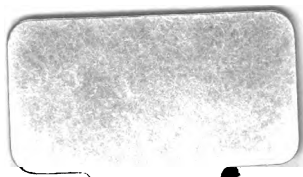




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TALES
OF
THE ANGELS.

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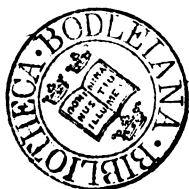
ETHEL'S BOOK;
OR,
TALES OF THE ANGELS.

BY
FREDERICK WILLIAM FABER.



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TO
THE LADY
ETHELDREDA FITZALAN HOWARD.

My dear Ethel,

Suppose we take the Angels instead
of fairies, and the Dead instead of ghosts,
and then see how we get on?

Yours affectionately,

F. W. F.

London, Christmas, 1857.

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**THE
LAST CHILDREN ;
OR,
THE BEAUTIFUL MIDNIGHT.**

THE LAST CHILDREN ;
OR,
THE BEAUTIFUL MIDNIGHT.

" SIGH! Sigh! Sigh! said the midnight wind, as it swept over the great Brazilian forest. And the tall palms trembled, and waved their green fans, to get all the sea's coolness, which came in the breeze ; and their feathery domes swung to and fro, like ships rocking at anchor.

Lilalpa ! death must be very beautiful, said Oniato : for death is God's night.

Ah ! Oniato, replied Lilalpa, but light is more beautiful than darkness.

Dearest Sister! you must not say so, answered Oniato: darkness is more beautiful than light. We see God better in the darkness.

Why have your thoughts been so often wandering on God lately, my dearest Brother? said Lilalpa. God! God! it is a beautiful word, and makes a strange stir in my heart. Where is God? who is God?

I know not, Lilalpa; but when things make a stir in our hearts they must be real things. There must be a God, though perhaps His Name is not God.

Ah! Oniato, I see why you love the darkness. It is because it makes you think more of God. Beautiful darkness! it feels like a home.

Oh yes, Lilalpa, and when I have listened to the missionaries reasoning with my father, I have sometimes thought that light was really

darkness, and darkness really light, and that they had only agreed to look like each other, instead of looking like their own selves.

Indeed the night was beautiful, just such a night as would be likely to make children talk like Angels. I wonder how much they understood of what they were saying to each other. We are all of us born poets, but only a few of us find it out.

They wandered on. They were lost in the forest. The boughs met above their heads like the roof of a cathedral. They heard the wild beasts arguing with each other, complainingly rather than savagely. Occasionally there were silences, and they thought they heard the earth breathe; but just as they were going to make certain of it, some night-bird from a lofty branch would suddenly pour forth gushes of clear song

into the ear of the ancient night. Why is night ancient, why should it be more ancient than day? Nobody knows, yet everybody says it is so, and feels that it is so.

Every now and then they saw the stars fighting in the sky. So Lilalpa thought: but it was only the tossing of the branches, which kept showing and hiding the stars. There were many sights and many sounds in that wood, which the children did not understand. But they felt them all; and somehow when they felt them, they whispered to themselves, God! God! We enjoy the day time. We feel the night time. In the day time God sees us. In the night time we see God. On earth, to see God means to feel Him. Feeling is mostly the best kind of seeing.

Why had these children left home? They will never return to it. The End of the World

will come in an hour, and they will die in the waters of the wood, and, having been really dead before, will make themselves alive by dying. O blessed Waters of the Wood! Blessed all waters, which have wood in them, the Wood of the Cross.

O Lilalpa! is not this very solemn? Hark how the wind murmurs! It has a voice like that of our dead pale-faced mother. Lilalpa! I sometimes see my mother, when I sleep. But listen to the wind. It sings as if it was unhappy. Perhaps the wind is a god!

But if it was a god, Oniato, it would not be unhappy.

O Lilalpa! more and more I ask who is God? We have no God. We are not like the Christians with white faces, such as come to us, and such as they say were kings in this land thou-

sands of years ago. They have a God whom they love. How grand the ruins of their churches are! Our mother was white-faced, they say, and she too had a God and loved Him. Lilalpa! I must have a God, if it is only to have somebody to love.

Lilalpa burst into tears.

Dearest Lilalpa! said Oniato, you know I love you : you know what I mean.

O yes, Brother, replied Lilalpa, I am not unhappy. I do know what you mean; for I feel the same myself: and yet I love you, oh so much; so much it hurts my heart sometimes!

And Oniato threw his arms round her, and said, We will find God to-night. And a star shone into Lilalpa's tearful eyes. O sometimes the stars seem almost to speak by their shining.

Ah! Oniato! I wish our father would not

burn those white-faced priests in the fires of the snake-temples. Even now it seems to me as if the wind was full of the sound of those sighs and murmurs which they make in the fire.

And yet, Lilalpa, they are not like the murmurs of pain or anger.

No! that is the strange thing.

Lilalpa! I cannot breathe in my father's palace. I have enticed you here on purpose. Let us find God. If not, let us live in the forest, and die here, like flowers. Let us seek the white-faced man of God whom my father drove into the forest to-day to die of hunger, or to be eaten by the wild beasts. I have hidden a flask of wine in my clothes to take to him, if we can find him.

Oniato! shall we ask those dear stars to lead us to him?

No! Lilalpa, his God will know best where he is. To be sure the eyes of the stars seem to be everywhere. But I think we had better pray to his God instead.

Oniato! see! the earth is on fire!

No! Lilalpa! it is only the fire-flies. Let us follow them. They are the living stars of the wood. Perhaps God has sent them to lead us. So they followed the fire-flies.

Sigh! Sigh! Sigh! sang the wind; for it was very tired, as it had been all round the earth. And the fire-flies played round the heads of the children, like glories round the heads of Saints in pictures. Some swung like globe-shaped lamps in front of them, and seemed to lead the way. Many wild-beasts were prowling round. The flame-coloured eyes of the pumas looked at the children as they passed. But they dared

not touch them; for the beasts saw three Angels with the children, whom the children did not see. Two were the Guardian Angels of the children, and the third was the Angel of the Sacrament of Baptism.

What a silence! Deep, deep, deep silence! Silence above! Silence below! Silence all round!

Oniato, said Lilalpa, silence is more like a god than wind.

It was near midnight. In the heart of the wood a huge flower slowly opened out, and blossomed, and filled the forest with a most exquisite perfume.

O Lilalpa! there is the Midnight Flower! How I should like to be a Midnight Flower, with nobody to see me blossom, nobody to smell my fragrance, except God! I suppose He made

the rest of the flowers for us, but that one for Himself. He keeps its sweetness for Himself in the lonely darkness. It smells like the flesh of the white-faced priests in the fires, so sweet! The smell of it sometimes comes into my window from the wood. It always makes me think of God.

Dear children ! they too were truly Midnight Flowers, and the hour of their blooming was at hand.

Oh! Oniato, what beautiful soft thunder is that ?

They had come near a waterfall, under dark cedars. They saw the foam flash under the dark branches.

Oniato! that waterfall speaks to me like the Voice of a God.

Perhaps, Lilalpa, there is no God, except that

Christ who makes the white-faced priests smell sweetly in the fire.

Hush! Hush! Oniato—look at the globe of fire-flies under the palm: there is the Christian priest sitting on a rock by the river! His back is resting against the tree.

At that moment it thundered under their feet. The forest rocked and creaked, and the ground quivered, like the sail of a ship when the wind slackens.

They went up to the priest. He seemed asleep. But it was not so. He had fainted from hunger. His face was very beautiful. When the fire-flies disappeared, it was the colour of moonlight, and shone very marvellously in the dark night, with a soft shining.

Oniato! whispered Lilalpa, it is the light of his God shining upon his face.

It thundered again under their feet. They looked up. Green and purple and crimson meteors were rushing about the sky, and crackling in the air. Strange children! they were not afraid. They fear nothing, who are seeking God.

They went up to the priest, and poured some wine down his throat, and he revived, and opened his eyes, and looked at them.

My children! who are you?

We are the king's children. We want to know about your God.

He smiled, and kissed them, saying, You shall be king's children indeed!

Then it thundered again under their feet, and it thundered over their heads, and the trees moaned, and the meteors crackled.

And he told them about Bethlehem.

They heard a hissing noise. A great dark mountain was opposite to them on the other side of the river, and behold ! a broad solid flash of violet-coloured lightning split the black mountain in two. Suddenly there was silence.

And he told them about Nazareth.

A distant roar was heard. On came the whirlwind. It rooted up all the trees, and carried them miles into the air. The black mountain sank into the earth with a loud rumbling. But they were not hurt. Then once more the rushing of the river was heard in the silent night. It wanted only a few minutes to midnight.

And he told them about Calvary.

And they clasped their hands, and wept.

Behold ! ten thousand wild-beasts, howling and moaning, rushed past them, pursued by a

great yellow fire, which had broken like a river out of the earth. It did not hurt the priest or the children.

And he told them of the Mount of Olives, and the Ascension, and the coming again to Judgment.

And Lilalpa took hold of Oniato's hand and they both looked up to heaven, and said, Jesus! Jesus!

And the priest smiled, and wept.

And a venerable white-haired old man suddenly appeared at the other side of the river, and said, It is time!

And the priest said, Blessed St. Joseph! I obey.

And he led the children to the edge of the rock, and said, You have given me wine: I will

give you water, water with the Blood of Jesus hidden in it.

And he explained Baptism, and they begged to be baptized.

And the heavens opened with a fierce white light;—and a huge round glory, like a sunrise, was seen coming swiftly up from the east.

And the priest said, It is the Lord.

And he baptized the children.

And when they were baptized, they said, Come, sweet Jesus !

And the earthquake shook the rock on which they stood, and it rolled over into the deep foamy water, and, as they fell, the priest's arm was round them, and they saw St. Joseph smiling at them, and he pointed upwards where a heavenly Lady, all dressed in golden light, was waiting for them.

At first they thought it was their mother. But the Lady was more beautiful than their mother, and, though it seems strange to say so, her face was more full of love than their mother's was. Yet everybody, who sees that heavenly Lady for the first time, thinks her like his mother, because her beauty is so motherly.

