

Legends of the Saints

EPIC & LEGENDARY HEROES SERIES

SELECTED AUTHORS

Legends of the Saints

Selected Authors

Libraries of Hope

Legends of the Saints
Epic & Legendary Heroes Series

Copyright © 2022 by Libraries of Hope, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher. International rights and foreign translations available only through permission of the publisher.

Cover Image: St. George Struggling with the Dragon, by Raphael (1503). In public domain, source Wikimedia Commons.

Libraries of Hope, Inc.
Appomattox, Virginia 24522

Website www.librariesofhope.com
Email: librariesofhope@gmail.com

Printed in the United States of America

Contents

The Book of Saints and Friendly Beasts 3
Saint Gerasimus and the Lion 4
Saint Keneth of the Gulls 14
Saint Launomar's Cow 20
Saint Werburgh & Her Goose 26
The Ballad of Saint Athracta's Stags 34
Saint Blaise and His Beasts 39
The Ballad of Saint Felix 43
Saint Fronto's Camels 47
The Blind Singer, Saint Hervé 54
Saint Comgall and the Mice 65
The Wonders of Saint Berach 70
Saint Prisca, the Child Martyr 75
The Fish Who Helped Saint Gudwall 81
The Wolf-Mother of Saint Ailbe 85
Saint Rigobert's Dinner 90
In God's Garden 97
About This Book 98
Saint Ursula 100
Saint Benedict 111
Saint Christopher 121
Saint Catherine of Siena 130
Saint Augustine of Hippo 140
Saint Augustine of Canterbury 146

Saint Cecilia 153
Saint Giles 159
Saint Nicholas 163
Saint Faith 174
Saint Cosmo and Saint Damian 178
Saint Martin 184
Saint George 191
Saint Francis of Assisi 198
Our Island Saints 211
S. Alban 212
S. Kentigern 219
S. Patrick 234
S. David 251
S. Molios 255
S. Bridget 260
S. Cuthbert 268
S. Edward the Confessor 283
S. Columba 293
S. Margaret of Scotland 308
S. Hugh of Lincoln 325
The Saints in Story 339
St. Margaret and the Dragon 340
St. Francis and the Soldan 347
The Legend of Wulfstan 355
References 359

Legends of the Saints

Month 11

The Book of Saints and Friendly Beasts

By Abbie Farwell Brown

Saint Gerasimus and the Lion

I.

One fine morning Saint Gerasimus was walking briskly along the bank of the River Jordan. By his side plodded a little donkey bearing on his back an earthen jar; for they had been down to the river together to get water, and were taking it back to the monastery on the hill for the monks to drink at their noonday meal.

Gerasimus was singing merrily, touching the stupid little donkey now and then with a twig of olive leaves to keep him from going to sleep. This was in the far East, in the Holy Land, so the sky was very blue and the ground smelled hot. Birds were singing around them in the trees and overhead, all kinds of strange and beautiful birds. But suddenly Gerasimus heard a sound unlike any bird he had ever known; a sound which was not a bird's song at all, unless some newly invented kind had a bass voice which ended in a howl. The little donkey stopped suddenly, and bracing his fore legs and cocking forward his long, flappy ears, looked afraid and foolish. Gerasimus stopped too. But he was so wise a man that he could not look foolish. And he was too good a man to be afraid of anything. Still, he was a little surprised.

"Dear me," he said aloud, "how very strange that sounded. What do you suppose it was?" Now there was no one else anywhere near, so he must have been talking to himself. For he could never have expected that donkey to know anything about it. But the donkey thought he was being spoken to, so he wagged his head, and said, "He-haw!" which was a very silly answer indeed, and did not help Gerasimus at all.

He seized the donkey by the halter and waited to see what would happen. He peered up and down and around and about, but there was nothing to be seen except the shining river, the yellow sand, a clump of bushes beside the road, and the spire of the monastery peeping over the top of the hill beyond. He was about to start the donkey once more on his climb towards home, when that sound came again; and this time he noticed that it was a sad sound, a sort of whining growl ending in a sob. It sounded nearer than before, and seemed to come from the clump of bushes. Gerasimus and the donkey turned their heads quickly in that direction, and the donkey trembled all over, he was so frightened. But his master only said, "It must be a Lion!"

And sure enough: he had hardly spoken the word when out of the bushes came poking the great head and yellow eyes of a lion. He was looking straight at Gerasimus. Then, giving that cry again, he bounded out and strode towards the good man, who was holding the donkey tight to keep him from running away. He was the biggest kind of a lion, much bigger than the donkey, and his mane was long and thick, and his tail had a yellow brush on the end as large as a window mop. But as he came Gerasimus noticed that he limped as if he were lame. At once the Saint was filled with pity, for he could not bear to see any creature suffer. And without any thought of fear, he went forward to meet the lion. Instead of pouncing upon him fiercely, or snarling, or making ready to eat him up, the lion crouched whining at his feet

"Poor fellow," said Gerasimus, "what hurts you and makes you lame, brother Lion?"

The lion shook his yellow mane and roared. But his eyes were not fierce; they were only full of pain as they looked up into those of Gerasimus asking for help. And then he held up his right fore paw and shook it to show that this was where the trouble lay. Gerasimus looked at him kindly.

"Lie down, sir," he said just as one would speak to a big

yellow dog. And obediently the lion charged. Then the good man bent over him, and taking the great paw in his hand examined it carefully. In the soft cushion of the paw a long pointed thorn was piercing so deeply that he could hardly find the end. No wonder the poor lion had roared with pain! Gerasimus pulled out the thorn as gently as he could, and though it must have hurt the lion badly he did not make a sound, but lay still as he had been told. And when the thorn was taken out the lion licked Gerasimus' hand, and looked up in his face as if he would say, "Thank you, kind man. I shall not forget."

Now when the Saint had finished this good deed he went back to his donkey and started on towards the monastery. But hearing the soft pad of steps behind him he turned and saw that the great yellow lion was following close at his heels. At first he was somewhat embarrassed, for he did not know how the other monks would receive this big stranger. But it did not seem polite or kind to drive him away, especially as he was still somewhat lame. So Gerasimus took up his switch of olive leaves and drove the donkey on without a word, thinking that perhaps the lion would grow tired and drop behind. But when he glanced over his shoulder he still saw the yellow head close at his elbow; and sometimes he felt the hot, rough tongue licking his hand that hung at his side.

So they climbed the hill to the monastery. Some one had seen Gerasimus coming with this strange attendant at his heels, and the windows and doors were crowded with monks, their mouths and eyes wide open with astonishment, peering over one another's shoulders. From every corner of the monastery they had run to see the sight; but they were all on tiptoe to run back again twice as quickly if the lion should roar or lash his tail. Now although Gerasimus knew that the house was full of staring eyes expecting every minute to see him eaten up, he did not hurry or worry at all. Leisurely he unloaded the water-jar and put the donkey in his stable, the lion

following him everywhere he went. When all was finished he turned to bid the beast good-by. But instead of taking the hint and departing as he was expected to, the lion crouched at Gerasimus' feet and licked his sandals; and then he looked up in the Saint's face and pawed at his coarse gown pleadingly, as if he said, "Good man, I love you because you took the thorn out of my foot. Let me stay with you always to be your watch-dog." And Gerasimus understood.

"Well, if you wish to stay I am willing, so long as you are good," he said, and the lion leaped up and roared with joy so loudly that all the monks who were watching tumbled over one another and ran away to their cells in a terrible fright, locking the doors behind them.

Gerasimus carried the water-jar into the empty kitchen, and the lion followed. After sniffing about the place to get acquainted, just as a kitten does in its new home, the lion lay down in front of the fire and curled his head up on his paws, like the great big cat he was. And so after a long sigh he went to sleep. Then Gerasimus had a chance to tell the other monks all about it. At first they were timid and would not hear of keeping such a dangerous pet. But when they had all tiptoed down to the kitchen behind Gerasimus and had seen the big kitten asleep there so peacefully they were not quite so much afraid.

"I'll tell you what we will do," said the Abbot. "If Brother Gerasimus can make his friend eat porridge and herbs like the rest of us we will let him join our number. He might be very useful—as well as ornamental—in keeping away burglars and mice. But we cannot have any flesh-eating creature among us. Some of us are too fat and tempting, I fear," and he glanced at several of the roundest monks, who shuddered in their tight gowns. But the Abbot himself was the fattest of them all, and he spoke with feeling.

So it was decided. Gerasimus let the lion sleep a good long nap, to put him in a fine humor. But when it came time for

supper he mixed a bowl of porridge and milk and filled a big wooden platter with boiled greens. Then taking one dish in each hand he went up to the lion and set them in front of his nose.

"Leo, Leo, Leo!" he called coaxingly, just as a little girl would call "Kitty, Kitty, Kitty!" to her pet. The lion lifted up his head and purred, like a small furnace, for he recognized his friend's voice. But when he smelled the dishes of food he sniffed and made a horrid face, wrinkling up his nose and saying, "Ugh!" He did not like the stuff at all. But Gerasimus patted him on the head and said, "You had better eat it, Leo; it is all I have myself. Share and share alike, brother."

The lion looked at him earnestly, and then dipped his nose into the porridge with a grunt. He ate it all, and found it not so very bad. So next he tried the greens. They were a poor dessert, he thought; but since he saw that Gerasimus wanted him to eat them he finished the dish, and then lay down on the hearth feeling very tired.

Gerasimus was delighted, for he had grown fond of the lion and wanted to keep him. So he hurried back to the dining hall and showed the empty dishes to the Abbot. That settled the lion's fate. Thenceforth he became a member of the monastery. He ate with the other monks in the great hall, having his own private trencher and bowl beside Gerasimus. And he grew to like the mild fare of the good brothers—at least he never sought for anything different. He slept outside the door of his master's cell and guarded the monastery like a faithful watch-dog. The monks grew fond of him and petted him so that he lived a happy life on the hill, with never a wish to go back to the desert with its thorns.

II.

Wherever Gerasimus went the lion went also. Best of all, Leo enjoyed their daily duty of drawing water from the river. For that meant a long walk in the open air, and a frolic on the

bank of the Jordan. One day they had gone as usual, Gerasimus, the lion, and the stupid donkey who was carrying the filled jar on his back. They were jogging comfortably home, when a poor man came running out of a tiny hut near the river, who begged Gerasimus to come with him and try to cure his sick baby. Of course the good man willingly agreed; this was one of the errands which he loved best to do.

"Stay, brother," he commanded Leo, who wanted to go with him, "stay and watch the foolish donkey." And he went with the man, feeling sure that the lion would be faithful. Now Leo meant to do his duty, but it was a hot and sleepy day, and he was very tired. He lay down beside the donkey and kept one eye upon him, closing the other one just for a minute. But this is a dangerous thing to do. Before he knew it, the other eye began to wink; and the next moment Leo was sound asleep, snoring with his head on his paws. Then it was that the silly donkey began to grow restless. He saw a patch of grass just beyond that looked tempting, and he moved over to it. Then he saw a greener spot beyond that, and then another still farther beyond that, till he had taken his silly self a long way off. And just then there came along on his way from Dan to Beersheba, a thief of a Camel Driver, with a band of horses and asses. He saw the donkey grazing there with no one near, and he said to himself—

"Aha! A fine little donkey. I will add him to my caravan and no one will be the wiser." And seizing Silly by the halter, he first cut away the water-jar, and then rode off with him as fast as he could gallop.

Now the sound of pattering feet wakened Leo. He jumped up with a roar just in time to see the Camel Driver's face as he glanced back from the top of the next hill. Leo ran wildly about sniffing for the donkey; but when he found that he had really disappeared, he knew the Camel Driver must have stolen him. He was terribly angry. He stood by the water-jar and roared and lashed his tail, gnashing his jaws as he remembered

the thief's wicked face.

Now in the midst of his rage out came Gerasimus. He found Leo roaring and foaming at the mouth, his red-rimmed eyes looking very fierce. And the donkey was gone—only the water-jar lay spilling on the ground. Then Gerasimus made a great mistake. He thought that poor Leo had grown tired of being a vegetarian, of living upon porridge and greens, and had tried fresh donkey-meat for a change.

"Oh, you wicked lion!" he cried, "you have eaten poor Silly. What shall I do to punish you?" Then Leo roared louder than ever with shame and sorrow. But he could not speak to tell how it had happened. The Saint was very sad. Tears stood in his kind eyes. "You will have to be donkey now," he said; "you will have to do his part of the work since he is now a part of you. Come, stand up and let me fasten the water-jar upon your back." He spoke sternly and even switched Leo with his olive stick. Leo had never been treated like this. He was the King of Beasts, and it was shame for a King to do donkey's work. His eyes flashed, and he had half a mind to refuse and to run away. Then he looked at the good man and remembered how he had taken out that cruel thorn. So he hung his head and stood still to be harnessed in the donkey's place.

Slowly and painfully Leo carried the water-jar up the hill. But worse than all it was to feel that his dear master was angry with him. Gerasimus told the story to the other monks, and they were even more angry than he had been, for they did not love Leo so well. They all agreed that Leo must be punished; so they treated him exactly as if he were a mean, silly donkey. They gave him only oats and water to eat, and made him do all Silly's work. They would no longer let him sleep outside his master's door, but they tied him in a lonesome stall in the stable. And now he could not go to walk with Gerasimus free and happy as the King of Beasts should be. For he went only in harness, with never a kind word from his master's lips.

It was a sad time for Leo. He was growing thinner and

thinner. His mane was rough and tangled because he had no heart to keep it smooth. And there were several white hairs in his beautiful whiskers. He was fast becoming melancholy; and the most pitiful beast in all the world is a melancholy lion. He had been hoping that something would happen to show that it was all a mistake; but it seemed as though the world was against him, and truth was dead.

It was a sad time for Gerasimus, too; for he still loved Leo, though he knew the lion must be punished for the dreadful deed which he was believed to have done. One day he had to go some distance to a neighboring town to buy provisions. As usual, he took Leo with him to bring back the burden, but they did not speak all the way. Gerasimus had done the errands which he had come to do, and was fastening the baskets on each side of the lion's back. A group of children were standing around watching the queer sight—a lion burdened like a donkey! And they laughed and pointed their fingers at him, making fun of poor Leo.

