MAY SUMNER.

ANGELS' VISITS.

"TIMES OF JOY, AND TIMES OF WOE,
EACH AN ANGEL-PRESENCE KNOW."

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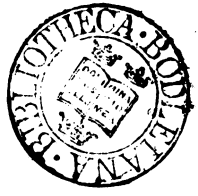
ANGELS' VISITS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"TALES FROM THE DIARY OF A SISTER OF MERCY."



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I.

THE ORGAN BOY.

My dear children, you have all read that beautiful story, written by a good priest, about earth's angels; how, day and night, week after week, and year after year, one of the purest and brightest of the angels kneels ever before the throne of heaven, praying that God will forgive the sins of men, offering up his burning love and ready obedience for our coldness and wickedness. This angel sees so much sin and so little love upon earth, that he is always lamenting bitterly for the outraged honour of his dear Lord, our Saviour, and the sins and sorrows of men.

All the angels in heaven have some particular work to do, and, because this one is always interceding for us, he is called "earth's angel."

The tears of this angel form a bright limpid stream before the throne of the great God,

always pure and calm; but one New-Year's Eve, when all the happy angels in heaven were singing most beautiful hosannas, and the whole court of heaven were prostrate before the once Babe of Bethlehem, this stream of the angel's tears was agitated; its silvery sweetness was moved by little waves that sighed mournfully. Our blessed Lady cast her eyes upon the sad, pleading waters, and she sent a bright messenger to inquire why earth's angel was so grieved on this New-Year's Eve.

The angel said he grieved bitterly for the sorrows and miseries of little children: some were dying with hunger and cold; some poor little babies were dying unbaptized; others were growing older, and learning to commit sin. The lips God made to love and praise Him were beginning to speak against Him, to speak falsely and unkindly; some even to curse and swear. The hands God made to be raised in prayer, and employed in good deeds, were used in quarrelling and dishonesty. The heart God made to serve Him was learning to neglect Him and love His enemies. Other children were good, but very unhappy; the angel's soul was sad on their account, and the tears dropped faster into the overflowing stream.

Then our Lady spoke to Him who had once been her little Child; she begged His mercy

and compassion upon the suffering children of earth.

Our Lady's voice sounded through heaven clear and melodious, like the beautiful strings of a golden harp, or the sweet, dreamy music of the wind on a summer's night. When she ceased speaking, there was a long silence; for the angels loved to hear the last echo as it softly died away.

Our Lord granted His mother's prayer as it was asked; he always does so. And He took compassion upon some of the children, and relieved their sufferings. Then He sent an angel down to earth to bring the most miserable child he could find to heaven.

The angel bowed his bright head before his Lord, and hastened to obey His command. The world was very fair, but it looked dreary and dull when compared with the beautiful golden heaven the angel had left behind. On his way he passed earth's angel, who gave him one of his tears; it was so large and bright that, if he held the little finger on which he carried it near the heart of a child, he could see by its light all that was passing within.

He alighted in one of the largest cities in England, because he knew there is always more misery in those great places than in small towns or villages. Busy crowds hurried along the streets;

and, under the rich dresses and poor rags, the warm clothing and scanty covering, he could see the human hearts beating, and could read their thoughts. When he saw what was passing in the minds of some who were fair to view, the angel turned away, saying, "Alas!" for the wounded honour and love of his Lord. He passed on through the light streets, filled with gay shops, and thronged by busy men and women. He came to some grand houses, brilliantly lighted and full of festivity. "I do not think I shall find a very miserable child here," said the angel; "but I will go in and see." He went through a spacious hall, up a large marble staircase, through magnificently-furnished rooms; he passed splendidly-dressed ladies on his way, until he came to the nursery; for every angel, when he enters a house, goes first where the children are. It was a large, warm room; the crimson curtains to the windows gave a rich, glowing colour to the light. No one seemed to be in the room until, looking in one corner, he saw a little boy, about seven years old, who had cried himself to sleep. His toys were all lying about, as though he did not care for them; one little hand grasped a small figure of a dog, two great round tears lay upon his cheeks, and every few minutes a deep sigh escaped from his lips.

Three years ago this little boy had a dear mother who loved him as all mothers love their children. Every night she would come, and, putting his hands together, teach him his prayers; then, drawing the white curtains round his little bed, would kiss him and bid him "Good night."

The little boy saw his mother's face was very white one night. She kissed him so often that he wondered. The next day she was ill; and after some time they carried him to her, where she lay so white and faint that he was frightened, and began to cry; but she clasped him in her arms, and held him there until some one gave a great cry, and the arms fell down. After that he never saw his mother again; they said she was gone to heaven. Some time after, his father brought a new mamma home, but she was not like his own; she did not seem to love him very much. So the little boy was very lonely; no one came at night to kiss him or hear his prayers; only the nurse-maid; and she used to frighten him with foolish tales.

On New-Year's Eve he sat and thought about his own mother, with her kind face, as he well remembered it, until he cried himself to sleep. The angel knelt by, and saw all that was passing in his breast. It was not all sorrow; oh no! for there was much love for his mother in

heaven to cheer the boy; and while any one loves a mother in heaven, he cannot be quite miserable. So the angel blessed the pretty sleeper, and left him.

He then went down to a narrow court, where the houses are so poor you would think no one could live in them. Into the worst of these the angel went. The window was broken and stuffed with rags, and the cold air came in. There was a very little fire, only just a few dying embers; no furniture but a heap of straw in one corner, and an old stool before the fire.

By the light of the wretched candle the angel saw a child fearfully ill; its face flushed, and its eyes heavy and dull. On the stool sat a poor woman cowering over the fire, trying in vain to get some warmth from it. Every time the child moaned the mother crossed herself, as though otherwise she should despair. Then the little weak voice said,—

"Mother, give me some tea; I am burning with thirst."

"I have not got it, darling," said the woman, with a passionate cry, as she fell upon her knees; "I have nothing to give you but water."

The angel knelt and looked in the child's heart. Poverty, cold, hunger, thirst, and sickness had all tried their worst. Yet for that child there was light in its darkness; in the midst of

its pains and troubles, it dearly loved its mother, and had great pleasure in her loving tenderness.

"The child is not quite miserable; I must go elsewhere," he said.

In another house a little boy was nursing his dying sister. The poor mother was busy preparing for the doctor; and the child's tears fell fast upon the pale baby he loved so dearly, and was so soon to lose for ever. But he was pleased because he knew that he would soon be in heaven. So the angel left him.

Passing on, he heard the sound of music near him; it was a very old street organ playing "Adeste Fideles." You would almost have smiled to hear how it groaned, and how it seemed to bring out the tune with labour and difficulty. The angel looked; there was a little boy about eight years old turning the handle round and round. His face was pale, his fair hair partially covered with an old cap; a thin dress did not half protect him from the sharp, freezing cold. Still he turned on and on without stopping. For he had only sevenpence; and he knew if he went home without a shilling he would get no supper; nay more, perhaps, than that, be punished.

Many people passed him by. Sometimes they stopped for a moment to look at him; then his

heart would beat high with hope, and he would eagerly watch their hands. They passed on without giving him anything; then the light would fade from his eyes, and "his heart grow sad again." Night came at last with its stars; the snow was frozen hard on the ground, the air blew keen and sharp. The street lamps and the gas in the shop windows were lighted. More people passed him by; they walked quickly because of the cold, and did not stay to think of the poor little boy or his music. Still he turned round and round, and every now and then "Adeste Fideles" came in its turn. None knew how the timid heart was shrinking from fear, or surely they would have given something from their abundance. As the night wore on, heavy tears fell down the pale face, and the tired arms almost refused to work.

"O mother," said the child, with a great sigh, "if I might come to heaven to you!"

Then the angel drew near; he held the light and looked into the boy's heart. "Ah!" said he, when he saw what was there; "but stay, I will be sure first."

Very slowly, very sadly the child turned his wearied footsteps home, lingering by the way; for he knew what awaited him if he had not money enough. Often staying to look in the shop windows, where the hot pies and cakes lay so

tempting, longing with all his hungry heart for one; then counting his money over and over again so carefully, hoping he might have made a mistake before, and feeling in every pocket to see if he had not overlooked one halfpenny. No; there it lay, only sevenpence; and he had been all day in the cold and snow. Wearily he lifted up his organ, and turned to go home. Ah me! what sad thoughts were in that poor little heart! how bitter were the tears that fell so fast! Well might the angel fancy, as he followed him, that he heard more distinctly and pitifully the ripple of the stream. While the child and the angel wend their way through the streets, I will tell you who the boy was.

His parents were poor Italians, who many years ago had left their beautiful land, to try to earn a livelihood here in England. They only had this one little boy, and he was called after the great St Bernard. He was so small and pretty, with such fair hair and dark eyes, that he was never called by any other name than Bernie. His mother died when he was very young, and left him to his father.

His kind father was everything to him. He amused him, played with him, and, when Bernie was tired, would take him in his arms, and sing songs of the beautiful Italy to him. Every morning the father went out with his organ, and re-

turned in the evening. The old woman, the mistress of the house where he lodged, used to take care of Bernie. In the evening, he would stand at the street door to watch for his father. When he saw him, he ran to meet him; and the poor father would often go without butter to his bread, or sugar to his tea, so as to be able to bring his darling boy a nice cake. I cannot tell you how passionately the father loved this little boy, and he, poor child, had no one else to love; no one else ever spoke a kind word to him, so all his heart was fixed upon his dear father.

One cold winter poor Bernie's father was taken very ill, and could not go out with his organ. He grew worse rapidly. The doctor and the priest both came, but they said he would never recover. One day, when he was alone with his son, he called him to the bedside, and said, "My dear Bernie, my poor boy, have they told you I am going?"

"Going where, father?"

"To heaven, I hope, my child."

"Oh yes, they told me; but I did not mind, because I knew you would never go anywhere without me. You will take me, won't you?" and he fixed his eyes wistfully upon his father's face.

But his father did not answer. How could he tell the poor little boy that he was going to

leave him for ever, and that he would be alone in the wide world, without one to love or care for him. He could only take him in his arms, and hold him to the heart so soon to be stilled for ever. The child felt his father's face and hands growing colder.

"Bernie," he cried at last, groping with his hand, as though in darkness.

"I am here, father," said the boy, wondering. Once, yet once more, such is the power of love, the dying arms clasped him for the last time. Those loving lips kissed the boy's brow, and then the hands grew colder, and an awful stillness fell upon the white face.

"Father, father," cried the child in wild terror. No answer. For the first time that voice was silent when he called. When the doctor came, he found Bernie senseless from grief and fear, still clasping his dead father's hand.

Poor Bernie, they took his father away, and laid him in the cold ground. He used to go every day to cry by his grave. Sometimes he would lay his head down upon the grass, and say so pitifully, "Oh, father, please let me come to heaven to you." Some people wanted Bernie to go to the workhouse; they said it was the proper place for such children as he. But the old woman where he lodged arranged to keep him for two or three shillings a week; and this he was to earn,

as his father had done, by taking out his organ every day.

One bright morning they put his lost father's organ in his hand, and sent him out. At first it was such a novelty to see the diminutive little boy playing, that people used to be very generous and pleased to give him a penny. Then, when they were quite accustomed to it, they would pass him by without notice.

The old woman was not cruel. She rather liked Bernie, and would have been kind to him if they had lived alone; but she had two idle sons, bad men, who led the poor child a miserable life. They used to send him out in the morning with a bit of bread to last him the whole day; and made a cruel rule that, if he came home with less than a shilling, he should have no supper. Dear children, think what that little boy suffered from hunger; think how he must have trembled all day for fear he should not have money enough. So he went on for some time, and at last New-Year's Eve came. He cried when he first got up in the morning, for he remembered how last New Year his dear father had hurried home with a beautiful orange and some warm food; how he had kissed him, and said, "Here is your New-Year's feast, Bernie." Alas! this New Year no one thought about him, or cared whether he lived or died. He looked

upon the snow, and then at the stars, and asked our Father in heaven to take him home.

The angel and the child went through a great part of the city, until they came to the house where he lived. How his poor heart beat with fear as he opened the door.

"Well," said a gruff voice, "what have you got, young one?"

"Only sevenpence," said Bernie, trembling in every limb.

Well he might, for a heavy hand struck a severe blow upon his defenceless head.

"Oh, please don't beat me," he cried; "I am very sorry, but I could not help it; no one would give me anything."

"Because you never asked," said the man, with another blow. "Now go up-stairs, and, remember, you have no supper; you do not earn your salt. Go along, sir."

Very slowly the little fellow turned to go away. The man was eating a nice supper of hot meat. Some of it was frying in a pan over the fire. It had such a savoury, tempting smell, that it made the poor child more hungry than ever.

"I am so hungry, and it's New-Year's Eve. Might I have a bit of supper?" he said, trembling.

"I 'll New Year you, if you talk that non-

sense. If you don't earn your supper, you can't have any. Go up-stairs."

So meekly and quietly he went, with such a look of hunger in his pale face, that the man's heart must have been harder than iron to resist the appeal; as it was, when he returned to his comfortable supper after driving Bernie up to his garret, he tried to satisfy his conscience by saying,—

"Those boys are so idle, one must be sharp with them."

"You need not starve him, if you are sharp," said his mother; "he looks bad enough now, without sending him hungry and cold to bed."

The man went on eating, and the old woman dared not offer to take the child anything while he was about.

Wearily the poor boy mounted the steep stair that led to his room.

What a place it was! so cold and dirty, with a small iron bedstead, and a straw mattress with one blanket; nothing else, not even a chair. Bernie put his organ safe in a corner of the room, said his prayers, then lay down, hungry, faint, and cold, on his miserable bed. Then, when he was quite alone, he hid his face in the blanket, and cried aloud. Even there he could smell the nice supper below. Every time the door opened he thought the old woman was

coming to bring him some, but she never came; and then his poor heart sank again.

A strange feeling came over Bernie: his head seemed to be lighter, yet all on fire; his hands were burning hot; his eyes so heavy he could not keep them open; and every limb ached as though he had been fearfully beaten.

"Oh, father, father!" cried the lonely child "do come to me, or fetch me to heaven; do you know how ill and hungry I am?"

The angel could bear it no longer. He drew near and held the light close to Bernie's heart; there could not be a more miserable child. Nothing could be worse than this: poor, lonely, cold, hungry; no one to love him or care for him; no one to speak a kind word to him; no one had ever kissed him since his father died.

The angel came nearer. He knelt by the bedside for a moment, and then stood by Bernie. He laid his cool, soft hand upon his hot brow and flushed face. The boy opened his eyes, and there, in place of the cold, dirty room, he saw a most beautiful angel, with a bright, sweet face, kind, loving eyes, and soft white wings; and upon one finger there was something that looked like a large diamond. Bernie was not afraid; no. Those were the first eyes that had looked kindly on him for so long.

"Bernie," said the angel, in a sweet, low voice, "my poor boy, you are very miserable."

"I am, dear angel, the most miserable child in the world."

"I am come to help you, Bernie."

"Oh, angel, will you? Then please take me to my father."

"I will take you to God; and, Bernie, you shall see both your dear mother and father again."

"Thank you, dear angel. Now I am happy."

Then the angel took Bernie's hands and folded them in his own. He breathed upon his face, and the child felt no more cold or heat; he only saw the golden glory round the angel's head, and heard a faint, distant sound of music, while something like fragrant incense seemed floating through the room.

"Now say after me. 'Dear Jesus, who wert once a child like me, take pity on me. I am sorry from my heart for all my sins; I repent most bitterly of them. I wish I had been a better boy. I offer Thee all my troubles; and I beg of Thee, dearest Lord, if it be Thy will, to let me come home to Thee.' Are you willing to die, dear Bernie?"

"Yes, I am very willing."

"You wish to go to heaven?"

"Yes, with all my heart."

"But if God wished you to live longer, and to suffer more, would you be willing?"

"Yes, dear angel, for the love of Him."

Then the angel drew nearer, and laid Bernie's head upon his heart. Whether he lay there moments or hours the boy never knew, he only saw the glory brighter and heard the music sweeter. He felt no pain, no care, only a dreamy longing to see something more glorious than he saw there.

Then the glory became so bright he could no longer bear it; and the music so sweet and near, he could distinguish the word, "Hosanna!"

"Close your eyes, Bernie," said the angel. He did so. The angel gently pressed his hand upon them; something fluttered at Bernie's heart and on his lips; the light and music ascended, and the angel and the boy joined the "Hosanna!" in heaven.

There was a great sensation on the morrow, when the child was found dead. The doctors could not agree as to how he died, or what was his disease. But they all wondered at the fair marble face, with its angelic smile, and the white hands crossed upon the little breast.

The poor old woman cried very much, and was grieved for little Bernie; even the cruel man never forgot the little pleading voice. But Bernie was safe among the bright angels in heaven.

MAY SUMNER.

II.

MAY SUMNER.

"MAMMA!" said a little girl, "how is it we cannot see our angel-guardian, or hear him speak?"

"We cannot see him, May, here in this world, but we shall in heaven. Are you quite sure, though, that you never hear him speak?"

"Quite sure, mamma," said May, eagerly. "I am always wishing I could hear his voice. I know if he were to speak I should do everything he told me; and, when I am naughty, if he asked me to be good, I could not help being so."

"Do you remember yesterday afternoon, my dear, I gave you some sewing, and told you that you were not to play in the garden until it was finished?"

May hung down her head and blushed, but she was a brave little girl, who always told the truth, so she looked up at her mother, and said,—

"Yes, I remember, mamma."

"As soon as I was gone, you looked at the garden; and the sun was shining so brightly you

longed to be there, Instead of working hard, like a good girl, until your sewing was finished, you threw it down, and went into the garden."

"Yes I did, mamma; but in two minutes I was miserable, I could not play, so I went back and finished my work. I told you, dear mamma, when you came in about it."

"What made you miserable, May?"

"I knew it was wrong, mamma; it was being disobedient and deceitful. Something told me so, and made me go to my work again."

"Can you not guess what that something was?"

"No, mamma."

"It was the voice of your guardian-angel speaking to you. You cannot hear that kind voice with your ears, but you can with your heart. He speaks continually; every time you feel inclined to be naughty, he whispers to you to be good. You have heard all the beautiful stories papa has told you about the saints."

"Yes, and I love St Agnes the best of them all."

"Well, May, the surest way to be a saint is to listen to every word your guardian-angel tells you; if you do that you can never do the least wrong."

"I shall try hard, mamma. I want to be good. I like to think about going to heaven, and seeing

the holy Jesus and our Lady. When I lie awake at night I always think about them."

"If you do that, May, you will be sure to see them when you die. When you feel inclined to be a naughty girl, bend your head for two or three minutes, and listen to what your guardian-angel says."

May Sumner lived with her parents in a large old country house, close to Charnley Wood, in Yorkshire. Any child would have been happy there. Mr and Mrs Sumner were very good and very kind; they knew how to make little children both happy and good. They were rich, and May was their only child.