Then they kissed each other, and said, The Angels are whispering in our hearts, that it is Mary of Bethlehem ; and they cried, Dear Mary ! And all three sank into the cold waters, and it thundered louder than ever, and the water gurgled in their ears, and they clung closer together, and it was painful for a moment. Then their ears were full of the sounds of harps, and they opened their eyes, and the water was turned into light, and it was heaven !

And those two were the last children, and so

the world ended. Oh it was a beautiful midnight to Oniato and Lilalpa! It is day-time with them now, eternal day-time. O happy children! who belong to Jesus, and have been saved by His Precious Blood!

PHILIP'S DEATH;
OR,
THE PAINS OF CHILDREN.

PHILIP'S DEATH.

EDITH was looking out of the window in her own little room. Opposite to her was a beautiful wood of beech trees. There was not in all England a more glorious wood for mossy banks and wild flowers than the Priory Wood; and none even to come near it for its wonderful purple hyacinths in spring, nor for the tallness of its green and yellow fern in autumn.

Just in sight of her window was a broken bank of white chalk a little way in the wood. It looked as if it had some time or other been a chalk pit. The sun of June was shining on it through the thin transparent beech-leaves, and

the white bank looked almost golden in the light. In the spring the crest of that old pit had worn a perfect diadem of the darkest purple hyacinths, and Edith remembered how she and Philip used to go to admire them, when her lessons were over. She had often to coax the nurse very much to let her take Philip so near the edge of the bank, though it was a very little one, and the pit so choked up with mossy earth, that I doubt if Philip would have taken much harm even if he had rolled over.

She remembered also how she had now and then been half vexed with Philip, because he sometimes broke the juicy stalks, and gathered a handful of the flowers, and threw them away as soon as he had gathered them. She believed he only plucked them to enjoy the nice little snap they made, when he broke the stalks.

Now there was but one argument which ever was good with Philip, and that was God. And so she used to tell him that God never plucked flowers unless He wanted them, never plucked them only to fling them away. Edith remembered all this. The spring, with its hyacinths, and new leaves, and boisterous thrushes half choking themselves with singing in a hurry, seemed as if it was only yesterday. And now Philip was dying, dying in terrible pain, and his face was as white as the chalk bank when the sun is not on it, a cold and weary white.

It was plain that Edith had been crying. But the look on her face just then was not a look of sorrow. It was something more painful, and not altogether right. There was a frown upon her brow, which never ought to be seen on a child's forehead; nor indeed on the forehead of a

grown-up person. For there is no frowning, when all is peace and pure love within the heart. At length she said out loud, Surely not everything which God does is right. He can be wrong, as well as any body else. I know He can do what He likes. But sometimes He seems to like very dreadful things. He is always powerful, but He is not always love.

Edith! said a very sweet voice.

The child started. She had never heard that voice before, and somehow it made her very much afraid. She turned round from the window to see who it was, but there was nobody in her room. She looked out of the wood, but there was nobody on the lawn between the wood and herself. She held her breath and listened.

Edith! said the voice, in a tone of love but also of reproach.

Who called me? cried Edith, very much agitated.

It is I, Edith, replied the voice: I, who am your Guardian Angel. I come to reproach you for thinking and saying such things of God.

The Angel then made her sit down. She could not see him, but she felt him at her side, and her fear passed away she did not know why.

Edith! said the Angel, the house is full of Angels, waiting on Philip, and helping him to die. It is like the sanctuary of a church. But the Evil Angel wants to come into this home of holy and peaceful sorrow. Now he never can get into a house, except through a heart; and he is trying to get in through your heart by trying to fill it with wrong thoughts of our Blessed God.

And Edith felt that the Angel bowed very

low, and trembled, while he pronounced the Name of God, and his trembling made a kind of hushed music, like the sound she once heard in the piano, when she ran against it in the dark.

Now tell me, said he, what the matter is.

Edith had some difficulty in explaining herself. The Angel knew very well what she was going to say, and could have put it into better words than she did. But he knew also that she would unburden her heavy little heart better if she said it for herself in the best way she could. So she answered as follows :

Mamma sometimes talks of being scandalized. I am not quite sure that I know what she means, but I have tried to make it out ; and I think I am now scandalized at God.

No sooner had she said the words than she heard the trembling music of the Angel much

more deeply than before. It quite went through her, as if she had been suddenly touched with ice. And for a few moments she could not go on. But the Angel comforted her, and she spoke again.

It seems so dreadful to me that dear Philip should suffer those horrible pains. He has never been naughty. Mamma says he is not old enough to do sins, and I know he loves God very much, and that he will go to heaven because he has been baptized. Oh if you had ever heard him say the Name of Jesus, and seen the sweet smile on his little pale face, when he lisps out, "Baby loves Jesus," it would be quite dreadful to you to see him twisting in bed, with his feet all drawn up, and his poor thin fingers tied up like a knot in a rope, and to hear his piteous moans. God could cure him if He pleased. Why does

He make him suffer such dreadful pains? And poor mamma's face is so shocking when she sees Philip in this way, that it breaks my heart. She says she has done sins, and that God is now punishing her for them, but I do not believe she can have done many, and I am sure they must have been very little ones. I really do not think it is right of God to be so cruel to her. It is very hard of Him to take Philip away from her; for she loves Philip ten times more than she loves me, and I am glad of it, because I love darling Philip so much myself. But if God will have Philip, and I know He has a right to him, because poor mamma said so, but she cried dreadfully when she said it,—if He wants Philip, why need He put him to such horrible pain? I know it is very wrong, very, very wrong, and I am very wicked; but I cannot bear to see God

breaking mamma's heart, and torturing Philip so.

And then Edith burst into a flood of tears.

Kneel down, my child, said the Angel, and before I speak to you, let us say the Our Father together.

The Angel then told Edith to remain kneeling, and she heard the hushed music again. Gradually the room grew dark, and then the Angel made himself visible to her, all glowing with silver light, with a transparent body; and in the midst of it, where his heart should have been, was a great bright sea with a harp rising up out of the waters; and she seemed to hear the billows of that sea beating in the softest thunder upon the shore which was invisible, and somehow she felt that the shore was God.

The Angel laid his hands on her head, and at his touch all the feeling of rebellion against

God went out of her heart, and he spoke to her.

Edith! my little one! God is indeed our Father, and He loves us to love Him, and lets us make very free with Him in our love. But we must remember that He is also the great, magnificent, terrible, everlasting God. He is so wide that we cannot see Him all. He is so deep that we cannot see down into the depths of Him. He is so bright that He dazzles us when we look upon Him. There is nothing about Him which we understand perfectly; but what we understand least of all is His love. There are many things about Him which we Christians are certain of, you men because you believe them, we Angels because we see them; but it is one thing to be certain, and another to understand. Young children have more need than any one else to know this, because God sparkles in their

pure souls, and they thus see things within them which the world hinders grown-up people from seeing, and so they ask very strange and very hard questions about God. Thus they must remember that, where God is concerned, it is one thing to be certain, and another thing to understand.

Blessed Angel, said Edith; but do not even you understand God?

No, Edith! although I know so much of God, that the big world is not big enough to hold all I know, and though I see Him in this room at this moment so clearly, that you would drop down dead if you saw Him as I see Him, yet I am so far from understanding Him, that, as a big grain of sand and a little one do not differ much from each other compared with a vast mountain many miles high, so, compared with God, my ignorance

and your ignorance look nearly the same. O my child! God is very great, unspeakably great, dreadfully great! We must never question His ways. We are certain that all He does is the sweetest and most loving thing that can be done.

But, kind Angel! replied Edith, if I see with my own eyes that it is not loving, but very cruel, as now with Philip's pains, what am I to do then?

My poor child! answered the Angel, you must trust God rather than your eyes. If you both saw and heard and touched a thing, it would not be one hundred thousandth part so certain as what the Church teaches you about God. There is an Angel in heaven, whose name is Michael, who is so strong that his breath would blow a thousand worlds away, and whose wisdom is so great that it would frighten you to see the least

little blaze of it. He sees deep into God; yet his eye is lost in a brilliant jewelled darkness not a quarter of a quarter of the way down into the depths of God. There is another Angel whose name is Raphael, and who loves men and women, boys and girls, with such a wonderful love, that I do not think he could bear to stay in heaven, if he did not think and know that our dear God was all burning with love for men on earth. It is only one little spark of God's love of men which has fallen into Raphael's spirit, and yet if Raphael spilled only one drop of his love of men upon the earth, I verily believe it would burn the whole world up in less than a minute. Yet both Michael and Raphael totter and tremble with fear, as they stand before God, and look into Him.

Then the Angel trembled, like a poplar tree

in the wind, and his countenance changed, and the harp within him sounded over its vast sea, and Edith heard the waves beat faster and louder on the invisible shore. She listened in silence for a while, and then said,

Blessed Angel! but I thought you were all happy, and how can you be happy if you fear so terribly?

For a moment it seemed as if the Angel could not speak, but the harp sounded louder than ever over the sea, and the waves beat on the invisible shore as if there were a storm upon the sea. And the Angel said,

Oh, Christian Child! there is no happiness like the happiness of exceedingly fearing God!

O Edith! he continued, you little think what we see and hear in God up in heaven! We see glorious resplendent lights flashing in Him, and

breaking in blazes of glory, as if ten thousand suns were rising, and ten thousand suns were setting in Him all at once. We call these the storms of divine light, though they are not confused and violent like what you call storms on earth. We lie on our faces before them, and almost die of happiness. Sometimes we hear thunders deep down in the darkness of God, and then our harps all cease, and we leave off singing, and we grow very little, and sink down before God as if we were crushed, crushed with glory, and with happiness. But when the divine thunder ceases, all heaven lifts itself up and the harps and the voices burst out in new songs which they have learned in the thunder, so glorious and so loud, and with such a very earthquake of grand music, that it is a wonder the stars do not fly like bees through the dark

blue skies, and the mountains of the earth leap into the green sea. Sometimes we feel God touching us, and I cannot tell you what it is like. The great seas, which we have in us instead of hearts, tingle all through, and the waves cease to beat upon the shore, and the harp sinks down into the deep, and there comes such a calm, such a silver calm, throbbing, throbbing, throbbing in the deeps, that the sea drinks in all our light, and a beautiful night, a beautiful darkness, comes over our spirits; and if you could look into heaven at that moment, you would see the grand power of God all stretched out with great bands round the spirits of the mightiest Angels to prevent their breaking, and spilling their seas, and dying of unspeakable blessedness, because of this little gentle touch of the dear God.