But suddenly the lion growled and began to lash his tail, quivering like a cat ready to spring on a mouse. The children screamed and ran away, thinking that he was angry with them for teasing him. But it was not that. A train of camels was passing at the moment, and Leo had seen at their head a mean, wicked face which he remembered. And as the last of the caravan went by, Leo caught sight of Silly himself, the missing donkey of the monastery. At the sound of Leo's growl. Silly pricked up his ears and stood on his fore legs, which is not a graceful position for a donkey. Then the Camel Driver came running up to see what was the matter with his stolen donkey. But when he came face to face with Leo, whose yellow eyes were glaring terribly, the thief trembled and turned pale. For he remembered the dreadful roar which had followed him that day as he galloped away across the sand holding Silly's halter. The poor donkey was quivering with fear, thinking that this time he was surely going to be eaten

piecemeal. But after all this trouble on Silly's account, the very idea of tasting donkey made Leo sick. He only wanted to show Gerasimus what a mistake had been made.

All this time Gerasimus had been wondering what the lion's strange behavior meant. But when he saw Leo seize the donkey's bridle, he began to suspect the truth. He ran up and examined the donkey carefully. Then Leo looked up in his face and growled softly, as if to say:—

"Here is your old donkey, safe and sound. You see I didn't eat him after all. *That* is the real thief," and turning to the Camel Driver, he showed his teeth and looked so fierce that the man hid behind a camel, crying, "Take away the lion! Kill the wicked lion!" But Gerasimus seized Silly by the bridle.

"This is my beast," he said, "and I shall lead him home with me. You stole him, Thief, and my noble lion has found you out," and he laid his hand tenderly on Leo's head.

"He is mine, you shall not have him!" cried the Camel Driver, dodging out from behind the camel, and trying to drag the donkey away from Gerasimus. But with a dreadful roar, Leo sprang upon him, and with his great paw knocked him down and sat upon his stomach.

"Do not hurt him, Leo," said Gerasimus gently. But to the Camel Driver he was very stern. "Look out, Sir Thief," he said, "how you steal again the donkey of an honest man. Even the yellow beasts of the desert know better than that, and will make you ashamed. Be thankful that you escape so easily."

Then he took the baskets from Leo's back and bound them upon Silly, who was glad to receive them once more from his own master's hands. For the Camel Driver had been cruel to him and had often beaten him. So he resolved never again to stray away as he had done that unlucky time. And when they were all ready to start, Gerasimus called Leo, and he got up from the chest of the Camel Driver, where he had been sitting all this time, washing his face with his paws and smiling.

"My poor old Leo!" said Gerasimus, with tears in his eyes, "I have made you suffer cruelly for a crime of which you were not guilty. But I will make it up to you."

Then happily the three set out for home, and all the way Gerasimus kept his arm about the neck of his lion, who was wild with joy because he and his dear master were friends once more, and the dreadful mistake was discovered.

They had a joyful reception at the monastery on the hill. Of course every one was glad to see poor Silly again; but best of all it was to know that their dear old lion was not a wicked murderer. They petted him and gave him so many good things to eat that he almost burst with fatness. They made him a soft bed, and all the monks took turns in scratching his chin for ten minutes at a time, which was what Leo loved better than anything else in the world.

And so he dwelt happily with the good monks, one of the most honored brothers of the monastery. Always together he and Gerasimus lived and slept and ate and took their walks. And at last after many, many years, they grew old together, and very tired and sleepy. So one night Gerasimus, who had become an Abbot, the head of the monastery, lay gently down to rest, and never woke up in the morning. But the great lion loved him so that when they laid Saint Gerasimus to sleep under a beautiful planetree in the garden, Leo lay down upon the mound moaning and grieving, and would not move. So his faithful heart broke that day, and he, too, slept forever by his dear master's side.

But this was not a sad thing that happened. For think how dreadful the days would have been for Leo without Gerasimus. And think how sad a life Gerasimus would have spent if Leo had left him first. Oh, no; it was not sad, but very, very beautiful that the dear Saint and his friendly beast could be happy together all the day, and when the long night came they could sleep together side by side in the garden.

Saint Keneth of the Gulls

Once upon a time, more than a thousand years ago, a great white seagull was circling above the waves which roll between South England and Wales. He was pretending that he was doing this just for fun; and he seemed very lazy and dozy as he poised and floated without much trouble to move his wings. But really he was looking for a dinner, though he did not want any one to suspect it. And he hoped that some unwary fish would swim up near the surface of the water within diving reach of his great claws. His keen gray eyes were open all the while unsleepily, and not much that was going on down below on the water escaped his notice.

Suddenly his eye caught sight of a little black speck on the waves. "Aha!" he said to himself, "I think I see my dinner!" and with a great swoop down he pounced. You could hardly think how anything which looked so lazy and quiet could dart so like a flash of lightning. But a gull is an air-ship that can sink whenever it chooses. And when he gives a fish a sudden invitation to step in for dinner, the fish is hardly able to refuse.

But this was no fish which the hungry gull had spied. Before he reached the water he saw his mistake, and wheeling swiftly as only a gull can, he flapped back again into the air, uttering a screech of surprise.

"Cree-e-e!" he cried. "'T is no scaly water-fish such as I like to eat. 'T is one of those smooth land-fishes with yellow seaweed growing on its head. What is it doing here? I must see to this. Cree-e-e!"

No wonder the great bird circled and swooped curiously over the wicker basket which was floating on the waves. For on a piece of purple cloth lay a tiny pink-and-white baby,

sound asleep, his yellow hair curling about the dimpled face, and one thumb thrust into the round red mouth.

"Well, well!" said the sea-gull to himself when he had examined the strange floating thing all he wished. "I must go and tell the others about this. Something must be done. There is a storm brewing, and this boat will not bear much rough weather. This little land-fish cannot swim. We must take care of him. Cree-e-e!" So off he flapped, and as he went he gave the family cry to call the gulls about him, wherever they might be.

Soon they came, circling carelessly, swooping sulkily, floating happily, darting eagerly, according to their various dispositions; and as they came they gave the Gull cry. "Cree-e-e!" said they, "what is the matter?" "Follow me," said the White Gull to the great fleet of gray-winged air-ships. "Follow me, and you shall see" (which is Gull poetry).

Then he led the flock over the spot where the wicker cradle tossed on the growing waves. "Lo," said he, "a land-fish in danger of being drowned among the Scaly Ones. Let us save it. See how pink it is. Its eyes are a piece of the sky, and its voice is not unlike ours—listen!"

For by this time the baby had wakened, and feeling cold and hungry and wet with the dashing spray, opened his pink mouth, and began to cry lustily. "E-e-e-e-e!" wailed the baby; and as the White Gull had said, that sounds very like the chief word of the Gull tongue.

"Poor little thing!" said all the mother gulls in chorus. "He talks our language, he must be saved. Come, brothers and sisters, and use your beaks and talons before the clumsy nest in which he lies is sunk beneath the waves. Cree-e-e, little one, cree-e-e! We will save you."

Now, I don't know what *cree-e-e* means in Gull. But the baby must have understood. For he stopped crying instantly, and looked up laughing at the white wings which fanned his face and the kind gray eyes which peered into his own blue

ones.

So the strong gulls seized the comers of the purple cloth on which the baby lay, some with their claws, some with their hooked beaks. And at a signal from the White Gull they fluttered up and away, bearing the baby over the waves as if he were in a little hammock. The White Gull flew on before and guided them to land—a high shelf which hung over the sea roaring on the rocks below, the nicest kind of a gull home. And here they laid the baby down, and sat about wondering what they must do next. But the baby cried.

"We must build him a nest," said the White Gull. "These rocks are too hard and too sharp for a little land-fish. I know how they sleep in their home nests, for I have seen."

Now the gulls lay their eggs on the bare rocks, and think these quite soft enough for the young gull babies. But they all agreed that this would never do for the little stranger. So they pulled the downy feathers from their breasts till they had a great pile; and of this they made the softest bed in which they laid the baby. And he slept.

This is how little Saint Keneth was saved from the waves by the kind sea-gulls. And it goes to show that birds are sometimes kinder than human folk. For Keneth was the Welsh Prince's little son. But no one loved him, and his cruel mother had put him into the wicker basket and set him afloat on the waves, not caring what became of him nor hoping to see him again. But this in after years she did, when Keneth was become a great and famous Saint whom all, even the Prince and Princess, honored. She did not know him then because she believed that he was dead. How proud she would have been if she could have called him "Son!" But that was many years later.

Now when the gulls had made Keneth this comfortable nest, they next wondered what they should do to get him food. But the White Gull had an idea. He flew away over the land and was gone for some time. When at last he returned

he had with him a kind forest doe—a yellow mother Deer who had left her little ones, at the White Gull's request, to come and feed the stranger baby. So Keneth found a new mother who loved him far better than his own had done—a new mother who came every morning and every night and fed him with her milk. And he grew strong and fat and hearty, the happy baby in his nest upon the rocks, where his friends, the sea-gulls, watched over him, and the mother Deer fed and cared for him, and washed him clean with her warm crash-towel tongue.

Now when Keneth had lived in the seagulls' home for some months, one day the flock of guardian gulls left him while they went upon a fishing trip. The mother Deer had not yet come with his breakfast, but was at home with her own little ones, so that for the first time Keneth was quite alone. He did not know this, but was sleeping peacefully on his purple quilt, when a strange face came peering over the edge of the rocks. It was a Shepherd from the nearest village who had clambered up to seek gulls' eggs for his breakfast. But his eyes bulged out of his head, and he nearly fell over backward into the sea with surprise when he saw Keneth lying in his nest of feathers.

"The Saints preserve us!" he cried, "what is this?" But when he had climbed nearer and saw what it really was, he was delighted with the treasure which he had found. "A beautiful little baby!" he exclaimed. "I will take him home to my wife, who has no child of her own." And forthwith he took up Keneth, wrapped in the purple cloth, and started down over the rocks towards his home.

But Keneth wakened at the stranger's touch and began to wail. He had no mind to go with the Shepherd; he wanted to stay where he was. So as they went he screamed at the top of his lungs, hoping some of his friends would come. And the mother Deer, who was on her way thither, heard his voice. She came running in a fright, but she could do nothing to

protect him, being a gentle, weaponless creature. However, she followed anxiously to see what would happen to her darling. So they went down the rocks, Keneth and the Shepherd, with the Deer close behind. And all the way Keneth shrieked loudly, "E-e-e-e!"

Now at last a messenger breeze carried the baby voice out over the water of the Bristol Channel where the gulls were fishing.

"What is that?" they said, stopping their work to listen. "Is it not our little land-fish calling us in Gull? He is in trouble or danger. Brothers, to the rescue! Cre-e-e-e!"

So the flock of gulls left their fishing and swooped back to the rock where they had left the baby. Dreadful! The nest was empty. They flapped their wide wings and screamed with fear, "What shall we do?"

But just then up the rocky hill came panting the mother Deer. Her glossy hide was warm and wet, and her tongue lolled out with weariness, she had run so fast.

"He is down there," she panted. "The Shepherd has carried him to his hut and laid him in a nest such as human-folk make. The Shepherd's wife loves him and would keep him there, but he is unhappy and cries for us. You must bring him back."

"We will, we will!" screamed the gulls in chorus. "Guide us to the place, mother Deer." And without another word they rose on their great, strong wings, and followed where she led. Back down the hill she took the path, over the moor and up the lane to a little white cottage under the rosebushes. "Here is the place," said the Deer, and she paused.

But the flock of gulls with a great whirring and rustling and screaming swooped in at the little low door, straight up to the cradle where Keneth lay crying "E-e-e-e!" as if his heart would break.

The Shepherd's wife was sitting by the cradle saying, "Hush!" and "Bye-lo!" and other silly things that Keneth did

not understand. But when she heard the rushing of the gulls' wings, she gave a scream and started for the door.

"Cree-e-e!" cried the gulls fiercely. "Give us our little one." And they perched on the edge of the cradle and looked tenderly at Keneth. Then he stopped his crying and began to laugh, for these were the voices he knew and loved. And in another minute the gulls had fastened their beaks and claws into the purple cloth, and once more bore him away as they had done when they saved him from the sea.

Out of the door they flew, right over the Shepherd's astonished head, while his wife stared wildly at the empty cradle. And soon Keneth was lying in his own nest on the ledge above the roaring billows.

After this no one tried again to bring the gulls' adopted baby back among human folk. Little Keneth tarried and thrived with his feathered brothers, growing fat and strong. When he came to walk he was somewhat lame, to be sure; one of his legs was shorter than the other, and he limped like a poor gull who has hurt his foot. But this troubled Keneth very little, and the gulls were kind. He was always happy and contented, full of singing and laughter and kind words for all.

And here in his wild, spray-sprinkled nest above the Atlantic breakers, Keneth dwelt all his life. The Welsh peasants of the Gower peninsula revered him as their Saint, knowing him to be a holy man beloved by the gulls and the deer and all the wild creatures of shore and forest, who did their kindly best to make him happy.

Saint Launomar's Cow

Saint Launomar had once been a shepherd boy in the meadows of sunny France, and had lived among the gentle creatures of the fold and byre. So he understood them and their ways very well, and they knew him for their friend. For this is a secret which one cannot keep from the animals whose speech is silent.

Saint Launomar had a cow of whom he was fond, a sleek black and white beauty, who pastured in the green meadows of Chartres near the monastery and came home every evening to be milked and to rub her soft nose against her master's hand, telling him how much she loved him. Mignon was a very wise cow; you could tell that by the curve of her horns and by the wrinkles in her forehead between the eyes; and especially by the way she switched her tail. And indeed, a cow ought to be wise who has been brought up by a whole monastery of learned men, with Launomar, the wisest person in all the country, for her master and friend.

It was a dark night after milking time; Launomar had put Mignon in her stall with a supper of hay before her, and had bade her good-night and a pleasant cud-time. Then he had shut the heavy barn door and had gone back to his cell to sleep soundly till morning.

But no sooner had his lantern disappeared through the gate of the monastery, than out of the forest came five black figures, creeping, creeping along the wall and across the yard and up to the great oak door. They were all muffled in long black cloaks, and wore their caps pulled down over their faces, as if they were afraid of being recognized. They were wicked-looking men, and they had big knives stuck in their

belts quite convenient to their hands. It was a band of robbers; and they had come to steal Launomar's cow, who was known to be the handsomest in all that part of the world.

Very softly they forced open the great door, and very softly they stole across the floor to Mignon's stall and threw a strong halter about her neck to lead her away. But first they were careful to tie up her mouth in a piece of cloth so that she could not low and tell the whole monastery what danger she was in. Mignon was angry, for that was just what she had meant to do as soon as she saw that these were no friends, but wicked men who had come for no good to her or to the monastery.