She was a good little girl; but she had one fault, she either forgot, or did not always do as she was told. She was very anxious to please her dear mamma, and felt sorry when she had not done so; but she did not always obey as she should have done. One day her mamma was busy in the store-room; she was tying up all kinds of pretty little jars; some were full of golden plums, and some of ripe red strawberries, and all sorts of nice fruits. May was busy giving her mamma pieces of string, and helping her in many little ways. She had been good all morning, and had not dipped her fingers once into the jam-pots. Her mamma had given her some spoonfuls of jelly, and May liked it very

much, and thought it very good. A servant came and asked Mrs Sumner if she would come for a few minutes into the kitchen to see a poor woman.

"May," said her mamma, as she was leaving the room, "be sure you do not touch this jar while I am away."

"No, mamma," said May, looking at the jar and wondering what was in it. It was made of glass, and, whatever it was that it held, looked such a beautiful bright red.

For a minute or two she went on playing happily enough, then she began to think again what could be in the jar that made mamma so particular.

"I wonder," said little May to herself, "why mamma will not let me touch that." You see the bad spirit was beginning to tempt her. Instead of running away where she could not see the jar, and saying one "Hail, Mary!" as her mamma had taught her to do whenever she was inclined to be disobedient, May went nearer, and touched the glass, then she drew the stopper out, and smelt it.

It had a curious but very nice smell.

If May had listened then, she would have heard her guardian-angel asking her to come away, and remember what she had been told; but she did not care to listen. One little finger

after the other was dipped into the jar; at last the whole hand got in, and then she drew out one of the bright, pretty red pieces, and began to eat it.

I think you might have heard May's screams all over the house, and even in the garden, she made such a noise. Mamma, papa, and all the servants came running to see what was the matter. They were surprised at the sight; there stood May, screaming, shouting with pain, her hands clasped over her mouth. The silly child had opened a pickle jar; and when she came to taste the bright red it was fiery hot, and burned and blistered her mouth and tongue most cruelly; even her lips were sore with it. It was very hot Indian pickle, that no one used except her papa.

Her mamma was grieved that her little girl had disobeyed her. She talked to her, and asked, her if she had listened to what her angel said; and May was obliged to confess that she had not thought about it, but she promised very sincerely never to forget to listen to him again. Mrs Sumner did not punish her, for May did penance enough. There was a delicious apricot pudding for dinner, but she could not eat it. It was many days before May was able to eat again, the poor burnt mouth was so sore.

For some weeks after that she was very good, and did everything just as she was told. She

listened for her angel's voice, and I am sure he must have loved her very dearly when he saw her little head bent down as if to hear him speak. But, alas! great faults cannot be cured all at once, unless little children watch over themselves without ceasing.

May's birthday came, and she was six years old. "Now," she said, "mamma, I mean to be quite good. I am six, and I do not mean to be a naughty child any more."

Her mamma had given May a most beautiful little dress, that she had embroidered with her own hands, to wear on her birthday. Her papa gave her a doll, nearly as large as herself. It could cry, and open and shut its eyes. It had a lovely red and white face, with long golden curls, and most beautiful clothes. Papa had remembered everything, hat and bonnet, frocks, shoes, stockings, and even little gloves. There never was a doll with so many nice things, and there never was a child so pleased as May.

"Nurse," she said, "may I go and take my doll for a walk in the garden?"

"Yes," said the nurse; "but mind you must not go near the seats or chairs."

"Why not, nurse?"

"Fie, miss, little children should not ask 'why' they are told to do or not to do things; they should do as they are told."

"So I will, nurse, I only wanted to know why."

"Because they are all wet, miss, and will dirty your clothes."

"Very well," said May, and ran away with her doll into the bright sunny garden. She played very nicely for more than an hour, then she began to feel tired. Instead of going like a good child back to the nursery, she walked towards one of the garden seats.

"I should like to sit there," she said, "it does not look wet; if I go in nurse will say I have played long enough. I could sit here and nurse my doll; it would be so nice."

So she climbed on to the seat, and sat down with the doll in her arms. The sun began to make her feel very warm, but there was a large, fragrant lilac-tree that shaded her a little. The birds were singing sweetly, and the flowers looked so gay, May was delighted.

She began to wonder if the flowers and birds had birthdays, then she wondered if her guardian-angel had a birthday, and as she thought about him she felt sorry that she had been disobedient again.

"How naughty I am," said May to herself. "I will jump down and go and tell nurse I have been disobedient." She tried to get down, but she could not move, she seemed to be stuck fast

to the seat. It was in vain she pulled and tried to get down; she was held fast. She began to be frightened, but just then she saw her nurse looking for her.

"Nurse! nurse!" she cried, "I am here. I am stuck fast; I cannot get down."

The nurse went to her, and, after shaking and dragging her, got her off the seat, but the beautiful dress her mamma had taken such pains to make for her was all spoiled. May had sat down upon a seat that had just been painted, and the heat of the sun had caused her clothes to stick fast to the wood.

As a punishment for her disobedience her mamma made her wear the dirty, spoiled frock all day.

May tried again. She prayed very much to Almighty God to make her obedient, and soon her mamma began to think she was quite cured of her fault, but poor May was to have a terrible lesson yet.

I think I have told you that Mr and Mrs Sumner lived close to Charnley Wood. The front of the house looked into a green lawn that sloped down to the high road which led to the town. At the back was a beautiful large garden, then came an orchard, full of fruit-trees. *That* led into a field where the cows grazed, and a stile from there led into the wood. Through

the wood, or forest, as some called it, there was one straight broad green path; it was the loveliest walk in the world, sometimes the large trees met overhead, and their branches were interwoven like an arch, then it seemed as if you were walking in a cloister of green, with a soft golden light coming through the leaves. From this broad path there were many small ones; some led into the thickest part of the forest, and some to the rock where the waterfall was.

Any one was quite safe in the broad path, but it was dangerous, unless you knew your way well, to get into the narrow ones. I need not tell you how strictly May was forbidden to go even into the field. Her mamma was so careful of her that she would not trust the nurse in the wood with her. If she ever went there at all it was with her papa and mamma, but that was not often.

The nurse, who had taken care of May from the time she was a baby, was obliged to go home to see her mother, who was ill.

May promised her mamma to be very good while Anne was away.

One beautiful bright morning, while May was reading to Mrs Sumner, some visitors came. As they wished to speak about business, Mrs Sumner wished May to go and tell Sarah, who was taking Anne's place, to take her to the nursery, and to stay there until she came.

May left the drawing-room; the library door was open, and just from curiosity she stepped in. Papa was not there, but the long windows that opened on to the lawn were open. May could see the sun shining and the flowers blooming. "How pretty it looks," she said; "I will have a run in the garden before I go to the nursery, mamma will not mind." So she went out on to the lawn. There was close to the window a beautiful rose-tree all in bloom; some of the little buds were just peeping out, others were quite hidden in the green leaves. May stopped to gather the prettiest she could find for her mamma, when all at once a splendid butterfly settled on the tree. It was the prettiest May had ever seen; its wings were purple and gold, and yet every other colour seemed to be there too.

May tried to catch it in her hands. She did not want to hurt it, she was too kind even to hurt a worm, but she wished to see those lovely wings closer. The butterfly would not be caught. He flew right away from the roses, and settled in a nest of carnations. No sooner did the little hands come near him than he was away again, and May after him. He roved over all the garden beds, and then flew into the orchard. May followed him from tree to tree, but in vain. Then he went over into the field, and rested

himself for a few moments on some fragrant clover. May thought she had him then, but he was a cunning butterfly; he was quite still until the little fingers were just going to close over him, then in one minute he was over the hedge and into the green wood. May went over the stile; she remembered as she was climbing it that she was doing very wrong, but she did not stop to think. If she had waited only a minute she would have heard her angel say, "Stay, May;" but there was the butterfly flying up the glade, and away went May after it. Sometimes it stopped, and then she would rest until it went on again, but she could not catch it, do what she would.

Then the butterfly grew tired of the broad path, and went down one of the narrow ones that led quite into the forest. May went too; she forgot everything else, and only thought about those beautiful wings. For more than half an hour she ran, and then all at once the butterfly flew right away over some yellow gorse, where May could not follow him.

Then, and then only, the poor silly child stopped and looked about her to see where she was. She could not tell; on every side of her stood large trees, and the little paths all ran into each other, until she could not tell where they began or where they ended. Poor May was

terrified, the more she ran, the more she became entangled in the thicket. "Oh, mamma!" cried the frightened child, "I am lost; what shall I do?"

She could not even see the blue sky over her head, the dark trees quite hid it, so poor May sat down on the long grass and cried as though her little heart would break. "Oh that silly butterfly," she thought, "I wish I had never seen it; I wish I had been obedient, and never entered the wood." She soon sobbed herself to sleep, for her long run and the hot sun had completely tired her. She laid her head on the fallen leaves and went fast asleep. Even then she sobbed and cried in her dreams.

But for all she had been so naughty her angel-guardian did not forget her; he spread his wings over the little child to shield her as she slept. I think he must have felt very sorry for her as he looked down upon her lying there, so helpless and alone. It was getting late in the afternoon when May opened her eyes. She screamed aloud when she remembered where she was, and how she had got lost in the dark wood.

All at once she recollected she was not quite alone; that her kind guardian was with her; and May began to pray to him to take her home.

"Take me home, dear angel," she cried; "take me home to my dear mamma."

Sometimes she would run a little way down a

path, hoping to find the broad one that led to the field, but poor May had wandered far from that when she followed the butterfly.

She began to feel very ill as well as tired ; she was faint from want of food ; so she went, poor child, hurrying on as fast as her tired little feet would carry her. The briars and brambles caught in her dress, and tore it.

The sun was going down, and the evening shadows were beginning to fall, and still the forlorn little child wandered on.

At last she could walk no more ; exhausted and wearied, she fell down, and had neither power nor strength to rise.

How bitterly then did poor May repent of her fault. If she had been good and obedient, instead of lying there, lost in a gloomy wood, she would have been in her own bright home with her mamma.

" Oh, if I ever live to see home again," said the repentant child, " I will never in my whole life be disobedient, never once."

So she mourned and cried. A faint sickness came over her ; her little face, all swollen with weeping, turned white, a heavy black cloud came over her eyes, and shut out the trees and the grass.

" Dear angel," moaned the child, " I am dying : take pity on me ; help me."

Little May saw no more; her eyes were closed in a death-like swoon.

While she lies there faint and ill, I must tell you what Mrs Sumner had done.

Her visitors stayed nearly two hours. As soon as they were gone, she hastened to the nursery, but, not seeing May and Sarah there, she concluded they were in the garden at play, and so went into her room to write her letters. She began to wonder that May did not, as usual, come running there to her, but she had some very particular papers which occupied her thoughts, so that she did not feel it so much. But when she had finished, she went to the garden to seek her little child, and, seeing no traces of her, she returned to the nursery. No May was there. She rang the bell, and, to her surprise, Sarah answered it, but no child was with her.

"Where is May?" asked Mrs Sumner.

"I do not know, ma'am; I have not seen her since I left her with you this morning," replied the girl.

"But did she not come to you while I was in the drawing-room?"

"No, ma'am, I have not seen her."

"I was going to ring for you to fetch her away when I heard you speaking in the hall, and I sent her to you."

"I never saw her, ma'am ; she must have gone elsewhere ; she did not come to me."

"But it is four hours since," said the terrified mother ; "where can she be ?"

They searched the house and the garden, but could not find her. They sent for Mr Sumner and all the labouring men from the farm. They looked everywhere. Some one suggested the wood, but Mrs Sumner said, "No, she was quite sure May would never go there."

They began to fear the child had been stolen, and the mother cried, and could not be comforted.

The afternoon came and passed without any news of the lost child. The whole of the country-side were beginning to be roused ; men were mounted on swift horses and sent down the roads ; while poor Mrs Sumner nearly lost her life with grief and suspense.

In the meantime, little May lay where she had fallen under the trees. It began to grow very dark ; one by one the stars came out in the blue sky, and the last gleam of daylight died away. What mortal terror and fright was in that poor child's heart no words could tell. In her home the rooms were always lit up and bright, and when she went to bed a small lamp was left burning ; but here all was darkness. The wind too began to moan in the trees, and May fancied

the sound she heard was her mother's voice crying for her.

"Oh mamma! dear mamma!" thought May; "I shall never see you again. My angel! my angel!" cried the poor child, "ask God to take me home."

The angel heard the pitiful cry. He did ask our Lord, and help came from heaven.

May heard clearly through the night air the barking of a dog. She wondered if it would come and eat her up.

The dog came nearer, until he was quite close to her, and then he barked furiously.

"Quiet, Hector," a man's voice said, "what are you making such a noise about?"

A tall gentleman came through the thicket after the dog. He stood lost in amazement at the sight of a little girl, lying helpless and alone, in the starlight in the wood.

He stooped down and raised her in his arms. The wearied head drooped upon his shoulder, and the little figure nestled on his breast.

"My dear child, who are you?" he asked.

"May Sumner," answered a weak, low voice.

"What brought you here?"

"I ran after a butterfly, and got lost in the wood."

"Does your papa live at Charnley House?"

"Yes; oh will you take me there, back to my dear mamma?"

"I will, my dear," said the gentleman, kindly, as he looked at the white face. "Have you had nothing to eat all day long?"

"No," replied May, faintly.

Then her kind friend gave her a little drop of wine, and folding her like a baby in his arms, took her home.

I need not tell you how he was received and welcomed. Mrs Sumner was nearly beside herself with joy. She held her darling in her arms as though she would never let her go again.

May did not know when she reached home. The fright and long fast had been too much for her. She fainted long before they were out of the wood. Some hours after, when she opened her eyes, she was lying in her own warm bed, with her mother's arms around her, and papa sitting near. She was ill for a long time, and very weak; but at last she got better. The lesson lasted her all her life. She lived to be a good and clever woman, and used often to tell this story of her childhood to other children as a lesson on the duty of OBEDIENCE.

THE ANGEL AND THE CROWNS.

III.

THE ANGEL AND THE CROWNS.

Two children, named William and Rose, lived in a small dark house, up a narrow little court, in the great city of London. They had no mother—she died when Willie was a baby ; their father worked in a large factory, and only came home in the evening. When their mother died, an aunt came to live with them, but she married, and went away ; so Rose, who was only eleven years old, was housekeeper, cook, servant, and nurse. Rose was a very good girl. She kept her father's house clean and tidy, and cooked his supper nicely. She had a great deal to do, and when she was tired, she felt inclined to cry, and wish she was far away from it all ; but the good priest, who went to see her, told her always to say three "Hail Mary's" when she was cross. Rose's patience was often sorely tried, and her great sorrow was that Willie was nearly always ill ; the reason, in truth, was, that the poor little fellow had not enough nourishing food.

I am sorry to tell you that Rose's father was

not a very good man: sometimes he was kind to his children, but he did not care sufficiently for them. When he received his wages, instead of taking the money home and buying them food and clothes, he would often go with the other workmen and sit and drink until he had hardly any money left, and then Rose and Willie were obliged to eat dry crusts or go without. Often when night came these little creatures would sit by the fire; they had no candles, and Rose would try to nurse Willie in her arms and rock him to sleep. She used to talk to him about angels, and best of all Willie liked to hear about the babe of Bethlehem, and Rose never wearied of telling him.

Willie asked a great many questions about "rich children," as Rose called them. He could not believe that there were children in the world who did not work, but who always had plenty of nice clothes and nice food, and who ate real cakes and had money. Poor Willie never had but one penny, and that a lady gave him, who was struck by his pale face and little curls; but, alas! as he was running from one shop to another, trying to make up his mind whether he should buy apples, or nuts, or cakes, the penny-piece slipped from his hand and rolled down a large open grate. Poor Willie cried, and ran about looking for it, but he never saw his money again,

and no one else ever gave him any. He looked very sad as he passed by the shops and saw all the nice things. Rose cried herself to sleep that night because her little brother had been so disappointed.

At last Willie was taken very ill with a fever. Day after day he lay moaning upon his bed; not a nice soft bed like so many of my readers have to sleep on, but a hard straw mattress. His hands were so hot, they almost burned Rose when they touched her; his head was hot, and he could not hold it up, it was so heavy, and ached so much. Rose was quite frightened when he did not know her, but lay there, his face flushed and burning, his eyes looking so wild, and moaning in such a low plaintive voice that it brought tears into her eyes. In a day or two he grew better, but still his head ached, and his lips were parched and dry. He could not eat, and Rose had nothing nice to take him. His father was sorry to see his boy so ill, and he bitterly reproached himself that he had spent so much of his money in drink instead of buying his children food. On Christmas Eve he rose early in the morning, and groping his way in the cold, dark room, he found a match, and lighted a rushlight, and went over to the bed where his children lay. Rose had thrown both her arms round little Willie, and his head rested on her shoulder. Her face

looked pale and worn and thin, and the eyelids were swollen with weeping; two large tears were still wet upon her cheeks. Her long hair fell round her like a veil, and the poor father took up one of the soft curls and twined it round his rough finger, inwardly praying that God would make him a better man. Then he looked at his boy; his feverish hands and quick breathing frightened him; every now and then the little fellow would start and scream, and Rose would say, "Hush, dear," and kiss him again and again.

"God forgive me," said the miserable father; "I have done this, but I will amend."

That morning, instead of calling Rose to get up in the dark and cold, he lighted the fire, and then tried to get some breakfast. He went to the cupboard, but it was quite empty, and he had no money. He caught hold of his coat and went out and sold it; with the money he bought coffee and sugar, with bread and butter, and then drew the little table up to the fire, and soon had a nice breakfast ready for them.

The unusual smell of the hot coffee woke poor Rose, who could not believe herself when she saw her father so busy. She rose and dressed quickly. Little Willie could not sit up, so they made him a nice piece of toast, and gave it to him. Rose and her father sat by the fire and had such a happy comfortable breakfast, she never forgot it.

"Oh, father!" she said, "will it be like this every day? Shall we always have such nice coffee?"

"We will, my child."

"And you won't come home cross, and scold now, and we won't have to eat hard bread?"

The tears rolled down the father's face, and he firmly made up his mind he would drink no more, but take care of his money for his children. He was not at bottom a bad man; he did love Willie and Rose; but he was of a weak character, and, when tempted, he was easily led away. He went to the bed to kiss Willie, and the poor child's hot lips burned him.

"Come, my boy," he said, "I will bring you an orange to-night, a nice ripe, sweet orange, that will make you feel quite well." And he went out a happier man than he had been for many a day.

"Oh, Rose," said Willie, "a real orange; I wish it was night. Rich children have oranges, don't they?"

"Yes," said Rose, smiling; "so you will be rich to-night, Willie."

"I have seen oranges in the shops, but I never had one in my hand; I shall keep it to look at, it is too pretty to eat."

