

Cantiga 18: The Silkworms that Wove Veils

*Holy Mary takes pleasure in showing us her fine miracles every day, to keep us from doubting.*

And to show us her prowess, she performed a great miracle in Estremadura, in Segovia where there lived a lady who cultivated a lot of silk in her house.

When she lost silkworms and had little silk, she promised to give a veil to decorate the statue of the matchless Virgin, in whom she believed deeply, which stood on the altar.

Once she had made the promise her silkworms grew and grew, and did not die, but the lady was so slow in giving the veil made from the silk, that it would always slip her mind.

And so it happened that on the great August Feast [15 August, Feast of the Assumption] she came to the chapel and spent the whole afternoon praying before the altar, and as she was at her prayers she remembered the veil that she owed.

Weeping bitterly she ran back to her house, and saw the worms at work making the veil as fast as they could, and she began to cry with great joy.

And when she was finished crying she looked closely at the veil, and called a great number of people to come and take note of how the Mother of God could work with holy skill.

When the people heard this, they gave thanks to the Mother of God with great joy, and came out into the street crying "Come hither, come hither, and see the great miracle which our heavenly guide has worked."

One by one and two by two the people came, and meanwhile the silkworms made another veil, to match the first, so that if anyone was to take one, the other would be left.

And so King Alfonso, as I heard, keeps the finer of the two in his chapel, and has it brought out on feast days, to dispel heretical thoughts in those who might be so foolish as to doubt the Virgin's power.