But now she had to go with them dumbly, although she struggled and kicked and made all the noise she could. But the monks were already sound asleep and snoring on their hard pallets, and never suspected what was going on so near to them. Even Launomar, who turned over in his sleep and murmured, "Ho, Mignon, stand still!" when he dimly recognized a sound of kicking—even Launomar did not waken to rescue his dear Mignon from the hands of those villains who were taking her away.

The robbers led her hurriedly down the lane, across the familiar meadows and into the dense woods, where they could hide from any one who happened to pass by. Now it was dark, and they could see but dimly where they were going. The paths crossed and crisscrossed in so many directions that they soon began to quarrel about which was the right one to take. They did not know this part of the country very well, for they were strangers from a different province, who had come to Launomar's home because they had heard of his famous cow and were bound to have her for themselves.

Very soon the robbers were lost in the tangle of trees and bushes and did not know where they were, or in which direction they ought to go. One said, "Go that way," pointing towards the north. And one said, "No, no! Go *that* way,"

pointing directly south. The third grumbled and said, "Ho, fellows! Not so, but *this* way," and he strode towards the east. While the fourth man cried, "You are all wrong, comrades. It is *there* we must go," and he started to lead Mignon towards the west. But the fifth robber confessed that indeed he did not know.

"Let us follow the cow," he cried; "she is the only one who can see in the dark. I have always heard that animals will lead you aright if you leave the matter to them." Now as the other robbers really did not have the least idea in the world as to which was the right direction, this seemed to them as sensible a plan as any. So they stripped the halter from Mignon's head and said, "Hi, there! Get along, Cow, and show us the way."

Mignon looked at them through the dark with her big brown eyes, and laughed inside. It seemed too good to be true! They had left her free, and were bidding her to guide them on their way out of the forest back to their own country. Mignon chuckled again, so loudly that they thought she must be choking, and hastily untied the cloth from her mouth. This was just what she wanted, for she longed to chew her cud again. She tossed her head and gave a gentle "Moo!" as if to say, "Come on, simple men, and I will show you the way." But really she was thinking to herself, "Aha! my fine fellows. Now I will lead you a pretty chase. And you shall be repaid for this night's work, aha!"

Mignon was a very wise cow. She had not pastured in the meadows about Chartres with blind eyes. She knew the paths north and south and east and west through the forest and the fern; and even in the dark of the tangled underbrush she could feel out the way quite plainly. But she said to herself, "I must not make the way too easy for these wicked men. I must punish them all I can now that it is my turn."

So she led them roundabout and roundabout, through mud and brambles and swamps; over little brooks and through big miry ponds where they were nearly drowned—

roundabout and roundabout all night long. They wanted to rest, but she went so fast that they could not catch her to make her stand still. And they dared not lose sight of her big whiteness through the dark, for now they were completely lost and could never find their way out of the wilderness without her. So all night long she kept them panting and puffing and wading after her, till they were all worn out, cold and shivering with wet, scratched and bleeding from the briars, and cross as ten sticks.

But when at last, an hour after sunrise, Mignon led them out into an open clearing, their faces brightened.

"Oh, I think I remember this place," said the first man.

"Yes, it has a familiar look. We must be near home," said the second.

"We are at least twenty-five miles from the monks of Chartres by this time," said the third, "and I wish we had some breakfast."

"By another hour we shall have the cow safe in our home den," said the fourth, "and then we will have some bread and milk."

But the fifth interrupted them saying, "Look! Who is that man in gray?"

They all looked up quickly and began to tremble; but Mignon gave a great "Moo!" and galloped forward to meet the figure who had stepped out from behind a bush. It was Saint Launomar himself!

He had been up ever since dawn looking for his precious cow; for when he went to milk her he had found the barn empty, and her footprints with those of the five robbers in the moist earth had told the story and pointed which way the company had gone. But it was not his plan to scold or frighten the robbers. He walked up to them; for they were so surprised to see him that they stood still trembling, forgetting even to run away.

"Good-morning, friends," said Launomar kindly. "You

have brought back my cow, I see, who to-night for the first time has left her stall to wander far. I thank you, good friends, for bringing Mignon to me. For she is not only a treasure in herself, but she is my dearest friend and I should be most unhappy to lose her."

The men stood staring at Launomar in astonishment. They could hardly believe their eyes and their ears. Where did he come from? What did he mean? But when they realized how kind his voice was, and that he was not accusing them nor threatening to have them punished, they were very much ashamed. They hung their heads guiltily; and then all of a sudden they fell at his feet, the five of them, confessing how it had all come about and begging his pardon.

"We stole the cow, Master," said the first one.

"And carried her these many miles away," said the second.

"We are wicked robbers and deserve to be punished," said the third.

"But we beg you to pardon us," cried the fourth.

"Let us depart, kind Father, we pray you," begged the fifth. "And be so good as to direct us on our way, for we are sorely puzzled."

"Nay, nay," answered Saint Launomar pleasantly, "the cow hath led you a long way, hath she not? You must be both tired and hungry. You cannot journey yet." And in truth they were miserable objects to see, so that the Saint's kind heart was filled with pity, robbers though they were. "Follow me," he said. By this time they were too weak and weary to think of disobeying. So meekly they formed into a procession of seven, Launomar and the cow going cheerfully at the head. For these two were very glad to be together again, and his arm was thrown lovingly about her glossy neck as they went.

But what was the amazement of the five robbers when in a short minute or two they turned a corner, and there close beside them stood the monastery itself, with the very barn

from which they had stolen Mignon the night before! All this time the clever cow had led them in great circles roundabout and roundabout her own home. And after all this scrambling and wading through the darkness, in the morning they were no farther on their journey than they had been at the start. What a wise cow that was! And what a good breakfast of bran porridge and hay and sweet turnips Launomar gave her to pay for her hard night's work.

The five robbers had a good breakfast too; but perhaps they did not relish it as Mignon did hers. For their consciences were heavy; besides, they sat at the monastery table, and all the monks stood by in a row, saying nothing but pursing up their mouths and looking pious; which was trying. And when the robbers came to drink their porridge Launomar said mildly—

"That is Mignon's milk which you drink, Sirs. It is the best milk in France, and you are welcome to it for your breakfast to-day, since we have such reason to be grateful to you for not putting it beyond our reach forever. Ah, my friends, we could ill spare so worthy a cow, so good a friend, so faithful a guide. But I trust that you will not need her services again. Perhaps by daylight you can find your way home without her if I direct you. The highroad is plain and straight for honest men. I commend it to you."

So, when they were refreshed and rested, Launomar led them forth and pointed out the way as he had promised. He and Mignon stood on the crest of a little hill and watched them out of sight. Then they turned and looked at one another, the wise Saint and his wise cow.

And they both chuckled inside.

Saint Werburgh & Her Goose

I.

Saint Werburgh was a King's daughter, a real princess, and very beautiful. But unlike most princesses of the fairy tales, she cared nothing at all about princes or pretty clothes or jewels, or about having a good time. Her only longing was to do good and to make other people happy, and to grow good and wise herself, so that she could do this all the better. So she studied and studied, worked and worked; and she became a holy woman, an Abbess. And while she was still very young and beautiful, she was given charge of a whole convent of nuns and school-girls not much younger than herself, because she was so much wiser and better than any one else in all the countryside.

But though Saint Werburgh had grown so famous and so powerful, she still remained a simple, sweet girl. All the country people loved her, for she was always eager to help them, to cure the little sick children and to advise their fathers and mothers. She never failed to answer the questions which puzzled them, and so she set their poor troubled minds at ease. She was so wise that she knew how to make people do what she knew to be right, even when they wanted to do wrong. And not only human folk but animals felt the power of this young Saint. For she loved and was kind to them also. She studied about them and grew to know their queer habits and their animal way of thinking. And she learned their language, too. Now when one loves a little creature very much and understands it well, one can almost always make it do what one wishes—that is, if one wishes right.

Saint Werburgh & Her Goose

For some time Saint Werburgh had been interested in a flock of wild geese which came every day to get their breakfast in the convent meadow, and to have a morning bath in the pond beneath the window of her cell. She grew to watch until the big, long-necked gray things with their short tails and clumsy feet settled with a harsh "Honk!" in the grass. Then she loved to see the big ones waddle clumsily about in search of dainties for the children, while the babies stood still, flapping their wings and crying greedily till they were fed.

There was one goose which was her favorite. He was the biggest of them all, fat and happy looking. He was the leader and formed the point of the V in which a flock of wild geese always flies. He was the first to alight in the meadow, and it was he who chose the spot for their breakfast. Saint Werburgh named him Grayking, and she grew very fond of him, although they had never spoken to one another.

Master Hugh was the convent Steward, a big, surly fellow who did not love birds nor animals except when they were served up for him to eat. Hugh also had seen the geese in the meadow. But, instead of thinking how nice and funny they were, and how amusing it was to watch them eat the worms and flop about in the water, he thought only, "What a fine goose pie they would make!" And especially he looked at Grayking, the plumpest and most tempting of them all, and smacked his lips. "Oh, how I wish I had you in my frying-pan!" he said to himself.

Now it happened that worms were rather scarce in the convent meadow that spring. It had been dry, and the worms had crawled away to moister places. So Grayking and his followers found it hard to get breakfast enough. One morning, Saint Werburgh looked in vain for them in the usual spot. At first she was only surprised; but as she waited and waited, and still they did not come, she began to feel much alarmed.

Just as she was going down to her own dinner, the Steward, Hugh, appeared before her cap in hand and bowing

low. His fat face was puffed and red with hurrying up the convent hill, and he looked angry.

"What is it, Master Hugh?" asked Saint Werburgh in her gentle voice. "Have you not money enough to buy tomorrow's breakfast?" for it was his duty to pay the convent bills.

"Nay, Lady Abbess," he answered gruffly; "it is not lack of money that troubles me. It is abundance of geese."

"Geese! How? Why?" exclaimed Saint Werburgh, startled. "What of geese. Master Hugh?"

"This of geese, Lady Abbess," he replied. "A flock of long-necked thieves have been in my new-planted field of corn, and have stolen all that was to make my harvest." Saint Werburgh bit her lips.

"What geese were they?" she faltered, though she guessed the truth.

"Whence the rascals come, I know not," he answered, "but this I know. They are the same which gather every morning in the meadow yonder. I spied the leader, a fat, fine thief with a black ring about his neck. It should be a noose, indeed, for hanging. I would have them punished, Lady Abbess."

"They shall be punished, Master Hugh," said Saint Werburgh firmly, and she went sadly up the stair to her cell without tasting so much as a bit of bread for her dinner. For she was sorry to find her friends such naughty birds, and she did not want to punish them, especially Grayking. But she knew that she must do her duty.

When she had put on her cloak and hood she went out into the courtyard behind the convent where there were pens for keeping doves and chickens and little pigs. And standing beside the largest of these pens Saint Werburgh made a strange cry, like the voice of the geese themselves—a cry which seemed to say, "Come here, Grayking's geese, with Grayking at the head!" And as she stood there waiting, the sky grew black above her head with the shadowing of wings, and the honking of the geese grew louder and nearer till they

circled and lighted in a flock at her feet.

She saw that they looked very plump and well-fed, and Grayking was the fattest of the flock. All she did was to look at them steadily and reproachfully; but they came waddling bashfully up to her and stood in a line before her with drooping heads. It seemed as if something made them stay and listen to what she had to say, although they would much rather fly away.

Then she talked to them gently and told them how bad they were to steal corn and spoil the harvest. And as she talked they grew to love her tender voice, even though it scolded them. She cried bitterly as she took each one by the wings and shook him for his sins and whipped him—not too severely. Tears stood in the round eyes of the geese also, not because she hurt them, for she had hardly ruffled their thick feathers; but because they were sorry to have pained the beautiful Saint. For they saw that she loved them, and the more she punished them the better they loved her. Last of all she punished Grayking. But when she had finished she took him up in her arms and kissed him before putting him in the pen with the other geese, where she meant to keep them in prison for a day and a night. Then Grayking hung his head, and in his heart he promised that neither he nor his followers should ever again steal anything, no matter how hungry they were. Now Saint Werburgh read the thought in his heart and was glad, and she smiled as she turned away. She was sorry to keep them in the cage, but she hoped it might do them good. And she said to herself, "They shall have at least one good breakfast of convent porridge before they go."

Saint Werburgh trusted Hugh, the Steward, for she did not yet know the wickedness of his heart. So she told him how she had punished the geese for robbing him, and how she was sure they would never do so any more. Then she bade him see that they had a breakfast of convent porridge the next morning; and after that they should be set free to go where they

chose.

Hugh was not satisfied. He thought the geese had not been punished enough. And he went away grumbling, but not daring to say anything cross to the Lady Abbess who was the King's daughter.

II.

Saint Werburgh was busy all the rest of that day and early the next morning too, so she could not get out again to see the prisoned geese. But when she went to her cell for the morning rest after her work was done, she sat down by the window and looked out smilingly, thinking to see her friend Grayking and the others taking their bath in the meadow. But there were no geese to be seen! Werburgh's face grew grave. And even as she sat there wondering what had happened, she heard a pro-prodigious honking overhead, and a flock of geese came straggling down, not in the usual trim V, but all unevenly and without a leader. Grayking was gone!

They fluttered about crying and asking advice of one another, till they heard Saint Werburgh's voice calling them anxiously. Then with a cry of joy they flew straight up to her window and began talking all together, trying to tell her what had happened.

"Grayking is gone!" they said. "Grayking is stolen by the wicked Steward. Grayking was taken away when we were set free, and we shall never see him again. What shall we do, dear lady, without our leader?"

Saint Werburgh was horrified to think that her dear Grayking might be in danger. Oh, how that wicked Steward had deceived her! She began to feel angry. Then she turned to the birds: "Dear geese," she said earnestly, "you have promised me never to steal again, have you not?" and they all honked "Yes!" "Then I will go and question the Steward," she continued, "and if he is guilty I will punish him and make him bring Grayking back to you."

The geese flew away feeling somewhat comforted, and Saint Werburgh sent speedily for Master Hugh. He came, looking much surprised, for he could not imagine what she wanted of him. "Where is the gray goose with the black ring about his neck?" began Saint Werburgh without any preface, looking at him keenly. He stammered and grew confused. "I—I don't know. Lady Abbess," he faltered. He had not guessed that she cared especially about the geese.