"Ah, Willie! you will not keep it long. Now,

go to sleep, and think about the nice, beautiful orange father will bring you."

In an hour or two Willie woke again.

"Is it night, Rose?"

"No, my Willie, not quite yet; wait a little longer;" and the little boy lay awake and watched the white snow over the houses; then he grew tired and cried: so Rose left her work and came to him.

"Do sing to me, Rose," he said; and she sang a hymn the nuns had taught her. I daresay, my dear readers, you all know it; it is called, "Sleep, Holy Babe." Willie was so fond of it, it made him love the Holy Child more and more every time he heard it. He went to sleep when Rose had finished, but he woke again with a short cry of pain.

"What is the matter, Willie?" asked Rose.

"Oh, my head! I wish I hadn't got a head, it is always aching."

"Hush, dear," said Rose, smiling; "think how funny you would look without a head."

"Isn't it night yet? I do want my orange."

"Father will bring it soon, dear."

"You shall have some, Rose. I will give you half. Is that father?" And the little fellow tried to sit up and listen.

"No, he is not coming yet."

Rose sat and waited until it grew dark, but

no father came. She did not know that her father was gone with his bad friends again. He meant to be good, and, when he received his wages, he put the money carefully in his purse, intending to buy something nice for the children; but as he was going down the street he met two of his companions, who asked him where he was going. "Home," he replied. They laughed at him and teased him, until at last they persuaded him to go with them. "Only for half an hour," he said, then he meant to hurry home; but hour after hour passed, and he forgot all about poor Willie and his orange.

All these long dreary hours Rose sat trying to comfort her little moaning brother; and, to add to her distress, every now and then he would wake up and ask for his orange. At last the heavy sound of a man's step was heard, but it passed by, and no father came. Then poor Rose felt frightened as the dreary time passed. She had no light except the fire. Ten o'clock struck and eleven, but still no father, and her weary little head dropped, and her eyes closed. Then Willie moaned again, and she felt his hot breath like a flame against her face.

"Is my orange come yet, Rosey?"

"No, darling, wait a little longer;" but the child's heart died within her; she feared what this late hour meant.

"Hark, Rose, there is father now: my orange is come! Make haste, open the door!" and Willie's eyes glistened, and he stretched out his hand eagerly as his father entered the room.

"Where is Willie's orange, father?" said Rose, as he came in.

He pushed her roughly away, saying, "Don't tease me, child;" and threw himself on the bed and was asleep in a moment. Poor Rose stood for a time as though her heart would break, and then went to Willie. He did not speak; he laid quietly down, and sobbed himself to sleep. Poor little fellow! All day long he had thought of his orange, and now his father had passed him by and never looked at him. Rose lay crying by his side; by degrees his quiet sobs stopped, and he went to sleep in her arms. She could not move to undress herself without waking him, so she lay quite still, and thought of the Babe of Bethlehem. She heard the wind blowing fiercely, and the snow falling heavily; she felt very cold, but still she would not move.

"Oh, my God!" said Rose, "help me. My good angel, take pity on me."

"I will, my child," said a sweet voice at her side; and, looking round, Rose saw a beautiful angel, with shining wings, and a lovely, kind face, standing by her side. "I will help you!"

Moving her head she woke Willie, and he looked with wonder on the angel.

"Do not be frightened, little one," said the angel, going to Willie, and bending gently over him. "I have been with you all day, and have seen how disappointed you have been, and how good and kind your sister is; now I am come to help you, little Willie. Do you love God?"

"Oh, yes, I do; and I love the Holy Child Jesus." Willie's eyes shone bright as two stars.

"You love the Holy Child. Should you wish to be like him?"

"Yes," said Willie, and he folded his hands reverently.

"You can be," said the angel. "You are cold and hungry; so was He. He had not even a house like you have, or a bed. He was born in a stable, and laid in a manger; you are richer than He was, Willie."

"I wish I was rich, I should not be cold and hungry then."

"But Jesus, who is now in glory, loves you better now, as you are poor, than He would if you were rich and proud."

"Does He? Then I like to be poor; but, oh! dear angel, I am a miserable little boy, always ill and in pain. Does the good Jesus love me?"

"Yes, my little one," said the angel with a

sweet smile, "and the more you suffer, the more He loves you. He loves you so much that He has sent me to take you away to-night, and bring you to His bright home."

"Dear angel," said Rose, "must you take my Willie away?"

"Do you love him, Rose?"

"Yes, better than any one in the world. I have no one to love but him."

"Does it grieve you to see him suffer?"

"Ah, yes! dear angel," said Rose, with a sigh.

"Then would you wish to keep him here when the good Jesus would have him in heaven? See," said the angel, "what I have for him." And he took from underneath his mantle a shining white robe, and a beautiful glittering crown.

"See, Willie, the Holy Child has sent you this."

"Dear angel," wept Rose, "take me too; I cannot live without Willie."

Then the angel bent down and laid his white hand upon Rose.

"Look, Rose," said he; and he showed her a beautiful crown, and a white robe like her brother's. "If you wish very much to go with us now, these are yours; but I am bid to tell you that your Lord wishes you still to live

on earth for Him. Would you leave your father, Rose? Now, look again, and see the crown that will await you in heaven, if you will be good and patient, and try to make your father good too; and the angel drew forth a robe made of gleaming silver, and a crown so bright and radiant, Rose could not bear to look upon its brilliancy.

"I will live, dear angel, and try to bear it. I will be good and patient."

"And, now, may I take Willie, Rose?"

"Yes, dear angel, yes. Let me kiss him once more;" and she strained him in her arms and kissed his lips, now quite cold. "Take him now; good-bye, my little brother." Then the angel lifted the little boy carefully in his arms, put on him the white shining garment, then on his golden head he placed the glittering crown.

Rose hardly knew him, his pale face was so beautiful and bright; a golden glory played round his head, on which glittered the splendid crown. "Good-bye," and then his lips touched hers. Again there was a light and fragrance; Rose closed her eyes. The light grew clearer and the fragrance sweeter, and when Rose looked, the angel and Willie were gone.

. . . . .

When the father awoke next morning he felt so ashamed and sorry he did not like to get up.

He remembered how his little boy had longed for the orange, and he was so sorry he had not bought it. "I have money enough left," he thought; "I will go quietly and buy one." So he got up and dressed himself, without making any noise, and went out. He bought two nice large oranges, and laid them by Willie's side. He made some coffee and toast, but he did not like to wake Rose, she had been up so late the night before; he knew she must be tired; so he waited and waited, wondering little Willie did not cry. At last he went up to the bed, and called Rose very gently. She did not move, and he bent down to kiss her. He looked at Willie and started, the child lay so cold and stiff and still. He touched the little cheek, yesterday burning with fever; it was like marble, and the lips were cold and motionless. He leaned over him, but the little breast no longer heaved, and then he gave a startled cry, for he knew too well it was death, and that cry awoke Rose. She seemed lost for a moment, and then she said, "Hush! father, do not cry; Willie is gone to heaven. He was so ill and hungry, the good angel came and fetched him away. God sent for him, and he wears a white robe and a golden crown. I wanted to go, for I am cold and lonely, but the angel said I must stay and make you good, and then I should have a brighter

crown. Don't cry, father." But her words made him cry more and more.

"You know, father, all day yesterday he was waiting for that orange, and talking about it; then you came home so late, and cross. He was not angry: he laid himself down and cried so quietly, I cried too. I wish he had had that orange before he died."

Strange hands robed Willie in his white shroud; the good angel had robed his soul; and then, when Christmas Day was passed and gone, they carried him to his grave. No tears would Rose shed, and people wondered; they wondered why little Willie's dead face was so beautiful and bright.

I must tell you that the poor father was ill for a long time; but before Willie was buried, he rose from his sick-bed and went to the little coffin; he took the thin folded hands in his own, and swore a solemn vow that he would never touch again the fatal drink. Then he kissed the pale lips, and covered his boy's face, never to see it more.

Rose is earning her crown. She is so gentle and good, never angry or impatient, always charitable and kind; every one loves her, and she loves every one, especially little children.

The poor father still lives, but much altered.

He goes to church and to confession, he comes straight home from his work, and takes all his money to Rose, and he reads to her during the long evenings while she sits and sews. But when he goes through the streets, if he sees a little boy of Willie's age, with a fair face and curly hair, he takes it up in his arms and kisses it, while large tears fall from his eyes.

HELEN'S TEMPTATION.

IV.

HELEN'S TEMPTATION.

CHAPTER I.

In the town of Barford there stands a convent known by the name of "Our Lady of the Angels." The sisters who reside there have a school for young ladies.

The convent was not very large, so that the nuns could never have more than twenty pupils at once, but a happier and better set of children it would have been difficult to find. The house was built in the midst of beautiful green fields on the slope of a hill, and the sea lay shining below it; on one side were the dark woods of Ladyvale, on the other the smiling meadows and green country roads. It was a sweet spot, so quiet and bright, you could never be dull there, for the changing sea was always beautiful, whether at sunrise or sunset. The skies seemed to be always bright, and the birds made a continual concert in the large stately trees that shadowed the building. The hill-side was

covered with fragrant wild-flowers, and when the windows of the house were opened it was as though the whole air was perfumed with their rich scent.

The interior of the school was as pleasant as the exterior. On the ground floor was the large airy study, with pictures and maps and well-filled book-cases. The sisters knew how to make even a schoolroom pleasant. There were no high narrow windows that kept out the sunshine, but long ones that came nearly from the ceiling to the floor, and opened into a pretty green lawn, so that when the tired eyes of the pupils did for a moment wander from the lessons, they rested on the gay flowers and the waving trees. There was a long low table in the middle of the room, and a row of desks at the end. It was the kind of place that any one would have liked to study in, so light and bright and cheerful. Lessons seemed easier to learn there than in a gloomy, dull room. There was, too, a pretty little altar, and on it stood a beautiful statue of Our Lady with the Infant Jesus in her arms. Pretty vases filled with the sweetest flowers stood on the altar, and candlesticks with white wax tapers. The children considered it a great honour to have charge of the altar; and the child who during one week had been the best behaved, the next week was allowed to gather the flowers and arrange them upon it.

The next room was the music-room ; it looked on to the garden with its gay flowers and pretty arbours. A door led from that into the studio where the drawing lessons were given, and that again opened into the playground. On the first floor were the dormitories, and their little white beds ranged along the sides, each with its pretty white curtains and small crucifix hung up at the end.

The playground was a beautiful place. In the middle it was hard firm ground, and all round were little garden beds: each child had one, and of course had the whole charge of it. You could almost tell what the children's minds were like from seeing their gardens. Some were so neat and well-arranged, with borders of green box and flowers in pretty groups; perhaps a rose-tree in the centre, with violets all round it, —not a stone or weed to be seen, all fresh, nice, and fragrant. In others, weeds might be seen, the borders broken, the flowers growing wild in any way they could, without the help of little hands to guide them, stones and pebbles crushing the tender buds so that they could never blossom. At the end of the playground there was a row of beautiful lime-trees. Under their shade some pleasant seats had been placed, so that when the children were tired with their play they could sit down to rest, while the

very good, truthful, and industrious; but poor Helen had one great fault; she was vain, and always desirous to be first in everything. She wished the sisters and all her companions to like her the best and to think the most of her. She was never content to be on the same level as her friends; she liked to be one degree higher. She was very much loved, for she was good-natured and kind, and always ready to help the little ones. The sisters considered her clever and talented, although they never told her so. They were anxious she should try and correct this fault of vanity and of wishing always to be made more of than the rest. Teresa Lynne was the same age as Helen, and they were great friends. Teresa was gifted and clever, and in this respect she almost equalled Helen. Teresa was a "child of Mary," which was the other association for the convent girls. It would have been difficult to have found a more pious or docile girl. The sisters were very much attached to Teresa, she was so humble and child-like. Instead of always seeking to shine, even at the expense of others, she was retiring and modest, and liked to be classed with the rest.

Helen and Teresa were the two first girls in the school; then came three sisters, Rose, Fanny, and Margaret Darcy; then Marie and

Lilly Spencer, two little orphans; they made the first class, and on this day they were all surrounding Sister Gabrielle, each having a multitude of questions to ask.

"My dear children," said the Sister, "I cannot hear you all at once, even if I would; I am only able to answer one at a time; sit down and take it in turns—make a circle here. Now, Teresa, you begin; what do you want to ask?"

"I think, Sister," replied Teresa, "that we are all anxious to know what Mother Lucy meant this morning when she spoke to us in the refectory."

"Good," laughed Sister Gabrielle. "Now, Helen, it is your turn to speak."

Helen answered promptly—"After breakfast, before we left the refectory, Mother Lucy came in and said she should come into the study this evening, for she had something to tell us which she thought would be an agreeable surprise."

"Very well, Helen. Now Fanny, ask your question."

"I can easily do that, Sister; what does Mother Lucy intend to say?"

A general laugh followed this concise little speech, and then Sister Gabrielle said—

"Mother Lucy told me I was to give her message, as in all probability she will not be in the study to-day. None of you here remember

Laura Clifford; you, Helen, may do so perhaps, as you have been some years with us. Well, Laura Clifford, ten years since was one of our best pupils; she left us and was married to a rich gentleman. Her name now is Lady Rawdon."

"I remember hearing the other girls speak of her," said Helen; "I never saw her."

"I hardly thought so, Helen. Well, Lady Rawdon has been abroad some years; she has just returned to England, and came to Barford yesterday, that she might once again have the pleasure of seeing the Rev. Mother and the Sisters. Of course every one was delighted to see her. She begged a holiday for you, and has invited you all to join her in a picnic in Ladyvale woods."

There was a chorus of delighted approval. Marie Spencer cried out—"That is just what I shall do, Sister Gabrielle, when I am grown up and come back again to Barford to see you all."

"Very well, Marie," laughed the Sister, "we accept the invitation beforehand; but there is something more yet. Lady Rawdon has bought some very beautiful books which she has begged Rev. Mother to add to your library, some splendid vases and ornaments for the altar in the schoolroom, and a large statue for the dormitory where she used to sleep."

"How kind she is," said Helen; "is that all the news, Sister Gabrielle?"

"No, my dear; the examination takes place as usual this year, but there is to be an extra prize. There will be one for history, grammar, catechism, music, and all the other branches; but there is to be a splendid one for which you are all to compete, besides that the examination will be public. Lady Rawdon, and we think perhaps the bishop, will be here."

"What is the prize, Sister," asked Helen, "and how shall we compete for it?"

"After the usual examination is over, Rev. Mother will give six questions; they are to be answered in writing, and the one who gives the best replies will win the prize; it consists of a gold medal and a splendidly bound set of books."

"I should like to win that," said Helen; and her words were echoed by all her companions.

"What will the six questions be, Sister Gabrielle?" asked Teresa.

"I do not know; Rev. Mother will not tell any one, not even the Sisters. It is easy enough to answer questions when you have had time to prepare. This is to be the test. You will not even know the subject, so that it will be a fair trial of your powers, and show better than anything else the extent of your knowledge."

"Suppose, Sister," said Marie Spencer, with a comical look on her little face; "suppose that some of us can give no answers at all."

"Then such a one would stand but a poor chance of the prize, Marie."

"Will they be difficult or easy, Sister Gabrielle?" asked Helen, anxiously.

"Rev. Mother knows, my dear, how far you are advanced in your studies, so that she will not be likely to ask you things you cannot answer; at the same time, as it is to test your general knowledge, I have no doubt that the questions will be rather difficult."

"I would give anything to win that prize," said Helen; "I would rather have it than all the others put together."

"I have no doubt," said Sister Gabrielle, "that you will be one of the most likely to win it; why are you so anxious?"

"I should like it too," said Teresa, gently; "my dear mamma would be so pleased; I know how her face would brighten up when I showed it to her."

"There is a great difference in the two motives, my dear children," replied Sister Gabrielle, with a significant look at Helen; "but there is the first dinner-bell, we must go in."

The picnic party to the woods of Ladyvale took place a few days after the above conversa-

tion, and heartily was it entered into by all the children. Lady Rawdon spared no pains to make them enjoy the day. It was a treat to eat a nice dinner under the shade of the trees, and to play the whole day in the bright sunshine. Notwithstanding all the fun and merriment, each little mind was pondering on the six eventful questions that were to be asked. Helen and Teresa walked home from the woods with Sister Lôuise, under whose charge they had been. They could speak of nothing but the one engrossing subject.

"Do you know, Sister Louise," asked Helen, "how Rev. Mother will arrange the examination?"

"Yes," replied the Sister, "I heard it spoken of last evening: the usual prizes will be given; then the first class will be summoned, for of course you know that is the only class that will try for the prize. You will take your seats, and the six questions will be read; two hours will be given for you to write the replies, which will be read aloud, and the prize will be given to the one who gives the most correct answer."

CHAPTER II.

Never had the pupils of the convent studied so diligently. The examination was to take place in July, and the midsummer holidays began the day after it was finished. No two children studied harder than Helen and Teresa. Helen wished for the honour and glory of obtaining a prize, which would for a time make her the first girl in the school, and would entitle her to the respect of all her companions. Teresa wished quite as anxiously to be successful, in order that she might give a real and pure pleasure to her beloved mother. The younger children were divided in their opinions. Some felt sure that the prize must fall to Helen, because she was so quick and so clever; others, again, thought Teresa would win it, because she was so thoughtful, and had such an excellent memory.

Another subject, too, occupied Helen's mind. For some long time she had been trying very hard to overcome her faults, especially that leading sin of vanity; and Mother Lucy had promised her, that if she saw a great improvement, she should become a "Child of the Angels" before she left for the vacations. Helen really was trying. She was a good girl, and anxious to be obedient, and to do her duty in all things;

but when this unhappy vanity and love of praise turned her head, she was apt to forget all her good resolutions, and sacrifice sometimes what was right, in order to obtain a little of the admiration she loved so much.

The time for the examination was rapidly drawing near. Already the letters of invitation had been sent to the parents of the pupils. One morning, just a week before the day appointed, the Rev. Mother came into the study while the children were preparing their lessons. She wished to speak to Mother Lucy, who was there. Rev. Mother had a little room near the study, where she arranged all the business connected with the pupils; it was neither her cell nor her sitting-room. It was very simply furnished with a long writing-table, a few chairs, and a bureau, where she kept her various books and accounts. The children called it "Rev. Mother's room," and generally passed the door with feelings of great awe and veneration, for it was there that both Mother Lucy and Rev. Mother lectured and reproved those who had been guilty of any fault that called for a severe reprimand.

The children had stood up when Rev. Mother entered the room. She told them to be seated, and go on with their lessons. She remained for some time in earnest conversation

with Mother Lucy. Suddenly she turned to Helen, and said, "My dear child, will you go to my room; take these keys, and unlock the first drawer in the bureau. You will see a small red book lying there; bring it here. Do not touch the papers in the drawer."

