is true that the common sense of the Maltese attributes these, as well as all other acts opposed to the Catholic Faith, to the grossest and blindest ignorance, which inspires them with a profound pity, with something in it akin to contempt, for the dominant race which has settled down on them. This experience serves not only to quicken their faith, and render it proof against the evil and chilling influences which surround them, but also introduces an element of reparation into their devotions, probably unknown to other Catholic people who are happy enough to know the monster, heresy, only by hearsay.

Toil, ceaseless toil, only interrupted by the scrupulous observance of the holidays of the Church, has been another preservative against the evil influences in the midst of which these people live. Probably nowhere under the sun is the curse pronounced on Adam and his sons more exemplified than in Malta and Gozo; for man's daily bread has, as it were, to be wrung out of the hard rock by the sweat of his brow. By nature the islands which have been given to these people to be their home, are mere barren rocks, and but few natural aids are bestowed on those who spend their lives in cultivating them. It is true that the reward of their labours is great, as is testified by the productions of the islands, but it is only by dint of the hardest and most unceasing work that the stony, stubborn soil consents to yield

its fruits. This constant toil, blessed as it has been to them both spiritually and temporally, has impressed a certain matter-of-fact solidity on the character of the people which is, as it were, typified by the sombre hue of the costumes of both men and women—a hue out of keeping with the blue sky and blue sea by which they live surrounded.

Such are these islanders: good, faithful, hard-working, and loyal children of the Church. What wonder, then, that our Lady should have chosen their home wherein to manifest herself and her power. Gozo, the island of her special choice, does not, happily for itself, possess those natural features which render Malta so valuable to the British Government, and has, therefore, been less exposed to its Anglicizing influences. In the goodness of the Gozitans there is a simplicity which is beautifully childlike, and which probably attracted our Lady's favours to them especially. For centuries their love for her has been tender and faithful; and now that she has condescended to speak in their midst they are very happy.

The sanctuary *ta Pinu*, the little chapel where, about nine years ago, our Lady spoke from the picture of her Assumption, stands isolated in a large stony stretch of field, in the parish of Garbo. It is a small, square, and unpretentious oratory, built of the stone of the country, and might, at first, be taken for one of the many boulders of rock which lie about, so insignificant an item of detail is it in the dazzling mixture of white and blue which makes up the land-

scape in these islands. To any one who knows the utter absence of all natural verdure in the Maltese Islands it would be superfluous to say that neither tree nor any scrap of vegetation, save the crops in the fields, tend to conceal or give charm to the severe isolation of the sanctuary, standing solitary, as it does, in the middle of its scald plain of stony fields, surrounded at a distance by an amphitheatre of strangely shaped, square-topped hills, between which gleams the indescribably blue Mediterranean.

So hidden in its unostentatious publicity is the sanctuary, that, unless previously told the story of what took place there, no chance passer-by would think of turning from the road, down the beaten track which leads to it across the field.

Neither inside the little chapel is there anything (except the numberless *ex votos* which now cover its rough walls, and which tell their own tale) to seize the attention or distract it from the miraculous picture of the Assumption which hangs over the altar, and faces you as you enter. It was, as is testified by an inscription on it, painted in 1619 by Amedeo Perugino, in memory of one Pino Gauci, to whom the chapel owes its present name of *ta Pinu* or "of Pino;" but whether it be an original painting, or the copy of some unknown original, is a mere matter of conjecture.

The picture itself would anywhere attract attention and inspires a strong feeling of devotion as you gaze at it. Our Lady with head inclined, eyes cast upward, and hands joined in prayer, is borne up on the heads of three cherubs. Four angels, two on

either side, support her with their hands, gazing, as they do so, intently on her face, while the two upper ones are placing a crown on her head. Down below are seen the empty tomb, and six of the Apostles. In spite of the extreme stiffness of the composition as a work of art, there is an aspect of calm devotion, devoid of all mere sentiment, in the figures and countenances of both our Lady and the attending angels, which grows under the gaze of the beholder, and leaves a memory behind it.

The first building of the chapel cannot be traced, though it is supposed to date from the fifteenth century. All that is positively known is that a certain tradition of sanctity has always been attached to it; and that its titular feast, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, has, through all the vicissitudes of its history, been kept with whatever solemnity the times admitted of, certain benefactors having at various times bequeathed sums of money for its proper observance.