"Nay, you know well," said Saint Werburgh, "for I bade you feed them and set them free this morning. But one is gone." "A fox must have stolen it," said he guiltily.

"Ay, a fox with black hair and a red, fat face," quoth Saint Werburgh sternly. "Do not tell me lies. You have taken him, Master Hugh. I can read it in your heart." Then he grew weak and confessed.

"Ay, I have taken the great gray goose," he said faintly. "Was it so very wrong?"

"He was a friend of mine and I love him dearly," said Saint Werburgh. At these words the Steward turned very pale indeed.

"I did not know," he gasped.

"Go and bring him to me, then," commanded the Saint, and pointed to the door. Master Hugh slunk out looking very sick and miserable and horribly frightened. For the truth was that he had been tempted by Grayking's fatness. He had carried the goose home and made him into a hot, juicy pie which he had eaten for that very morning's breakfast. So how could he bring the bird back to Saint Werburgh, no matter how sternly she commanded?

All day long he hid in the woods, not daring to let himself be seen by any one. For Saint Werburgh was a King's daughter; and if the King should learn what he had done to the pet of the Lady Abbess, he might have Hugh himself punished by being baked into a pie for the King's hounds to eat.

But at night he could bear it no longer. He heard the voice

of Saint Werburgh calling his name very softly from the convent, "Master Hugh, Master Hugh, come, bring me my goose!" And just as the geese could not help coming when she called them, so he felt that he must go, whether he would or no. He went into his pantry and took down the remains of the great pie. He gathered up the bones of poor Grayking in a little basket, and with chattering teeth and shaking limbs stole up to the convent and knocked at the wicket gate.

Saint Werburgh was waiting for him. "I knew you would come," she said. "Have you brought my goose?" Then silently and with trembling hands he took out the bones one by one and laid them on the ground before Saint Werburgh. So he stood with bowed head and knocking knees waiting to hear her pronounce his punishment.

"Oh, you wicked man!" she said sadly. "You have killed my beautiful Grayking, who never did harm to any one except to steal a little corn."

"I did not know you loved him, Lady," faltered the man in self-defense.

"You ought to have known it," she returned; "you ought to have loved him yourself."

"I did, Lady Abbess," confessed the man. "That was the trouble. I loved him too well—in a pie."

"Oh, selfish, gluttonous man!" she exclaimed in disgust. "Can you not see the beauty of a dear little live creature till it is dead and fit only for your table? I shall have you taught better. Henceforth you shall be made to study the lives and ways of all things which live about the convent; and never again, for punishment, shall you eat flesh of any bird or beast. We will see if you cannot be taught to love them when they have ceased to mean Pie. Moreover, you shall be confined for two days and two nights in the pen where I kept the geese. And porridge shall be your only food the while. Go, Master Hugh."

So the wicked Steward was punished. But he learned his

lesson; and after a little while he grew to love the birds almost as well as Saint Werburgh herself.

But she had not yet finished with Grayking. After Master Hugh had gone she bent over the pitiful little pile of bones which was all that was left of that unlucky pie. A tear fell upon them from her beautiful eyes; and kneeling down she touched them with her white fingers, speaking softly the name of the bird whom she had loved.

"Grayking, arise," she said. And hardly had the words left her mouth when a strange thing happened. The bones stirred, lifted themselves, and in a moment a glad "Honk!" sounded in the air, and Grayking himself, black ring and all, stood ruffling his feathers before her. She clasped him in her arms and kissed him again and again. Then calling the rest of the flock by her strange power, she showed them their lost leader restored as good as new.

What a happy flock of geese flew honking away in an even V, with the handsomest, grayest, plumpest goose in all the world at their head! And what an exciting story he had to tell his mates! Surely, no other goose ever lived who could tell how it felt to be made into pie, to be eaten and to have his bones picked clean by a greedy Steward.

This is how Saint Werburgh made lifelong friendship with a flock of big gray geese. And I dare say even now in England one of their descendants may be found with a black ring around his neck, the handsomest, grayest, plumpest goose in all the world. And when he hears the name of Saint Werburgh, which has been handed down to him from grandfather to grandson for twelve hundred years, he will give an especially loud "Honk!" of praise.

Dear Saint Werburgh! One would almost be willing to make a goose of himself if so he might see her again, with all her feathered friends about her.

The Ballad of Saint Athracta's Stags

Athracta was a maiden fair,
A Prince's daughter she;
Down to her feet fell golden hair,
A wondrous sight to see.
And all amid this golden shower,
The sweetest rosebud face
Blossomed like a dew-fed flower
Upon a stem of grace.
Yet loved she not the court of kings,
But in the wild would be,
With but one maid her hair to braid
And bear her company.
So, near Lough Cara's silver sheen,
They built of turf and bark
A hut wherein from springtide green
They dwelt through winter's dark.
On seven cross-roads the hut was made,
That they might offer rest
To pilgrims by the night waylaid,
And strangers hunger-pressed.
To draw them water from the lake,
To till their little soil,
Two ancient horses did they take,
Outworn for other toil.
Once gallant chargers these had been,
Keen-eyed and prancing gay,
Who tourneys brave and wars had seen,
All decked in bright array.

But now their age in peace was spent
By kind Athracta's side;
No gallant wars, no tournament,
And yet they served with pride.
Their neighbors in the forest glades
Were stately, antlered deer,
Nor of the two most holy maids
Had these, their brothers, fear.
So dwelt the maidens there alone
For many months and years,
The doings of the world unknown,
Its wars, its woes, its tears.
But strife was stirring in the land,
And kings must castles build,
To guard them from the foeman's hand
With fire and weapon filled.
And so the King's most stern decree
Went forth upon a day,—
"My serfs must build a fort for me,
Each must his service pay.
"Each man and maiden must fulfill
In this great work his share;
It is the King of Connaught's will,
Let tardy hands beware!"
Athracta sent unto the King:
"We be but maidens twain,
My Liege, we cannot do this thing,
I beg we may refrain."
But sternly sent he back the word,—
"Ye maids must do your part."
He was a hard and cruel lord,
No pity touched his heart.
So forth they fared into the wood,
Athracta with her maid,

To fell the timber as they could,
Without of men for aid.
Heavy the axe and full of pain
Each weak and skill-less stroke,
Yet strove the maids again, again,
With walnut, beech, and oak.
Until upon the wagon cast
By which the horses stood,
Their bleeding hands had piled at last
The goodly logs of wood.
But when Athracta saw the steeds
Straining with feeble will
To draw the heavy load, it needs
Must make her eyes to fill.
Athracta spoke all piteously,—
"Alack! poor broken things,
Must you, too, bear your painful share
To save the pride of Kings?
"How can I ease your burden, how,
My faithful servants still?
My little hands are bleeding now
With toil beyond their skill."
"O mistress dear," then spoke her maid,
"These be but feeble nags;
How would the King's pride be dismayed
If you could harness *Stags!*"
"Thou sayest well," Athracta vowed.
"Come hither, Stags!" she cried,
And lo! the thud of hoofs grew loud
Ere yet the echo died.
"Come hither, Stags!" O'er green and glade
The silver summons thrilled,
And soon the space about the maid
With antlered kings was filled.

Through moss and fern and tangled trees
Twelve panting creatures broke,
And bending low their stately knees
They knelt beneath the yoke.
Now harnessed in the horses' stead
The great Stags strained their best,
To please the Lady at their head
And follow her behest.
But lo! a vexing thing then happed;
Scarce had they gained the road,
The rusty chains of iron snapped
Beneath the heavy load.
Yet paused she not in weak despair,
This noble-hearted maid,
But loosed her heavy golden hair
Out from its double braid.
She loosed her locks so wonder-bright
And shook them to the breeze;—
It seemed a beam of yellow light
Had sifted through the trees.
Then from amid this golden net
She plucked some silken strands,
And where the chains had first been set
She bound them with her hands.
She tied the ends against the strain,
And knotted them with care,
Then bade the Stags pull once again
Upon the ropes of hair.
And lo! the slender harness held,
And lo! the antlered steeds
Went forth to prove their generous love
Lent to a maiden's needs.
Straight to the King her gift they bore
To fill his heart with shame;

And her true maiden went before
To show him whence they came.
Now when the King this wonder saw
He turned all pale and red,
"She hath a greater power than law,"
He vowed, and bowed his head.
"She hath a greater power than I,
Whose slaves the wild stags be,
And golden hair like this might snare
E'en the wild heart of me.
"No need to her of castles stout,
No need of moat or tower,
With antlered guardians about
Her lonely wild-wood bower.
"No need to her of watch or ward,
With friends like these at hand;
Bid her from me henceforth to be
Queen of her little land.
"Henceforth she is no serf of mine,
Nor subject to my throne;
Where'er her golden hair may shine
That is her realm alone."
So where the seven cross-roads met
Still dwelt the holy maid,
Her hut a place of refuge set
For all who shelter prayed.
Her realm a holy place of peace,
Where, with the ancient nags,
Lived out their days in pleasant ways
Athracta's faithful Stags.

Saint Blaise and His Beasts

This is the story of a Saint who loved all animals and whom the animals therefore loved in return.

Saint Blaise was the son of wealthy people in Sebaste, a town of Armenia near Turkey, in the days when it was fashionable to be a heathen. He was not like the other boys, his playmates, for he was a Christian, full of sympathy for everything that lived. More than all things he longed to learn how to help the creatures that he loved—men and women, the children, the dumb beasts, and everything that suffered and was sick. So he went to school and studied medicine; and by and by he grew up to be a wise man with a big, tender heart. Every one loved him, for he did great good among the people of his village, tending their children and healing their cattle and household pets.

Nor did he neglect even the wild beasts. For Saint Blaise loved to go away into the woods and fields where he could learn about the untamed creatures and teach them to be his friends. The birds and beasts and fishes grew to love him because he never hurt them, but talked to them kindly and healed them when they were sick or wounded. The timid creatures were brave in his presence, and the fierce ones grew tame and gentle at the sound of his voice. The little birds brought him food, and the four-footed beasts ran errands and were his messengers. The legends say that they used to visit him in his forest home, which was a cave on Mount Argus near the city of Sebaste. Every morning they came to see how their master was faring, to receive his blessing and lick his hands in gratitude. If they found the Saint at his prayers they never disturbed him, but waited in a patient, wistful group at

the door of his cave until he rose from his knees.

One day a poor woman came to him in great distress because a wolf had carried away her pig. Saint Blaise was sorry to hear that one of his friends had done so wicked a thing. He bade the woman go home, and said he would see what could be done. He called the Wolf up to him and shook his head gravely at the culprit.

"You bad Wolf!" he said. "Don't you know that the Pig was a friend of mine, too? He is not handsome, but he is nice and plump; and he is the only pig of a poor, lone woman. How could you be so selfish? Go straight home and get my friend Pig, and drive him down to the woman's house." Then the Wolf went sheepishly away, and did what the good Saint had told him to do; for the Pig had not yet been made into pork. And when the poor woman saw the Pig run grunting into her yard, chased by the repentant Wolf, she fell upon his fat neck and wept tears of joy. Then the Wolf went back to Saint Blaise, who told him he was a good wolf, and gave him a dish of fresh milk to cool his throat.

Saint Blaise was chosen Bishop by the Christians who loved him for his piety and his charity. And the wood-beasts were glad of this honor done to their dear master. But the poor creatures did not know how dangerous it was to be a Christian in those days, and especially to be a Bishop who had much power over the people. For the heathen were jealous of him, and feared that he would make all the people Christians too, when they saw the wonderful cures which his medicines made. But they could not find him, for he was living in his forest cave.

This was 316 years after Christ's birth, and the cruel Emperor Licinius was causing many Christians to be killed. Agricola was the governor whom Licinius had appointed in Sebaste, and he sent his soldiers into the mountains to get some wild beasts for the games in the arena, where the Christians were to be put to death. But they could not find any

beasts at all in the mountains, or in the fields, or valleys, or woods. They thought this very strange. But by and by they came by accident to the cave where Saint Blaise lived.

And there were the animals, all the fierce beasts whom they feared; lions, tigers, leopards, bears, and wolves, making their morning call upon Saint Blaise and sitting quietly about. In the midst was Blaise himself, praying so earnestly that he never noticed the men with nets and spears who had come to entrap the beasts. Although the creatures were frightened they did not move nor growl for fear of disturbing their master, but kept quite still, glaring at the soldiers with big yellow eyes. The men were so astonished at the sight that they stole away without capturing an animal or saying a word to Saint Blaise, for they thought he must be Orpheus or some heathen god who charmed wild beasts. They went to the Governor and told him what they had seen, and he said—

"Ho! I know he is a Christian. The Christians and the beasts are great friends. Go and bring him to me straightway."

And this time the soldiers went in the afternoon when the animals were taking their after-dinner nap. So they found Saint Blaise quite alone again at his devotions. They told him he must come with them; but instead of being frightened he said joyfully, "I am ready, I have long expected you." For he was a holy man willing to die for his faith, and holy men often knew what was going to happen to them.

It was on his way to prison that Saint Blaise cured his last patient—a sick child whose mother brought him to the holy man's feet begging help. The child had swallowed a bone and was choking to death, poor little thing. But Saint Blaise touched the baby's throat and the trouble was gone. This is why in olden times people with sore throats always prayed to Saint Blaise to make them well.

The good Bishop was put in prison. And after that they tortured him, trying to make him promise not to be a Christian any longer. But Saint Blaise refused to become a heathen

and to sacrifice to the gods. And so they determined that he must die. They would have put him in the arena with the wild beasts, but they knew that these faithful creatures would not harm their friend. The beasts could not save him from the cruel men, but at least they would not do anything to hurt him. Those which were still left in the forest howled and moaned about his deserted cave, and went sniffing and searching for him everywhere, like stray dogs who have lost their master. It was a sad day for the wood-creatures when Saint Blaise was taken from them forever.

The soldiers were told to drown Saint Blaise in the neighboring lake. But he made the sign of the Cross as they cast him from the boat, and the water bore him up, so that he walked upon it as if it were a floor, just as Christ did once upon the sea of Galilee. When the soldiers tried to do the same, however, thinking to follow and recapture him, they sank and were drowned. At last of his own free will Saint Blaise walked back to the shore, clothed in light and very beautiful to look upon; for he was ready and eager to die. He let the heathen seize him, and soon after this was beheaded.