Helen, only too happy to be of service, hastened to obey her; and she opened the drawer, took the book, and was leaving the room, when a strip of paper lying on the table fell to the floor. Helen had brushed it off with her dress as she passed. She ought to have replaced it, without so much as looking to see what was written upon it; but as she raised it, she saw the numbers from one to six, and knew instantly that she had the list of questions Rev. Mother had prepared in her hand. Now came Helen's temptation. If she read it, she would be able to prepare every answer, and so easily secure the wished-for prize. "Put it down," cried her good angel, earnestly; "do not commit such a dishonourable action. You will never respect yourself again if you so much as look at it."

"Read it," said the tempter, "then you can study the answers, and you will win the prize. Only think how much every one will admire you, and how clever they will think you are."

Helen listened to both voices, and stood for a moment irresolute. She thought and thought

again. It was a hard struggle. Then honour and honesty fell before vanity. The angel turned away his head in sorrow, and Helen deliberately read the list of questions from beginning to end. It did not occupy one moment; then she replaced the paper, and left the room, disgraced, fallen, and unhappy. She did not look at Rev. Mother when she gave the book and keys into her hand. Mother Lucy smiled, and said Helen was quick. The miserable child felt inclined to tell her she had found time enough to commit a most dishonourable action. Helen had not been more than five minutes away from her companions. She left them happy and gay; she returned to them with a load upon her heart and a weight upon her conscience that took all happiness and gaiety away from her. No one noticed the saddened, darkened face bent over her books; no one knew how already she repented of having yielded to such a miserable temptation; just, too, as she was trying to correct her faults, in order to become a "Child of the Angels." A brave, noble impulse, prompted her to follow the Rev. Mother from the room, and confess her fault, and beg forgiveness; it would be easy to give six other questions. But again vanity whispered, "What would Rev. Mother think of me? she would never have any faith in me again. So the good thought was sent away, and Rev

Mother left the study without knowing how much she had been deceived.

The week that followed was one long struggle. At times Helen resolved that she would not use the knowledge she had so dishonourably acquired, but it was almost impossible to keep her thoughts from running continually upon the questions she had read. Two of them were from the History of England, and every spare moment Helen had a volume of it in her hand, reading earnestly the parts that she wished to remember. Every one noticed a change in her; the children thought she was silent and anxious about the prize; the Sisters believed she was using this last week in preparation for joining the "Children of the Angels."

She was quiet and gloomy; no happy smiles or gay words came to her lips; but on the day before the examination she had thoroughly studied every answer that had to be given, although she hated herself for having done so. When the other children stood together in groups, chatting merrily about the prizes and the holidays, she kept away; every innocent jest was like a stab to her. When any of the girls, pitying what they thought was her over-anxiety, tried to cheer her, she gave them hasty, almost unkind replies, and turned from them. They, none of them, could understand the change that had come over

their brilliant companion. This was the last week of school, and Helen had charge of the altar. On the evening before the examination day, she went, as usual, to arrange the vases, and fill them with newly-gathered flowers. The other children were all at play; she was in the study alone. When her task was completed, Helen knelt to say the usual little prayer asking for our Lady's blessing. Then the whole dishonour of her miserable fault rushed through her mind; she could not look up into that holy Mother's face, for she knew the shame that was written upon her brow. Helen laid her head at the foot of the little altar, and wept bitter tears.

Our dear Lady must have looked upon her, and have felt compassion for the unhappy child; for presently a thought came into Helen's mind, which made her rise and look earnestly into our Lady's face. She stood there, her arm leaning upon the altar, and her head bent upon her hand, her countenance still bearing the traces of her deep grief and bitter tears. Then her good angel spoke again: they were brave words, so brave, that at first Helen shrank from hearing them. Then the shadow left her eyes; a clear soft light filled them. She kissed our Lady's hands and the outstretched arms of the infant Jesus, while she said, "I will do it, dear Mother, I promise you; help me, and make me strong."

The following morning the examination commenced; Rev. Mother, with all the Sisters, was there as a matter of course. Lady Rawdon, all kindness and interest, accompanied her, talking merrily of the happy time when she had passed the dreaded ordeal. Many of the parents of the pupils attended; but, to everybody's great disappointment, the Bishop was not there; he had been called away on urgent business.

Rev. Mother examined the children, and gave the prizes, accompanying each with kind words of encouragement. When it was over, Rev. Mother said she was perfectly satisfied; but she wished now to see what the children of the first class could do without preparation. She therefore proposed giving them six questions, taken from the different branches of their studies, and bestowing a valuable prize on the one who gave the best answers. Two hours would be allowed for writing, and at the end of that time the papers would be read aloud, and the prizes awarded.

There was quite a murmur of excitement amongst the children as they took their seats around the study table. Six sheets of paper were given to each, and then Rev. Mother read the questions out to them. They were not difficult to answer; still they required some thought and consideration. Helen and Teresa

sat side by side. Helen's cheek was flushed; her pen moved rapidly over the paper. Teresa almost gave up all hope when she saw how quickly one page after another was filled. Not a word was exchanged among the young students; they were too much engrossed. Sister Gabrielle sat at the head of the table. She could not help remarking the strange expressions of Helen's face.

"I have finished," said Teresa at last, throwing down her pen.

"So have I," said Marie Spencer; "but see, Helen, your paper is quite full, and some of my questions have only six lines in answer. I am afraid I am not a genius."

There was a general smile at Marie's candid opinion of herself. Then Rev. Mother entered the room, together with Mother Lucy, Lady Rawdon, and many of the Sisters. She took her place at the head of the table, and commenced reading the papers.

Some excited a murmur of admiration, others a smile of amusement. There could be no doubt about it, Helen's were infinitely the best; next to hers were Teresa's. There was a few minutes' consultation between the Sisters, and then Rev. Mother gave her opinion upon each set of papers. When she came to Helen's, she turned to her, and said, "I cannot, my dear child, ex-

press to you my pleasure at finding you have profited so well by your studies. Your papers are well written, and the answers themselves show a greater degree of knowledge than I imagined you to possess. I have great pleasure, therefore, in giving you the prize. Teresa," continued Rev. Mother, remarking her wistful face, "your papers are the next to Helen's, but they are inferior both in knowledge and construction. Helen, come here: let me place this medal round your neck. You have won it honourably. Let it stimulate you to make greater exertions and still better use of your time." Helen rose from her seat, and went to the head of the table. Rev. Mother laid the beautiful books before her, and held the medal smilingly in her hand. The smile faded from her lips as she saw the white agitated face before her.

"Helen," she cried; "my dear child, what is the matter?"

"Dear Rev. Mother," answered the poor girl, "I must not take this prize; it is Teresa's, not mine."

"What do you mean?" asked Rev. Mother, in the greatest surprise.

"I have not won it well or honourably; it is not mine."

"You must explain what you mean, my child.

Your papers are the best. Why have you not won it honourably?"

Hot blushes covered poor Helen's face. She clasped her hands; her lips quivered with emotion. She made a brave effort to conquer herself, and finish her confession. Her voice was low and changed as she replied,—

"I knew the questions, Rev. Mother. I saw them written upon a slip of paper the day that you sent me into your room for the book in the bureau."

Dead silence followed this open and honest confession. Helen's angel, we may be sure, loved her better, standing as she did there, humbled to the very dust, but brave and courageous in doing what she knew to be right, than if she had won all the honours.

The Rev. Mother and Mother Lucy looked pained and grieved; the tears were in Sister Gabrielle's eyes; the children looked as they felt astonished and sorry.

"What made you read the paper, Helen?" asked Rev. Mother. "I was not aware that I had left it there."

"I brushed it from the table, Rev. Mother, with my dress as I passed by. It fell on the ground, and when I stooped to pick it up, I saw what it was, and after thinking for a minute, I read it through."

"O Helen!" said Rev. Mother; "my dear child, why did you not put it down, or come and tell me that you had seen it; I would have found other questions."

"Because," replied Helen, "I wished so much to win the prize; but I have never been happy since. I have been wretched all the week. Last night I went to fill the vases on our Lady's altar, and I was ashamed for her to see me. I cried very much, but while I was crying, a good thought came to me, and I promised our Lady I would obey it."

"What was the thought, Helen?" asked Rev. Mother, in her kind sad voice.

"It was vanity that prompted me to read the paper and commit the fault, so I determined I would punish my vanity by telling every one what I had done."

"You have done your best to repair your error, my dear child. I need not punish you. You have suffered enough. Thus much I will say, Helen, that I am as pleased with your honest and brave avowal, as I am grieved at your fault. I cannot help thinking that you have won a noble victory over yourself."

How great the victory was, not even Rev. Mother knew. Helen was so anxious to have the praise and esteem of every one, and yet she had voluntarily deprived herself of both, as she

thought. Still, her heart was lighter, and she was happier, humbled and ashamed as she felt, than she had been at any moment since she read the paper.

"That child has a noble character," said Lady Rawdon aside to Mother Lucy; "I admire her courage in making this public confession more than I can say."

"Helen's greatest fault is vanity, and a too great love of admiration. Unless I am mistaken, she has herself taken a great step towards curing it."

"Of course, my dear children," said Rev. Mother, "this makes a great difference. Helen acted very wrongly; her fault was dishonourable in the extreme; but she has made a noble reparation. Teresa, I have much pleasure in giving the prize to you, its proper owner. Your papers were very good; they are by far the best of any, excepting those which I cannot now pass."

Rev. Mother placed the beautiful gold medal round Teresa's neck, and put the books in her hands. Helen cried bitterly. Sister Gabrielle drew near to comfort her. The children were divided between joy at Teresa's triumph and sorrow for poor Helen. They kissed Teresa, and looked wonderingly at her splendid prize; then they crowded round Helen, who was still sobbing.

"Never mind, dear," whispered one; "you have told the truth; no one will remember your fault."

"Cheer up, Helen," said another, "you will win the next prize I am sure."

Rev. Mother allowed them to console her for a few minutes, then she called Helen to her. The poor child knelt, and implored her pardon. Rev. Mother laid her hand kindly upon the downcast face, all streaming with tears.

"I freely pardon you, my dear Helen," she said, "and I unhesitatingly declare that I shall trust you more than I have done. I see that although vanity misleads you at times, yet you are truthful and brave. My dear children," said Rev. Mother, turning to the young girls who surrounded her, "it is my express wish that you never repeat this circumstance. Helen has honestly owned her fault before you all, and you are in honour bound to forget it. Do not mention it either amongst yourselves or to your friends. Let us forget it. Remember only this, that while you will do well to avoid Helen's fault, you may safely imitate her truth, and admire her courage. If ever you are inclined to do wrong for the sake of vanity or love of praise, think of Helen's temptation."

Teresa enjoyed the happiness of seeing her mamma's look of delight when she showed her

the prize she had won. Helen remained three years longer at the convent, and her character and behaviour continued to improve from day to day, so that she was at last admitted into the confraternity of the Children of Mary. She had many hard battles with her leading temptation, but the lesson she learned had been a hard one, and she never forgot it.

THE MARTYR CHILD.

V.

THE MARTYR CHILD.

CHAPTER I.

YOU all know that many years ago there reigned in England a king called Henry VIII. When he was young he was good and handsome, and all the people loved him very much. He married a princess called Katherine of Arragon. But when he grew older he became very wicked ; he sent his kind and gentle queen away. There was a new religion men had just invented, which would allow him to do as he pleased. He gave up by degrees all the doctrines of the Catholic faith, and not only became a Protestant himself, but tried to make all his people do the same. I could never tell you all the sorrow and wrong he caused when he found that the people would not give up their faith to please him. One of the most cruel and unjust things this bad king did was to destroy all the convents and monasteries. He spent a great deal of money, and found he must have a great

deal more. When he thought any convent or monastery was rich, and had money or costly altar vessels, he would send a band of rough soldiers, who took possession of all the valuables in the convent to satisfy the covetous king. They were hard, bitter times, and no one was happy.

In the south of England, in the fertile county of Kent, stood Vere Court, the seat of a nobleman whom we shall call Lord De Vere. He was a young Catholic nobleman, exceedingly good, and beloved alike by rich and poor; and his wife, Lady De Vere, was no less so.

Lord and Lady De Vere were as good and as happy as it was possible to be.

Lady De Vere had been one of Queen Katherine's maids of honour, and she was much attached to her royal mistress. She loved her so much for her goodness and her sorrows, that she would have given her life for her. The queen was very sorry to lose her favourite attendant, but she told Lord De Vere he must often bring his lady to see her.

They had one little girl, and, as Lady De Vere loved the good queen so much, she gave her little baby the same name—Katherine, or, as every one called her, Katrine De Vere.

They were very happy in their beautiful home; no shadow of trouble had ever darkened their

lives. They had everything to make them contented and satisfied.

There was a beautiful chapel at Vere Court, of which Father Cuthbert was the chaplain. When Katrine was only four years old, he instructed her in her religion, and taught her to love our Lord and His blessed Mother, and the holy angels. Katrine grew in goodness; and it soon became her greatest delight to join in the services of the Church, to gather flowers for the altar, and help her mamma in adorning the church.

But a sad time was coming for this happy, loving family. The wicked King Henry wanted to send away his queen; and all the good Catholics in England were very angry, and much opposed to it; and no one felt more grieved than Lord and Lady De Vere. They went up to London to see the queen, and try what they could do to help her. It was a woeful journey for them. King Henry was so angry at any one daring to oppose his wishes that he made excuses for putting many people who did so to death. Some of his spies told him all Lord De Vere had said, and Henry was in a great rage. He had him seized, and thrown into the Tower. His judges were as bad as Henry himself; and after a cruel and unjust trial, they declared Lord De Vere had been guilty of high treason, and he

was condemned to death. There were many people who knew that this was wicked and untrue, but no one had the courage to interfere to take his part. Henry was such a tyrant, few dare oppose him, do what he would; he killed friends and foes alike. Not satisfied with taking Lord De Vere's life, his estates were forfeited, and King Henry took all his money and lands, while his poor wife and child were left without a shilling.

Little they thought, on the bright morning they left their beautiful home, that none of them would ever see it again. The sun shone, the birds sang, the trees and flowers gave forth a thousand perfumes. There was no shadow of the dark prison or the red scaffold; but both were to come. Lady De Vere went daily to see her dear husband while he lay in that gloomy tower. Katrine went with her mother; she was too young to know why her poor father lived in that dark narrow room, and would not come back to Vere Court. "I am sure the chestnuts are all in bloom, papa," she would say; "when shall we go home?" She would clasp her arms around his neck, little thinking, poor child, that her father would never see chestnuts bloom or sunrise again.

The day dawned that was the last Lord De Vere was to see on earth. His poor wife came to

bid him farewell. Even angels bow their heads before grief such as hers. Katrine wondered why her papa held her in his arms, and kissed her with such streaming eyes and burning lips. She saw her mother carried white and senseless out of the cell ; she heard the heavy booming of the bell ; and then they told her that her father she loved so dearly was dead.

Poor Katrine was soon doubly orphaned, for Lady De Vere did not many days survive the tragical scene. She soon rejoined her beloved husband. Katrine, lately a happy, blooming child, heiress to great wealth, and the petted darling of her parents, was now alone in the world, penniless and almost friendless. Then came to her aid one of those friends who seem always at hand to succour and console. The good Father Cuthbert, who had hurried up to London when he first heard of the imprisonment of Lord De Vere, took the lonely child under his protection. It might have been, that if he had not removed her quickly from notice, the vengeance of the ruthless king might have fallen upon her defenceless head. But Father Cuthbert travelled with her night and day, and never left her until he had placed her safely under the charge of the Rev. Mother of St Mary's Convent, at Hilsgate, in Yorkshire.

CHAPTER II.

A new life began now for little Katrine. The memory of her beautiful, gentle mother, and her dear father, never left her; but she gradually forgot Vere Court and the golden hours she had spent there. She was the only little one in the convent. The Sisters thought it better to keep her name a secret until she was old enough to hear all the sad story; so she was known by the name of "the Convent Child." She had a little room to herself, and one of the Sisters had the charge of her. She was very happy after a time, and was much loved by the good nuns. Father Cuthbert, too, went over once or twice in the year to see her.

As Katrine became older, she was remarkable for her great love and devotion to our Lord in the most blessed Sacrament. It seemed to her so wonderful a mystery, she could think of nothing else. She liked to hear about the crib at Bethlehem; that, however, was passed many years ago, but Jesus was still with us upon the altar. No grown-up saint ever thought more of this sweet mystery than did little Katrine. She only wondered that with such a great miracle daily and hourly going on, men and women could be so indifferent.

The nuns had told her about the Dominican

saint, Imelda, who, though she was a child, loved Jesus so much in the blessed Sacrament that she died because her love was so great. Katrine longed to be like her. She had no father on earth; but when she went into the convent chapel, she never felt sad or lonely. A soft light came through the stained windows, a large crucifix hung over the altar, and underneath that was the altar-piece, representing our Lady holding her dead Son in her arms. Katrine used to gaze upon our Lord's calm face, all marked with cruel wounds, until her heart ached; then came the comforting thought, "But He lives still, and I will love Him to make up for it." The time Katrine loved best was the twilight, when the sanctuary lamp shone brightly, before the tapers were lit. It was a beautiful picture to see that angel-child kneeling then before the altar.

Whenever she knew there was no one else there, she would hasten, and sit or kneel by the altar-rails until others came. I do not think she was praying all the time, but her mind was full of beautiful thoughts and ideas, and her heart was full of love for the dear Lord she was with.

Ah! dear children, what a different world it would be if men loved our Lord more. Even you, whom He loves so dearly, His chosen little ones,

often forget that He is upon the altar, and laugh and talk even in His holy presence.

While all was peaceful and calm in the quiet convent, dreadful things were happening in England. The good Queen Katherine was driven from her palace; and the king, now that his pious wife was away, set no bounds to his evil deeds. All the convents round London had been pillaged, and most of them destroyed. The soldiers were ravaging the north, and the nuns of St Mary's began to fear. They had many costly things in their chapel; among others, the tabernacle, which had been given to the chapel many years before by a lady who died in their house. It was a thank-offering she had made on account of her only son who had escaped great dangers, and had at last become a Jesuit priest. The sacred vessels, too, were all of gold, and studded with precious stones.

When the soldiers robbed the churches and convents, they treated these holy things with such dreadful irreverence that any good Catholic would sooner have died defending them than have yielded them into such wicked hands.

"My dear Mother," said little Katrine one day, "what makes you look so sad? You never smile now; and all the Sisters look sad too."

"We are all grieved, Katrine; the king is putting so many good Catholics to death."

"Why does he do that?"

"Because he has been wicked, and good men will not take his side; he has taken a great hatred to nuns and monks, and is turning them all out of their homes."

"Will he hurt us, Rev. Mother?"

"I hope not, my child; we are so far away, they may not think of Hilsgate."

"But if he does send, what shall we do?"

"Trust in God, Katrine; we have no other hope."