Edith crouched down as the Angel spoke. She did not understand half he said. But she felt herself growing very little, so that she thought she should almost disappear [into nothing. Indeed I think she was dying, but the Angel put his hand into the sea within him, and sprinkled a few drops upon her, as if he had been sprinkling holy water, and she revived.

Then the angel whispered something to her; and she rose, and went to her mother, and asked if she might put her bonnet on, and go to Father Paul, and ask him to come into the chapel, and hear her confession. In the chapel the Angel helped her to examine her conscience. She was a long time in the confessional, and when she and Father Paul came out, if any persons had been in the chapel, they might have perceived that both the old priest and the little girl had

been weeping. But certainly they were not tears of sadness.

She remained in the chapel to do her penance, and to thank Jesus for His Precious blood, in that sweet Sacrament of Confession.

Then the Angel led her to Philip's room. Neither her mother nor the nurse were there; for some sleeping medicine had been given to Philip, and they knew they could safely leave him for a while. Round his little bed were chintz curtains, lined with pink calico. Her mamma liked to deceive herself in this way, and Philip certainly looked less pale, when the pink flush of the curtains fell upon his wan and interesting face. The Angel parted the curtains, and told Edith to come and look. She drew near, but suddenly started, and fell upon her knees, and said, O merciful God! what

is this? For instead of Philip she saw the Infant Jesus in the bed, with a crown of thorns on His Head, and a rosy wound in one of His tiny hands, which lay outside the bed-clothes; the other hand was under His Head, so she could not see it. She trembled all over, and began to weep sweet tears. And the Angel looked at her, and smiled, and disappeared.

That night there was a very high wind. The house seemed to rock like a cradle. Several large trees were blown down. The rooks in the rookery were blown out of their nests, like stones hurled from a sling, and they cawed and clamoured dismally, which was a strange sound in the dark night. Edith rose, and crept to her mother's room: but her mother was not there. But she saw the door of Philip's room ajar, and she peeped in, and her mother was sitting on

a low sofa, with the dead body of Philip across her knee. Poor Edith! she ran up and threw herself upon her little brother, and cried as if her heart would break. Then the nurse took her by the hand, and led her to her room, and one of the servants came and sate by her bed-side.

Edith cried herself to sleep; and when she slept, she dreamed. She dreamed that she was in Philip's room, and on the low green sofa sate our Blessed Lady, with the dead Body of the crucified Jesus on her lap, and Philip's Guardian Angel stood near, and was playing a sweet song to God upon his harp. And on the bed was a small white coffin, in which Philip was lying, strewn over with flowers; and as he lay in his coffin, he did not look like a boy, but like the whitest of white angels, with his wings folded by his side. Then she saw heaven open; and

she saw the living Jesus on His throne, with His Mother near Him on her throne, and she exclaimed, Two Christs, two Maries, two Philips! for Philip also was there. She was puzzled whether earth was in heaven, or heaven upon earth. Ah! this is always the puzzle of loving and believing hearts, even when they are grown up!

Jesus was sending millions of angels to souls on earth that were in sorrow, or in want, or in sin. He gave the Angels graces to give them, and Edith saw that the graces came out of Philip's pains, which rose and fell with a sweet splashing murmur, like a fountain, just before the throne of Jesus. When the Angels had gone our Lord filled both His hands from the fountain, and sprinkled the water upon the earth, and it fell all over, into heathen lands as well

as Christian, and wherever it fell, some child got baptism, who would not else have got it. So they got it through Philip's pains. Then Edith looked up into our Lady's face, and behold! on our Lady's lap lay Philip, as if he were a wonderful dark blue hyacinth. It was a hyacinth, yet somehow she knew it was Philip, and our Lord leaned over His Mother, and smelled at the sweetness of the hyacinth, and smiled as if it pleased Him exceedingly. And Edith looked up into the Face of Jesus, and behold! it was so beautiful that it awoke her.

Then Edith remembered the chalk pit in the beech wood, and how she had said to Philip, prophecying true prophecies without knowing it, as we so often do,—that God never plucked flowers unless He wanted them, never plucked them only to fling them away!

THE
MELANCHOLY HEART ;
OR,
THE CHILD TO WHOM NOBODY WAS KIND.

THE MELANCHOLY HEART ;

OR,

THE CHILD TO WHOM NOBODY WAS KIND.

How merrily the birds sing ! How wildly the fishes jump in the clear black river ! How happily the flowers nod their heads, as if approvingly ! How blithely the clouds in the blue sky play at hare and hounds with each other ! How pleasantly the sea smacks his great foaming lips on the sloping sand ! How slyly the sunbeams peep through the green leaves, and run like lizards down the bark of the trees, and jump

into the eyes of children and sparkle there! How the cows lie down on the soft grass, and look so wonderfully contented, that we cannot help laughing at them! No wonder the girls on the village green are singing. The beautiful evening has got into their heads, and made them dance on the green, as the gnats are dancing in the air. The very gnats blow their trumpets, like the proud boys in the village band, because they are so self-satisfied. Nature always looks most pleased with herself in the evening.

All this made Rosamond frown, as she sat by herself on the common. The golden gorse smelled like pine-apples, or apricots, or nectarines, she could not tell which. But even the sweet smell made her cross. Rosamond was not a nice child. But, like all children, she only wanted a very little to make her nice. If we

could have got into her heart, we should have seen that it was not quite the right shape. It was deep enough; but too narrow at the bottom. We should have seen a black streak also running across it. She was a melancholy child.

Her father had been a soldier, and had spent most of his life in foreign lands. Her mother was almost always with him. So Rosamond had been put to board at a school, when she was too young to have left the shelter of home. She hardly remembered her father and mother; and now they were both dead. Nobody had ever loved Rosamond, and Rosamond had never loved anybody.

I was very wrong to say that; for God loved her most tenderly; and her Guardian Angel loved her also, as our tale will show. Indeed her Guardian Angel was the only creature who

could ever keep his temper with her. She had once had a little dog, and he used to wag his tail, and frisk round her, and fetch sticks and stones to her. But she was so snappish with him, that he gave it all up as useless, and took to getting into a corner, out of her way, and sleeping all the day long. It always tells well for children, when animals are fond of them.

Have you begun already to hate little Rosamond? Well then, you are just doing what her good Angel did not do. You will be lucky if your Angel does for you what Rosamond's Angel did for her.

O how those sea-birds are shrieking round the ship, and how cold and gray the dreadful water looks, and the sun has set in horrible black clouds with edges as if they had been stained with blood! Thump come the great waves against

the side of the ship. The wind wails with piteous shrill cries among the ropes, as if they were murdering babies up at the top of the masts. Mutter, mutter, mutter, growls the distant thunder. Wash, wash, wash, sounds the ship as it staggers among the great, cold, lead-coloured billows.

Poor Rosamond! her cousins were tired enough of the disagreeable orphan; and so they had shipped her off to an aunt in Australia, without any notice but the letter which went by the same ship. They had put her under the care of the captain. It was an unmerciful thing to do, and they will never have a blessing again as long as they live. Nevertheless they did it. When men are impatient with children, it is extremely displeasing to the Angels; and the best thing that can happen to a man when he

has offended the Angels is either to make peace with them, or to lie down and die; for no good comes of a man who is not friends with the Angels. Do not think it strange if I say, that the dear Angels sometimes remind us of those glorious great dogs, who are so rough with men and so gentle with children.

Poor Rosamond! the mischief about her was not so much ill-temper, as melancholy. She was ill-tempered certainly, but then it was her melancholy that made her so. She always looked at the dark side of every thing. And she not only looked at it, but she liked it best. She could not bear the bright side of things. But then nobody had ever said a kind word to her, and very few had ever done her a kind action. Besides which she was an extremely ugly child. No wonder then that she was silent and sullen.

When the ship went down, there rose a terrific cry to the ear of God from off the bosom of those maddened waters. It was a kind of prayer, for all misery is a prayer in the ear of our Heavenly Father ; and His mercy followed to the bottom of the sea those who sank there that wild and stormy night. Rosamond floated on the top of the dark waves, as if her white frock which was spread out on the waters held her up. I was going to say that she was thousands of miles away from home, but alas! she had no home in all the wide world. A child, to whom no one is kind, can have no real home, though she may live in ever so grand a house, and have plenty of brothers and sisters. But there she was on the cruel sea, thousands of miles from any land, her frock making a white speck on the water, and the savage wind roaring

fearfully all round her, as if it had room and time to get up its strength, when it had thousands of miles of sea to flow over without being interrupted by any mountains or trees.

Most little girls in England were safe in their quiet beds that night sleeping sweet sleep, or dreaming heavenly dreams; and smiles and kisses, and endless dear little joys, will meet them when they wake. How little they thought of that white speck on the stormy ocean. Those whom she had left in the boarding school,—how little they thought of it! Even in their dreams, they dreamed of nothing half so strange as Rosamond on the bosom of the deep. But in reality all children, to whom nobody is kind, are quite as desolate as she was, even in the middle of London, with miles of houses all round them, and streams of carriages and floods of

men. It is worse than death to have no one to be kind to us ; and we ourselves are never so unlike God, as when we are unkind. O that all children had the grace never to be unkind to other children, especially to orphans !