The vicissitudes in its history have been extraordinary. Five different times since 1554 it has been allowed to fall into a state of ruin, and five times a decree from the Bishop of the day has been issued for its total demolition. Each time, however, it survived, and some benefactor came forward with the offer to rebuild and re-endow it. Once, tradition says, its destruction was so nearly consummated that the workmen were actually on the spot to carry out the Bishop's orders. But accident after accident occurred to those who laid a hand on the building, and the work of destruction being thus stayed, the

peasants of the neighbourhood came in a body and built up the chapel, stone by stone, with their own hands. At some periods it was left in a state of complete desolation ; at others, Mass was celebrated on days of obligation, but as, from its isolated position, the Masses said there were of no practical benefit to people as well supplied as are the Gozitans with parish churches, they were discontinued. In the middle of this present century an old priest, Don Giuseppe Cassar by name, took up his abode near the chapel out of devotion to Our Lady *ta Pinu*, for the purpose of saying Mass there every day ; but after his death the building was suffered to fall into its former state of neglect and desertion, and was kept locked up. For the benefit, however, of those few whom devotion might prompt to visit our Lady, the key of the door was left under a stone in the field outside.

There is an unmarried woman of the village of Garbo, by name Carmela Grima, whose devotion to our Lady used to move her to visit the deserted sanctuary whenever she could find time to do so. Time, however, was a scarce commodity with Carmela, for she was part owner, with her sister, of a piece of land, which they cultivated with their own hands, and on the produce of which they depended for a living. This, together with the distance at which the chapel lay from her home, prevented her from going to *ta Pinu* as often as her heart prompted her ; still, she felt such sorrow at the thought that our Lady should be neglected,

that she made every effort in her power to visit her.

One day in June, 1883, about ten o'clock in the morning, Carmela was returning from her work in the fields, along the road from which branches out the foot-path leading to the chapel, reciting, as was her wont, certain favourite prayers as she walked along. She was, that morning, in a hurry to reach her home, and had no intention to pay a visit to our Lady in her sanctuary, but as she approached the foot-track she heard a voice, proceeding apparently from the chapel, which called out to her three distinct times: "Come! come! come!" She looked all round to see if there were any one in sight who could have thus spoken, and, seeing no one, she stopped on her course with a feeling of awe. As she paused the voice continued: "Come to-day, for you will not be able to come back for a whole year." Carmela now felt but little doubt that it was our Lady who had spoken to her from the chapel, and she obeyed the summons with somewhat trembling steps, walking, according to her own account given later, very slowly. When she reached the chapel she looked cautiously through a little opening which was left in the door, fully expecting to see our Lady in person within; but the little chapel was, as usual, empty and deserted. Carmela then took the key from under the stone where it was kept, entered the chapel, and knelt down before her favourite picture.

She prayed for some time, experiencing an unusual interior joy; and, when she had finished

the prayers which she usually said, she waited on her knees, wondering what more she ought to say. So convinced was she of our Lady's presence in the chapel that, with the utmost simplicity, she waited to receive directions from her. Then the same voice which she had heard before, and which apparently proceeded from the picture, spoke again and said : "Say three Hail Marys in honour of the three days that my body remained in the tomb." Carmela repeated the required prayers with unhesitating simplicity, and then, after waiting a little while, and hearing no more, she left the chapel, locking it behind her as usual, and returned home. For some unexplained reason she was unable to return to *ta Pinu* for a whole year.

Carmela treasured what she had heard in her heart, keeping silence about it for two years. At the end of that time she was moved to open her heart to a youth of holy life, named Francesco Portelli, who shared her devotion to Our Lady *ta Pinu*. When she asked him whether he had ever heard anything unusual while praying before her picture during his frequent visits to the sanctuary, he told her in confidence that on six different occasions our Lady had spoken to him from her picture, and had exhorted him to have great devotion to the wounds on our Lord's shoulder, caused by bearing the Cross. Having confided in each other, these two good people kept the secret between them for nearly two more years.

To any one who knows the nature and habits of the people of Gozo, this silence of itself has some-

thing of the supernatural about it. It has been said, by one who ought to know, that it may be assumed that a minimum of mortal sins are committed in Gozo; and this may account for the fact that these simple childlike people have no secrets among themselves. Every action, every word, and even the very thoughts of each individual, seem by almost common consent to be the property of every one else, and are discussed with a kindly inquisitiveness. What you say and do in your secret chamber is by some mysterious process known all over the place, and your neighbour is better posted in the details of your daily life than you are yourself. Therefore, that Carmela and Francesco should not only have held their tongues, but that their secret should not have been divined in spite of themselves, is wonderful, and gives the impression that they must have received some supernatural intimation to keep silence.