"But I would run to the chapel if they came near," said Katrine, kindling up, "and would let them kill me ten thousand times over, sooner than they should touch any holy thing."

Rev. Mother smiled as she caressed the little head and kissed the eager little face. "My dear child," she said, "they would not care much for such a little girl as you."

"I should like though," answered Katrine, slowly, "to die for our Lord."

Rev. Mother raised the child in her arms, and looked at her.

"Tell me, Katrine," she said, "if these soldiers come, and want you to go away with them, and give up your religion, would you sooner die than say, 'Yes'?"

"Sooner, ten thousand times, dear Mother."

"But it would be a cruel death; and if you do as they wish you, you will be taken care of, and have money and fine clothes; perhaps even the king would give you back your own home."

"Not if they would give me the whole world. Why, Rev. Mother," she continued, eagerly, "do you remember St Agnes in the picture? She was quite a child like me, only a little older perhaps; and sooner than deny our Lord, she died a martyr's death."

"Would you like to imitate her?"

"Oh yes!" and Katrine clasped her hands joyously. "Why, dear Mother, I would give anything to go to heaven with a palm branch in my hands like that St Agnes carried. Think, think, how pleased our Lord would be."

Rev. Mother sighed, and told Katrine it was time to leave her. When the child had gone, she knelt and prayed. She shed bitter tears, for her heart was wrung with grief and anxiety for the little flock under her charge.

She was provided against the worst. Underneath the vaults of the convent was a subterranean passage that led to a small room; it had been constructed during the wars of the Roses, and was so safe that it defied discovery. Even if the walls and vaults were all destroyed, no trace of it could be found: only Rev.

Mother and four of the Sisters knew the secret of the entrance. In the room was a large recess, and there Rev. Mother determined to hide the treasures of the convent, if it should be attacked. Every preparation was made, so that, after the first alarm, all might be secured. But they heard no more evil news; there seemed to be a calm. The cloud, however, hung dark and heavy above their heads, ready to burst suddenly and violently upon them.

CHAPTER III.

IT was just the end of Benediction; Vespers and Compline had been sung, the fragrance of the incense filled the little chapel, the tapers gleamed like stars upon the altar, the priest had pronounced the blessing, when all at once a violent tumult was heard outside the convent walls. A terrified lay Sister rushed into the chapel, and, running up to the Superioress, cried, "They are come, Rev. Mother; the soldiers are here." A cry of dismay rang through the place. The Rev. Mother, with a pale but calm face, said—

"Delay opening the outer gates as long as you can."

She went quickly to the altar, and, by the aid of the Sisters and the priest, the sacred vessels were nearly all deposited in their hiding-place before she was summoned to the commanding-officer's presence.

Sister Frances disappeared down the dark vault with the last part of her precious burden as the heavy clanging steps of the soldiers were heard coming towards the chapel. The Rev. Mother had time to whisper to her, "Do not fail to let me know when all is finished, and send me the key," when she went to confront the men who were thirsting for plunder.

"We hear you have some valuable treasures, Madam," said the officer. "We do not want any trouble; give them up quietly, and no harm will be done."

"By whose authority?" said the Rev. Mother.

"By that of our Sovereign Lord the King. We have ridden hard, for money is wanted; and that golden treasury of yours must be changed into coin of the realm. Lead the way, if you please, to the chapel and the sacristy; let us see what we can find."

With a din and uproar indescribable, the unruly band entered the chapel, where so lately the blessing of Jesus had been pronounced. At one glance they saw the altar had been stripped. Rage and fury seized upon them.

"Fly, my Sisters," said Rev. Mother, "and save yourselves."

Some were caught, and killed in the cloisters; some found refuge in the neighbouring houses; others were wounded, and left to the mercy of the ruffians. The Superioress remained firm; they dragged her from the church, to make her show them all the rooms where they thought it likely the treasure might be hidden. The soldiers all followed; no one remained in the chapel save little Katrine, who, with pale cheeks and quivering lips, had watched the frightful scene. She clung to the altar-rails, and no one had noticed her.

As soon as the last footsteps died away, Sister Frances came out of the vault. She saw the little child, and ran to her.

"Katrine," she said, "I am so glad you are here. I have heard all that has passed. I am quite sure those men will not let me speak to our Mother again. Will you take this little key, and tell her all is well; if they kill her, they will not hurt you. Keep the key, then, and give it to some good priest;—Father Cuthbert, or our own Father, if he be still alive."

"I will," said Katrine.

"Hide it here," said the Sister, "in your dress; mind no one sees it."

After a time of dreadful suspense, the soldiers

returned, forcing the Rev. Mother with them. They saw the entrance to the vaults; and, with a shout of triumph, lighted their torches and went down.

They found nothing there. Their fury became ungovernable, and after in vain interrogating the Rev. Mother, one of the troop struck her down with a fearful blow. She fell on the threshold of the little chapel she had so long loved.

Sister Frances took the trembling child into her arms. She thought it possible they might escape together.

"Sister," whispered Katrine, "tell me what key this is?"

"It is the key of the hiding-place where we have put all the sacred vessels and holy things. Dear child, you had better perhaps return it to me."

"Please, dear Sister, let me keep it, they will not think of searching me."

The soldiers returned, resolved to pull the whole place down in order to find their booty. With many dreadful oaths and curses, they assailed the Sister and the child, who answered not a word.

One of the men, a little less brutal than the rest, pushed the good nun out of the chapel, and bade her go while she had time, for they would burn the place down.

"The child!" she cried, "give me the child."

Then, for the first time, they noticed the little one.

"Holloa," said one, "we may discover something now," and he raised the child in his rough arms.

"I say, my little one," he began, "do you know where they have hidden all those precious things?"

"Put her down," said another, "what should a child like that know?"

"Let me tell you, comrade, children often know a great deal; little eyes are very sharp."

"We did not come here to make war upon children," said a third. "Put her down."

"I shall not. Do you know where the Rev. Mother hid all her fine things?" he continued.

"Shall you make me a martyr like St Agnes if I do not tell?" asked the child, without any sign of fear.

"Then you *do* know," shouted the man in triumph. "I say, captain, this child knows something."

The captain, a fierce, dark-looking man, came up to them.

"Do you know where these things are hidden?" he said, with a savage oath.

Katrine made no answer. He shook her violently; and as he did so, the key fell from her dress.

Sister Frances made a step towards her, but the soldiers thrust her back, and closed the door. Katrine stood like a meek, defenceless lamb before her cruel enemies.

"Now," said the captain, fiercely, "no nonsense; tell me what key this is?"

"I cannot," said Katrine.

"You shall. If we return empty-handed we shall be disgraced. I know there are rich treasures here, and I will have them. If you do not tell me what key this is, and show me to what door it belongs, you shall be killed."

She clasped her little hands. She looked so fair and gentle, standing there in the midst of those dark soldiers, that the man's heart, in spite of himself, was touched.

"Now," he said, "decide quickly; will you tell me about the key?"

"No," said Katrine, firmly.

"If you will, I will take you to London, and the King will give you money and everything that can make you happy. If you do not, I will throw you in that dark vault, and there you shall die."

The child's lips turned white; but her little voice did not falter as she said, "I will not, if you kill me twice over."

Out of himself with rage, the ruffian struck her a violent blow over the head; and as the

child fell, her temple struck against the sharp corner of one of the benches. It was a violent blow; it opened the gate of heaven to Katrine, and gave her a martyr's crown.

The men, savage as they were, turned away from the pitiful sight of that murdered child. One took the key from the little hand, which clasped it tightly; another raised the head, and placed a cushion underneath it. They murmured amongst themselves, for they thought it a cruel deed to take that young life.

"Come, my men," said the captain, "I was rather too rough, certainly. But the mischief is done; let us see if we can find the door that this key opens. Here you," he said roughly to Sister Frances, "go inside, and see if you can help that child."

The Sister, who was weeping bitterly, entered. She sat down, and, taking Katrine in her arms, pillowed the little head upon her kind heart.

"My child, my darling," she cried, "I have done this. I ought not to have given you the key; but I did it for the best. I never thought they would touch you."

The dying eyes opened slowly.

"Dearest Sister, I am so glad. It is all over now, and I shall soon be with our Lord in heaven."

"Yes, my darling, you will indeed. You are

a true martyr; you have died for the honour of Jesus. I envy your fate."

A loving smile lit up the sweet face; the lips murmured the sacred names of "Jesus" and "Mary;" and before Sister Frances could speak again, the loving soul had gone home. Holding that dead child in her arms, Sister Frances made her escape. She found refuge in the house of a Catholic widow lady, who lived near the convent.

Not even her own mother could have mourned for Katrine more than did the good Sister. She washed the blood from those golden curls Lady de Vere had loved so much. She crossed the little white hands on the breast; she placed a lily between them; and then they laid the little martyr into her grave.

Years afterwards, when those of the nuns who had escaped the persecution met in one of their houses abroad, they spoke of nothing so much or so lovingly as of their dear "Convent Child."

THE CHRISTMAS ANGEL.

VI.

THE CHRISTMAS ANGEL.

My little children, Christmas is your especial feast. You learn now that Jesus was once a little babe and a little child like you. You are no longer frightened, nor think that God is too great to notice you. Your hearts are full of love; you kneel before the crib and look at Him, and feel sure He knows and loves you. Look at Him well; note His sweet face, His hands, and His hair. Then think those eyes never looked cross or angry; those lips never uttered an unbecoming word; those outstretched hands were never lifted in anger. Now look at yourselves, and see the difference; sometimes you are both cross and angry; you speak unkindly to your playfellows, and disrespectfully to your parents.

This is your feast; for when the kind Jesus lived on earth, He said, "Suffer little children to come unto me," and He loves you as much now as then.

How kind He is! He has sent a beautiful

bright angel from heaven to take care of you, who is always close by your side; he knows and sees everything you do, and tells Jesus all. When you are naughty, he hides his face in his wings, and sorrows for your sins; but when you are good, he smiles upon you, and throws his wings around you. The next time you are tempted to do wrong, think about this good angel.

Christmas is a happy time for little children, every one is so kind, and they get so many nice presents. The church looks so beautiful, you would like to be always there. The snow lies upon the ground, and you have some fine sport with the snow-balls. There is no school, a long holiday, and nearly all play. But I am going to tell you about a little boy, who had no mother to make him nice things, no home, no bright fire, no loving little brothers and sisters; who scarcely knew what the name of God meant, and had never been inside a church.

This little boy lived in London; his mother was dead, and his father had gone far away, no one knew where; and he was left with an old woman, who cared very little whether he lived or died. His poor mother had been a Catholic, and he had been baptized; his name was Charlie. He was a pretty, fair-haired boy, with deep blue eyes, and rosy lips. He was very thin, for he had

not half enough to eat. You could see the blue veins plainly through the small white hands. Charlie was not seven years old ; he was a good boy, though no one had ever taught him his catechism. His guardian-angel took care of him, and whispered in his ear what was right and what was wrong, and Charlie always did the right.

The old woman who had the care of Charlie was called Nanny, and she was one of the crossest old women you would meet with. She was always scolding or beating the little fellow, and he had but a miserable life. Charlie sometimes went out into the yard to play with the children. One morning, when he got up, he felt very cold, and his head ached ; so he went out into the yard to run about, and get warm. There, sliding up and down, he saw his companions.

"Oh, come along, Charlie, here 's such fun," said one of them, "the day after to-morrow is Christmas-day!"

"Christmas-day!" said Charlie; "what is that?"

"What 's that!—why, it 's Christmas-day, I tell you ; every one has a plum-pudding ; my mother says we shall, too."

"And," said Billy Hopkins, "my father says I may slide all day. Christmas is such fun!"

"I thought people went to church on Christmas-day," said a curly-headed little boy.

"Some do," said a big boy; "but that 's not my way."

Little Charlie crept up to the curly-headed child and said, "Tommy, what is 'church'?"

"Church!—why, it 's a beautiful place, with a large altar in it, and full of pictures and flowers and candles; and oh, Charlie, there is one picture, so beautiful, of the blessed Lady and the holy Jesus."

"Who are they?" said Charlie.

"You are a funny boy; don't you know about our Lord and the blessed Virgin? I do; and my mother often talks to me about them."

"Ah! but I haven't got a mother."

"Doesn't old Nanny tell you about God?"

"No," said Charlie, with a reverent face; "will you?"

"Well, God lives up in heaven, you know, and He loves us all, and He sends a beautiful angel to take care of us. You 've got one, and so have I."

"Have I? Where is he?"

"By your side. My mother says the angel never goes away; he never leaves you for one moment; he is by your side now."

"I wish he would nurse me, my head aches so bad."

"Nurse you! why, you cannot see him."

"I wonder," said Charlie, after musing some moments, "why God didn't give me a mother, if He loves me so much."

That question puzzled Tommy, and he answered, "I don't know. I don't know much about anything, but my mother will tell you. Good-bye, Charlie, I must go in."

"Good-bye," said Charlie, going slowly back to the house. All day he sat by the fire, thinking about what Tommy had told him, and wondering if the angel really stood there.

"What on earth are you turning round in that way for?" said old Nanny.

"I am looking for my angel."

"For what?" said Nanny, frightened.

"My angel; but I can't see him;" and his little head drooped wearily.

"I'll cure you of that nonsense!" she said, and she gave him a blow which made Charlie fall.

"Oh, don't beat me, my head aches so bad."

But Nanny was a wicked woman; she hated all things good and holy. She was the worst of all bad people, an apostate Catholic.

"Angels, indeed! Go up to bed, and don't let me hear that again."

Little Charlie went sobbing up to his wretched room.

"O angel," he said, throwing himself on the dirty straw; "take me to God! I want to go away."

He cried himself to sleep. The next morning, when he awoke, his head ached, and he felt burning hot; his legs and arms hurt him, too, and he could hardly walk down-stairs. When he got into the kitchen, old Nanny was in one of her dreadfully cross tempers; he was afraid to speak, but after a little while he asked,—

"Nancy, please may I go to church?"

Already furious, she grew quite savage.

"Church!" she almost shrieked. "What does the boy mean? I'll send you to church, never fear!" And she seized the trembling boy roughly by the arm. Dragging him to the door, she opened it, and, pushing him into the yard, exclaimed, "There! Now go to church! Mind you had better not come here again. I'm not going to have you preaching about angels and churches. A pretty life I should have of it. I'll beat you until you have done with all that."

Poor little Charlie! Out he went; down the dirty yard, and into the long, endless streets. The snow was thick upon the ground, and the cold so intense, he could not keep himself warm. He put his hands under his ragged pinafore, and then blew upon them as little children do. But he could not warm them. He wandered on

through the long streets. Grand ladies passed him, dressed in velvets and furs; troops of happy children, with beaming faces; big, stalwart men, wrapped in greatcoats; carriages and horses, loaded drays, cabs, porters; men with baskets full of game and poultry; till Charlie's aching head grew dizzy, and he sat down upon the door-step of a fashionable-looking house. He rested his head on his hands, and was just going to sleep, when a policeman came up and shook him roughly by the shoulder.

"Now, then, walk on, if you please. We can't have dirty boys like you sitting on respectable people's door-steps."

Wearily poor Charlie walked on.

"O angel, are you with me now? Help me! Tell the good God how cold and hungry I am."

Something within the child's heart told him the angel was there. The day was far gone, and the dusk of evening was coming on.

"I wish I could find a church," thought Charlie. "They must be kind people that live there. I will try. I wonder what it's like."

Then evening came, and the lamps were lighted. Still the poor, ragged boy wandered on. Some few looked at him. A happy mother, with her child clasped tightly in her arms, passed him with a sigh. A poor girl,

with a sweet face, but a scanty dress, stood and watched him; but, alas! she was houseless and homeless. Many a head was turned after him, but on he went. At last he came to a shop, round which stood a crowd of boys and girls. Hot pies, smoking and steaming, filled the whole street with their savoury fragrance. What a picture were those hungry eyes and pale faces round the window! What a mixture of envy and regret, as a more favoured mortal entered and bought one! What straining eyes and longing looks!

Charlie stopped.

"How I should like a pie!" he said; "how nice they smell. I wish I had a penny!"

Some man coming up, pushed him away, and took his place at the window.

"No one cares for me; they all push me;" and the hot tears came into his eyes. Still he went on through the cold. At last the shops became less frequent, and grand white houses came instead. It was colder still there, and the snow-fringed trees bent their tall heads, and the winds whispered through them; they seemed to speak to him. He came to a large house with a porch before it; and, numbed with the cold, sick and faint, he entered and lay down.

"I am glad: I am sure my angel brought me

here ;" and he put his cold hand on his burning forehead.

Little Charlie was very ill, though he did not know it. His head felt so fiery and so light, and his little limbs were so heavy, he could not stir. Then his senses began to wander. The darkness frightened him, and he thought he really saw his angel standing by him.

"Oh, take me to God," was his moaning, pitiful cry. "I am so cold and hungry."

He went on talking, as though the angel were speaking to him. Then he thought the angel knelt by his side, and placed his cool hand kindly on his head. There came a low sound of sweet music in his ear, and clearly through it he seemed to hear the angel's voice, which said,—

"My dear Charlie, I am going to take you to our good God in heaven, and you will be an angel there."

"I am so glad," said Charlie; "my head is so bad, I want it to rest in heaven. Will old Nanny come too? Will she beat me there?"

"There is no beating in heaven, my dear little boy. You will find it all happiness and joy."

"Shall you be there, dear angel?"

"Yes, my child. I will take you, and show you to our Lord, and to our Blessed Lady, and all the saints."

"Will they love me? No one loves me here."

"Yes, they will love you very much."

The music grew louder and sweeter, and a great light shone in the porch.

"Charlie," whispered the angel, "speak after me." And the angel said, "Our Father," and Charlie repeated it after him.

"Tell me what it means; oh, do tell me! Have I got a father in heaven? Shall I see my mother there?"

"Yes; your mother is waiting for you."

Then the angel bent down his head and leaned over Charlie, and a sweet perfume floated over him. The music grew louder, and the light clearer.

"Will you go with me, Charlie?" said the angel.

"Yes," he whispered.

The eyelids quivered, the little frame shook, and then all was quite still. Charlie was dead; his soul had gone to heaven.

Suddenly the house door opened, and a tall, powdered footman came out.

"Hallo!" he cried; "what is here? Get up, little boy!" and he touched the lifeless body with his foot. It did not stir; then the man was frightened, and stooped down.

"Why, he's dead! Starved to death, I declare!"

He rang the bell, for he had closed the door. More servants came, and they sent for a policeman. The dead child was carried to the workhouse, and there left. They washed him, and put on him a little white shroud ; they brushed out the fair curls, and folded the thin hands on the little breast.

"I wonder," said the nurse, "what he could have been smiling about when he died."

"I don't know," said another standing near. "People do say children often see angels when they die."