In very old times it used to be the custom in England on the third of February to light great bonfires on all the hills—*blazes* in honor of his name.

And we can well believe that all the little animals came out of their dens and burrows and nests at the sight of these fires, and thought with loving hearts of the dear old Saint who so many years ago used to be kind to their ancestors, the beasts in the forests of Armenia.

The Ballad of Saint Felix

It was in sunny Italy
    Where skies are blue and fair,
Where little birds sing all the day,
    And flowers scent the air.
But sorrow was through all the land,
    And bloody deeds, and strife,
For the cruel heathen Emperor
    Was slaying Christian life.
And Nola of Campania
    Was full of soldiers grim,
Who sought where good Saint Felix dwelt,
    To be the death of him.
For he, the Bishop, old and wise,
    Was famous far and near,
And to the troubled Christian folk
    His name was passing dear.
Saint Felix would not run away,
    But thought no shame to hide
Until the bloody storm passed o'er,
    And he might safely bide.
And so he doffed his Bishop's robe,
    And donned a Pilgrim's dress,
With hat and staff and sandal-shoon,
    So none his name would guess.
Now as Saint Felix, bent and gray,
    Was tottering down the street,
A band of soldiers, fierce and wild,
    The old man chanced to meet.

"Ho! Pilgrim," cried the Captain stern,
Who stopped him with his sword,
"Answer me truly, or thy life
Shall pay the lying word.
"We sought for Felix at his home,
We find him not, alas!
Say, hast thou met him, for within
The hour he did pass?
"Say, hast thou met him? Tell us true,
Or thou shalt lose thy head."
Saint Felix looked him in the eyes,
"I *met* him not," he said.
So then the soldiers let him pass,—
But he had spoken truth,—
And hurried forward on their search,
A fruitless quest, in sooth!
And good Saint Felix hastened too,
As quickly as he might,
For they would guess full soon, he knew,
How he had tricked their sight.
And truly, ere his oaken staff
Had helped his feeble feet
To win a mile, he heard their shouts
A-nearing down the street.
He heard the clashing of their swords,
Their voices' cruel roar,
Alack! the chase was almost done,
For he could speed no more.
All breathless, worn, and clean forspent
He looked about him there;
He spied a tiny ray of hope,
And made a little prayer.
There was a broken, ruined wall
That crumbled by the road,

And through a cleft Saint Felix crept,
And in a corner bode.
It was a sorry hiding-place,
That scarce could hope to 'scape
The keen sight of those bloody men,
For murder all agape.
But lo! in answer to his prayer
Made in the Holy Name,
To help Saint Felix in his need
A little spider came.
And there across the narrow hole
Through which Saint Felix fled,
The spider spun a heavy web
Out of her silken thread.
So fast she spun, so faithfully,
That when the soldiers came
To pause beside the ruined wall
And shout the Bishop's name,
They found a silken curtain there
Wherethrough they could not see;
And "Ho!" they said, "he is not here,
Look, look! it cannot be;
"No one has passed this spider's web
For many and many a day,
See, men, how it is thick and strong;"
And so they went away.
And this is how Saint Felix fared
To 'scape the threatened doom,
Saved by a little spider's web,
Spun from her wondrous loom.
For when the soldiers all had passed
It luckily befell,
Among the ruins of the walls
He found a half-dug well.

And there he hid for many months,
Safe from the eager eyes
Of all those cruel soldier-men
And money-seeking spies.
And on the eve when this thing happed,
It chanced a Christian dame
Was passing by the ruined wall
Calling her Bishop's name.
For well she knew he must be hid,
And came to bring him food;
And so he answered from the well,
Saint Felix, old and good.
And for the many weary months
She came there, day by day,
All stealthily to bring him bread,
So no one guessed the way.
And when at last the peace was made,
Saint Felix left his well.
What welcome of his folk he had
There are no words to tell!

Saint Fronto's Camels

This is a story of Egypt. In the midst of a great yellow sea of sand was a tiny green island of an oasis. Everywhere else the sunlight burned on sand and rocks and low, bare hills to the west. But here there was shade under the palm-trees, and a spring of cool, clear water. It seemed a pleasant place, but the men who were living here were far from happy. There was grumbling and discontent; there were sulky looks and frowns. Yet these men were trying to be holy hermits, to live beautiful lives and forget how to be selfish. But it is hard to be good when one is starving.

There were seventy of them in this lonely camp in the desert—seventy hungry monks, who for many days had had only a few olives to eat. And they blamed one man for all their suffering. It was Fronto who had induced them to leave the pleasant monastery at Nitria, where the rest of their brethren were living in peace and plenty. It was Fronto who had led them into this miserable desert to serve God in solitude, as holy men loved to do in the early days of Christendom.

Fronto was a holy man, full of faith and courage. He had promised that they should be fed and cared for in the desert even though they took no care for themselves, and they had believed him. So each monk took a few olives in his pouch and a double-pronged hoe to dig and plant corn with, and followed Fronto into the desert.

After trudging many days they found this spot, far to the east, where no caravans would come to interrupt them, for it was out of the way of travel. But soon also they found their provisions gone and no others forthcoming. What were they to do? They asked Fronto, but he only bade them be patient.

It was when they had borne the pangs of hunger for several days that they began to grumble and talk of returning home. But Fronto was indignant. "The Lord will provide," he said, "O ye of little faith!" And he bade them go to work and try to forget their hunger. The monks drew the cords tighter about their waists. But that did little good. They had never fasted like this before! Day by day they grew more pale and thin, and their long robes flapped about their lean limbs. The few dates which grew on the palm-trees of their oasis were long since eaten, and the poor monks went about chewing the knotted ends of their rope girdles, trying to pretend that it was bread. Oh, how they longed for even a bit of the hard black bread which was Lenten fare at the monastery beyond the hills!

Day by day they grew more hollow-cheeked and despairing. At last one evening they came to Fronto in a body—such a weak, pale body. "Take us back to Nitria, or we starve!" they cried. "We can endure this no longer!"

Fronto stood before them even more pale and worn than the rest, but with the light of beautiful trust in his eyes. "Wait yet a little longer, brothers," he begged. "We are bidden to take no thought to the morrow, what we shall eat and drink"—

"Nay, 't is to-day we think of," interrupted the monks. "If we could eat to-day we would indeed take no thought of the morrow. But we starve!"

"Patience, brothers," continued the Saint wearily. "If we return now we shall show that we distrust God's promise. Wait till to-morrow. If help come not then, I give ye leave to go, without me. I shall not return."

The monks withdrew, still grumbling and unhappy. But the words of the Saint had made some impression, and they agreed to wait until morning. Each monk stretched himself on his goatskin mat on the floor of the little cell which he had dug in the sand. And with groans of hunger mingled in their prayers they tried to go to sleep and forget how long it was

since their last breakfast.

But Fronto could not sleep. He was sad and disappointed because his brothers had lost their faith, and because he felt alone, deserted in this desert by the friends who should have helped him with their sympathy and trust. All night he knelt on his goatskin mat praying that the Lord would fulfill His promise now, and prove to the doubting monks how mistaken their lack of faith had been. The other monks slept a hungry sleep about him, dreaming of delicious things to eat. Now and then one of them would cry out: "Another help of pudding, please;" or "Brother, will you pass the toast?" or "Thank you, I will have an egg, brother." And Fronto wept as he heard how faint their voices were.

At last the pink fingers of morning began to spread themselves over the face of the sky, pinching its cheeks into a rosy red. Suddenly Fronto, who was on his knees with his back to the door of his cell, started. Hark! what sound was that which came floating on the fresh morning air? Surely, the tinkle of a bell. The good Saint rose from his mat and went hastily to the door, his sure hope sending a smile to his pale lips and color to his hollow cheek. He knew that his prayer was answered. And lo! away in the northwest he saw a thread of black, crawling like a caterpillar over the sand toward his oasis. Nearer and nearer it came; and now he could see plainly what it was—a line of great rocking camels, the little tinkling bells on whose harness gave the signal that hope was at hand.

But the sound had waked the other monks. With a cry of joy they came tumbling out of their cells and rushed toward the camels, which were now close to the camp. How the poor monks ran, to be sure, many of them tripping over the skirts of their long robes and falling flat in the sand from their weakness and excitement. They were like men on a sinking ship who had just caught sight of a rescuing sail. Some of them jumped up and down and clapped their hands like children, they were so glad. And tears stood in the eyes of nearly all.

There were seventy camels, soft-eyed gentle creatures, whose flat feet held them up on the soft sand like snowshoes. They bore packs upon their backs which promised good things, and they came straight to the cell of Fronto, where they stopped. And what a welcome they received! The monks threw their arms about the beasts' necks, as they knelt on the sand, and kissed the soft noses as though they were greeting long-lost brothers. They were so glad to see the camels themselves that they almost forgot to wonder whence they came, or what they were bringing. But Fronto was looking for their owner, for the man who drove them. There was no one to be found. They had come all alone across the desert, without any one to guide them. Fronto's face was full of joy. "The Lord has sent them!" he said. And the other monks bowed their heads, and were ashamed because they had doubted.

Hungry though they were, first of all the good monks tended the tired beasts who had come so far to save them. They relieved them from their heavy loads, and tenderly washed their hot, weary feet, and gave them draughts of the spring water. Some of the starving monks skurried away to gather the green grass of the oasis for their hungry friends, and others unfastened the bales of hay which some of the camels had brought, and made beds for the animals to lie on. Then they all fell to and built a fold for the seventy camels in the shade of the palm-trees. And here they left the patient creatures to rest and chew their cud with a sigh of relief that the long, hot journey was over.

Then the monks hurried back to Fronto, wondering if it were not now almost time for their breakfast. They came upon him reading a letter which he had found on the harness of the foremost camel. It was written from the city of Alexandria, and it explained how the camels had been sent.

Four nights before this, Glaucus, the rich merchant, had been resting on a couch in his summer house. He had just finished an excellent dinner, with all his favorite fishes and

meats and fruits and sweets, and he was feeling very happy. When suddenly he thought of the seventy monks who had gone out from Nitria many days before to live in the desert with the help which the Lord should send. And a pang smote him. Perhaps they were starving now, while he was feasting. And he wished he could help them to a dinner as good as his. Ha! an idea came to him. Why should he not indeed send them a dinner—many dinners? It should be done.

So the next morning he had loaded seventy camels with provisions, five of them with bales of hay for the camels themselves. And taking them to the border of the desert, without driver or any one to guide them, he had sent them out into the sea of sand, the great ships of the desert, to find the right harbor by themselves. For somehow he felt sure that the Lord would guide them safely to the monks. Here the letter of Glaucus ended.

Oh, how good that breakfast tasted to the poor, famished monks! There were all kinds of fruit—fresh figs and olives and dates, citrons and juicy grapes and yellow pomegranates. There were bread and oil which the monks loved, and nuts and combs of the most delicious golden honey such as it makes one's mouth water to think of. Glaucus had sent them a breakfast fit for a king. And they all sat down on the sand in a happy circle and had the finest picnic that was ever seen in that desert.

When they had eaten they went out once more to visit the camels who had saved their lives, and to thank them with caressing words. The camels seemed to understand, and looked at them with gentle eyes, chewing their cud earnestly as if thinking: "You see, the Lord was looking out for you all the time. We are only poor, dumb beasts; but we came straight to you across the desert without any fear or wandering, because we trusted. Why were you not trustful, too?"

And again the monks were very much ashamed, and went back to Fronto to beg his forgiveness, promising never again

to be faint-hearted nor to lose faith.

The next morning they made ready to send back the camels to Alexandria. For they knew Glaucus would be anxious to hear how his ships of the desert had fared on their errand. And half the provisions they returned, for they had more than enough to last them a year, according to their simple meals. Then, with tears in their eyes, the monks sent the great beasts forth again into the desert, confident that as they had come so they would find their way back to Alexandria, safe and sound. Each in his cell door the monks stood and watched them slowly winding away over the yellow sand, disappearing at last behind the hills which rose like great waves between them and the world of cities.

Now it was eight days since Glaucus had sent out the camels, and he was growing uneasy. Seventy camels are a valuable property, which even a rich man could not afford to lose. Glaucus feared that he had been foolish; the desert was full of robbers, and there was no one to protect this leaderless caravan. Would the Lord take care of affairs which were left wholly to His direction?

Glaucus was sitting with his family in the garden, silent and gloomy. His family felt that he had been rash, and they did not hesitate to tell him so, which made him still more unhappy. The leader-camel was the favorite of Glaucus's daughter, Æmilia. She was crying in a corner of the garden, thinking about her dear Humpo, whom she never expected to see again. When, just as Fronto had done, she heard a faraway tinkle. She jumped up and ran out to the road.

"What is it, Æmilia, my child?" called out her father, startled by her sudden movement.

"Oh, Father, Father!" she cried. "I think I hear the tinkle of a camel bell among the mountains!" And sure enough. As they all hurried down to the garden gate the sound of little bells drew nearer and nearer. And presently came in sight the line of seventy camels, Humpo at the head, half of them

loaded with the provisions which the monks were too unselfish to keep. And soon Æmilia had her arms about the neck of her dear Humpo, and was whispering nice things into his floppy ears as he knelt before her, looking lovingly at her with his big brown eyes. Thus it was that Glaucus, the good rich man, knew that the Lord was pleased with him for his kindness, and had helped him to do his duty. And every year after that he sent the seventy camels forth into the desert on their unguided errand to the far-off oasis. So they grew to be dear friends of Saint Fronto and his monks, looked for as eagerly as Santa Claus is at Christmas time.

The Blind Singer, Saint Hervé

I.

Once upon a time when Childebert was King of France, a thousand years ago, there lived a young man named Hyvarnion who was very handsome and had the sweetest voice. Hyvarnion was the King's minstrel; he lived at the palace and it was his business to make music for the King to keep him in a good temper. For he wrote the most beautiful songs and sang them to the accompaniment of a golden harp which he carried with him everywhere he went. And besides all this Hyvarnion was very wise; so wise that when he was a boy at school he was called the Little Sage, for Saint Cadoc had been his master and had taught him many things that even the King, who was a heathen, did not know.

Now Hyvarnion had lived four years with the King when one night he had a wonderful dream. He dreamed that he saw a beautiful maiden picking flowers in a meadow, and that she smiled at him and gave him a blossom, saying, "This is for my King." And Hyvarnion woke up longing to see the maiden more than anything else in the world.