The idea may occur to the English reader which has been discarded almost without hesitation in Gozo and Malta, viz., that the alleged communications from our Lady received by Carmela and Francesco were a fabrication of their own. Not only do the graces, both spiritual and temporal, which have been received at *ta Pinu*, disprove the theory that the devotion could have been founded on a lie, but the simple, practical Christianity of both Carmela and Francesco equally forbid such a thought. The impiety of attributing words to our Lady which she never spoke, and still more to affirm the same on oath before the Bishop, are sins which could scarcely be committed

by these simple people, whose lives are as transparent as the day, and known to every one in the island.

Although they maintained their silence, it was not God's will that the favours bestowed by the Blessed Virgin should remain a secret. Early in 1887, nearly four years after our Lady had first spoken to Carmela, vague rumours of the revelations then made began to spread themselves abroad. A certain number of the more curious-minded visited the chapel, but found nothing to reward their curiosity save four bare walls, and the picture which had first kindled Carmela's devotion, hanging, as of yore, without even a lamp burning before it. The key still lay under the stone in the field, and few except Carmela and Francesco had taken the trouble to remove it from its hiding-place during those four years. In spite, however, of the discouraging aspect of affairs, the rumours that our Lady had manifested herself in an extraordinary manner at *ta Pinu*, spread more and more, and a spontaneous, irresistible burst of devotion ran like wildfire over the whole island. Long before the crops made green the stony plain in which the chapel stood, crowds flocked to it from all quarters, and the field encircling it has been described as simply black with the kneeling multitude. First came processions of families and friends, reciting the Rosary—ever the favourite devotion in Malta and Gozo—and to these there succeeded more formal processions of whole villages headed by their clergy. All through the spring and summer of 1887 the sound of litanies and canticles filled the air from

the first hour of dawn till late at night. It was a movement which no human power could stay.

For some time past the parish priest of Garbo had heard rumours of the alleged manifestations at *ta Pinu*, and had appealed to the Bishop for instructions how to act. The only answer he received was: "Wait! If there is any truth in what you have heard, the Blessed Virgin will find the means to let us know it." Now, however, he was besieged, not only by his own flock, but by strangers from all parts of the island, with inquiries and demands for some sanction for the growing devotion. Again he went to the Bishop for instructions how to meet the torrent of devotion.

Seeing that the people were taking the devotion into their own hands, the Bishop, Mgr. Pace, now Archbishop of Malta, directed the parish priest to send for Carmela and Francesco, and to examine them separately, taking down their depositions on oath, while he himself would examine them afterwards.

Carmela, when called on to speak, broke her long silence, and told her story simply, adhering to one unvarying version, in spite of the efforts of, first the *parroco*, and afterwards the Bishop, to puzzle her and make her contradict herself. Francesco's silence was more obstinate, and he refused to break it until required to do so by the Bishop in person. Even then he was laconic in his replies, and confined himself to briefly answering the questions put to him on oath, his answers being of a nature to substantiate the story as told above.

In a second inquiry held by the Bishop three years later, in 1890, Carmela adhered exactly to her narrative as told in 1887; but in this later examination it transpired that during the innumerable visits which she had paid to the sanctuary since our Lady first spoke to her in 1883, she had received several further communications from her. The substance of these was taken down on oath by order of the Bishop, but as far as the outer world is concerned, Carmela's silence remains unbroken, for the documents containing these later revelations, several of which are reported to take the form of prophecies, remain sealed and locked up from public view.

Such is the story. In spite of the publicity of their solemn attestation, and in spite of the increasing crowds which flocked to *ta Pinu* from Gozo, from Malta, and from beyond their shores, Carmela and Francesco still led, or, rather, are still leading, their hidden life as if nothing had occurred to single them out for observation. So completely has Francesco succeeded in obliterating himself, that though he still lives and labours at Garbo, and though his mother was the first person to be cured by Our Lady *ta Pinu*, his name is scarcely mentioned, and it is well-nigh impossible to obtain any details of his present state.