Three days afterwards they carried little Charlie to the cemetery, and there buried him. He was left in his snow-covered grave ; the leafless trees waved over him, the silent stars shone down upon him ; the birds sang cheerily in the cold, clear frost ; but the little boy was unconscious of all ; he had joined the band of angels in heaven.

There was a paragraph next morning in the newspaper, telling how a fair-haired boy had been found dead. Papas and mammas, over their comfortable breakfast-table, sighed, and said it was a pity such things should be. Bright-eyed children paused for a moment and looked sad. And then he was forgotten. None knew of the aching head and weary limbs, or guessed how hard blows and harder words had

driven the helpless child from the wretched place called his home.

The night Charlie died, old Nanny had gone out to look for him; but he was many miles away. After a long search she returned, and the next day she heard how he had died. His pale face haunted her; his meek replies, his earnest "Don't beat me, Nanny," were ever in her ears. She never forgot the sorrow of his eyes, and his pitiful little voice; and the result was that, after a long life of dark sin, she returned to the faith she had so long forsaken. The prayers of the angel-child were answered, and old Nanny endeavoured to repair the scandal she had caused.

Dear reader, my story is ended now. Let it teach you one thing—that is, to be kind to the poor. You have a happy home, kind parents, and plenty to eat and drink. Think sometimes of the little starving ones who have none of these things. Proud words, too, are as hurtful to the poor as cold and hunger. Do not, when you pass along the streets, look haughty and proud, and think how much better your clothes are than that poor boy's and girl's, and do not draw away your dress, as though their touch soiled it. Be gentle and kind. Remember a kind word and a bright smile will be valued as much as all your presents.

So Jesus, who loves the poor, will bless you.

THE WHITE ROBE.

VII.

THE WHITE ROBE.

CHAPTER I.

It would be difficult for those children who have kind parents and nice homes, to imagine what those little ones suffer who have neither. There are many such. London is a wonderfully large city, and there are thousands of children living there who would seem to have no one to love or care for them. It is very pleasant to live in a nice house near the green, sunny parks; but if you were to go into the dark, dull parts of the city, where the streets are narrow and dirty, the houses dark and gloomy, and see the poor children who dwell there, you would be grieved and surprised. Think what a different place this world must be to them and to you. If they could change with you for a time, how delighted they would be! A poor child in the country does not suffer half as much as one dwelling in London, or any other large city. There, no matter how poor they are, they have

many pleasures ; they can go out into the fields and woods, play among the buttercups and daisies, and wander through the green, shady lanes. They have bright eyes, rosy cheeks, and strong limbs. They breathe fresh air, and have clear water to drink. In those dull London courts and alleys there is no room to play ; the sun even cannot shine into them, for the houses are built so near each other, that they are always in the shade. No fresh breeze can blow, and there is always a close, stifling smell. The little children who live there have faces white and thin, sunken eyes, and weak limbs. They never look clean, and the unbrushed, matted hair hangs over the pallid face. Sometimes they look so wretched, that you almost wonder at first if they are human beings. Good and kind people take much interest in these poor children, but they are so numerous that it seems impossible to help them all. It is difficult to imagine a child who has never seen a green field, or held daisies and buttercups in its hands. Every now and then some dreadful accident happens,—a child is beaten, burned, or scalded to death, and then for a short time charity is on the alert ; but there are so many to rescue, and so much to do, that unless every one helps, the poor little ones must still suffer on. Grown-up people who read the papers are shocked and

horrified. Only lately, a poor little boy whom nobody owned, who had neither father, mother, nor friend, was beaten by a big, cruel man, and left in the fields to die. His poor body was hidden under some straw, and found months afterwards. Who could tell the suffering, the fear of that child's life, or the agony of his lonely death?

Not much less dreadful was the fate of a hapless little one whom a poor ignorant girl thrust into boiling water and scalded to death. There is never a week passes that people do not shudder at such sad stories. If every one would help just a little, there would be fewer of them. It is well for you, my readers, to remember these things; they are not fairy tales, but sad and cruel realities, sometimes occurring close to your own peaceful, happy homes.

Now, I want you to leave the wide streets, full of gay shops and busy, well-dressed people, to leave your own nice home, and go with me in fancy to a street and house that both actually exist in London. Through the busy thoroughfares of the city, until you arrive at a place called Seven Dials—we need not describe it—you pass children such as I have tried to picture, many hundreds of them; and when you gaze upon the little faces, you will think the "fair image and likeness" blotted out by want, dirt, and too often

sin. Children who have never known childhood, who never enjoyed a childish pleasure; children old in sorrow and poverty, accustomed only to blows, curses, hunger, and misery; children with wan, pinched features and hungry eyes; only to pass them by saddens you, and you long to take them away where they can be washed and fed, and made more human. Is it a child's voice that utters those terrible oaths and wicked words? Alas! yes. A little girl, who ought to be as good and innocent as an angel. Her father and mother swear, so does she; and the little lips that have never yet pronounced the sacred names of Jesus and Mary seem almost blistered by the dreadful expressions that fall from them. There is much to do among the heathen, but surely far more for those little ones at home.

A long walk down a very dirty street brings you into another, called Birt Street. Here you may say good-bye to what little sun and fresh air you have enjoyed, for here there are neither. At the end of the street is a narrow dark passage, and that leads into Birt Court; there are twenty-four small houses in it, twelve on each side, and the space between them is so narrow that you could almost reach the opposite house with your arms. The place is full of children, sickly and pale and dirty. Under your feet lies

scattered bits of orange-peel and broken cabbage-leaves, which some of the children will devour hungrily. A noise of women scolding, children shouting, some in play, some in anger, nearly deafens you. The last house, No. 12, it is called, on the right hand side, is inhabited by an elderly woman, who gains her livelihood by taking in children to nurse. She is a stout, strong-looking woman, with a red face and sharp angry eyes. She has a daughter, named Bessy, who helps her to take care of the little ones. You would think, perhaps, that no one would send a delicate baby to Mrs Bents, but her house is full of them. Mothers who go out to service send their children there until they are six or seven years old, and can do a little work themselves. Sometimes a poor mother dies, and the father, a labouring man, out at his work all day, cannot take care of the children, so the baby, and perhaps the two youngest ones, are sent to Mrs Bents; she charges two and three shillings a week, and for that "feeds and minds them." It would, perhaps, be harsh to call Mrs Bents a cruel woman; she considers little children and babies as her trade; she could not tell you what the words love or tenderness mean; she would not starve them, but she considers herself right in making some profit out of each miserable little child under her care. While they are

very young and helpless, she makes the older ones nurse them, but the greater part of their time is spent in sleep. If she hears a little pitiful moan she does not raise the babe and hush it with sweet words and loving kisses, she gives it a few drops of sleeping stuff and lays it down. Sometimes the babies live to grow up pale, stunted ghosts of children, but far oftener they die before they are old enough to know the misery of their fate.

It is so sad a scene that I do not like to describe it to you: the small, dirty, close room only contains a bed, a round stand, a wooden stool, and three broken chairs; the squalid, dirty children sit on the bed or on the floor. At nine in the morning they are all hurriedly dressed, and have each a slice of bread; one tin mug of milk and water is passed round, and each child drinks a little. Woe to the younger ones who cannot look out for their own rights! The day passes in scolding, crying, and sleeping; each morning brings the same weary round. If a child falls ill, but little notice is taken about it. If one of you fall sick, what love and tenderness are lavished upon you! Nice cool oranges moisten your lips; your head lies either on your soft pillow or on your mother's arm; every one pities you, and tries to make you well. But there, when a child was ill, no mother's arm

pillowed its little head, no tender hand cooled the hot forehead; if there seemed to be any danger, the doctor was sent for, if not, the child grew well as it could.

One morning a woman brought a little child, a baby girl, to Mrs Bents'. She said her husband was dead, and she had found a situation, and wanted some one to take charge of the child for her. She seemed fond of it, and kissed it when she went away, begging the old woman to be kind to it. She said it had no name, they could call it what they pleased. It was so fragile and little that the other children called it Tiney. For two years the mother sent the money, and then no more was heard of her. Whether she died, or ran away, or purposely neglected the child, no one ever knew. Mrs Bents was very angry indeed at first, and poor Tiney was well shaken for her mother's silence; but she did not send the little thing to the workhouse, for she thought in a few years' time it might be able to help her very much; so she kept it. Tiney had very little to eat; indeed, how she grew up at all was a great mystery. Some of the neighbours were sorry for her, and very often, instead of throwing away old pieces of crust or other food, they would fill her ragged pinafore and tell her to eat quickly. At seven years old she was very small, thin, and pale; she had a quiet, patient face, with a wist-

ful look in her large eyes, which was sad to see. She was generally engaged in nursing babies nearly as big as herself; but two or three times in her short life Tiney had been out of the court into the streets, and saw splendours that awed her; children with pretty frocks, bright shoes, and hats with gay ribbons, with clean faces, and tidy, nicely-arranged hair. Poor Tiney used to look at them, and something like a vague wonder would fill her mind; she could not quite believe that she was the same kind of being. It was very seldom that such a treat as going out fell to her share, for, as a rule, Mrs Bents kept her very hard at work. Though she was only seven years old, she knew how to feed the babies and measure out the sleeping stuff; she was, indeed, the little drudge of the house. The older children even knew she was "kept for charity," and felt themselves very much above her. Tiney had many strange thoughts; she wondered much who had made her, and who had made everything else. She ventured one day, when Mrs Bents was in a very good humour, to ask her about a great many things. The old woman did not give her any satisfactory reply, and Tiney remained as puzzled as ever. She was a good child naturally, though she had never in her life received one word of instruction, or heard the name of Almighty God. She was

kind and patient. Many a little babe nestled to sleep in her arms, and was happy in having so gentle a nurse.

One morning the babies were unusually cross. It was a hot summer day, and the warm room was full of noisome smells. It was with difficulty one could breathe there. Mrs Bents was cross and tired. She gave them a dose of her famous sleeping-stuff, but two or three little unfortunates were obstinate, and could not, even if they would, stop the wailing cry that was so pitiful to hear.

"I must give those young ones another dose," said Mrs Bents to her daughter; "there is no keeping them still."

The bottle was empty, and neither mother nor daughter chose to go out in the heat of the day to get it refilled. It was suggested that Tiney should be sent; and after many admonitions she was entrusted with twopence and the bottle, and told to go to the druggist's at the corner.

Tiney started on her errand, proud in the extreme of the trust reposed in her. She held the two pennies tightly, and the bottle clasped in her hand, as though it were the most precious thing in the world, instead of a kind of poison, as it really was. The noise and bustle of the street confused the child, and she took the wrong turning. That did not matter, home was still

near, and there were many druggists' shops. But Tiney saw something just then more splendid than she had ever beheld in her life. It was a nice carriage, with a coachman driving, and a footman behind. It stopped at the door of a poor looking house, and a tall lady alighted from it and went into the house. Tiney's eyes grew large as they gazed upon her, for she wore a rich dress of trailing silk and a handsome velvet mantle ; her face was kind and sweet ; the child had never seen anything like her before, and she stood transfixed with wonder. After a few minutes she went on, and having accomplished her errand, returned by the same way, hoping, as the carriage still remained there, that she should see the lady again. But, alas ! her eyes were fixed so intensely upon the door of the house that she did not perceive a boy approaching with a large basket on his head. He carelessly knocked against the child as he passed by her, and she fell with some violence on the ground. The bottle was broken, and the dark contents all spilled upon the pavement. More than that, Tiney fell with one arm upon the glass, and cut it deeply in several places. Two or three people saw the accident, but no one came to help the child. She got up from the ground and sat down upon a door-step, sobbing as though her heart would break. The blood

was streaming from her arm, and covered the thin rags with which she was clothed. It was a pitiful sight, the forlorn little child, her face wet with tears, and her poor wounded arm. But such things are so common in those crowded streets that the busy passers-by seldom stop to to see what is the matter. Tiney, in her sorrow, had not noticed what step she sat down upon, and suddenly the door opened and the lady she had watched with so much delight came out. She stopped when she saw the weeping child, and bending over her, asked her gently what she was crying for. Tiney could not speak, her sobs came so thick and fast. Then the lady saw the bleeding arm ; she touched it tenderly, and tried to see where it was hurt.

"Try, my dear," she said, "to tell me how you have hurt yourself?"

At the sound of these words, the kindest she had ever heard in her life, Tiney raised her eyes to the lady's face. Something in that sad, patient little countenance brought tears into the kind eyes fixed upon it.

"Tell me," the lady continued, "how have you hurt this poor little arm so much."

"I fell," sobbed Tiney, "upon the bottle and broke it. All the stuff is spilled, and I dare not go home."

"Where is your home, little girl?"

"I live in Birt's Court, at Mrs Bents'."

"Is she your mother?" asked the lady.

"No," replied the child, with a wondering look; "I hasn't got any mother."

"Is she dead? Poor little child! where is your father?

"I don't know if she is dead. I hasn't got any father. Tommy Ball has, and he brought him three cakes. Tommy gave me a bit of one."

"Is Mrs Bents your aunt? What do you do at her house?"

"I mind the babies all day, and at night I sleep with them."

"But you are a baby yourself," said the lady, with a smile.

"No," answered Tiney, very gravely; "I am seven years old; but, oh!" she continued, sobbing again most bitterly, "what shall I do? I dare not go home."

"Let us see about the poor arm first," said the kind lady; and going back into the house, she procured some warm water, and after washing the wounds she bound it up nicely with some plaster and clean linen.

"There," she said, when it was finished; "now it feels easier, does it not?"

"Yes," cried Tiney; "but it is not my arm that frightens me; I am sure they will beat me.

When Tommy Ball spilt some milk one day and broke the jug, Bessy and Mrs Bents both beat him, and he had no dinner and no tea; he was so hungry I gave him all my bread."

"I will take you home," said the lady. "What is your name?"

"Mrs Bent says I have'nt got a name; but they call me Tiney."

"Well, Tiney, if you will show me the way to your house, I will go with you, and save you from being punished if I can."

The lady spoke a few words to the coachman, and then, with the little child at her side, proceeded to Birt's Court.

While they are going there, I will tell you about the lady. Her name was Lady Cliffe, and she was known everywhere for her great kindness and charity to the poor. But her especial care and interest were the homeless orphan children of London. To find them out, to rescue them from their wretched state, and provide them with a home in some institution, was the great business and pleasure of her life. She was wealthy, and had many children of her own; and that made her heart still more kind and tender for the little ones who had no friends. The poor blessed this lady's name when they heard it. No one was too miserable or unfortunate for her sympathy. On the morning

when poor Tiney fell, she had driven through the City to visit an old woman who had for many years subsisted on her bounty, and who was now lying on her death-bed. She could not pass a child in trouble, and when she saw Tiney's patient, hopeless little face, her kind heart was touched, and she determined to see if it was not possible to help her.

As they walked along, and the child, joyous and elated at the kind words so new to her, prattled gaily and innocently at her side, the interest she felt in her deepened, for she imagined she saw many little noble and generous traits in her character. She resolved, if possible, to rescue her. As they entered the court Tiney began to tremble again, her face grew white with fear, and her lips quivered, in spite of Lady Cliffe's efforts to reassure her.

Mrs Bents, who stood waiting at the door, rushed in a furious passion to seize hold of the child, but, seeing who was with her, stopped short, and satisfied herself by looking the anger she did not dare to express.

"Your little girl has met with a bad accident," said Lady Cliffe, in her kind, gentle voice; "she has broken the bottle and spilled the medicine, and has besides, I am sorry to say, cut her arm very severely."

"I have been waiting all this time with those

babies screaming until I am almost deaf," was the reply Mrs Bents made, as she advanced angrily towards the child, who shrank and trembled at her approach. Lady Cliffe drew the little one near her. "Nay," she said gently, "do not punish her—she is badly hurt; besides which, it was a perfect accident—some big boy knocked her down."

"They always have some excuse ready," replied the angry woman. "I told her to make haste, and so she ought to have done. A pretty thing to lose both bottle and money; she shall pay for it in some way."

"Will you allow me," said Lady Cliffe, "to give you the value of what she has lost?"

"That is another thing," replied the old woman, her face relaxing as she saw the well-filled purse in the lady's hand. "I am a poor woman, and every penny is of consequence. I am sure I could never live at all if I had not the means to give these young ones a dose every now and then."

"But you do not give them sleeping-stuff, I hope," said Lady Cliffe.

"Yes, indeed I do, and glad enough I am to get it; it don't hurt them, and if it did, I can't help it."

"You are very wrong," Lady Cliffe replied earnestly; "the stuff you give them is poison,

and if it does not take away life, it injures those little brains, and does the children deadly harm."

"Every one else does it, so must I."

"By no means; it is a cruel wrong and a great sin. More children are killed by it than you would like to think of."

The woman turned away, and just then Lady Cliffe's attention was drawn to the little child, who, during this conversation, had crept to her feet, and now sat there on the ground, gazing into her face with such a wistful, yearning look, that the lady's heart was inexpressibly touched by it. "I will save her if I can," she thought. "I should like to make some arrangement with you about this child," she said to Mrs Bents. "Who is she? what is her name? has she any friends living?"

"None that I know of. Her mother brought her here seven years ago; she was paid for regularly for two years, and then I heard no more of her."

"But could you not make her out?"

"No; she had left her place; and no one knew where she had gone. I should have sent the child to the workhouse, but I thought in a year or two's time she might be useful and help me with the babies."

"Should you be willing to part with her?"

"Well," replied the woman, seeing quickly that she might make something profitable by the affair, "I might perhaps to any one who would make it worth my while."

"She seems a nice little child," said Lady Cliffe, "and it would be a great pity for her to grow up in ignorance and misery. What do you call worth your while?"

Then there was a conversation in a low tone of voice, which ended in Lady Cliffe taking her purse from her pocket and counting some gold pieces, which she placed in the old woman's hand.

"Now," she said, turning to Tiney, "you are going home with me, my dear."

"Oh!" cried the child, who had intently watched the arrangement; "I *am* so glad. Have you bought me?"

"Bless the child," cried Mrs Bents; "did ever any one hear the like of that? we don't buy and sell children in a Christian country."

Lady Cliffe smiled as she answered,—"No, Tiney, I have not bought you; I have only given this good woman money that she may pay some one to take your place in nursing the babies."

"I thought you had paid for me," said the child anxiously.

"No, my dear; but now come with me, you are going to a new home. Say good-bye to your little friends here."

Tiney kissed each pale sleeping face; but when she came to Tommy Ball, who had given her the only treat she ever had enjoyed, a piece of his cake, her little heart failed her; poor, squalid, and gloomy as was the place, it was all she had ever known of home.

"Good-bye, Tommy," she said; "I am going away to another home."

"Are you going with that grand lady?" asked Tommy, who knew more of the world than Tiney did.

"Yes, she is going to take me away."

"What ever does she want you for, Tiney?"

"I do not know; perhaps to go of errands. I wish I was bigger."

