

# The Tumbler of Our Lady

by Hugh O'Reilly

A JESTER entered a monastery and after a time, became very sad because he could not participate in the praying of the Divine Office or in the intellectual or artistic activities of the monks. He was afraid of being expelled as a useless mouth to feed. One day, while he was in the crypt of the Church before a statue of Our Lady a marvelous inspiration came to him.

When he heard the bell for the Mass, while he was arranging his garb he thought: "Oh! How unfortunate I am! Each one is fulfilling his duty now, but I am here like a tethered ox with naught to do but chew its cud. What should I do? What should I say? I will at least do something for the Mother of God, and none is here to blame. I will do what I know how to do, what I learned, which is my office. The others serve her with chant, and I will serve her with tumbling."

Then, he took off his cowl, and approaching close to the altar he humbly gazed at the statue of Our Lady and said: "Lady, to Thy fair charge I give my body and soul. Sweet Queen, charming Lady, do not scorn the thing I know, for with the help of God I will exert myself in good faith to serve Thee. I do not know how to chant or read, so I will set before Thee what art I have. I will be like the lamb that jumps and frolics before its mother. Lady, Thou who art nowise bitter to those who serve Thou with a good intent, accept my actions with Thy good pleasure."

Then he started his merry play, leaping low and small, tall and high, over and under. Then he bowed and knelt before the statue: "Ah! My most sweet Queen, of Thy pity and Thy nobility, do not scorn my service."

Again, he leaped and capered and with great ardor made the somersault of Metz [a type of acrobatic]. Again, he bowed before the statue, paid it reverence and all the honor that he might. Next, he did the Spanish vault, and then the vaults they move in Brittany, then the vault of Lorraine. He did all these feats as best as he was able. Afterward, he did the Roman vault, and then, with hands before his brow, he danced with charm before the altar, gazing humbly at the statue of the Mother of God.

"My Lady," he said, "here is a beautiful somersault, which I proudly offer to Thee only. I do not tumble for my own delight, but to serve Thee, and this alone is my recompense. Just as my brothers serve Thou, so also do I serve Thou. Do not scorn Thy servant, I beg Thee, for I do it for Thy pleasure. Thou

art the most perfect creature who makes the entire world more beautiful!” Then, he stood on his head and walked upside-down. His feet were moving joyfully, but his eyes were weeping...

He leaped and sprang until he was worn out and could do no more. Every day in his simplicity he would repeat his exercises of piety. But one day a certain monk discovered his secret and revealed it to the Abbot. Then the two of them hid themselves near the altar where they could see and not be seen, to watch the acrobatics of the minstrel.

The Abbot and the monk saw the whole performance of the tumbler, the many vaults, as well as his nimble leaping and dancing. They saw him bow toward the statue and then bound and leap until he was nigh to faint. So weak was he that he sank to the ground, all worn out, and the sweat fell from his body to the ground, wetting the pavement of the crypt. But then, without delay, from her niche came the Sweet Lady to his need. Well she knew that guileless heart.

The Abbot watched everything attentively. He saw that there came down from the vault of the altar toward the jester a Lady so glorious that certainly no man had seen one so brilliant, so richly dressed, and so beautiful. Her vesture was marvelous, covered with gold and precious stones. In her train came the Angels and Archangels of Heaven, and they pressed close about the minstrel, and solaced and refreshed him. When their shining ranks drew near, peace fell on his heart. For they contended to do him a service, so they might be part of the work of the Lady who is a most precious Pearl.

Then, the sweet and noble Queen herself took a white kerchief in her hand and with it gently fanned her minstrel who rested before the altar. The sweet and most good Lady refreshed his neck, body and brow, showing him a great concern as she comforted him.

The two witnesses withdrew. The Abbot called for the jester, asked him to tell his story, congratulated him and encouraged him to continue his devotion. Upon hearing this, the good tumbler rejoiced so greatly that the great emotion caused him to fall ill. He did not rise again from his bed, and shortly he died, surrounded by the Abbot and all the monks. These all humbly watched the dying man, and saw with their own eyes this wonder. About that lowly bed, the Virgin with her Angels appeared again to him, to await the passing of his soul, which she gathered to her bosom and brought to Paradise.

Thus ends the story of the tumbler. Fair was his tumbling, fair was his service, for with it he gained such high honor as is above all earthly honors.