Some children are exceedingly quick at understanding things. They can take hints even more speedily than grown-up persons. They seem to understand by their feelings, rather than by their heads. These sensitive clever children may do great things for God when they grow up. But they run a great risk of not being good. They are very likely to be unhappy children, and to grow up with their tempers soured, and their hearts gloomy. It is a very dangerous thing to be sensitive. It is not a fault, because God makes some persons more sensitive than others. Sensitive people are also capable of greater

graces than others. The saints were for the most part exceedingly sensitive. But nevertheless it is dangerous, because it is so easy for sensitive persons to go wrong when they are children, and to go wrong in a way which will affect their whole future life.

Now I will tell you how it was that Rosamond began to go wrong. I think you will learn a great deal from it. I will tell it you as her good Angel saw it, and understood it.

Before her relations sent her so unkindly to school, when she was far too young to have gone, she had often felt that their house was not exactly a home. She had got an idea, from hearing story-books read, of what a mother was like, and longed to have one. She made pictures in her mind of her own mother, whom she could not remember : and then she fell in love with

her own pictures ; and when she was by herself of a night, she used to cry over these pictures, and wish she had a mother. In her thoughts she painted her mother as a very powerful, beautiful, and most kind fairy, far sweeter than any fairy that ever danced by moonlight on the grass. Do you think she made the picture too bright ? Oh no ! you know well enough that a real mother is far, far better than any fairy, even if there were any fairies, and if they were all that in our fancy we could imagine them.

When children begin to make pictures in their minds, they soon take to dreaming their time away. Then they get idle and negligent, and after that disobedient, and then ill-tempered. Oh that dreaming ! what an evil it is ! It looks such a little fault, and is the mother of such great ones. So quick to grow, so artful to hide itself,

so slow in being cured! Dreaming leads a child all wrong, and much further wrong than we should have thought possible. So it was with poor Rosamond. She felt also most keenly and acutely the unkindness of her relations. Little looks, and words, and gestures, and tones of voice, and unkind smiles, went to her heart like the stabbings of a penknife. But she was too proud to cry, at least in their presence. Nay, she often imagined neglects and unkindnesses when none were intended.

She knew that all this was exceedingly wrong; and when they at last spoke of sending her to school, she made a good resolution that she would be quite different there. Indeed, the night before she went, she knelt down by her bedside in the dark, and promised God that she would be quite changed at school. Poor little Rosa-

mond! I fear she trusted too much to her own strength, and that in her prayer she was not quite so humble with God as she ought to have been. However she made this resolution, and determined to keep it.

When she arrived at school with her eldest cousin, who was quite an old lady, she found another little girl with her mother in the parlour. From her cap the mother seemed to be a widow, and her face was very pale, although it was also very beautiful, and she was evidently in great grief. When her cousin rose to go away, poor Rosamond felt a kind of love for her rise in her heart, and she ran to her, and threw her little arms round her, and looked up into her face as if she wanted to be kissed. Her cousin stooped coldly down, and kissed her with the slightest possible kiss on the forehead, and managed so

that Rosamond's lips should not touch her face and kiss her.

There now, my child, be good, said the old lady, and give your mistress less trouble than you have given me, and then perhaps I shall have you home at the holidays.

These unkind words she said in the presence of the widow lady and her little girl. The little girl seemed alarmed and astonished, and looked at Rosamond as if she was a kind of wild animal.

As the mistress was not in the room, Rosamond remained sitting there. I believe if she had burst out crying, she would have gained the love and pity of the widow lady and her little girl. But Rosamond had got the habit of not crying before others.

Soon afterwards the widow lady rose to go away, and rang for the mistress. The parting

between the mother and the little girl was most affecting. Rosamond had never seen anything like it, even in the pictures she had imagined in her own mind. It seemed as if both the hearts of mother and child would be broken. They bade good bye twenty times over. Their kisses were the longest kisses Rosamond had ever seen. They called each other by all manner of sweet names. Rosamond wondered that the mother did not tell her child to be good. But what she wondered at most of all, was that they did not seem to care about crying before the mistress. Poor Rosamond! her heart inside her burned painfully, like a red hot coal.

The mistress then took both the children into an orchard, where the rest of the girls were playing, and after she had introduced them to their new companions, she left them. The little girl who

had just parted with her mother, began to cry again. Whereupon all the girls got round her, and petted her. One kissed the tears away out of her eyes. Another smoothed her hair. Another patted her cheek. Then one of the big girls sat down on a garden chair, and took the little child on her knee, and gave her kandkerchief to one of the others, who ran and dipped it in the cold water of the fountain, and came and bathed her hot face with it. After that, they tried to coax her to play, and pelted her with rose-leaves, and as soon as they had made her smile, they set up a loud shout of joy, and ran and kissed her, so that you would have almost thought she would have been kissed away.

Meanwhile Rosamond was standing apart under a quince tree, and had hardly been noticed. But a bright happy-faced girl, whose eyes

were full of innocent mischief and fun, ran up to her and said, Why you have not been crying. I declare you have parted with your dear mother without a tear—you cold little creature! And, as she said this, she threw a handful of rose-leaves into her face.

Now it so happened that Rosamond was intensely wretched at that moment, far more wretched than any tears could have told. The little girl, who was crying, was as happy as an Angel in heaven compared with Rosamond. Rosamond was envying those very tears. She was dreaming over again that scene with the widow-mother in the parlour. She was almost rebelling against God, because she had no mother herself. So she lost her temper, and pushed the little girl who had thrown the rose-leaves at her. She pushed her very rudely, so that the little girl,

whose name was Agatha, fell over a root of the quince-tree, which stuck up through the grass, and hurt her forehead upon it, and made it bleed. Agatha immediately began to cry ; and as she was an immense favourite with the other girls, they all got round her in a moment, soothing and consoling her in every way, and looking very angrily at Rosamond.

Now Rosamond was nearly heart-broken at what she had done ; and after a few moments' struggle with her pride, went up to Agatha to beg her pardon, and to ask her to kiss her. But just as she was going to speak, one of the other girls pushed her away, and said, No ! you naughty thing, you shall not hurt our darling Agatha any more.

So Rosamond turned away and went to another part of the orchard.

Then the little child, who had just parted with her mother, told the girls in a whisper the dreadful words that Rosamond's cousin said to her when she went away. Now they all supposed this cousin to be Rosamond's mother. So they took a great dislike to her, and kept away from her; and though they did not do anything positively wrong to her, they made her very miserable by not loving her; and she had no means of keeping the good resolution she had made. Thus things got worse and worse, until the mistress wrote to the poor child's cousin, and said that she could not keep such a sulky, gloomy girl any longer. It was soon afterwards that they sent her to Australia.

I could say a great deal to you about all this. You see how Rosamond wished to be good, and made a trial to be good, and yet did not succeed.

You also see how it was her own fault. When she made her resolution to God, she did not ask Him to give her grace to keep it: when Agatha threw the rose-leaves at her, she should not have lost her temper; when the girl told her not to go near Agatha, though in reality she was going to beg her pardon, she should have carried her humility a little further, and said that she was only going to beg Agatha's pardon.

You see also how the other girls were in the wrong. They should not have judged Rosamond for not crying when her cousin left her. They judged her on a mistake; for they fancied her cousin was her mother, and you know they were quite wrong. They were in fault also for not giving her another trial. It would go very hard with them, if God only gave them a single trial. Alas! our dear heavenly Father gives us twenty

trials in a day; and the more trials we are patient and kind enough to give other people, the more trials He will mercifully give to us.

You see also of what great importance little things often are, even when we are children, and how much power, both for good and evil, we have over each other's souls. It is rather frightening to think of this. But there is one grand rule, which will keep us safely wherever we go and whatever we do—and that is always to be kind to everybody. And why should we ever be unkind, when we remember how delightful it is to be kind, more delightful even than a mother's kiss, which, after many, many orphan years, I remember still.

But we must really return to our story, for we left poor Rosamond floating like a white speck on the black and stormy sea. The huge waves

rose far above her head, and curled over, and seemed every moment as if they would fall upon her, and sink her to the bottom. The wind and the thunder roared against each other. The waves clashed angrily with a hissing watery sound. The lightnings, red and blue, split the dark clouds, and almost blinded her. And she fancied she saw sea monsters in the water round her, with their backs glistening for the moment when the lightning blazed.

Rosamond was afraid. You will not wonder at that. The wonderful thing in reality was, that this was the first time in her life that she ever had been afraid. Probably we were afraid for the first time, when we were so young, that we cannot remember now what it felt like. But if we could have seen the inside of our souls just then, we should have seen that nothing that can

ever happen to us in after-life, will change us so much as our first fear. It changed Rosamond. She had often said her prayers before, and she made a very short prayer now. But there was something in it, and she felt there was, quite different from any other prayer which she had ever made before. She had no sooner made it, than her fear passed away, and she was as quiet on the tossing black waters, as she had ever been on the soft sandy grass of her own sea-side common, through which the silent river found its way into the sea.

Suddenly by her side a beautiful Angel seated himself. He had in his hand a branch of a curious tree. Its leaves were very green, and the sweet smell of them almost took her breath away.

Rosamond! my sister! I am with you, said

the Angel. You must come with me. And he touched her eyes, and nose, and mouth, and ears, with the sweet-smelling green leaves, and it seemed as if her breath went out of her. Then, taking hold of her hand, he drew her down with him under the waters. They sank very gently until they reached the bottom of the sea.

There was no storm there. But there was a quiet golden green light, which Rosamond thought must come from the Angel; but she did not know. It was a beautiful place. Tall trees grew there, and waved gracefully about in the water. Some of the trees were green, some blue, some bright yellow, and some of the most delicate rose-colour. But the greatest number were of different shades of very glossy brown. Some of the trees had no leaves, but only twigs, like

the trees on land in winter, while others had leaves like ribbons, broad or narrow. Some of the trees were more than a mile high, and their leaves fifty yards long. Then there were rose-coloured shrubs low down, and rose-coloured grass to sit upon ; and beautiful animals swam in and out among these under-water woods, and others rested on the branches.

They sat down on the rose-coloured grass, and the Angel took Rosamond's hand, and spoke to her.

I am your Guardian Angel, my darling little sister. God has sent me from heaven to be always by your side all through your life, and to do you all the good you will let me do you.