Carmela takes no special pains to conceal herself, being, all the same, most effectually concealed by the hidden simplicity of her life. She still lives on her little homestead with her sister, both, in the eyes of

the world, being equally plain, middle-aged, toil-hardened, sun-tanned women. But those who have the happiness of seeing her, even though they cannot converse with her without the aid of an interpreter (for her own native Gozo tongue is the only language she speaks), feel that they are in the presence of one who has seen that which they themselves have not seen. There is a certain expression in her eyes, a certain indescribable pallor on her sunburnt countenance which startle those who behold her and make them realize the proximity of more than their senses are aware of. But her manners are perfectly natural, cheerful, and unself-conscious. As we saw her, standing under the archway of her old home, with its background of garden composed principally of rocks and prickly pears, standing, clad in her coarse blue cotton gown and coarser straw hat tied under her chin, no old-world lady of high estate could have surpassed her in the beautiful courtesy of her manners, as she did all in her power to make us understand by dumb show that we were welcome under her roof. If you ask her to pray for you, she is prompt with her promises to do so, though a little astonished at the pointed manner in which the request is made. If asked to pray for any specified intention, she turns her head a little on one side, and after a few moments' silence, gives her opinion, simply, whether the petition will be granted or not. Though quite ready to repeat and talk about all those things connected with *ta Pinu* which are now known to everybody, if any attempt is made to draw further information from her, she responds

by a strange mumbling movement of her lips which most effectually checks any further questioning on the part of the most inquisitive.

Though strangers may feel a reverence for her which might make them raise her toil-hardened hand to their lips, did they not know what pain and confusion it would cause her, those in the midst of whom she lives, make little or no fuss about her. She is to her fellow-villagers just simply Carmela Grima, the owner of certain fields, and no more. No doubt they consider her a very fortunate person to have been favoured with a personal communication from our Lady, but this favour does not change her in their eyes, although they all regard her as a very holy person. Our Lady is such a living reality to them that they do not regard a supernatural manifestation of herself as anything much out of the way. She might speak to any of them any day, and Carmela is very fortunate to have been the one chosen! "She is a good girl," is how Carmela is, in quaint English, described, "but then," it is added, "there is another good girl in such and such a place, and another somewhere else."

Numberless graces and favours now began to be received by those who flocked to the sanctuary, and invoked Our Lady *ta Pinu*; and many cures, professedly miraculous, were obtained at the shrine. Of these latter, after careful examination, a register has been kept by order of the Bishop, though the ecclesiastical authorities have not yet pronounced on them. In this register may be found many a beautiful story of faith and answer to prayer.

The first person to be cured by the invocation of the Madonna *ta Pinu* was Vincenza Portelli, Francesco's mother. She was a very old woman, and in November, 1886, was suffering from acute heart-disease, while dropsy, in an aggravated form, caused her much suffering. The doctors pronounced her case hopeless. The secret of our Lady's communications was not, as yet, generally known, but Francesco must, by that time, have let it transpire in his own family, for it was to the Madonna *ta Pinu* that his three brothers, Salvatore, Nicola, and Leonardo, turned for aid in their need. It is strange, and somewhat characteristic, that in this story of his own mother's cure Francesco's name does not appear. The three brothers went to the sanctuary and recited the Rosary together. They would willingly have offered the wealth of the world to our Lady, but all that they were able of their poverty to promise, if their petition were granted, was to light a lamp before the holy picture whenever they could afford it. The humble offering was accepted, and the old woman was restored to health.

The next favour recorded is so characteristic of the simple and filial love borne towards our Blessed Lady by the people of Gozo, that it must find a place in these pages. Maria Cutajar was in great grief because she could not nurse any of her children. They were put out to nurse, and while none of them had thriven, the last of the three had died from almost inevitable neglect. In April, 1887, another little one was given to Maria, and with an aching heart she gave it to her mother to take to be nursed

by her sister at Casal Xeuchia. It was just then that the devotion to Our Lady *ta Pinu* was spreading like wildfire over the island ; and as Maria lay awake, in tears, the night after she had sent her baby from her, a sudden ray of hope shot through her heart, and turning to Our Lady *ta Pinu* she invoked her aid with the most fervent faith, promising, if her prayer were granted, to offer her gold ear-rings at the shrine, and to visit it herself, fasting on bread and water. She felt an instantaneous change come over her, and so certain was she that she would be able to nurse her child, that she wanted her mother to go off to Xeuchia to fetch it at once, in the middle of the night. The old woman protested against this, but humoured her daughter by starting off the first thing in the morning, to bring back the little one. When its happy mother clasped it to her breast, she found that our Lady had indeed heard her prayer.