For three nights he dreamed the same dream, of the singing maiden and the meadow and the flowers; and each time she seemed more beautiful than on the last. So on the fourth day he woke up and said, "I must find that maiden. I *must* find her and hear her call me her King."

So, taking his golden harp on his back, he went out from the palace and struck into the deep black forest. By and by he came to an open place, like a meadow, where the grass grew tall and thick, and where in the midst was a spring like a bit of mirror set in a green frame. And Hyvarnion's heart beat

fast with joy when he saw on the border of the spring the very maiden about whom he had dreamed, but much more beautiful than any dream. She was bending over, picking something from the grass, and she seemed like a wonderful pink-and-white flower set among the other flowers of yellow and red and blue.

For a moment Hyvarnion stood and gazed with open mouth and happy eyes. Then he took his harp and began to sing a song which he had just that minute made. For because he was a minstrel it was easier for him to sing than to talk. And in the song he called her Queen Iris gathering flowers for her crown. Then the maiden raised her head and she turned pinker and whiter, and looked even more like a fair flower than before. For she too had had a dream, three times. And it was of golden-haired Hyvarnion that she had dreamed, whom she now saw looking at her and singing so sweetly with his silver voice.

But she also answered him in a song, for she was a singer, too. "I am no Queen Iris," she sang, "I am only the little maiden Rivanone, though they call me Queen of this Fountain. And I am not gathering flowers as you say, fair Sir, but I am seeking simple herbs such as wise men use to cure pain and trouble."

"What are the herbs you seek, Rivanone?" asked Hyvarnion, coming nearer. She held up a sprig of green in her white hand. "See, this is the vervain," she answered in song; "this brings happiness and heart's ease. But I seek two others which I have not found. The second opens the eyes of the blind. And the third—few may ever find that precious herb—the third is the root of life, and at its touch death flees away. Alas! Fair Sir, I cannot find those two, though some day I feel that I shall need them both most sorely." Rivanone sighed and two tears stood like dewdrops in her flower eyes.

But Hyvarnion had now come very close. "Still, you have found the first, which gives happiness, little Queen," he sang

tenderly. "Have you not happiness to share with me, Rivanone?" Then the maiden looked up in his eyes and smiled, and held out to him a sprig of the green vervain.

"For my King," she sang, just as he had dreamed. And then he did just what she had dreamed he would do; but that is a secret which I cannot tell. For no one knows all that a maiden dreams.

And after this and that they came back to the King's palace hand in hand, singing a beautiful song which together they had made about Happiness. So they were married at the court, and the King did them great honor and made them King and Queen of music and of song.

So, happily they lived and happily they sang in their little Kingdom of Poesie—for did they not possess the herb of joy which Rivanone had found and shared with Hyvarnion, her King?

II.

But it was a pity that Rivanone had not also found those other plants for which she had been seeking, the root which brings light to the blind, and the root which gives life to the dying. Because Rivanone had foreseen only too well the need of them which would come to her. For when, after a year or two, their little son was born, his blue eyes were sightless and all the colored wonders of the world were secrets which he could never know. So they named him Hervé, which means Bitterness—the first bitterness which had come into their lives of joy. But it was not the last. Not long after the little Hervé came, golden-haired Hyvarnion lay ill and dying. And because on that spring morning, Rivanone had not found the herb of life, she could not keep him from going away to find it for himself in that fair country where it is the only plant that grows, with wonderful blossoms which no living man has ever seen.

So Hyvarnion passed away from his kingdom of music and

song, which he left to be shared by dear Rivanone and Hervé his little son. Thus Hervé became a Prince, heir to all the gifts of that royal pair. And of these there were in particular four of the best: a beautiful face, the sweetest voice that ever thrilled in Brittany, the golden harp of Hyvarnion his father, and many a lovely song made by those two, which Rivanone taught him. What a wonderful Kingdom that was to be his! What beautiful gifts for a little boy to own!

But even in a kingdom of this sort one has to bear sorrows and discomforts, just as folk do in other kingdoms which are less fair. Hervé's name meant bitterness, and there was much bitterness in his little life before he learned what a Prince he really was. For he was blind and could not play with the other children. Rivanone was a poor widow and there was no one to earn bread for the two. Sometimes the carols which they sang together were the only breakfast to begin the day. Sometimes the songs Rivanone made beside his bed at night were the only food Hervé had tasted since sunrise. Sometimes they were both so hungry that they could not sing at all; and those were sad times indeed.

But when Hervé was seven years old a great idea came to him. Rivanone lay ill and miserable, and there was nothing to eat in the house. Hervé sat by her side holding her hand, and wishing there was something he could do about it. Blind as he was he had never been out of the house alone. But suddenly courage came to him and hope, through his great idea.

"I will save you, dear mother!" he cried, throwing his arms about her neck. "I will take father's golden harp and go out upon the highway and sing your beautiful songs. People will give me pennies, and I shall buy you food."

So, carrying the golden harp on his back, in his ragged clothes and bare feet the little fellow went out stumbling and feeling his way along the hard road. Now almost at the first corner he met a white dog, who seemed to have no master. This creature came sniffing and whining up to Hervé and

licked his hand. And when the boy went on the dog followed close at his side as if to guide and protect him. Hervé asked every one he met whose dog it was; but they all said it was a strange dog come from Nowhere, and belonged to No-one. It seemed almost as if the beast had been sent especially for Hervé. So at last he said, "You shall be my dog," and at that the great white beast jumped up and barked for joy. Hervé fastened a rope about the dog's neck and kept one end in his hand. So now he had some one to guide and guard him, for the dog was very careful and kind and took care that Hervé never stumbled nor went astray into the ditch by the side of the road.

It must have been a hard-hearted man indeed who had no pennies to spare for the blind boy led by the big white dog. With his bare feet blue with cold, his teeth chattering, and his eyes turned wistfully up to the sky which he could not see, he was a sad little figure to meet on the lonely Brittany roads. And he sang so sweetly, too! No one had ever heard such a voice as that, nor such beautiful songs. Every one who heard gave him money. So he was helping his mother, getting her food and medicine and clothes to keep her warm. And this thought comforted him when he was shivering with cold, his rags blown about by the wind and soaked in the rain.

Day after day, week after week, Hervé trudged along the flinty roads. Often he limped with cold, bleeding feet which the faithful dog would try to lick warm again. Often he was very tired, and sometimes he was sad, when people were not kind. But this seldom happened. Once Hervé was passing through a strange village where all the folk were heathen. And a band of naughty children began to dance about him and tease him, pulling his hair and twitching his cloak. And they mocked his music, singing, "Blind boy, blind boy! Where are you going, blind boy!" Then it is said that a wonderful thing happened. Hervé was sorry because they were so cruel and unkind, and he struck a strange chord of music on his

harp and sang in a low, clear voice—

"Dance on, bright eyes who can see. Dance on, children who mock a poor blind boy. Dance on—and never stop so long as the world wags." And it is said that the wicked children are still dancing, over the world and back, around and around, tired though they must be. And they will be still more tired before all is done. For they must whirl and pirouette until the end of the world; and that is a long time even for children who love to dance.

At a different time another unkind thing happened to Saint Hervé. But this time it was a beast who hurt his feelings. And this was strange; for usually the beasts loved him and tried to help him as the white dog had done. But after all this was only a mistake; yet it was a sad mistake, for it cost Hervé the life of his faithful guide. This is how it happened.

As Hervé and his dog were passing along a lonely road, a black wolf sprang out upon them. He mistook the dog for an ancient enemy of his, another wolf. For indeed Blanco looked like a white wolf—a wolf such as Saint Bridget gave the King of Ireland. And without stopping to find out who he really was, which would have saved all the trouble, they had a terrible fight, and poor Blanco was killed by the huge black wolf.

Then Hervé was sad indeed. He cried and sobbed and was so wretched that the wolf was sorry. Besides, as soon as the fight was over the wolf had found out his mistake, and saw that it was a strange dog whom he had killed, no wolf-enemy at all. He was very much ashamed. He came up to Hervé and fawned at his feet, trying to tell that he was sorry, and asking what he should do about it. So Hervé told him that if he would be his dog now instead of Blanco he would try to forgive the wolf; though he was, oh, so sorry to lose his faithful dog.

After that Hervé went on his wanderings led by a big black wolf whom he held in a strong leather leash. And the wolf became as dear to him as Blanco had been. He slept in

the barn with the oxen when he was at home, and never snapped nor bit at them as most wolves would do. But he kept sharp watch over his little master, and saw that no one hurt or cheated him. I should be sorry to think what would have happened to any one who had dared to touch Hervé while the wolf was near. And he was always near, with his sharp teeth and watchful eyes.

So they wandered and wandered together, Hervé and the wolf, carrying music from town to town, the songs of Hyvarnion and Rivanone. But Hervé had not yet learned to make songs of his own.

III.

Now after seven years of wandering, Hervé had earned money enough to keep his mother in comfort. He longed to go to school and be taught things, to grow wise like his father, who had been called the Little Sage, and to learn how to make songs for himself. For he felt that it was time for him to come into the kingdom of Hyvarnion and Rivanone; and the songs shut in his heart were bursting to come out.

Gourvoyed, the brother of Rivanone, was a holy hermit who lived alone in the forest, and he would teach Hervé, his nephew, for love of him. For Gourvoyed was a wise man, skilled in all things, but especially in the making of songs.

It was a blessed morning when Hervé started for his school in the woods; he was going to his kingdom! The sunlight framed his fair curls in a halo of light, as if giving him a blessing. Birds sang all along the way as if telling him that with Gourvoyed he would learn to make music even sweeter than theirs. The wolf led him eagerly, bounding with joy; for he shared in all the hopes of Hervé's life. And all the creatures knew that he would become a great poet. And so indeed it was.

For Hervé soon learned all that Gourvoyed could teach, and in his turn he became a master. Many pupils came to the

hut in the forest which the hermit gave up to him, and begged Hervé to make them singer-poets like himself. But he could not do that. He could teach them to sing and to play the harp; but no one could sing as well as he sang, or play as well as he played. And no one can ever be taught to make poetry unless he has it in his soul, as Hervé had. For that is a royal gift, and it came to Hervé from Hyvarnion and Rivanone, the King and Queen of music and of song. It was Hervé's kingdom, and it was given him to take away the bitterness from his name, to make it remembered as sweet, sweet, sweet.

And now on his wanderings from town to town Hervé was received like a prince. He sat at great lords' tables, and sang in ladies' bowers. He had golden goblets as his gifts, and shining gems to wear if he chose. But he was so generous that he gave them all away. Never was there heard music so sweet as his; never were there songs so beautiful as he sang to the rippling of his father's golden harp. For Hervé was even a greater minstrel than Hyvarnion or Rivanone had been.

In his wanderings all about the country Hervé came to many strange places and met with many strange adventures. Once he spent the night at the castle of a great lord who made Hervé sit on his right hand at table and honored him above all his guests. When the banquet was over, at the Count's request a page brought to Hervé his golden harp, and they all shouted for "A song! a song!" Every one pushed back his stool to listen, and Hervé took the harp and ran his finger over the golden strings with a sound like drops of rain upon the flowers.

Now outside the castle, beyond the moat, was a pond. And in the pond lived a whole colony of great green bullfrogs, whose voices were gruffer and grummer than the lowest twanging note on Hervé's harp. And as soon as Hervé began to sing these rude frogs began to bellow and growl as if trying to drown his music. Perhaps they were jealous; for Hervé's voice was sweeter than a silver bell. But all they could sing

was "Ker-*chog!* Ker-r-kity-chog, Ker-*chog!*" which is neither very musical nor very original, being the same tune which all the frog-people have sung from the earliest days.

Now Hervé was displeased by their disagreeable noise. He could not sing nor play, nor think of the words which belonged with his music: only the "Ker-*chog!* Ker-r-kity-chog, Ker-*chog!*" sounded in his ears. And it grew louder and louder every moment as one by one all the frogs joined in the chorus.

Hervé waited for them to stop. But when he found that they did not mean to do this, but were really trying to drown his voice, he was very angry. He strode to the window holding his harp in his hand. And leaning far out he struck another of his wonderful chords of music, such as had charmed the mocking children once before, as you remember.

"Sing your last song, O Frogs," he said. "Sing your last Ker-*chog*, for henceforth you will be silent. I command you from this night never to open your mouths again. All save one, the littlest of you all. And he shall sing forever, without cease, to remind you of your rudeness to me." And no sooner had he ceased speaking when there came a great silence outside the window, broken only by one wee piping tadpole voice. "Ker-*chog!* Ker-r-kity-chog, Ker-*chog!*" he chanted his sad little solo. And all alone he had to sing and sing this same tune forever. I dare say one can hear him yet in the greeny pond outside that old French castle.

IV.

Now after many years of wandering, of singing, of making beautiful songs, of teaching and wandering again, Hervé's dear mother Rivanone died. But he still had some one to love and look for him and the wolf when he came home from his travels. For Rivanone had adopted a dear little girl named Christine, beautiful as sunshine and sweet as a flower. She called Hervé "Uncle" and loved him dearly, and the wolf was a great friend of hers.

So at last he thought to settle down and make music about him in his own home, letting people come there to hear it, instead of carrying it to them by road and river. For he was growing an old man, and it was not so easy to travel in his blindness as it used to be. Besides, the black wolf was also growing gray, and needed rest after these long years of faithful work.

Hervé resolved to build a church, and to live there with Christine near him in a little house of her own. He had grown to be an important personage in the world, and had many friends, pupils, and followers who wanted to live near him. So forth they set to find a place for their church, Hervé and his troop of black-robed monks. And before them, like a little white dove among the ravens, ran Christine holding her uncle's hand in one of hers, and in the other grasping the leash at which tugged the grizzled old wolf, who was guiding them. Over many a hill and dale and bloomy meadow he had led Hervé before now, down many a lane and village street, but never upon so important a journey as this. For this was to be the old wolf's last long tramp with his master. And the wolf was to choose the spot where the church should stand. Where he stopped to rest, there would they lay the first stone.

So he led them on and on. And at last he lay down in a green spot by a river, just the place for a beautiful church to grow up. And thenceforth Hervé the minstrel would wander no more, but bide and rest and be happy with the wolf and Christine.