"I daresay you will grow, Tiney; good-bye."

The little friends parted, and never met in this world again. Lady Cliffe's coachman, and indeed her whole household, were too much accustomed to what they chose to call her odd ways to express any surprise when the poor, ragged, dirty child was brought to them. One of the maids offered to give her a bath, and some old clothes that the children had finished with were found for her. Tiney looked like a different creature when the dirt that had become almost engrained in her little face was washed away, and the tangled hair neatly combed. She looked quite a nice little girl. None of a child's

bright gaiety was to be found in her countenance; but in its place there was a look of patient resignation and quiet endurance very touching to see. Her unbounded delight and surprise at the beautiful house she now saw, amused those who heard her. Her enjoyment of the first good dinner she had ever tasted was almost as great. She said but little, for she did not know how to express her thoughts. After she had been washed, and had finished her dinner, Lady Cliffe ordered her to be brought to her room.

"Now, Tiney," said the lady, "sit down here on this little stool and talk to me. You have no name?"

"No, only what they call me."

"Do you know if you have ever been baptised? Mrs Bents says you have not."

"I have been cut in the arm," said Tiney promptly, without the least idea what baptism meant.

"It is not that," said Lady Cliffe, with a sad look on her kind face. "Can you say any prayers? have you ever been to church?"

"No," replied the little girl; "but I have seen the outside of one."

"Has any one ever taught you anything about God or heaven, Tiney?"

"No," was the answer, given more slowly; for the poor child began to fear Lady Cliffe would

send her back again when she found that she knew nothing. Anxious to make the best of herself, Tiney said—

"I can nurse babies, and feed them, and rock them to sleep; I can sweep a floor, and do errands; but I don't know how to do any more because that is all I have ever done."

"Those are all very useful things, Tiney, but you must learn more; you must be taught to read and write; above all, to be a Christian."

"I don't think I want to be made a Christian of," answered Tiney, thoughtfully; "are they all like Mrs Bents?"

"No," said Lady Cliffe, with a smile; "who told you Mrs Bents was a Christian?"

"She did herself. She was always saying no Christian was ever tried like she was with the babies. They did cry a great deal," added the child, reflectively.

"You shall be a Christian, Tiney, but not like Mrs Bents. See," she continued, taking from a book that lay near her, a small picture of an angel, "would you wish to be like this?"

"How beautiful," cried Tiney. "Yes, I should indeed."

"Well, in time you will be; but now I want to tell you something. You have very much to learn, and you must go to a convent-school, where there will be time to teach you. You will

stay there some years, until you are a big girl, and then we shall see what more can be done for you."

"How kind you are to me!" said the child, earnestly. "What makes you care for me?"

A look of great emotion passed over Lady Cliffe's face.

"I care for you, dear child," she said, taking the thin little hands in her own, "because God made you, and our Lord loves you. You will understand soon what that means. But tell me, do you often cough like that?"

A violent fit of coughing had shaken the fragile child most terribly, and the lady was alarmed to see that when it was over her lips were slightly tinged with blood.

"Yes," replied the little girl; "sometimes it was so bad that Mrs Bent used to shake me, and make me take a spoonful of sleeping-stuff. In the room where I slept with some of the babies, the rain came down through the roof, and wetted us all."

"Poor little child! but you will have happier times now, Tiney. Run and get your bonnet, and then we will go to your new home."

CHAPTER II.

The convent of the Sisters of Charity was situated just where it was most required, in the crowded back streets of the city. The Sisters, with their black dress and large white cap, were were well known there. As they passed through the streets, the roughest and rudest men would stay their cursing and swearing until they had gone by. Quarrelsome, idle women would lower their voices, and feel ashamed of themselves as those quiet figures came near them. The streets seemed in some way brightened and made more cheerful as those good sisters walked through them.

The convent is a dark stone building, and the church is close to it.

To this orphanage Lady Cliffe took little Tiney. She knew that in all the wide world she could find no home so good and pleasant, no friends so tender and kind, as there. At the first sight of Sister Vincent, who had charge of the orphanage, Tiney was almost frightened. She had never seen such a dress before,—poor child, she had not seen much, shut up in that narrow court ; but when she looked at the kind, good face smiling over her, all her alarm vanished, and she nestled close to the Sister's side.

Lady Cliffe told the sisters all the story of her meeting with Tiney, and made arrangements for her to be received as one of the inmates of the orphanage.

She was taken to the clothing-room, and dressed in the uniform of the schools. Poor little Tiney could hardly at first believe in her own grandeur. To wear real shoes and stockings that fitted her, seemed so wonderful, and the pretty, neat black frock and pinafore, gave her the greatest possible pleasure. Then she was taken to the large school-room, where fifty other children, of all ages, were assembled. Sister Vincent called one of the older ones, and told her to take the little stranger under her charge. So her kind benefactress bade her good-bye, and left her happy and cheerful. I think the good angels must have smiled on that kind lady, and have blessed her, for she had that morning accomplished a noble work: she had rescued a lonely and wretched child from a life, in all probability, of sin and misery.

Sister Vincent had not much time to attend to Tiney until evening came; then she took her into a room, where she could talk to her alone. She was astonished at the little child's ignorance and simplicity. She knew no good, but she knew no harm; the little ailing babies that her few years of life had been passed with could

teach her none. Her mind was like a sheet of pure white paper, and you could print on it what characters you would. Sister Vincent admired the innocent little creature, who did not seem to know what wrong was. It was a beautiful task to train that mind, to clasp the little hands together, and to teach the lips the words of prayer. The first time they told Tiney about the good God who had made her, and the dear Lord who had died for her, she shed such happy, grateful tears. You, my dear readers, who have known these great truths all your life long do not realise them as she did. She learned so rapidly, that before many weeks were over the nuns said she was quite ready to be baptised. Sister Vincent instructed her, and told her what baptism was, and how when a little child received this great and holy sacrament, its soul became so brilliant and beautiful that God loved to gaze upon it, and the angels smiled as they blessed it. Then the sister read to her the beautiful words of the service, until she came to these, "Receive this white garment, and see that thou carry it without stain before the judgment-seat of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Tiney's mind fastened upon this idea.

"Shall I wear a white robe, Sister," she asked earnestly.

"Your soul will, dear child, in God's sight.

And remember this, dear Tiney, that every sin and every little fault will stain that beautiful white robe."

"Oh, but, Sister," she answered, clasping her hands, "I will never commit any, not even one."

"You must try not to do so. Why, even now, if Rev. Mother, or Lady Cliffe, or any one you love very much, were to come in and find you with a dress all soiled, and torn, and dirty, you would be quite ashamed, and try to run away and hide yourself."

"Indeed I should, Sister; I would not let them look at me, if I could help it."

"Well, if that seems so dreadful, only think, Tiney, what it must be to have to meet our Lord, when the white robe He has clothed our souls in is all stained and torn with sin! It will be no use trying to run away then. His searching eye will see each spot."

"I will be so careful, Sister. I wish, I almost wish, that I could die the moment my white robe is put on."

"No, that would not do, Tiney. God's little children must live and work for Him."

"But what can a little child like me do, Sister Vincent, for the great God?"

"Very much. You must, first of all, take care of your own soul, and try never to wound or

grieve His sacred heart by any sin. Keep the white robe He gives you without spot or stain; and then even a little girl like you, who can neither read or write, can do very much for Almighty God. For instance, always give good example to your companions; never let them see you idle, talking in church, rude at play, or inclined to quarrel or speak untruly. And, again, if you see another child going to do wrong, whisper to it, very gently and quietly, how grieved our Lord will be to see its white robe stained."

"I will try; I will indeed, Sister; but if ever I should be so unhappy as to commit a sin, what shall I do? Will nothing make my robe clean again?"

"Yes, Tiney; tears of real and true sorrow will; but I think there is no brilliancy so precious to our Lord as the shining light of that garment He gives you Himself."

"I will always take care, Sister." And she always did. Two days afterwards she was baptised, and it was beautiful to see the reverent awe of that innocent little face, and the deep tender light shining in her eyes. From that moment the white robe she had thought so much about became a reality in her eyes. I believe she always imagined herself to be clad in it, for I have seen her, when anything not quite right

was being carried on, perhaps an angry quarrel or an act of disobedience, draw her little frock closely around her, as though she dreaded its being touched. Every thought of her mind was bent upon this one object of keeping pure and spotless the garment intrusted to her. When her eyes fell upon a picture of our Lord, she used to say, "Dear Jesus, I am trying hard not to have one stain upon my baptismal robe."

She was like a little angel amongst the children; even her very walk was full of reverence. Sometimes the elder ones almost smiled at her sweet simplicity. If she saw one angry, or going to commit any act of disobedience, she used to put a little arm around the child's neck, and say, "Don't, dear; that would make such a great stain." It was really wonderful to see how much good that one little ignorant child managed to do. When her pure eyes were looking on, so full, as they seemed always, of good thoughts, it was almost impossible to do wrong in her presence. The elder girls said she seemed always keeping guard, like a little sentinel, over God's honour. She would not have been disobedient for the whole world; she never spoke untruly; you might rely upon every word that came from her lips. The children loved her greatly. Some of them would talk, with smiles on their lips and tears in their eyes, of Tiney's white robe, and

how much she strove to keep it clean, and shining bright.

At last poor Tiney fell ill. The hardships of her early wretched years told sadly upon her, and for some weeks she had to lie in the little white bed in the infirmary. One evening she was much worse, and Sister Vincent, who loved her fondly, would not leave her. She sat up during the whole night, sometimes pillowing the hot head upon her arm, sometimes bathing it with cooling water, and always saying cheering, beautiful words. Towards midnight, she saw that the child's mind began to wander. She imagined herself back at Mrs Bents with the poor babies, then she was with Lady Cliffe, and then again at her prayers. Sister Vincent listened, with tears in her eyes, to the prattle that flowed from those innocent lips. All at once a look of great awe settled on the flushed face, and the child stretched out her hands, calling aloud, "Dear angel, do not let them say there are spots upon my white robe. See, it shines as brightly as the first day I wore it." Sister Vincent bent over Tiney, and tried to soothe her. When the morning dawned she was better, and after a hard fight between life and death, she recovered. Tiney grew up in the convent unchanged, and when she was old enough, she begged of the Superior to allow her to study, so that some day

she might become a nun; and after some years, she became a Sister of Charity, and went out to China with a band of other sisters. She lives there now, as good, and innocent, and holy, as when she was a child, spending all her life in working for our dear Lord; and many of the sisters who know her best, say they do not think there is a spot or stain upon her cherished white robe.

OUR LADY'S CHILD.

VIII.

OUR LADY'S CHILD.

CHAPTER I.

MANY years ago, in the fair, sunny land of France, on the banks of the river Seine, not far from Paris, there stood a grand old chateau, belonging to the noble family of De la Croix. Dark woods and sunny fields surrounded it. A beautiful garden, gay with brilliant flowers, went down almost to the edge of the stream. It was ancient and picturesque; the garden walls were covered with purple grapes and blooming peaches, and the fragrance of the flowers filled the air. The music of the birds and the gentle rippling of the river, the distant sound of the rustling woods, made harmony so sweet, that the ear was charmed while the eye was pleased. The family of De la Croix was one of the oldest and most loyal in France. The Marquis was one of the chief favourites of that unfortunate king who died, murdered by his own people, Louis XIV. As his seat was so near Paris, he could attend to his

court duties, while the Marquise and their daughter, Hyacinthe, enjoyed the quiet and pure air of the country. Those were troublous times in France. When you read history, you will understand why: the people were angry with the king, and neither the king nor his nobles seemed to understand the wishes and wants of the people. There was a beautiful, but most unhappy queen, too, of whom you have heard, Marie Antoinette. She was very gay, lively, and generous, but the people did not understand her; they thought she was careless of their sufferings and wrongs, though she was not so. When you read of all they made that poor lady undergo, from the time they first rebelled against her husband, until they led her to the scaffold, you will wonder at their barbarity. In these dangerous and gloomy days the Marquis De la Croix was a great comfort to the king; he was so good and charitable, that the people could not hate him for himself, so they hated him because he was true to his sovereign. The Marquise seldom went to court; she was a great invalid, and knew but little of the disturbed state of the kingdom. Her husband was only too pleased that she should remain in perfect ignorance of it, for he never liked to see any anxiety on her pale face. The De la Croixs had one daughter; she was a charming little girl, with a sweet, fair face, and large tender

blue eyes. She was so pretty, even as a little babe, that her mother had her named Hyacinthe, and there was something in her slight figure that did remind you of the flower. Her mother, who was very devout and good, had consecrated the little girl to Our Lady for thirteen years. She was to wear Our Lady's colours of white and blue, and was always taught to love our sweet Mother, and do many things in her honour. Every morning, after Hyacinthe had made the sign of the cross, and offered her heart to God, she used to kneel for Our Lady's blessing; the same at night before she went to bed. In her pretty sleeping-chamber she had a statue of the Holy Virgin holding the Divine Infant in her arms; and the child loved it almost as if it were a living thing. When she was very little, if any one gave her any bon-bons or nice fruit, she used, before she touched it herself, to run and offer some of it to the Holy Child. Every morning, with her own hands, Hyacinthe gathered fresh flowers for her altar. She would not let strangers touch it. The good Curé of the village of Fontaine, which was close to the chateau, was very kind to Hyacinthe. He took great pains in teaching her the catechism and the doctrines of the Church. It was a pretty sight, and one that all the villagers loved much to see, the little girl in her blue dress, her golden curls falling over

her shoulders, kneeling in the church so devout, so recollected, and good. They used to say they could fancy Our Lady, when she was a child, looked like that. Then Hyacinthe was so charitable to the poor; she always had the kindest words and sweetest smiles for them. You would see her sometimes the centre of a little group of peasant-girls, speaking so nicely, with such a modest grace, it was delightful to listen. She was the great friend of all the poor round about; they went to her in all their troubles and distress. Seeing her so good and so innocent, the people loved her exceedingly, and gave her the name of "Our Lady's Child."

Few children could be happier than Hyacinthe; her father was rich, and her home a splendid one, with everything to gratify the taste. She had a kind governess, who lived in the château with her, and a Swiss waiting-maid, to whom she was much attached. Her papa had given her a little pony, and her mamma bought for her a nice riding-habit: she had, besides, a little pet-dog named Chéri. She had so many toys and books, that her mamma allowed her a room to keep them in, which was called "Miss Hyacinthe's play-room." On all the feasts of Our Lady, her mamma permitted her to invite the village children to a feast, and then she gave each one a present, either of dresses, shoes, or hats. But the

Marquise was a wise lady; she knew the difference between real generosity and mere good-nature. When you have plenty of money, it is easy to give plenty away; but the highest generosity is when you sacrifice a thing you like or wish for, and give it to another. That was what her mamma taught Hyacinthe to do. Sometimes when a nice jelly came up, or a tempting little cake made on purpose for her, the Marquise would say, "Hyacinthe, poor old Manon is ill; would you like to send that jelly to her?"

"Yes, mamma," the child would answer; "I will give it up to her." So she learned the sublime lesson of self-sacrifice, together with the virtue of generosity.

When the Marquis was not in attendance upon the king, he was delighted to spend the bright summer days with his beloved wife and child. Madame De la Croix had for some years been suffering from a disease of the heart. She was obliged to be very still, for the doctors had warned her that any sudden or violent emotion would endanger her life. That was the principal reason why her husband tried to keep her in total ignorance of all that was going on in Paris. The days that he spent at home were very happy ones; lessons were invariably dispensed with; and papa, mamma, and Hyacinthe had a most delightful ramble through the woods. In the

evening Monsieur De la Croix would relate some pretty stories, which interested his wife as well as his child. Hyacinthe's favourite topic was the beautiful queen and her young children. It would be difficult to imagine any one happier than this young girl; she had never even known the name of care or sorrow. She did not understand the danger that threatened her beloved mother. She was so accustomed to seeing her always lying on the sofa, and looking pale and thin, that she did not think what such signs betokened.

They had many servants at the château of Fontaine, and one of the most respected and trusted was Pierre, the steward. His mother had nursed Monsieur De la Croix when he was an infant, and the son had grown up in the service of the family. He was many years older than the good Marquis. He was devoted to little Hyacinthe, and she liked Pierre better than any one else, after her governess and Stephanie, her maid. Pierre used to roam the woods over to find her flowers and curious leaves. He thought a day so spent a happy one, if the child's face lighted up when he showed her the treasures he had found. It was a pretty picture to see her with the old man; they reminded one of spring and winter; she was so gentle with him, and laughed so heartily at his curious accent and

droll tales. Pierre had a sister, who lived in Alsace, and the dream of his life was to send for Madelaine to keep house for him, when he should be rich enough to retire. He had saved money during his service under his kind master: the good use he made of it you will see hereafter.

One evening the Marquis arrived at the château. He looked pale and fatigued, and told Hyacinthe he had come to rest himself for two or three days, for he had had much trouble and anxiety. She was happy at seeing him; but, child as she was, she perceived some great sorrow was hanging over him. He paced the room restlessly, and if he tried to read, the book did not interest him, and he laid it down. Unfortunately, too, Madame De la Croix was a little worse than usual, so, whatever grief preyed upon his mind, he could not seek consolation from her. Hyacinthe heard him, as he walked rapidly from one room to another, murmur to himself, and several times she distinguished the name of the king and the queen. She busied herself in doing everything possible for her papa. To her great happiness she persuaded him, on the second day of his return, to go with her to the woods of Fontaine. Madame De la Croix offered to join them, and they started on their expedition. It was the last they were ever to enjoy. The Marquis saw for the last time the green trees of the

forest; but the others mercifully knew nothing of this, and that last afternoon was one of unalloyed happiness. In the dark after-years, Hyacinthe loved to recall it, and think over each loving word her dear father had said to her, each tender caress he had lavished upon her. They gathered the wild flowers, and watched the birds as they sang and flew from tree to tree. Monsieur De la Croix had arranged a seat for his wife on the trunk of a fallen tree, and she sat watching the merry gambols of the father and child, listening to the merry musical laughter that Hyacinthe never tried to repress. The sun shone down upon them through the green foliage, and they were as happy as though no dark cloud were ready to burst upon them.

"It is growing late, Hyacinthe," said Monsieur De la Croix, at length; "see the shadows on the grass; my watch says six, and dinner will be at seven; we had better return."

"O papa! it is so nice here," cried the child; "I should like to live in the woods with mamma and you."

"Not always, my dear," answered the father, smiling; "it is pleasant now; but when the trees are bare, the green leaves all dead, and the ground covered with white hard frost, I think you would be happier in your nice warm room, with a thick carpet, and a good fire."

"Yes," said Hyacinthe; "but, papa, I should be happy anywhere with mamma and you. You make it always summer for me."

The father laughed, and declared that Hyacinthe was growing poetical; but he held her little hand tightly clasped in his all the way home. He carried for her the handful of wild violets that she had gathered, and until the day of her death poor Hyacinthe never parted with those withered flowers.