Have you left the grand Heaven, said Rosamond, to be with such a melancholy girl as I

am? Everybody dislikes me, and I am afraid that I dislike everybody now.

Saying this, Rosamond began to cry.

The Angel answered, Yes, dearest! I have left Heaven for your sake; but I am never melancholy. I cannot be melancholy, because I always see God, and the sight of God is in itself the heaven of heavens.

Do you see God in these green waters? said Rosamond, trembling.

Yes! said the Angel.

But I see nothing, replied Rosamond, except these wonderful trees, and shining fishes. O how beautiful they are!

Yes! Rosamond, said the Angel; but God does not think them so beautiful as your soul.

O! God cannot think my soul beautiful, it is so naughty and sulky. The servant at school

used to say that she was sure my soul was as black as a coal.

Ah! Rosamond! but God thinks it very beautiful, although it is naughty. He loves you so tenderly, that we Angels, if we did not understand God better, might think He did not know all about you, He seems to love you so much better than you deserve.

Angel! do you love me?

Yes! Rosamond! I love you most tenderly, and I always love you, and it fills me full of joy to be near you.

To be near me! said Rosamond in amazement: why, the girls at school used to say they should love me best when I was a hundred miles off.

Then Rosamond began to cry; and while her tears were very bitter, they were also very sweet. She hardly knew why she wept; but, as she

wept, she seemed to be weeping her old heart out of her ; and it seemed as if the golden light of the Angel went into her, and began turning itself into a new heart for her. I think it was being spoken kindly to which made her cry, because she had never been used to it. By the time she had done weeping, all her old heart was gone, and all her new heart was come : and the deep green sea, as it swung to and fro, seemed to wipe her eyes for her, as gently as if it was a mother.

When she had done weeping, she said, O dear Angel! I have got a new heart.

And the Angel laughed, and his laugh sounded like hundreds of little silver bells, and it made her more merry and gay than she had ever been before in her life, and at the same time so gentle and soft, that it seemed to her as if she

could both laugh and cry at the same time, and not know which of the two was the happiest.

Rosamond! said the Angel, it is true you have got a new heart; but I think you have got new eyes as well.

And Rosamond looked about her, and behold! all things were changed! Everything seemed full of love and happiness, and in some strange way she saw that all the love and happiness came from God. There was a happy look of love in the fishes' eyes, which she had not perceived before. When they waved their tails about, she saw, as plainly as if their tails spoke, that it was all quiet happiness.

She saw that the old sea swung to and fro, as if it could not keep itself still, because it was so full of joy. The dumb, wet, silvery life of the fishes seemed very strange to her, and she

saw how silent people could be full of happiness, whereas hitherto, when she had been silent, she had always been sulky. The very light out of the Angel was happiness, and joy, and God's presence.

This was Rosamond's first lesson. It was a grand school, though rather a funny one, that curious bottom of the huge sea. I think on the whole, that what astonished her most was, that creatures should be so happy, when they could not make a noise. To be sure, the fishes made a sort of chuck when they took in a mouthful of water, and the oysters every now and then clapped their shells, as if they had some sweet thought all on a sudden. I do not wonder this astonished her; for I have never yet been able to make out myself, whether a noisy child or a silent child is the happiest.

Morning was rising over the great woods. Rosamond and her Angel were living in the air. They had risen up out of the sea. When she was tired, she could sit down on the air, and rest, as if it was a good stout cushion. It would almost have made you wild with joy, if you could have heard how the wood rang with the songs of the birds, as the sun rose that morning. She saw that birds were among the animals, what Angels are among spirits, bright, hot, joyous things. She saw how wonderfully quick their hearts beat, and how hot their blood is, and that the hotter their hearts are, the softer are their feathers. Perhaps they are the most joyous of animals, because they are nearest heaven. Flying is a thing delicious in itself. Singing perhaps does not so much make them happy, as it saves their hearts

from bursting because they are too full of happiness.

To say the truth, Rosamond thought the birds almost too joyous to be gentle. They were slightly boisterous. Neither did she think they were altogether so good-humoured as the fishes were. For she had observed at the bottom of the sea that even when the fishes ate each other up, they did it in a kindly, good-tempered sort of way. But what struck her most among the birds was, that she watched them as they flew, and she saw a silver hand round each of them, the fingers closing round their velvety feathers, but not quite touching, only ready to rest them when they were tired; and when they crossed the sea, she saw Angels holding up the tips of their wings, lest they should fall. And she understood that the hand was the Hand of their Heavenly Father,

and then she did again, what she had learned to do at the bottom of the sea, laughed and cried at the same time.

One night at the end of her bird-life, the Angel took her, as he often did, to sleep in a grand orange-coloured cloud in the midst of the sunset. But this night she could not sleep, she wanted to ask questions.

My dear Angel, she said, I am astonished at the immense quantity of joyousness among the birds. Why does God fill the world with so much happiness?

God Himself, said the Angel, blessed be His Holy Name! is uncreated, unbeginning happiness. He created the world to fill it with His own happiness; and He meant those creatures to glorify Him most, who should be the happiest. He had nothing to gain by creating the

world. It was His excessive goodness which made Him do it. There is only one thing in the world, which God never intended, and that is naughtiness; and where there is naughtiness, there is no happiness.

But how, said Rosamond, could anything get into the world, if God did not intend it; and if God did not intend naughtiness, how can there be any naughtiness in the world?

Because, replied the Angel, God saw that in order to be happy we must be free.

This answer made Rosamond think; it was somewhat hard to understand, but it contented her.

After a while she said, God seems to be very much in the world of birds. Perhaps this is the reason why the birds are a people who appear to be so much given to prayer.

Yes! said the Angel, the very chirping of the little ones in their nests is a sort of happy, humble, confidential intercourse with God.

O! cried Rosamond, how dear is God!

Times and places were changed now. Rosamond and the Angel were living among the insects. This was the most wonderful of the worlds she had seen. It was the least, and yet it was the strongest. It could destroy the world of men, if God did not interfere to keep it down. It struck Rosamond, that the insects were more social than the birds. For the most part they dwelt in nations and cities, with kings and queens, and enjoyed each other's company in the most cheerful manner, and talked endlessly, some with tongues, some by making their wings whirr and buzz, and some by tickling each

other's faces with long feelers or pliant horns. O they were a merry lot!

Yet somehow it was strange they should be so, because millions of them were dying every moment. Every breath of air that blew, every drop of rain that fell, every animal that passed by, killed multitudes of them. But they did not mourn. Rosamond would perhaps have loved them better, if they had mourned. As it was, they struck her as being more merry than affectionate, and clever rather than kind. But they were mightily industrious, and it was this perhaps which made them happy. How very seldom a clever child is happy or sweet-tempered, unless he is industrious! But the love of God appeared more wonderful, and more ingenious, and more minute, among the bright insects, than among the fishes or the birds.

One day when Rosamond and the Angel had been living for some time in a wasp's nest, and she had been admiring the lovingness and unselfishness of the wasps to each other, and with what alacrity they were all trying to do each others' work, and make each other comfortable without caring to be comfortable themselves, she said to the Angel,

O dear Angel! how full this wasp's nest is of the love and tenderness and joy of God.

Yes, replied the Angel, He is everywhere, because He is immense; but it is more wonderful to me that He should everywhere be making Himself so little, and stooping to His little creatures, and filling all their tiny natures full to overflowing with joy out of His great Self!

O Angel! Angel! cried Rosamond, and we men and women are kind to so few, and so often

unkind to the few to whom we really wish to be kind!

Rosamond wept as she spoke, and then looked at the wasps, and smiled. But this time the laughing and the crying did not go together.

It was noonday on the green plains of Tartary. Rosamond and the Angel were living among the beasts. She was very much struck with the beasts. She thought they each of them had characters, which made them so much more like men, than either the fishes, or the birds, or the insects were. What affected her most was the love the mothers had for their young.

She found no unhappiness among the beasts, but there was a great deal of gentleness, which almost amounted to sadness. It was expressed in their deep voices. But, above all, she read it in

their eyes. To be sure, it was not quite so with all of them. Some had a foolish look. The camel had an expression in its eye, which made her laugh, because it looked as if the beast was going to make a joke, but was puzzled how to do it neatly. Also in some eyes there was a laughter-loving look of mischief; and some looked sly. But the eyes of the horses were full of character, quite as much so as men's faces; and the eyes of the oxen were the most beautiful things she had seen in nature, so full were they of love, of quietness, and of contentment.

Still there was a sweet and softened gentleness in them all, as if they had had a human experience of life, and so left off frisking about the green plains. She thought their happiness a quiet happiness, like the happiness of a man, who, while he is happy in himself, is sor

rowing for others; and she thought that perhaps, as the beasts come next to man, they have a sort of sympathy with him, as well as obedience to him. On the whole she considered that in this world of beasts there was great happiness, but more kindness than happiness. They were affectionate rather than joyous. And she liked them better for it. Those eyes of the oxen helped on the change in her very much.

She and the Angel sate in the dewy starlight in the midst of a herd of very small antelopes. The Angel said to her, My little sister, you have been growing very pensive, since you came to live among the beasts!

She said, But my dear Angel! I am not less happy. I am more happy, more silently happy, more deeply happy. All is love and all is joy; but there are so many kinds of love, so many

kinds of joy, I am bewildered. One thing only do I see,—that on all God's earth there is nothing melancholy.

Then the Angel said, Rosamond! we have done with earth. And he took her by the hand, and they rose up through the dewy starlight, and they passed on to the distant stars, and left them behind, till the great round orbs, which had grown larger and larger as they approached them, now grew smaller and smaller as they left them, and then went out of sight altogether.

At last they came to an immense purple cloud, and in one place there was a faint cloudy light, such as the moon makes in a mist, and the Angel took her there and told her to look through. And she saw the world of Angels, a vast golden world of light and song, but made softer and fainter to her through the thick mist. She saw

that no one in all that world had ever known what sadness was. Wise as they were, they could not even tell what sadness was like. They were so happy, that they would have been too happy to love any one or to be kind, if their happiness had not come from God, and therefore was love as well as happiness.