They built her an arbor near the church, in a clump of willows on the border of a spring. It was cone-shaped and covered with straw like a huge beehive. And Christine herself seemed like a busy bee gathering honey as she buzzed in and out among the roses, humming little tunes below her breath. For she was always among the flowers, as Rivanone had been. Every Saturday morning she would rise early, and with her little basket on her arm would go out to pick the blossoms

with the dew still on them. And every Saturday evening she came to the church with her arms full of flowers till she looked like a bouquet of sweetness. And going into the empty church she would busy herself with arranging the flowers for the next morning's service. For it was her duty to see that Uncle Hervé's church was kept clean and sweet and beautiful.

And while Christine stood there putting the flowers into tall golden vases, singing softly the songs which Rivanone had taught her, her Uncle Hervé would come creeping up the steps of the church, his hand on the head of the wolf, who always led him to the place where he heard her voice. Softly, very softly, as if he were doing something naughty, Hervé would pull open the heavy door, just a crack, the better to hear her sing. Then he would put his ear to the opening; while the wolf would thrust his nose in below, and wag his tail eagerly. But Christine's keen ears always heard them, no matter how slyly the good blind man crept up to that door. And it became part of the game that she should cry out suddenly—

"I see you, Uncle! I see you!" And though he could not see her at all, he would start and pop back, pulling the wolf with him as though he had done something wrong. Then without making any noise they would tiptoe away to Hervé's house, their hearts beating with love for the dear little maiden who would soon come to bid them goodnight on her way home to her bower.

So they lived happily all the rest of their days, these three among the flowers. And in spite of his name Hervé's life was not one of bitterness, but of joy. The kingdom which had come to him from Hyvarnion and Rivanone was his all his life long; and though he no longer wandered painfully from town to town, the songs which he made wandered still from heart to heart. And long, long afterwards their echo made music through the land of Brittany, as the fragrance of a flower lasts long after the flower has passed on its way elsewhere.

Dear Saint Hervé!

Saint Comgall and the Mice

At the place where the Irish Sea is narrowest is the town of Bangor. There the green hills of Saint Patrick's island smile over at the purple cliffs of Scotland across the lane of water where the ships pass to and fro, just as neighbors nod across a narrow street above the heads of the passers-by. And here at Bangor Saint Comgall built a monastery, thirteen hundred long years ago.

This does not sound very interesting, but it was interesting to many people in those days, and I think it will be interesting to you. For Comgall is an Irish word which means "the goodly pledge." And the man who bore this name was a goodly pledge of friendship between man and beast. Comgall had many pupils in his monastery, and many friends living near who loved and honored him. They did splendid things together, and tales of their doings were put into great books. But the most interesting stories of all are about certain friends of Saint Comgall who could not speak Irish and who did not wear clothes. Some of these friends wore feathers and some wore fur; the strangest story of all is about his friends with long tails and very sharp teeth. But you must wait for that till I have told about the swans.

One day Comgall was walking with some friends on the bank of a pond. All of a sudden, through the rushes and the tall grass some one spied six beautiful white swans floating on the water, preening their fine feathers and arching their necks proudly. For they could see in the water, just as if it were a mirror, how handsome they were, and it made them vain.

"Oh, Father," cried Comgall's pupils (they always called their teacher "Father" in those days), "see the lovely swans!

May we not coax them ashore? We want to play with them."

Comgall chuckled inside, for he felt sure that the swans would not come to them, because they were strangers. But he said with a twinkle in his eye—

"Oh, yes, boys. Call them here if you can. But you must give them something to tempt them, or I fear they will hardly come."

Then the boys tried to find a crust of bread or some crumbs in their pockets, to throw to the swans. But no one had anything, not even a peanut; for peanuts were not invented in those days. They stood on the bank whistling and calling, trying in every way to make the swans swim ashore. But the birds only cocked their red-rimmed eyes at the boys and fluttered their wings timidly.

"We don't know you," they squawked with their harsh voices. "The like of you are no friends of ours. Hurrooh! Go away and leave our pond in peace."

All this time Comgall had been standing behind them on the bank laughing at the vain attempts of his pupils. But now he walked quietly down to the pond. Making a little croony sound in his throat, he put out his hand towards the swans, but with no crumbs to tempt them.

The swans had never before seen him. But as soon as they heard his voice you should have seen the commotion! How the water did wrinkle and spatter as those dignified birds scurried headlong towards Comgall! Each one seemed trying to be the first to reach his side; and each one flapped his wings and went almost into a fit for fear another should get ahead of him. So finally they reached the bank and gathered around Comgall, talking to him all at once and telling him how much they liked the look of him. And one great white swan fluttered into the old man's lap and sat there letting himself be stroked and patted, stretching his long neck up to Comgall's face and trying to kiss him with beaky lips.

You can imagine how the pupils stared at this strange

sight. For they knew that the swans were as truly strangers to Saint Comgall as to the rest of them. But the swans had guessed in some way that this was a man who loved all animals, and that is why they were not afraid, but loved him as soon as they saw him.

But this next is the stranger story. Mice are harder even than swans for most people to get acquainted with. But Comgall had also made the mice his friends, as you shall see.

There came a time of famine in Ireland, and there was not food enough to go around, as has often happened there from the earliest days until even now. Comgall and his household at Bangor were very hungry. But what made it hardest to bear was that they knew where there was plenty of food close by, if only they could get it. For Croadh was a great Prince who lived in the neighborhood, and Croadh had barns and storehouses full of grain which could be made into bread. But he was a selfish, stingy man and would not give away or even sell his stores, for he would rather see the people starve. Now Croadh had a wicked old mother living in his palace, who was even more cruel than himself. Her name was Luch, and Luch means in Irish "the Mouse." And it was her name which put an idea into Comgall's head.

After sending all sorts of messengers to beg Croadh to give them some of his grain; after trying all sorts of ways to make him sell it, Comgall went himself to the Prince's palace to see what he could do. He carried with him a beautiful silver goblet which had been given him by some one as a present, and it was worth many bushels of grain.

Comgall strode into the Prince's hall and stood before Croadh holding out the goblet in his hand. And he said—

"Here, O Prince, is a valuable thing. We are starving in the monastery, and silver we cannot eat. Give me and my monks some of your golden grain and I will exchange for it the silver cup. Be merciful, Croadh, and hear me."

But the Chief only laughed and said mockingly, "Not so.

You keep your silver goblet and I will keep my golden grain. Your beggarly pupils shall not eat of my stores. I want all, every grain, for my old Mouse." And by that word he meant his mother, the black-eyed, wrinkled, gray old Luch, whose name meant "the Mouse." For she was the most miserly, wicked, old woman in the world, and she had made him promise not to give up any of the grain. Then Comgall was angry, because he saw that the Prince meant to see the people starve.

"Very well," he said, fixing his eyes sternly upon Croadh, "as you have said, so shall it be. The mouse shall have your grain." And drawing his robe about him he strode home with the useless silver goblet.

As I have said, the mice were Comgall's friends. He had only to call them and explain what the hard-hearted Prince had done; he had only to tell the mice what he wished them to do, and the matter was settled. The word spread through the kingdom of the mice, carried by the quickest messenger with the shortest tail. All the mice became enemies of Croadh. And there were many mice in Bangor in those days.

That very night when every one was asleep, out of every hole and corner came peeping little pointed noses and quivering whiskers. And a great procession of long-tailed tiny things formed into line and crept along, and along, up the hill, and up the walls, and into the barns of Croadh. A legion of mice, thousands upon thousands of them in a gray-uniformed army, pounced upon the Prince's precious grain and ate up every kernel.

So the next morning when Croadh went to his barns he found them empty. There was not so much as a single yellow dot of grain left anywhere. But out of every crack and crevice peeped a pair of twinkling black eyes which watched him saucily. Then Croadh began to bellow and roar with anger, and the wicked old woman Luch, his mother, came hobbling in to see what was the matter. But when the mice saw her they gave a chorus of fierce squeaks as if crying "Mouse!

Mouse! Mouse!"

Then Croadh remembered what Comgall had said, that the mouse should have his grain after all. And he guessed what the Saint had meant, and knew that Comgall had taken this way to punish a selfish and cruel man.

The Wonders of Saint Berach

The life of Saint Berach was full of wonders from the very first. For when he was a boy at home in the house of his father, Nemnald, he had a vision. An angel appeared to him and beckoned him to follow. So he went, and the angel led him straight to the monastery at Glendalough where holy Saint Cœmgen lived with his friend the white doe, and taught boys to be wise. And Berach joined the other boys to be taught all that Saint Cœmgen knew, and to learn other things beside.

Ireland was a wild country in those days, for this was only six hundred years after Christ's birth and the little towns had hardly begun to grow. The huts which men had made in the wilderness—calling them houses and schools and churches—were not close together but far, far apart. Wild beasts prowled everywhere, and there were no policemen.

Close by the monastery were the broad green meadows where the monks pastured the herds of cows which gave them milk. From the windows of his cell the young monk loved to watch the cows and their calves browsing the juicy grass and wading in the brooks which ran under the rows of willows. He especially loved Bel, the sleekest, most beautiful of them all, a proud mother cow who had a new little red calf

One day as he was watching Bel and her baby who had strayed a little distance from the rest of the herd, he saw something which frightened him. A great gray wolf was hiding in the shadow of a hedge, creeping nearer and nearer to the peaceful pair. But Bel did not guess that an enemy was so near. Berach hurried down the turret stair and out of the gate, hardly pausing to tell the brother porter whither he was going. For he knew there was no time to lose.

He ran to the meadow, and pushed through the blooming hedge of hawthorne. But alas! he had come too late. The great gaunt wolf, who was very hungry, had pounced upon the little red calf, and had eaten it up. Poor Bel, wild with grief, ran lowing about the pasture as if seeking for her little one. But the wolf was slinking out of sight.

When Berach saw what had been done, at first he was very angry with the wolf, for he loved Bel dearly, and it troubled him to see her sad. He thought how lonely the poor cow would be without her calf, and when she came pitifully lowing up to him as if asking him to help her, the tears stood in his kind eyes. But then he thought how hungry the wolf must have been. Poor thing, how thin and hollow he had looked—perhaps he was not so much to blame after all. Probably he had never been taught any better.

And then a strange idea came to Berach. He was a wonderful man, and he must have had great power over animals. For he called to the wolf, who was already some distance away; he called loudly and in a stern voice. You will hardly believe it, but the wolf came slinking back, frightened and whining like a naughty puppy, and crouched at Berach's feet. Then the Saint spoke kindly to the wolf, no longer treating him like a murderer and a thief. He called the cow also, and taking her by the horns led her gently to the wolf, soothing her so that she was not afraid of the great gray beast.

And Berach said to the cow, "See, Mother Bel, this shall be your child now, in place of the little one which is gone. He will be a kind and gentle son to you, I promise." And to the wolf he said, "Here, Wolf, is the mother whom you need to make you gentle and good. You shall be kind to her, and make her forget the wrong you have done by being a loving and dutiful son, ever doing her bidding." So after that the cow and the meek wolf dwelt peacefully together in the meadows of the monastery, and he shielded her from danger, and like a huge watchdog kept away the other wild beasts from the herd.

After that came a winter when for weeks the ground was white with snow, and the laughing mouths of the brooks were sealed with ice. Duke Colman's little son had been sent to school at the monastery, and the boy was very ill. He was hot and thirsty, and his throat was parched with fever. So little Edward begged for juicy apples, and for salad of fresh sorrel leaves—things which were not to be found in all the land in the dead of winter. But Cœmgen the Abbot trusted in the power of his young friend who could tame wolves. "Go forth, my son," he said to Berach, "take my staff and bring what the boy needs."

Then Berach retired to his cell and prayed that he might be blessed to save the dear child's life. After that with faith and courage he went out into the white meadows, using the Abbot's staff to help him over the great drifts of snow. He came to the row of willows by the frozen brook where the cows had loved to wade. And here he paused. Lifting the staff, he touched the bare brown branches of the willow on which the snow clung like shreds of cotton wool, and he pronounced a blessing. Instantly the snow began to melt as it does before the sun in April. The stiff brown twigs turned green and became tender and full of life. Then gray willow buds put forth woolly little pussy-willows, which seemed fairly bursting, like fat round kittens. They grew bigger and bigger, rounder and rounder, till at last they really did burst, and plumped great rosy-cheeked apples into the lap of the Saint, who held up the skirt of his gray gown to catch them as they fell. Lo, under the trees meanwhile the snowdrifts had melted, and little green leaves were poking up through the frozen ground. And Berach gathered there a great bunch of juicy, tart sorrel which makes such good salad. Then with his arms full—what with this and his apples and the blessed staff—he floundered back through the snowdrifts to the monastery. They received him eagerly and there was great rejoicing. Little Edward was revived by the out-of-season dainties thus miraculously

provided for him, and soon became quite well again.

It was many years after this, again a hard and cruel winter, when Saint Berach made another wonder come to pass. Meantime he had grown older and even wiser. He had himself been made Abbot and had built a monastery of his own in a lonely place far away from Glendalough. But he had an enemy. There was a rich man who wanted the land which Berach had chosen, and who was so envious that he tried to do him spite in every way he could. He even sought to destroy the monastery. Then Berach appealed to the King for protection, and both men were summoned to the court.

The rich man went in a chariot, splendid in his fine robes of fur, with a gold chain about his neck. And the guards hurried to let down the portcullis for him, and with low bows bade him enter. But when Saint Berach came he wore only his gray monk's robe, all torn and tattered. He was shivering with cold, and weak from having walked so far. So they thought him a mere beggar and would not let him in. As he stood outside the gate, friendless and alone, some rude boys who had gathered there began to laugh and jeer at his bare sandaled feet and the rents in his robe through which the cold winds blew. They made snowballs and rushed upon him in a crowd, like the cowards they were, pelting the poor man most cruelly. But suddenly, what do you think? Their arms stiffened as they raised them to throw the balls; their legs stuck fast in the snow; the grins froze on their faces; and they were almost choked by the shouts which turned to ice in their throats. What had happened? Well, Saint Berach had merely breathed upon them, and they were as if turned into ice, so that they could not stir. Br-r-r! How cold they were!

Then the Saint made ready to warm himself. A drift of snow had fallen from the palace gate when it opened to let in the rich man. And going up to this he blew upon it. He blew a warm breath this time. Instantly the whole heap burst into flame, and snapped and crackled like the fire in the chimney-

place of the dining-hall at home. In front of this merry blaze the good Saint stood, warming his hands and thawing out his poor frozen feet. But the group of boys stood like statues of snow; so cold, so cold, but unable to come nearer to the fire; so frightened, so frightened, but unable to run away.