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Based on Lagarde & Michaud, *Moyen Age*, p. 109

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“The soul who constantly unites her life with mine glorifies me and does a great work for souls. Thus, if engaged on work of no value in itself, if she bathes it in my Blood or unites it to the work I myself did during my mortal life, it will greatly profit souls.... I so much want souls to understand this! It is not the action in itself that is of value; it is the intention with which it is

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done. When I swept and labored in the workshop of Nazareth, I gave as much glory to my Father, as when I preached during my public life.” --Our Lord to Josefa Menendez: Nov. 30, 1922. *Way of Divine Love*, p. 213.

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And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had. Lk. 21:1-4.

## The Story of Lady Anne Grimston

by Margaret Galitzin

The most popular tourist attraction on the grounds of St. Peter's Church in Tewin, England, is a tree. The church dates back to Saxon times, and is an interesting structure in itself. But what people from around the world come to see is the massive single tree with four trunks that grows over the grave of Lady Anne Grimston, who was buried more than 200 years ago in the ancient parish churchyard.

Who was this English lady, and how did this strange massive tree take root and grow over her gravesite?

In a great house in Hertfordshire County, Lady Anne Grimston lay dying. She was a proud and obstinate woman who had enjoyed her wealth and lands as well as the society of her friends. During her long life, she had paid little attention to the more important things which do not pass away. And so, she died as she had lived, without faith and the consolation that comes to God-fearing men and women who leave this world prepared to stand before the dread Judgment Seat.

She believed that there was nothing else in this world except the life she had lived: her riches, her grand house, her friends, the fine dinners and elegant clothes she enjoyed. After she passed away, there would be nothing, she claimed. There was no eternal life of the soul, no heaven and hell. Her friends tried to point out to her how terrible and impossible this was, how certain it was that she would live another life, just as the roses die back in the winter and then live again. Just as the trees and flowers in the field come to life again after their long sleep, so also, her friends told her, would she, Lady Anne Grimston, continue to live, and that the life that was in her would never end.

But Lady Anne Grimston was proud and unbelieving, and she said to her friends. "I shall not continue to live. It is as unlikely that I shall continue to live, as that a tree will grow out of my body." She went so far as to make a challenge to Heaven, saying "If, indeed, there is life hereafter, trees will render asunder my tomb."

Lady Anne Grimston died, and was buried in a strong tomb made of marble – buried and forgotten. But not quite, for one day, many years after, the marble slab over her grave was found to have moved from its position. The

builders fixed it firmly back in its place and left it, thinking it quite secure.

Again the heavy marble slab tilted slightly on one side, and in the middle was a crack, with a tiny bunch of leaves bursting through. The crack was closed with cement, and the slab put back. But again the slab was lifted up, the crack opened wider than ever, and the thin trunk of a tree appeared. They repaired the crumbling tomb and built tall iron railings around it to hold the masonry together. But the young tree made its way, breaking the masonry in two, destroying the walls of the tomb, and tearing the heavy iron railings out of the ground.

And today, growing right from the heart of Lady Anne Grimston's grave in St. Peter's churchyard in Herfordshire County is one of the largest trees in England, with four trees growing from one root. The trunk of the tree has grown fast through heavy iron railing, which cannot be moved. The marble masonry of the tomb has shattered to pieces, and today Lady Anne Grimston's grave is a heap of broken stone and twisted iron bars.

For over 200 years the trunks have forced their way through the tomb, to raise their branches in a silent but powerful triumph.

### Writings of Maria Concepcion Zuniga Lopez

"Wisdom renews all things, and through nations conveys herself into holy souls. She makes the friends of God and prophets." Wisdom 7:27

Maria Concepcion Zuniga Lopez was a Mexican religious who died in the odor of sanctity in 1979. Her most famous book is *Legion of Victim Souls*. (Imprimatur, 1966). Our Lord is seeking a legion of victims, who will help to save sinners from perdition. Her other works are:

*My Best Book*. A short autobiography.

*Laments of Jesus, Victim*. Six short meditations.

*Warnings and Voices from Beyond the Grave*. An account of how her sister, Esther Zuniga, asked help from purgatory. **Prayer books:** *Penitential Rosary*.

The value of praying with one's arms in the form of a cross. *Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help*. Available at:

<http://avalon44.tripod.com>