She saw into the inside of one Angel's spirit, but it was at a great distance, and she did not see very clearly. But it seemed to her that there was in that one spirit such oceans of happiness, as would have drowned a thousand worlds, if it could have been poured out over them. When she had looked for a long while, she turned away, weeping and not smiling, and said, It is too bright. I feel all black myself while I look at it.

Then the Angel showed her a golden seat, be-

tween two glorious Angels, and he blew gently on the mist, and she saw plain, and her name was written on the chair, and she saw that, if she persevered in loving God, that was to be her eternal home, and actually the dear Angels were rehearsing the songs they intended to sing, to welcome her when her hour should come. And she fell back, saying, It is too much love: it is too much happiness !

The quietness of midnight was on Jerusalem. Above the moonlit city was one cloud, which stood quite still, and cast a single spot of black shadow on the white buildings. Sad music played high up in the air, and when it ended there was a strange silence, a silence which might be felt and touched ; at least it seemed so. Then the Angel fell upon his face on the cloud, and told her to do the same. She did so, and down below,

on the Mount of Olives and in Jerusalem, she saw beautiful human-looking Angels acting the Passion of our dearest Lord. What was most wonderful was, that the Angels managed in each mystery to show the inside of our Lord's Heart, as well as what He said, and did, and suffered, outwardly.

But in all the mysteries Rosamond saw herself always lying right in the middle of the Heart of Jesus, as if all He suffered was only for her. And she hid her face under the Angel's wing, and said, O it is too much kindness! My heart will break.

And the Angel kissed her, and said, Kindness has more heart in it than happiness.

Then Rosamond said, O dear Angel! take me back to life; for I see that kindness is God's shadow, great and broad, falling softly and

sweetly over the whole world. And now that I have seen that kindness of Jesus, I am dying to be kind to some one. I do not care any longer for people being kind to me: I only want to be kind to them, to be kind always, and to be kind to everybody. I can only be happy now by being kind.

Years passed away. One autumnal evening the sun shone out goldenly and free over a green hill-side in Australia. It was dotted with the strange stiff-leaved trees of that land, and sheep with snowy fleeces were scattered over the slope. A funeral procession was winding along a road which led to a little cemetery, in the centre of which stood a Crucifix, and along the walls of which were painted at intervals the Stations of our Lord's Passion. The procession moved on somewhat irregularly; for it was encumbered

with a crowd, which seemed to form almost the whole population of the little town which lay just below. The poor were all there. Old men on sticks, who could hardly keep up with the procession, slow as it was, and women, children, rough grown-up shepherd lads, and stout labouring men,—all were there, most of them in tears, and all of them with the expression of deep sorrow on their faces. The priest himself was weeping.

It was Rosamond's funeral. She had grown up in Australia. She had soothed the declining years of her aunt, and had inherited her fortune. She had remained unmarried, that she might the better devote her life to acts of kindness. The more ungrateful any one was to her, the more kind she was to him. She had died now, close upon a hundred years old, beloved, almost

worshipped, by all in the little town. Large as her alms were, it was her kindness more than her alms that they thought of. The poor have delicate hearts, and none thirst for love so much as they. They were now carrying to her grave her whom they had affectionately named "The Kind Lady," the poor Rosamond, the disagreeable child, to whom no one but her Angel had been kind!

THE
WEEPING ANGEL.

THE WEEPING ANGEL.

AN Angel stood upon a mountain-top, and he was weeping.

He was happiest when he wept the most bitterly, and God was happy to see him weeping, and the men who saw him weeping were made happy by seeing it.

The mountain was very high. It saw the sun on both sides of it. One of the Angel's wings shone like silver in the white sun-rise, and the other was a golden crimson in the red sunset. Yet there was a night there, as well as a day, and sometimes the Angel wept most by night,

and sometimes he wept most by day. But he was always weeping.

The whole earth lay below, as if it were in two vast plains sloping away from the mountain. There were the shining seas, spotted all over with ships, and the ships seemed magnified, and had a marvellous strong light upon them, much stronger than the light that was upon the seas. So the ranges of mountains on the earth, and the yellow deserts where no rain falls, and the immense forests where the noonday is dark with greenness, and the wide plains where the wild horses roam, and the two huge icy ends of the earth where cold and silence reign, seemed much less in size, and less prominent, and with less of a distinct light upon them, than the cities and villages where men dwelt. Indeed from the top of the Angel's mountain, all the objects

of nature looked very small, while on the contrary everything which had to do with men looked very large.

It was a wonderful sight to behold. In the early morning it seemed more wonderful; but then when evening came, the evening seemed more wonderful than the morning. At noon you would have thought it most full of life, but, if you had waited till midnight you would have changed your mind, and thought there was most life then. Another strange thing about it was that, although the sun and moon and the great-eyed stars shone down upon the earth, yet the earth sent up more light from itself than it received from the sky; so that the Angel saw things rather by the light that came up from the landscape, than the light that shone down upon it. It seemed studded with stars

more thickly than the heavens are strewn with them on the clearest night, and they had a sweeter light. These earth-stars were the thousands of tabernacles where the Blessed Sacrament reposes. It was an exceedingly beautiful sight, that outstretched sloping earth; and yet the Angel wept, and wept, and wept, almost incessantly.

Why did he weep? Happy tears! An Angel's tears must be all joys. There is no unhappiness among the Angels. Sorrow is not unhappiness. This is a great secret. Indeed it is the great secret of the world. All the world is always nearly telling it, nearly, but not quite. When the leaves rustle on the trees, they want to tell it. When the stars twinkle, as if they had got tears in their eyes, they almost tell the secret by their looks. When the sea beats with a

hollow sound upon the sand, it murmurs the great secret of the world, that sorrow is not unhappiness.

You did not know little Wilfrid. I only saw him once myself. It was easy to see at once, that he was a child who had some great vocation from God. It is not grown-up men only who have vocations. Children make a little Catholic Church of themselves, where God is always being loved and served in a particular way; and in this child-church there are wonderful things done, which we do not know of. It is very much mixed up with the kingdom of the Angels. It also has sorrows of its own, and joys of its own, and vocations of its own, beautiful mysterious vocations sent by our Heavenly Father.

Wilfrid had one of these vocations. You might have been certain he would have to suffer,

and that he would have the grace to love suffering, because he was so merry a child. His soul was full of brightness and gladness, even to overflowing. These are the children out of whom strong men are made. Strength comes out of brightness. Endurance depends on happiness. It is only the light-hearted who know how to suffer rightly, and as God wishes us to suffer. These are hard words; but you will understand them some day.

Wilfrid was one of those children, the very sight of whom makes old people young again. Somehow, even when he talked nonsense, he made you think of God and heaven; and when he laughed, you felt a wish to shed sweet tears. There are many children who live more in the night than in the day. They are wise and old in their dreams by night, even when they are light

and careless in their games and tasks by day. This was the case with Wilfrid; and if you had shut your eyes when he was telling one of his dreams, you would have thought it was some grown-up poet or artist who was describing things. His descriptions were almost unnatural, they were so like the descriptions of an educated man. But there he was with his black hair, and with barely seven summers twinkling in his eye. Yet you could see also that he was one of those children who are never meant to be men, any more than spring-flowers are meant to grow in summer.

Wilfrid had been sleeping for an hour when he first saw the Weeping Angel. His mother had kissed him when he was in bed, and the feeling of her kiss always lasted on him through the night. But this night she had wetted his

little face with her tears. Perhaps she was thinking of his father, who had died the week before, and been buried under the lime-trees by the monastery. That night he saw the Weeping Angel for the first time.

All the next day he was very grave, and yet he had never been so happy. His sisters wondered why he was so much kinder than usual. It makes us very kind to see Angels, and our eyes are filled with quiet brightness, and our voices are low and sweet. In the afternoon Wilfrid was a little impatient for night to come; and he longed to be alone in the dark, though a week ago he would have been frightened at it beyond measure.

His mother had taken the candle away, and had gone out of the room. But the curtain was not quite drawn, and he went to sleep with the

moon in his eyes, and the darkness this night was brighter than it had ever been before.

The golden light, in which the Angel was visible, became more golden and more clear. The mountain-top seemed quite near to Wilfrid, so near that it appeared as if he could almost touch it. But he could see no view from it. Beautiful clouds rolled at his feet. Every moment he thought they would have rolled away, and that he should have seen some wonderful sight. Indeed once they parted slightly, and through the chink he fancied he caught sight of a very sunny sea. A low wind blew upon the mountain-top; and it made a noise in the Angel's wings like the mournful sobbing and sighing in the fir-trees on the north-side of the house. He was also nearly sure that a sweet murmuring

sigh came from the Angel's lips like very sad music.

The next day Wilfrid was still more silent. His face was rather pale, and his eyes were more than usually bright. He was soft and subdued in his manner. But somehow though his mother was very glad of all this, she was also somewhat uneasy. She could not understand it, and yet she shrank from speaking to him about it. She thought of another fair child whom she had lost, and once during the day, when she had been watching the fire in Wilfrid's eyes, she suddenly went away to her own room, and knelt down, and wept bitterly, and prayed fervently to God.

The night came, and Wilfrid was put to bed. But his mother lingered longer in his room, as if she did not like to leave him. At last she had

given him her last kiss; it was about the twentieth last kiss that night. Just as she was leaving his room, he asked her to draw the curtain aside, that the shining of the moon might come in at the window. She was startled at this request; and she began to ask him why he wished it, but she checked herself. But, as she put the curtain back, a silent tear trickled down her cheek.

Sleep came to Wilfrid; and the golden light grew so golden that he almost was afraid. And it seemed as if he was borne up to the top of the mountain, close to the Angel. And from very high above him, there came a deep, sweet, low voice, which bade him speak to the Weeping Angel. The voice did not make him afraid. On the contrary it made him very brave, and very happy. So he said to the Angel:

Angel! may I call you dear Angel?