From thenceforth many more had recourse to the Madonna *ta Pinu* for cure of their bodily ailments. There is something in human nature which craves for outward signs, and thus it occurred to the friends of those who were too ill to visit the shrine in person, to take home to them, and anoint them with, some of the oil from the lamp which was now always kept burning before the picture ; and from that time this oil has been the chief vehicle of our Lady's healing power. Thus, in April, 1887, Maria Cefai, a young girl, was cured of lock-jaw by its application to her teeth. In the same month, Rosa Borg, an old woman past seventy, was cured by its touch of a dislocated knee. Carmela Sultana, also an old woman, whose

left hand had been for three years paralyzed and withered, was cured in the same way. Saverio Busuttil, whose legs were so powerless that he could not take a step without assistance, was instantaneously cured by the application of the oil in the chapel itself. Angela Borg, who was too blind to attend to her children and household duties, was restored to full sight by its touch. Such are a few instances among the many that are recorded.

Margherita Bartolo, a girl of twenty-seven years of age, was apparently dying of an internal complaint, from which she had suffered for eleven years. The doctors gave up all hope of curing her, but suggested as a last resort that she should go to Valetta, there to undergo an operation rarely other than fatal in Malta. Death stared her in the face on all sides, and in her extremity she turned to Our Lady *ta Pinu*. She made the five mile journey from Nadur, her home, to the sanctuary, in a carriage, the movement of which caused her excruciating agony, and exhausted her in a manner to alarm those who were with her; and it was with difficulty that they carried her into the chapel. "Behold me before thee, *Madonna mia*," she said, as soon as she had been placed before the picture. "If thou wilt grant me this favour which I beg, I will come back here with twelve other girls, and I will have a Mass with a sermon said in thine honour, and we will all receive Holy Communion together." Her cure was instantaneous, and she walked back along the footpath to the road with perfect ease. She wished to walk back to Nadur, but her friends, having less faith than herself, insisted

on her returning in the carriage. To the astonishment of her father and sisters, who had remained at home, she almost ran into the house to greet them, and set to work at once to busy herself with the household duties, a thing she had been unable to do for eleven years. Not only her disease, but various painful complications arising from it were completely cured. She lost no time in collecting her twelve friends to fulfil her vow ; and this time it was on foot that she made her journey to *ta Pinu*.

An old woman, Maria Caruana, a Maltese of Valetta, fell down and broke her hip. The doctors did all they could to set the limb, but were unable to do so properly on account of her advanced age. So, after giving herself over into their hands for a time, she left her bed and tried to get about as best she could. This she did by supporting herself on the furniture, though she suffered the most acute agony as she thus dragged herself about. One day, feeling more desponding than usual at her state of complete helplessness, she dragged herself to a table on which stood a little print of the Assunta *ta Pinu*, such as is now to be found in nearly every house both in Malta and Gozo. "Ah, *Madonna mia*," she sighed, "thou who hast done such wonders for others, do not refuse me when I ask you to make me able to walk." Even as she said these words, a sort of shudder ran through her whole frame, and she felt as if she were shaken violently and set on her feet. She knew she was cured, and bursting into tears, she cried out with a loud voice which summoned the other inmates of the house to her side : "The Madonna has worked a

miracle on me! The Madonna has cured me!" The first use she made of her restored walking powers was to travel to Gozo to return thanks at the sanctuary.

Carmelo Azzopardi, an upholsterer of Valetta, with a wife and large family entirely dependent on him for their support, was threatened with loss of sight from the effects of erysipelas in his eyes. His sight got worse and worse, till the day came when, strain his eyes as he would, he found that he could not see sufficiently to do his work. His wife and children clung to him, and all were in a state of loud lamentation, when a friend of his, Paolo Formosa, happening to call, related to him the favours which Our Lady *ta Pinu* was dispensing around her. This was in April, 1887, when the burst of spontaneous devotion, as related above, was reaching its height. Carmelo, full of faith, and without loss of time, invoked Our Lady *ta Pinu*, and promised to receive Communion at her shrine, and offer a wax candle if he were cured. The inflammation and pain in his eyes ceased while he prayed, and, snatching up his work, he found that he could see perfectly. He and his family fell on their knees in thankfulness, while their cries of joy called their neighbours to hear the wonderful news. At the moment that his eyes were being cured, another cure was being wrought in Carmelo's soul. He had, of late, become somewhat neglectful of his religion, but even as he offered his petition to our Lady, and before he knew that it was granted, an overwhelming desire to serve God more perfectly flooded his soul. Ever since that day he

has led a life of fervent prayer and fasting, rising in the middle of the night to find that time for prayer which his labours forbid him to find by day—a life, be it said, by no means uncommon among the working classes of the Maltese. The first day that he could spare he went to Gozo to fulfil his vow, and there attested on oath to the above circumstances.