When they reached the chateau the whole place was in a commotion. A courier had arrived from the king, to summon the Marquis immediately to his side. Monsieur De la Croix was for some minutes in close conversation with him, and then the man went away. They sat down to dinner, but though he tried to conceal his agitation, they could see that the Marquis looked very pale and anxious.

"Is there anything the matter, Léon?" asked Madame De la Croix, when she saw her husband's plate untouched.

"The king, my dear, is in some little difficulty, and wants me; there is a meeting, or something of that kind. I fancy nothing to be alarmed about; I must go at once though, when dinner is over."

Hyacinthe clung round her papa as he hastily drank the cup of coffee she usually arranged for him herself.

"May I see you mount, papa? I will not go near the horse," asked the child.

"Yes," said her papa; "and, Hyacinthe, while I am away, take great care of mamma. I shall expect to see her looking quite rosy when I return."

"How long shall you be away, Léon?" asked his wife.

"I cannot tell; perhaps three or four days, not more, I hope."

Madame De la Croix bade him farewell; for the last time she clasped that kind brave hand in her own, and heard low words of loving care from his lips. She went to the window and watched her husband mount his horse and gallop away. Hyacinthe followed her papa into the courtyard. He held her fondly in his arms, and she clung to him, with tears streaming down her face. "Papa," she cried, "it never seemed so hard to let you go away before." He kissed the little face and quivering lips again and again. Did something whisper to him that he should never more hold that little form in his arms, or hear the sound of that beloved voice? He placed her on the ground, for his eyes were wet with sad foreboding tears.

As he left the courtyard, he turned again to look at his dear ones. His wife's calm face smiled

at him, and Hyacinthe gave him a farewell look that told him how much she loved him. As he saw those two beloved faces then, he beheld them until the last moment of his life—through the heat and fury of the awful battle that raged during the next three days in Paris—through scenes of bloodshed and cruelty, that made strong men turn sick with terror—through the fearful death-hour when he lay murdered in the streets of Paris, the life-blood flowing from the wounds which cruel hands had inflicted. He was out on business of the greatest importance for the king, when the infuriated mob, who ranged the streets, recognised him. It was sport to them to kill him, and his dying ears were assailed with threats, that as they had treated him, so they would deal with all belonging to him, and that when Paris was done with, they would burn the chateau of Fontaines, where a king's favourite had lived. Through that awful scene, when red angry faces and flashing eyes surrounded him, when his pale lips were pleading to God for mercy on his soul, he still saw, as in a dream, the smiling wife and child he was to meet again in heaven, but no more on earth. While cruelty and death reigned at Paris, all was still and calm at Fontaine. No rumour had yet reached them of their king in deadly peril;

their queen, with her fair young children, in mortal anguish; their beloved master lying dead, trampled underfoot in the streets, which seemed to run with human blood.

CHAPTER II.

THE sun was shining brightly on the chateau and woods of Fontaine. It was a gay summer morning, two days after Monsieur De la Croix had left home. Hyacinthe had been for some hours busily engaged with her governess, and now, glad that, for a time at least, lessons were over, she ran down into the room where her mamma generally passed the morning.

"Mamma," cried the child, "did you ever see a morning like this? I could hardly help dancing, even while I was saying my lessons, everything looks so gay."

"It is very pleasant, my dear, I know."

"Come to the window, mamma, and just look at Chéri on the grass; he has been rolling round until he is quite out of breath; do come, mamma, it will make you laugh to see him." Madame De la Croix rose and went, as her little daughter begged her, to look at the dog. She laid her forehead against the glass, but no smile came to her lips, as Hyacinthe had hoped.

"Mamma," said the child, "you are not well to-day. You look so dull, and your eyes are full of tears."

"I am well, darling, but I am very low spirited; there is a great weight at my heart, and a dull, cloud on my mind, that I cannot account for."

"Look at the sunshine, dear mamma; that will cheer you, I am sure."

"It does not, Hyacinthe; but what is that cloud of dust in the road; can you see it?"

"Yes; it is a great crowd of people; oh, see mamma! they have bayonets flashing in the sun. What a dreadful noise; where can they be going? let me stand on that chair, mamma, that I may see."

Madame De la Croix lifted her on to a chair, and they stood together by the window watching the advancing mass. Hyacinthe clasped one arm round her mother's neck, and her mother held the child in her arms. Their surprise was soon changed into deadly alarm, for they could hear fierce cries of "down with the aristocrats;" and then they saw the crowd breaking down the barriers, and rapidly advancing towards the house.

"Mamma, mamma," cried the terrified child, "what is this? Are these fierce, angry men, coming here? what shall we do?"

Then the frightened servants rushed in, and

with cries of horror, told their mistress that the revolutionists had killed her husband, and were coming to destroy the chateau; they implored her to save herself.

The lady stood transfixed with horror as they told the dreadful tale. Hyacinthe felt her hands and face growing deadly cold; she covered her mother's pale countenance with warm kisses and tears. "Mamma," she cried again, "why do you look so?" Those clasping arms held the little one for one moment tightly pressed to her heart; the white lips moved as though she would fain speak; a film came over the loving eyes, and then the child fell from its mother's grasp. At the same moment the insurgents forced an entrance into the chateau. The servants fled in various directions, each thinking only of his or her own safety. Only one remained with poor Madame De la Croix; and Pierre, seizing Hyacinthe in his arms, trying to stifle her cries and sobs, escaped with her.

In a few more minutes, when the angry mob found their way into the room, they only saw the dead body of the poor lady, and her faithful maid standing by.

She had died instantaneously, as the doctors had always said she would, at the least fright or emotion. They jeered and scoffed, and declared she had gone to join her husband. Disappointed

of their prey—for they had intended to wreak their vengeance on the poor innocent lady—they rushed upon the maid-servant who had remained with her dead mistress. They made her find the keys to open the wine cellars and larders, and then they forced her to die a cruel and dreadful death, because she could not, or would not, tell where the child was gone. You would have thought them a band of devils, not men, if you could have seen them destroying that noble old chateau. They made a great bonfire in the courtyard, and there they burned the massive furniture, and the beautiful pictures, that for generations had adorned the walls. Books, linen, ornaments—all were burned, or divided amongst them. They came to Hyacinthe's little sleeping-room at length, where only last evening her mamma had bent over her child, and kissed her.

They drank the wines stored up in the cellars, and when they were mad with drink and fury, set fire to the walls, and danced around the flames. By this time the villagers knew what was going on. The frightened servants had found refuge in their houses; few as they were in number, they were well aware that it would be useless for them to attempt to interfere with that savage and brutal mob. So the flames rose higher and higher, until the sky

grew red; the people in Paris who saw them shouted for joy that this "nest of another aristocrat was destroyed."

Their next search was for the child. They roamed through the chateau and through the grounds, but no child was to be seen. Then, believing her to be concealed in some hidden room or secret passage, they set fire to the buildings, hoping she would perish in the flames. The morning had dawned bright and gay; the evening sun shone upon a heap of smoking ruins. The stately old mansion was no more. Satisfied with the vengeance inflicted, the surging crowd moved on; they had more cruelties in hand, and many a flame rose on that night to the clear high heavens from the burning homes of those whose only crime was their noble birth.

Pierre knew every nook and corner of the house. When he seized the sobbing child in his arms, he rushed with her through the rooms on the ground floor, up a narrow staircase that was seldom used that led them into a small room, and there was a turret-entrance into a long underground passage which extended for some miles under the woods of Fontaine. It was impossible for any one who did not know the secret of the opening to discover it; but Pierre knew which board to touch, and how to press it.

It opened and disclosed underneath the floor a narrow winding staircase, dark as night; cautiously closing the boards after him, Pierre descended, carrying the frightened child in his arms. He groped his way down the stairs until he came to a thick iron door, that opened with difficulty, and closed with a bang after him. Then they traversed a narrow passage, of perhaps two miles in length, which had been constructed during the wars that raged in France, and had more than once secured for the inhabitants of the chateau a safe and sure flight. In some places it was so narrow that they were obliged to crawl on their hands and knees. It seemed to the poor heart-broken child that they would never reach the end. "Shall we ever see the sun shine again, Pierre?" she asked; and the very words, the sound of her own voice, brought back to her the terrible scene of the morning. "Tell me," she cried, "is papa really killed? what has he done? why have they killed him? will he never see me again? O Pierre, stop; set me down; if papa and mamma are both dead I cannot live." The wild sobs shook the child's whole frame. In vain did the old servitor try to cheer or console her. The agony of her loss was too great. "Pierre," she cried again, "my cheek is warm where mamma kissed me. She cannot be dead, though she looked so white when she let me fall;

Oh, come back to her! the men may kill me if they like; let me look at mamma once again." But the old man hastened on with his precious burden along the dark passage. He knew the place where they would come out, which was in the midst of the woods; and as they drew nearer the opening the passage became wider and lighter. Pierre now sat down to rest with the weeping, exhausted child in his arms. He found at length the way to soothe her intolerable anguish. He told her the dear kind parents were gone to heaven, and that in a very few years, if she were good, God would send his angel for her, and they would be happy together again.

"I will be good, Pierre. I only wish it would be very soon, for I want to see mamma again, and dear papa too."

From that moment she thought of nothing but meeting in heaven those whom she had lost on earth. Pierre waited until the shades of evening fell before he durst leave the woods, but all seemed still and tranquil. Poor Hyacinthe, worn out with crying, and faint with hunger, had fallen into a deep slumber. He laid her down upon the soft grass, and kneeling by her, the old man shed bitter tears. He prayed God to bless the desolate orphan, and promised to make her comfort and happiness his sole study and life-long care. While she lay sleeping he arranged

all his plans. He decided to go to Alsace, where his sister lived, and take a small house, which she could manage for him; and Hyacinthe would there receive some of the attention and care she had lost. Pierre had saved money, and he was pleased to have the opportunity of repaying his dead master's generous liberality, by spending his savings on his orphan child.

When the shades of night fell around them, the old man and the child started on their long journey. At the first village they reached he procured a disguise for her; the long curls, her mother's pride, were cut off; the pretty frock and dainty shoes were thrown away, and a peasant's dress procured, with a little close white cap. It was hard to recognise the little heiress of Fontaine in her new guise. After a long and tedious journey, they reached the village of Birne, where Madelaine lived. In a short time Pierre succeeded in all his wishes; he found a pretty little cottage, which he took, and his sister came to live with them and manage it. He procured employment at a neighbouring farm some distance from Birne. They fitted up two little rooms for Hyacinthe, one for a parlour, the other for a sleeping-room. The parlour had no grand furniture; but there was a most beautiful view from the window; it overlooked

the whole valley of Birne, and the deep, clear stream that flowed through its midst. Pierre went to the Curé of the village, and confided to him the story of Hyacinthe, and the secret of her noble birth. He did this, hoping the good father would devise some means of assisting in the child's education, which he did. He furnished her with books, and devoted a short space of time each day in directing her studies. Hyacinthe led a quiet life in the secluded valley, but yet a happy one. The two good people who had adopted her did all in their power to console her. They waited upon her, and devised every means of obtaining for her some of the comforts and delicacies to which she had been accustomed. Madelaine made her pretty blue frocks; they would not buy her any others; for they never forgot she was "Our Lady's Child." Very soon the villagers began to love her as those of Fontaine had done. They liked to see her kneeling so devoutly in church, or speaking, with her serious, patient smile, to their children. No one ever heard Hyacinthe laugh. She never for one moment forgot the dear dead parents and their cruel end. If Pierre took her to see any village fête, she would look where he told her, she would even smile, but the old, sunshiny, joyous laugh that used to brighten her face never appeared

there again. She was thoughtful and grave, like one upon whom a great shadow had fallen. So for two years Hyacinthe lived in the quiet valley of Birne. She loved to wander by the dark, deep stream that ran through the land. She would sit upon the bank, gazing into the clear waters, and thinking her happy life over again. Often the child slept, and imagined it all a dream. She was once more in the woods of Fontaine, playing with her father, or listening to her mother's gentle voice.

Pierre had twined some beautiful flowering shrubs round the little summer-house in the garden; he would have done anything to beautify the house where his little mistress dwelt. Hyacinthe sat watching him, and her thoughts flew back to that last afternoon she had spent with her beloved parents.

"O Pierre!" she cried, clasping her hands, her eyes wet with tears, "will it be long?"

"What, *mon enfant?*" he asked, startled at her cry.

"Long before I see papa and mamma? My heart almost breaks with the pain of longing for them. Oh, Pierre, when will it be?"

"My child, it will not be much longer now. See, in that beautiful blue heaven they are waiting for you. When you are good enough to go there, God will take you home. You must wait."

Many said afterwards that it was the prospect of reunion with her parents in a brighter world that gave to the child's face such earnest sweetness. Every morning she crossed the stream to hear mass in the village church; then she would go straight to the altar, and, kneeling there, pray that she might soon be good enough to go to heaven.

"Will it be long?" was the thought which ever came into her mind. But an angel-voice would whisper, "Not yet: be patient."

CHAPTER III.

THE cottage that Pierre had taken was at some distance from the village, from which it was separated by the stream. Rustic bridges, rudely constructed, led thither. If rainy weather lasted long, the river would be swollen; and more than once it happened that its angry current swept the bridge away. Modern improvements had not yet extended to this secluded spot; and the peasants, with planks and stepping-stones, made what they considered a safe road over the river, which, though wide in some parts, was in others very narrow.

One evening in the lovely month of May,

Pierre was taken suddenly and most alarmingly ill. His sister, in her distress, summoned one or two of her neighbours; but all their endeavours to ease his pain or alleviate his sufferings were useless. One hour after another passed by, and brought with it no alteration for the better. One of the women present fetched the doctor, and he said poor Pierre's life was in danger. Madelaine was busied in waiting upon him, and the two neighbours in helping her.

The doctor, who was himself a good man, suggested that they should send for the priest. Madelaine could not leave her brother, and Hyacinthe promptly offered to go.

"Be careful, my dear child," said Madelaine, as the young girl started. "See how the clouds are gathering. There will soon be a terrible storm, I fear. When you have seen the Curé, if it rains, do not come home. You had better wait at the presbytery until morning. Take care of yourself; and mind tell Mons. le Curé to hasten, if he pleases; my brother is very ill."

So Hyacinthe set out on her long walk. She knew no fear; for every step of the way was familiar to her. Madelaine was right about the weather; for although no rain as yet came down, the sky was dark and lowering, and the air full of that angry sound that betokens a coming

storm. Hyacinthe reached the banks of the river; it was running rapidly along; no voice from its depths warned the child as she crossed the fragile bridge that led to the village. She reached the church, and found Mons. Le Curé at the door. Benediction was just over. She told her errand, and the good priest, grieved to hear of the faithful old servitor's danger, hastened to the cottage. As he was leaving the porch, he said to Hyacinthe, who still remained there—

"Go in, dear child, and pray for your friend."

She entered the church. Just then the clock struck nine. The shades of night were falling fast, but there all was still, light, and beautiful as day. The tapers were not all extinguished, and the lamps before the altar shone like stars. Clouds of fragrant incense still filled the church, and mingled with the perfume of the flowers. Before Our Lady's altar knelt the young girls who had been taking part in the procession such as they had every evening in the month of May. Our Lady stood there in figure nearly as large as life. Her meek hands were crossed upon her breast. She seemed to be smiling upon the children and the flowers at her feet. There Hyacinthe went, and, kneeling, prayed that her Mother in heaven would intercede with her divine Son for the good and faithful servant whose life was in danger. Then looking into

Our Lady's face, she forgot the present with its desolation; she remembered only her constant prayer, that "it might be soon." One by one the kneeling children around her had arisen and gone home, the church was nearly empty, and the night had grown dark. Still she knelt there, praying with all the fervour of her heart and soul that Our Lady would help her to be good enough to go to heaven. Once she started, and nearly screamed, for she thought our Lady smiled; but it was only a flicker of light from one of the lamps.

A sudden rush of rain beating against the windows roused Hyacinthe. She finished her prayers and left the church. The storm had burst in all its fury; the black sky seemed to pour forth sheets of water; an angry, whirling wind beat the rain in all directions. Hyacinthe ran to the presbytery door, but she could not make any one hear; whether the noise of the storm drowned the feeble rap her little hand gave, or whether the housekeeper was out, she did not know; but no one came, and she went back to the church. During her absence, the man who had charge of it had locked the door and gone home. There was nothing for it save to brave the furious wind and rain, and return to the cottage. There was no fear in this lonely, little heart, neither at the darkness of the night

or the raging of the storm. She walked on as quickly as she could, until she came to the river. As she took her first step on the bridge, she fancied it seemed to shake; but no thought of danger made her pause and turn back. She went on steadily; there came a beating rush of rain in her face; the wind seemed to shake everything around her. With difficulty she maintained her footing, but at last she found herself safe on the opposite bank. But the violence of the storm almost prevented her proceeding, and she was obliged every now and then to stop altogether, and rest till she could regain her breath. It may easily be supposed it was long before she reached the cottage.

The good Curé had hastened to the cottage, and had given Pierre the last sacraments, when, as often happens, from that moment the pain abated, and the danger grew less. Before the priest left the house, they began to entertain some hope that the life of the worthy man might be spared. Madeleine was not much alarmed when she saw the terrible storm; for she had told the child to remain with the housekeeper at the presbytery. When Mons. le Curé said he hoped the little one had found shelter, she replied—

"Yes; Hyacinthe would be at his house."

The rain had abated when the Curé left for home. On his way he met one of the villagers, who, bidding him "good-evening," told him he must go to the lower bridge; for the one nearest had been broken during the storm. The priest thanked him, and, going farther down the road, crossed the stream safely, and soon reached home. Immediately on his arrival, he asked for Hyacinthe; but the housekeeper had neither seen or heard of her. He grew frightened; for, with all who knew her, the good father loved Our Lady's Child. In spite of the cold sleet, still falling, and his own fatigue, he started again for the cottage, but she was not there. Search was made in vain. The alarm soon spread. The sick man alone was not allowed to hear the child was missing; but before midnight sounded, every man in the village was looking for the lost child. Meanwhile Hyacinthe, dripping with wet and utterly exhausted, had reached home, to the great joy of Madeleine, who immediately put her to bed, and gave her some warm cordial. Great was the joy of the Curé and the people when they returned from their fruitless search and found the little girl safe and enjoying a refreshing slumber. The bridge must have been carried away by the storm immediately after she crossed the stream. Truly her guardian

angel had been with her to protect her on her errand of mercy.

Pierre recovered, and lived for several years. At last Hyacinthe saw the faithful servant laid to rest, and soon after the good Madeleine followed him.

Hyacinthe became the lonely occupant of the cottage; but it was not for very long. After a few years, spent in the constant practice of devotion and charity, the loving daughter went to rejoin the parents she had lost and mourned so long.

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