And the Angel answered, Yes! for you are my little brother in Jesus.

Then Wilfrid said, Dear Angel! why are you always weeping?

And the Angel answered, My sweet Wilfrid, our great and good God has something which He loves exceedingly, and which He calls His glory. Now, all the world over, men are continually robbing Him of His glory, and doing wrong to Him. So I stand on this mountain-top, all the year round, hundreds of years; and I see all the cities of the world, and the inside of the houses, and even the inside of men's hearts. This last I could not see, except by a special permission of God. Thus I see everything which everybody does. I hear everything which everybody says. I know everything which everybody thinks. And I join myself to every

work, and word, and thought, on the great huge earth, and add my love of God to it, and I weep over what is wrong in it, and try to make up to God by my tears for all the glory which men might give Him, but will not give Him. This is why I weep. And I weep always, because always, somewhere on the earth, wrong things are being done. And God loves my tears, and Mary, our sinless Queen, is always offering them up to Him. And all heaven sees me on my mountain-top, and they make songs about me there, and they love me exceedingly, and they call me Poor Earth's Angel.

But, dear Angel, said Wilfrid, I do not quite understand about God's glory. What is it like? Is it something He wants and cannot get?

No! sweet little Brother, it is not so. It is hard to explain to you. When your mother's

heart is almost breaking with love of you, it would quite break with sorrow, if she thought you did not love her. Now it cannot be so with God ; but it is something very like it. His glory is our love ; and His love of His own glory is the greatness of His love for us. We can only know what God's glory is like by loving Him very tenderly.

Then Wilfrid was silent, and began to weep. But oh ! they were such sweet and soft tears, that he would like to have wept so all night. Then he said, Dear Angel ! will you bless me ? And the Angel said, Do not come so near, lest one of my tears should fall upon you ; and it is not time yet. Then the Angel blessed him, and Wilfrid was carried home so swiftly that the air sang in his ears ; and he awoke, and heard the wind in the trees, and the raindrops splashing on

his window-panes, and his pillow was wet as if he had been crying. He slept no more that night, but lay very still, and did not seem to want sleep. His mother's pillow was wet also, for she had seen his white face all night in the dark room, and had thought of the dead Ferdinand, his little brother.

The next day Wilfrid felt very tired, and was inclined to be silent. His mother did not go down stairs as usual to attend to her housekeeping, but she remained in the room with him. He asked if he might lie down on the sofa, because he was tired, and his mother put a cushion under his head, and went and sat where she could see him without his seeing her. He lay very quietly with his eyes shut, going over again in his mind what he had seen in the night. He forgot that his mother was in the room, and

at last he said, half out loud, Poor Earth's Angel! His mother asked him what he meant, and he turned very red, and said to her, O nothing! Do not mind me. Then after a few minutes of silence he asked her to come near him, and sit close to him. And he put his little hot hand in hers, and said to her, Dearest mamma! do you think I might make my first confession now?

You are not seven yet, my darling: you are only six and a half. Why do you want to go to confession?

I think, mamma, I should be happier, replied Wilfrid. I think Father Andrew would let me do so.

Well darling, I shall see Father Andrew at the boys' school this afternoon, and I will ask him.

Thank you, dearest mamma : stoop down, and let me kiss you.

Then his mother went out, and Wilfrid lay very still, until his sisters had finished their lessons, and came down to him from the school-room. That afternoon father Andrew consented to his making his first confession, and began to instruct him how to do so.

Thus a week passed away. Every night Wilfrid was with the Angel, on the mountain-top, and in the daytime he was preparing for his confession. His sisters thought he was growing very odd, and wise, and old-fashioned. But there was a belief among those sisters, that nothing which Wilfrid did could be wrong. On Saturday he made his confession, with his head resting on Father Andrew's knee. He shed a great many tears, not because he had been very

wicked, but because his heart was almost breaking with the love of Jesus. Then he went to the little chapel in the house, and kissed his crucifix, and wetted it with his tears. His sisters came in to put some flowers before the image of our Lady, and to light a candle before it, because of Wilfrid's first confession, and as they came in, they heard him say, Oh! dear Lord God, sweet Jesus! now I also can be a Weeping Angel.

That night the Angel seemed brighter than ever, and said to him, Little earthly Brother! now you will do part of my weeping for me! You see now that it is a sad thing to be unhappy, but it is not a sad thing to be sorrowful. Jesus and Mary were always sorrowful, but they were never unhappy. Your mother is sorrowful about little Ferdinand, but she is not at all unhappy

about him. You are sorry, very sorry, for your faults; yet I see in your heart that you were never more happy in your life. When you kiss your crucifix, you are sorry for the sufferings of Jesus, yet the sorrow is very sweet to you.

Dear Angel! said Wilfrid, go on; you say such beautiful things.

The Angel told him to come nearer, and he would show him something. Then he touched Wilfrid's eyes, and the touch, though it was very gentle, smarted a little, and tears came, and behold! through his tears the child saw the whole world, and all its cities, with their streets lighted up, and all its villages on the mountain-sides, and all its cottages on the edges of the enormous forests. And he saw what all the people were doing, and he seemed to know them by their names, and all about them, and

the names of their children, and whether they were good or naughty. He saw gay rooms with people dancing in them, and rooms where men were drinking wine, and talking loud, and he observed that over those places, the Angel wept like a shower of rain. He saw also great hospitals, with beds on both sides of the rooms, and many persons suffering and dying; and the Angel wept here also, but at the same time he smiled through his tears. He also saw churches where monks were singing psalms, and organs were playing. Here also the angel wept, but it was very little. He saw thousands of children in thousands of schools, and he observed that the Angel hovered over the children, and shook his wings, so as to make some drops of his tears fall on particular children here and there.

But, dear Angel! said Wilfrid, is this the earth

I have sometimes seen from the window lying in the moonlight?

Why do you ask, my little Brother? replied the Angel.

Because, answered Wilfrid, I did not think you would have had reason to weep then. When I saw the earth one night with the moonlight on it, it seemed to me, not only beautiful and quiet, but also holy and good. It felt as if God was all over it, and when I opened the window, it seemed as if God came into the room. The river made less noise where it ran under the wall, less noise than it makes in the day-time; and the trees were quite wonderful, and looked, I thought, as if they were forbidden to speak. Everything felt as if it was inside a church. I fancied you would have rested in the night, or at least on moonlight

nights, or only watched over the people who were out upon the sea in ships.

Dearest child! said the Angel, I am always resting. To be working for God is the grand rest of all those who are in Heaven. We know of no other kind of rest but that. The Saints in Heaven tell me, that on earth there is no rest so sweet as suffering for God. To us Angels there is no rest so sweet as working for God. If Angels could grow weary, it would be by not loving God every moment far more than they loved Him the moment before. Happily this can never be. But as to my not weeping, I must weep almost more by night than by day. Wicked men rob and kill in the darkness. All through the dark hours men are dying, and alas! many, when they die, make Angels weep. The moon shines on as many sins as does the sun.

Oh then, I shall never be so much in love with the moonlight again, said Wilfrid. Yet it is very beautiful, and I always find it hard to obey my dearest mother, and lie still in bed, instead of getting up to look out of the window. What makes it so beautiful?

All things, Wilfrid, are beautiful, which do the will of God. And the moonlight was a thought of God, one of His wonderful thoughts from all eternity. It makes us think of His own dear Mother. Perhaps he always meant it should be so. You may well love the moonlight, for it is one of God's sweet thoughts. Nay, it is part of His love for you; for there are some worlds which have no moons, and the nights are dreadful there.

Then they went on further in their flight. They looked down into thousands of ships upon

distant seas, and the Angel wept. They passed over lands where there were no churches, and no Blessed Sacrament lamps burning, and the Angel wept sadly, because the lands were very dark. But there were other lands where there were ancient Christian churches, but without proper altars, and with no Blessed Sacrament, no Mass, no pictures of the Mother of Jesus; and Wilfrid thought, but he was not sure, that the Angel wept more bitterly over these lands than over the first lands. Then there were lands all Christian, with lamps lighted everywhere, and prayer and watching all the night through, and holy convents which gleamed like moons, that were shining in the deep green woods of earth, or on the tops of sea-side hills. And though the Angel shed fewer tears over those, it seemed to Wilfrid as if the tears were coloured with

blood, and the sorrow of the Angel seemed rather more like sadness, and yet it was not sad. At last Wilfrid saw a great city, with a river running through the middle of it; and he saw under the foundations of the houses, and the whole city seemed to be built on the bones of the Martyrs. And the Angel told him, it was God's city, the city of Rome. And he saw the inside of a grand palace, with soldiers in strange dresses walking before the doors; and when the house was all still, he saw an Old Man get out of bed, very gently, so that the people who watched in the next room should not hear him. There was something very wonderful in the look of the Old Man's face. He rose, and put on a white cassock, and went in his bare feet to the window, and opened it, and knelt down before it, with a

little picture of our Blessed Lady in his hand, and he began to pray.

The great city, with its twinkling lights, was beneath him, but scarcely any noise reached him but the splashing of some great fountains. Beyond the city were some mountains, which looked black and soft in the starlight, and beyond them again was the great, great world, of which that Old Man was the father. He was praying for the world, and he soon began to weep, and the tears ran down all over the picture of our dear Lady. And as he wept, his face grew more and more like that of the Weeping Angel. And the Angel bowed very low before him, and wept also.

Then Wilfrid wept so fast that in his tears the Old Man and the Angel seemed to go into one, and to be one person instead of two; and

he saw heaven open, and behold! God the Father was looking with great love upon the weeping Old Man, and then the Old Man himself grew to be like God the Father. Then the light became brighter, and Wilfrid saw that Mary kept pointing to the weeping Old Man, and God looked into his heart, and the Angels looked into God's Face, and read something there, and millions of them flew down to Rome, and looked into the Old Man's heart, and then flew away to the north and south, to the east and west, where they saw the Old Man's heart wished them to be. The Angel told Wilfrid that this was the Pope, and that he must now go back to his bedroom, as the Pope had sent an Angel there. Wilfrid thought it very strange that the Pope should know anything about him, or should send a grand Angel to such a little fellow as he

was. Perhaps it had something to do with his first confession.