Such are a few of the miracles recorded in the register kept at *ta Pinu*, there to await ecclesiastical confirmation. But the number of *ex votos*, which cover the rough walls of the little chapel, tell a tale of favours received and petitions granted, far more graphically than can any written record. On one side are a number of quaint pictures, portraying various cures and deliverances from danger, obtained by means of the invocation of Our Lady *ta Pinu*; while all about, without any method in their arrangement, are hung up the usual little waxen effigies of arms, legs, eyes, babies, &c., intermingled with more solid *ex votos* in the shape of crutches, surgical appliances, and so forth. Candles, also, of all sizes, fill every spare space, and are hung in festoons from the roof. These have all been brought from a distance to be offered at the shrine, for *ta Pinu* is absolutely innocent of anything in the shape of stall or shop for the convenience of pilgrims.

There is one form of *ex voto* which seizes on the eye and the imagination more, perhaps, than any other. Every available corner is fitted with glass cases, densely packed with gold ear-rings and other gold ornaments, which will, in course of time, be

melted down, or sold towards the expense of building the new church which is soon to be erected over the present sanctuary. These ornaments speak most plainly of favours received, and of the gratitude of those who have received them. Every Maltese and Gozo woman is possessed of certain gold ornaments, many or few according to her circumstances. They form an indispensable part of the dowry she brings her husband, and for a married woman to have no gold ornaments—not even a pair of ear-rings—would be a slur on her reputation not to be endured. Thus every woman in these islands has something to give in return for favours received, and these closely-packed cases at *ta Pinu* show how freely she has given, not only what she has got, but what she prizes most.

The devotion to the Madonna *ta Pinu* soon spread beyond the shores of Gozo. Malta soon began to pour in that constant stream of pilgrims which has never ceased to flow; for the steamer which plies between the islands rarely makes its trip without counting among its passengers a group of worshippers, usually accompanied by a priest to say Mass for them at the sanctuary. Tunis, also, and Sicily send their pilgrims, but beyond these countries Our Lady *ta Pinu* is not as much known as she probably will some day be.

In Gozo, of course, she reigns supreme in the hearts of the people. To her they turn on every occasion and in every emergency; and to her protection they attribute their immunity from many a

peril which has overtaken their sister island. When, in August, 1887, the cholera invaded Malta, creating a panic within its sea-girt boundaries, such as might, under similar circumstances, be created on board a ship, the scourge did not touch Gozo. So confident were both the Gozitans and Maltese that this was due to the intercession of the Madonna *ta Pinu*, that numbers of the latter fled to Gozo for protection. There was no quarantine between the islands, and though many of the Maltese fled from infected districts, and even from infected houses, not one case of cholera did they introduce into the more favoured island. There is scarcely a house in either Malta or Gozo which does not possess its picture of the Assunta *ta Pinu*, or the cupboard of which does not contain a bottle of healing oil from the lamp which always burns before it.

Since 1890 the sanctuary has been enriched by our Holy Father, Leo XIII., with many Indulgences; and now every evening, after the daily toil of the people is over, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament is given, while the Rosary, the Litany of our Lady, and certain prayers in honour of the Assumption are recited.

Both Carmela and Francesco foretold that ere long a splendid church would rise over the present sanctuary. This prophecy, whether the product of their own desire, or the result of a communication from our Lady, will soon be fulfilled, the commencement of the new church having only been delayed by a lawsuit between the Bishop and the owner of the land on which the chapel stands. It is intended to

enclose the present little sanctuary inside a large church. When this is accomplished, no doubt the secret of our Lady's manifestations at *ta Pinu* will be noised abroad, and her shrine will be visited by many who now scarcely know of its existence. We must all wish our Lady, thus manifested, to be more widely known and honoured, but perhaps a passing regret is permissible at the departure of the simple hiddenness of the sanctuary; for with the flow of devotion there must come the flow of profanation, and with the crowd of worshippers will be mingled the crowd of those who hope to make a good thing out of the worshippers. The world has not yet touched *ta Pinu*; as it was when our Lady chose it, so is it now in its hidden simplicity. Thus, while we rejoice at the coming publicity which will spread abroad the fame of her sanctuary, we may tremble lest the touch of the world's hand should tarnish that which is so lovely in its humility, and which is still radiant with the touch of our Lady's choice.