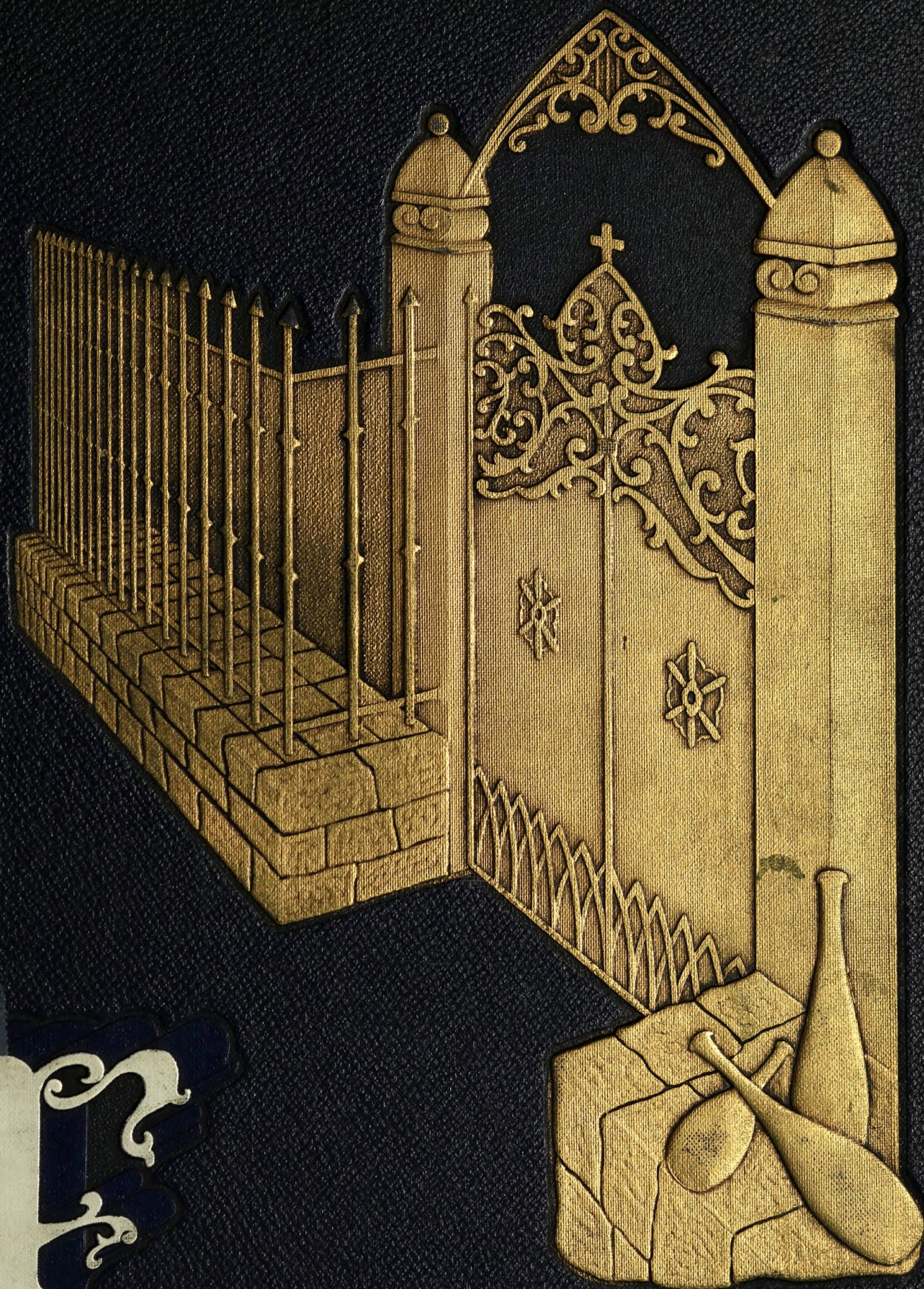


1954



Franciscan



*In the lives of the early Fathers, where there is much goodly matter, we are told this tale.*

A certain minstrel came and went for so long in divers places that at last, weary of the world, he withdrew into a holy order. Now, though the youth was of much worship and fair and well-made and goodly, he yet knew no craft of which the folk there stood in any need. For he had lived only by juggling and leaping and dancing for no other lesson had he ever learned; nor knew he either Pater Noster or chant or Credo.

"Alas," said he, "shall I serve neither by word nor by deed? By the Mother of God, I will serve by my own trade; the others serve by singing and praying and I will serve by juggling."

Therefore turning to the statue of the Lady, he laid aside his habit and donned the motley. Then he began to leap and to spring; to dance and to juggle. And then he went down on his knees before the image and bowed before it saying: "Most Sweet Queen, of your grace and of your mercy, despise not my service. Farewell, most Sweet Friend, I will serve you the best I can."

And he continued long in this way of life, returning again and again to offer his service and his homage.

But at length he was thrown into much trouble. For a monk took note of him and blamed him much in his heart in that he came not to matins. He went to the abbot and told the whole story as you have heard it and the abbot arose and said to the monk: "We shall follow this brother and see what he does." Then they went to the crypt and hid themselves in a nook in such wise that the juggler saw them not. And the abbot and the monk watched all his divers tricks and his leaping and dancing.

So worn and spent was he that the sweat ran out of his body down upon the floor of the crypt. But presently and in a little space his Most Sweet Lady came to succor him.

And the abbot watched and straightway saw the Lady come down to him from the vault and tenderly she wiped his forehead with her mantle and most gently she placed the Child in his arms.

And many years later the juggler fell grievously ill and at his deathbed those who were there saw a wondrous miracle. For even as the soul left the body and before it had time to fall, it was received by the Mother of God.

The holy Fathers tell us that thus it befell this minstrel. And now, let us pray to God, Who is above all, that He grant us to serve Him so well that we may deserve His love.

*Here ends the story of the Juggler of Our Lady.*