Some weeks now passed. Every night Wilfrid was with the Angel. He saw many other things; but they are so difficult to explain that I will leave them out. In the daytime Wilfrid seemed more and more weak and pale; but he said he was not ill. However his mother sent for the doctor, and the doctor put something like a little flute to his chest, and listened, and then looked very grave. Wilfrid patted the sleeve of the doctor's coat, and laughed at him. The old doctor stooped down and kissed him, and Wilfrid felt that the doctor was crying, because he had wetted his cheek when he kissed him.

Then the doctor went away with Wilfrid's mother into a different room; and she was

a long time with him ; and when she came back, Wilfrid saw that her eyes were very red, and that she also had been crying. All the rest of the day too his sisters looked very hard at him, and were very sad, and spoke almost in a whisper, and went about on their tip-toes as if somebody in the house was very ill ; and sometimes they came and put their arms round him, and said nothing.

One night Wilfrid had a little headache. It was not very bad. But because of it he went to bed without saying his night-prayers, and that night he did not see the Angel at all. But he had a most uncomfortable dream, of nothing but a solid and black darkness, built up like a wall before him, and which hurt him when he pressed against it. At the same time his conscience reproached him for having made his little head-

ache an excuse for missing his night-prayers. All the next day he was unhappy, unhappy rather than sorrowful. At night he saw the black darkness again, only behind it he heard the voice of the Weeping Angel. It said, Wilfrid! you must not be unhappy. You are unhappy because you are vexed at finding you are not so good as you hoped to be. You ought rather to be sorrowful, because you have not quite pleased God. Unhappiness never sends darkness away, but sweet sorrow does. Then the voice spoke no more.

Wilfrid awoke, and he prayed all the rest of the night to Jesus to give him true sorrow, and in the morning he was quite happy and peaceful, and yet extremely sorry. But he had determined quite briskly never to miss his prayers again, unless his mother told him to do

so, and he knew well enough that Jesus would give him grace to keep this resolution, because he felt in his heart that our dear Lady had been praying for him; and what she prays for is as good as done.

On the third night there was not exactly the darkness; but there was a kind of grey mist, and showers of beautiful, coloured drops of fire kept falling through it, and he felt that he was at the foot of the Weeping Angel's mountain, and that these showers of coloured fire were the Angel's tears. At first he was a little disappointed because he fancied God had not forgiven him all at once. But he soon recovered, and when he remembered how great and holy God was, he thanked Him for the grey mist, and said that, if it pleased God to punish him so, he would be content to go without seeing the Angel any more.

Now here is something very strange. Wilfrid never had any secrets with his mother. Yet somehow he had not liked to tell her about the Weeping Angel, and the nights he spent with him. He felt as if it was not a thing to talk about. He did not feel as if he was keeping a secret from his dear mother. If he had felt so, he would have told her directly. But now he determined to tell Father Andrew of it, and ask him if he had not better tell his mother. Father Andrew thought a little while, and then said he would go into the chapel and ask our Blessed Lord. When he came back, he told Wilfrid that he might tell his mother, but that his sisters were not to know, lest they should talk to him about it, and make him proud. Wilfrid wondered what being proud meant. However he did not ask, and indeed I do not think Father

Andrew would have been able to make him understand it. He told his mother about the Angel that day; and his mother kissed him tenderly, and said to him, God is your Father, my blessed child. His holy will be done!

That night all was golden again. Wilfrid was on the mountain-top with the Angel. The Angel looked more beautiful than ever. He said to Wilfrid, Once you have seen from the mountain-top; now you shall hear! Whereupon he touched Wilfrid's ears, and they tingled, and then rang as if there was water in them. At last he began to hear distinctly. He heard psalms being sung, and organs playing, and priests chanting, and sorrowful men and women sighing, and widows' eyes turned up to heaven, which made a sound like sweet singing, and orphans prattling, and little children saying their prayers,

and nuns kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, whose silence was turned by an Angel into the sweetest music, very gentle and very gay.

Then the Weeping Angel spoke to him again, and said, Wilfrid, do you remember your mother's bed of white lilies in the garden? And Wilfrid said, Oh yes! Then the Angel went on, You know how their green leaves wither and die when the plants are in flower. Their life is all in their blossom. In the same way the souls of little children, whom God makes pious very early, are to God's glory what the lily-bed is to your mother. When the world is very wicked, and God's glory withers and is yellow and dry, He refreshes it by the souls of little children, whom He takes to Himself, to increase His glory. Would you like to be one of these children whom God is so impatient to have with Him in heaven?

O yes, dear Angel, yes !

Then the Angel drew him near to himself, and let one tear fall on the top of his head. Wilfrid turned very cold, and there was a little pain in his heart, but not much ; and, strange to say ! he liked the pain, and would not have exchanged it for anything in the world. He slept no more that night ; but lay extremely still, and every now and then when the pain in his heart pinched him, he said, Jesus ! my own Jesus ! In the morning, when the nurse came to him, he asked her to go to his mother, and tell her that he did not think he could get out of bed. In a very few minutes his mother was in his room. She had not waited to dress herself. She bent over him, and when she saw him, a strange look of bitter anguish passed over her face. The doctor came, and he went away

weeping. Old nurse wept as if her heart was breaking. Sisters came in to see him, but were not allowed to speak. They promised they would not cry. And for some time they did not: but poor little Clare's lips began quivering faster and faster, and at last she burst out in a loud cry, and then Agnes, and Cicely, did so also.

They were hurried out into the nursery; and if you had heard them, you would have thought their three tiny hearts must have broken; and the younger nurse scolded them for crying, and yet all the while she was crying just as much herself. And the servants went up and down the house, as if they did not know what to do; and nobody wanted any dinner, when the dinner-time came. The poor mother did not cry. She smiled. But it was a sad smile on her poor white face. At noon the bishop came, and he

confirmed Wilfrid, and gave him his blessing, and kissed him, and said, Remember your poor bishop, when you see God!

Wilfrid's little heart had made such a great act of love when he was confirmed, that he was quite tired, as tired as if he had been playing in the sun a whole summer afternoon; and he fell asleep. In his sleep he dreamed that he was carried to the top of a low hill, round which there was a thick darkness, and the darkness was full of Angels, who seemed as if they wished to go nearer to something inside the darkness, but might not do so. But he was taken inside, where there was a ring of pale light, and Jesus hanging on the Cross, and Mary and John beneath. And he seemed lifted into the air, so that his face was on a level with the face of Jesus. Then he thought that the nailed Hands unfastened

themselves, and embraced him, and pressed him to the Face of Jesus, and our dearest Lord kissed him on the forehead, just where the Holy Oil, the Chrism of Confirmation, had touched him. He thought also that the kiss of those sweet lips left blood upon his forehead, which sank in, and made him all heavenly within.

It seemed as if the kiss awoke him, and he found he had turned his face on one side, where a little white Crucifix was lying, and that his forehead was pressing upon it, and that the pain in his head was greater than before. His mother heard him move, and came to the side of his bed, and she dipped a handkerchief in vinegar to bind round his head, and as she stooped over to tie it on, he put out his hand, and took the handkerchief and squeezed some of the vinegar into his mouth and swallowed it.

Why have you done that, my darling child?
said his mother.

Because I was thirsty, and I wished to be like
Jesus.*

As he said this he smiled into his mother's
face. It was a wonderful smile. It was as if he
had in his sleep grown as old as the oldest saint,
and as wise as the wisest doctor, in the Church;
and yet was as arch, and playful, and simple a
child as ever. A thick book, if it were written on
it, would not hold all the wisdom and beauty, all
the sweetness and consolation, that there was in
that smile. I am sure his mother will never
forget it as long as she lives.

Have you ever felt one of those summer after-
noons which are so beautiful that you do not
even like to play, but prefer to sit still, and let

* A real incident.

yourself be happy you do not know how or why? The quietness is so quiet, that you can almost hear it breathing. The flowers smell with an unusual sweetness. The trees seem to have gone to sleep, and no birds are singing. They never sing upon such afternoons as those. Even the cows in the field lie down. The church clock trembles while it strikes, as if it was almost afraid of doing wrong in striking at such a peaceful time.

It was a calm like this, while Wilfrid was sleeping. But there came a freshness towards evening, and an awakening of all nature. There was a sound of air in the tree-tops like the murmur of a distant sea. The cattle rose and began to crop the grass. The birds also began to sing; and flowers began to smell, which had not smelt a little while ago. Wilfrid also awoke. He awoke

that he might die. Sweet Flower of Christian Sacraments! his vespers were to be sung in heaven. The evening was to be to him an everlasting morning. O Ethel! it is hard to have to wait so long for ours.

Outside the house the sun still shone very brightly, and it seemed in the silent rooms as if the birds had never sung so loud before. Wilfrid sank very quietly. It was as if the Weeping Angel's tear was melting his soul away into God's glory. Some children belong to God and to their mothers. But some seem to belong to God only. These die soon, and they like to die. Yet they love their mothers better than other children do. Those are happy mothers who have such children. We call them God's Early Blossoms. Most mothers have one such.

Before the sun went down Wilfrid was gone.

There was one look in his eyes as if some new kind of pain startled him, and then a look of peace into his mother's face, a look which told her all was well. He was now part of God's pure glory. The three sisters went in to see him. Old nurse was sewing in the window: but she might as well have left off; for she was crying so, that she could not see through her spectacles. The poor Mother's head was buried in the pillow, her curls touching Wilfrid's cold cheek, and whenever she moved, his head sank upon hers, as if he was coming to life again, and was going to turn round and kiss her. Poor little Clare! there was one big tear on the middle of each cheek. She opened her eyes wide, and looked at Wilfrid; then she ran and flung herself into old nurse's lap, and you could not tell which of the two, the old or the young, cried

loudest; and poor Clare thought that she had better die also. And all the while Wilfrid's cold cheek lay still against his mother's hair.



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