This is what the King's guards saw when, terrified by the crackling of the fire and the great light which shone through the chinks of the gate, they came to see what it all meant. They ran to the King and told him of the strange sight. And he himself with a crowd of courtiers came out to look. When he saw the ragged beggar who had done all this he was filled with amazement. He immediately suspected that this must be a holy man and powerful. So he invited Berach into the palace hall, and there listened to his story.

Now when all was done the rich man was bundled away in disgrace, for daring to meddle with the good works of so wonderful a Saint. But Berach was honored and admired.

Before he went back to his monastery they begged him to restore the naughty boys to life and motion. Now Berach had wanted only to teach them a lesson, not to punish them too severely; for he was too kind-hearted to injure any living creature. So going out into the courtyard he blew upon the snow figures, and once more they became live boys. You can imagine how glad they were when they found they were able to move their legs and arms again.

Now Berach went back to his monastery in one of the King's chariots, with a robe of fur and a gold chain about his neck. And you may be sure he carried with him many other gifts and precious things from the King, who never thereafter suffered him to be troubled in his far-off retreat.

Saint Prisca, the Child Martyr

Saint Prisca's name has always been dearly loved, especially in England. January eighteenth is the day which is sacred to her, and she lived over seventeen hundred years ago. She is one of the few child-martyrs whose names have come down to us from those early days, although there were many other brave children who suffered and were strong, and who, at last, gave their lives to prove their faith.

Saint Prisca was a little Roman girl whose parents were Christians of a noble family. Claudius was the Emperor at that time, and though during his reign the Christians were not persecuted in such numbers as they had been before that, still many cruel things were done here and there, and it was a dangerous thing to be a Christian.

It was in the evil times when one did not always dare to say what he really thought, nor publicly to worship as he believed was right. Many of the Christians were not ashamed to conceal their real belief from the heathen Romans, who were everywhere seeking with hatred for the followers of Christ, to torture and slay them.

Prisca's father and mother had managed to keep their secret, and were not suspected of being Christians. They probably went to church in the secret chapels which the Christians had dug deep in the ground under the city. In these dark, gloomy catacombs, as they were called, the Christians held services directly under the feet of the cruel Romans, who were passing overhead without suspecting what was going on so near to them.

But Prisca scorned to use any precaution. Small and defenseless though she was, she did not fear to tell every one

what she believed and Whose Cross she followed. So she soon became known as a firm little Christian maiden. And there were people in the city cruel enough and wicked enough to hate even a little child-Christian and to wish her evil.

These persons reported to the Emperor's officers her brave words of faith, and told them how she would not sacrifice to the Roman gods as the other children did. So very soon she was seized by the guards and brought before the Emperor.

Claudius looked at the little maid in surprise to find her so young. And he thought: "Ho! I shall easily make this small Christian change her mind and obey me." And he bade his men take her to the temple of Apollo and make her offer incense to the beautiful god of the silver bow. So they carried her to the top of the Palatine, one of the seven hills on which Rome was built.

They first passed under a great marble arch and came into a fair courtyard surrounded by fifty-two marble pillars. In the centre of this space stood the temple of Apollo, the most magnificent building in all Rome. With its ivory gates and wonderful groups of statues, its inlaid marble floors and altars wreathed with flowers, its golden tripods breathing incense, its lamps and beautiful silver vases, it was a very different place from the bare, dark caverns in which the Christians worshiped. In front of the temple was a group of four oxen made of bronze, and in the centre of this group burned a fire upon a golden tripod. This was the altar to Apollo, the sun-god, whose enormous golden statue, in his four-horse chariot, stood over the door of the temple just above. He was the likeness of a beautiful youth with a wreath of bay about his head, carrying a bow in his hand, with which Apollo was believed to shoot the sunbeams down upon the earth.

They thrust incense into Prisca's hand and bade her throw a few grains into the fire in honor of the beautiful god of the sun. It seemed a very simple thing to do, to save her life—just

to scatter a handful of dark powder on the flames. Prisca loved the dear sun as well as any one, but she knew it was foolish to believe that he was a god, and wicked to worship his statue in place of the great God who made the sun and everything else. So Prisca refused to burn the incense.

Then the Emperor was very angry, and bade the soldiers whip her until she obeyed his command. But they could not make her yield by cruelty. Even the hard-hearted Romans who had come to look on admired her bravery and pitied her suffering. The women wept to see her so cruelly treated, and the men cried, "Shame! Shame! to torture a little child."

And then a beautiful thing happened; for Prisca appeared dressed in a robe of yellow sunshine. A wonderful light shone all about her, and she seemed herself a little star giving out light, so brightly did her brave spirit shine among those cruel men.

It seemed as if no child could bear all this suffering without yielding, and the Emperor hoped she would give in, for he did not want to have her killed. But Prisca was firm, and would not make the sacrifice. The Emperor was surprised to find a child so brave. He ordered them to drag her away to prison and to keep her there for many days. Here she was most unhappy—lonely and cold and hungry often, wondering what dreadful thing was to happen next. But her heart was always brave, and she was not afraid.

After a long time, one morning the guard came for little Prisca. They led her forth into the dear sunshine, and glad she was to see it and the blue sky once more. But it was only for a short time that they let her enjoy even this little pleasure; for they brought her to the amphitheatre, a great open place like the circus, with tiers upon tiers of seats all about, and crowds of faces looking down into the centre where she was.

Prisca knew what this meant, for she had often heard how the Christians were put into the arena to be torn in pieces by wild beasts. And kneeling down on the sand she made a little

prayer, not that she might be saved from the fierce beasts, but that she might have courage to show her Christian bravery and teach a lesson to these fiercer men and women who were looking on.

Then the keeper opened the grated door of a den at the end of the arena, and out stalked a great yellow lion. With a dreadful roar he rushed into the centre of the circle, and stood there lashing his tail and flashing his big yellow eyes all about the place. Then suddenly he spied the little girl standing quietly at one side with her hands clasped in front of her, looking at him without fear. And the great beast strode gently up to her on his padded paws. He bent his head and licked her little bare feet, and then he crouched down by her side, as a Saint Bernard dog might place himself to guard his little mistress. And this is why the old pictures of Saint Prisca represent her with a lion by her side.

There fell a great silence on the tented place. The Emperor and all the people sat perfectly still, wondering at the strange sight and admiring the courage of the child; for she had reached out her hand and was stroking the yellow head of the lion, playing with his mane. She bent her head and no one heard her whisper into his ear:—

"My good friend! you will not hurt me, I know, for the Lord has closed your mouth, just as he did the mouths of the lions into whose den Daniel was thrown by wicked men. These cruel men will put me to death, but you are kinder than they."

And the lion looked up in her face as though he understood, and growled softly. He was quite gentle with her, but when the keeper came towards them he roared and bristled and showed his great teeth, so that for a long time no one dared to come near.

But even the lion could not save her from the death which she had no wish to shun. At last they captured him and took him away. The Emperor's heart was softened by Prisca's

bravery, and he wished to give her one more chance to save her life. They shut her up for many days in the heathen temple, and tried in every way to make her sacrifice to the gods and give up Christianity. They coaxed her and made her fine promises; they threatened and punished her. But still Prisca stood firm, although she was now very worn and tired and ill because she had suffered so much.

So when she had borne it all patiently and bravely, and they saw it was impossible to make a little Christian turn back again into a little heathen, they led her away down the road which leads south from the Palatine hill, to the place of execution. This was just outside the Ostian gate, an archway in the great wall which surrounded Rome, through which the road led to the town of Ostium and to the sea. Just outside this gate, to show that they were no longer worthy of being Romans and living within its walls, criminals were executed. And here many Christian martyrs lost their lives. Prisca was one of these, for here she was beheaded. And till the very end she neither cried nor screamed nor was in any way afraid. And so she became Saint Prisca, a little martyr.

Then another strange thing befell. When she died a great eagle appeared in the sky, hovering over Saint Prisca's body far up in the air. And when any of the Romans ventured near her the eagle swooped down upon them with dreadful cries and flapping of his wings. And his round gray eyes looked so fierce and his claws so long and sharp, that no one dared to touch her for fear of the bird. Saint Prisca had found another protector in cruel Rome. And this is why many of the old pictures of Saint Prisca's martyrdom show a great eagle hovering over her.

The creature guarded her body night and day, driving every one away, until the Christians, who had been waiting for the chance to venture out, came secretly one night and carried her away. They buried her where the Romans could not find her, in their little secret cemetery in the catacombs.

This is how Saint Prisca lived and died two hundred and seventy years after Christ's birth. But I wish we knew what became of the noble lion and the devoted eagle.

The Fish Who Helped Saint Gudwall

The Welsh coast is famous for its beautiful scenery and its terrible storms. People who see it in the summer time think only of the beautiful scenery. But if they should happen to pass that way in midwinter they would be very apt to meet an unpleasant reminder of the terrible storms.

Saint Gudwall was born a Welshman, and he should have known all this. Perhaps he did know, but chose to run into danger just because it was dangerous, as so many saints loved to do in those years when it was thought no virtue to take care of one's life. At all events, it was summer when with one friend Gudwall moved to his new home, a tiny island off the coast of Wales, which at that time was very beautiful.

The first thing they did was to set about finding a place to live in. The island was one of those high mountains poking up out of the sea, with green grass on top, like colored frosting to a cake; and gray rocks below, all hollowed out into deep caves and crannies, as if mice had been nibbling at the cake. These caves are just the sort of places which smugglers and pirates choose to hide in with their treasures, for no one would think of hunting for any one there. And Gudwall wanted to be left alone with his pupil; so he thought there was no reason why a bad man's hiding-place should not make a good saint's retreat. So they chose the largest and deepest of all the caves, and there they put their books and their beds and their little furniture, and set up housekeeping.

Their home was one of those caves into which the sea rushes a little way and then suddenly backs out again as if it had changed its mind this time but would call again. Gudwall and his pupil loved to lie in their cave just beyond the reach

of the waves and watch them dash laughingly up on the rocks, then roar and gurgle in pretended anger and creep away out into the blue basin beyond. In summer their daily games with the sea were great fun, and Gudwall was very happy. They spent some lovely months alone with the waves and the rocks and the sea-birds which now and then fluttered screaming into the dark cave, and then again dashed bashfully out when they found they had come uninvited into a stranger's home. It was all very nice and peaceful and pretty in the summer time, just as tourists find it to this day.

But oh! what a change when old Winter came roaring down over the waves from the North in his chariot of ice, drawn by fierce winds and angry storm-clouds. Then the temper of the sea was changed. It grew cruel and hungry. It left off its kindly game with the lonely dwellers on the island, and seemed instead to have become their enemy. It tried to seize and swallow them in its cruel jaws.

One morning there came a terrible storm. In the far end of the cave Gudwall and the other were nearly swept away by a huge wave which rushed in to devour them. No longer content with pausing on the threshold, the sea swept through their whole house, dashing away their little store of books and furniture, a most unneighborly thing to do.

It tried to drag the two men from the corner where they clung to the rough rock. Choked and gasping they escaped this time, while the sea drew back for another plunge. But they did not wait for this, for they knew it would mean their death.

Drenched as they were and blinded by the salt spray, they scrambled out of the cave and began to climb the slippery seaweed to the rocks above. It was a hard and dangerous ascent, for the sea leaped after them to pull them back, snarling angrily at their heels like a fierce beast maddened by their escape. But it could not quite seize them, and at last they reached the top of the cliff where they were safe for the time.

But what were they to do now? There were no houses on the island, no place to go to keep warm; yet they could not live out in the open air to freeze in the snow and cold. It was no longer possible to live in the cave if the sea was to wash through it like this. But if only there were some barrier to keep out the stormy waves they could still live in their beloved cave. Saint Gudwall fell upon his knees and prayed for help—prayed for some defense against the winter waves.

And what do you think happened? The dwellers in the sea were kinder than the sea itself. The little fish who live safely in the angriest waves were sorry for the big men who were so powerless in the face of this danger. From the sea caves far under the island's foot, from the beds of seaweed and the groves of coral, from the sandy bottom of the ocean fathoms deep below, the fish came swimming in great shoals about Gudwall's island. And each one bore in his mouth a grain of sand. They swam into the shallow water just outside the cave where Gudwall had lived, and one by one they placed their burdens on the sandy bottom. One by one they paused to see that it was well done, then swiftly swam away, to return as soon as might be with another grain of sand. All day long a procession of fish, like people in line at a ticket office, moved steadily up to the shallows and back again. So by night a little bar of sand had begun to grow gradually before the entrance to the cave.

Now Saint Gudwall and his pupil were shivering on the top of the cliff, and looking off to sea, when the pupil caught his master's arm. "What is that down there in the water?" he said, pointing to a little brown spot peering above the waves.

"I know not," answered the Saint; "what seems it to be, brother?"

"I have been watching it," said the other, "and I think it grows. Look! it is even now higher than when first you looked; is it not so?"

And sure enough. Gudwall saw that ever so little at a time

the brown patch was growing and spreading from right to left. Grain by grain the sand bar rose higher and higher till it thrust bravely above the blueness a solid wall extending for some distance through the water in front of the cave. Against this new breakwater the surf roared and foamed in terrible rage, but it could not pass, it could no longer swoop down into the cavern as it had done before.

"The Lord has given us a defense," said Gudwall with a thankful heart. And then his eye caught sight of a great bluefish swimming back into the deep sea. "It is the fish who have built us the wall," he cried. "Blessed be the fish who have this day helped us in our need."

For the fish had piled up a stout and lasting barrier between Saint Gudwall and the angry sea, and thenceforth he could live in his cave safely during both summer and winter.

The Wolf-Mother of Saint Ailbe

This is the story of a poor little Irish baby whose cruel father and mother did not care anything about him. But because they could not sell him nor give him away they tried to lose him. They wrapped him in a piece of cloth and took him up on the mountain side, and there they left him lying all alone on a bush of heather.

Now an old mother wolf was out taking her evening walk on the mountain after tending her babies in the den all day. And just as she was passing the heather bush she heard a faint, funny little cry. She pricked up her pointed ears and said, "What's that!" And lo and behold, when she came to sniff out the mystery with her keen nose, it led her straight to the spot where the little pink baby lay, crying with cold and hunger.

The heart of the kind mother wolf was touched, for she thought of her own little ones at home, and how sad it would be to see them so helpless and lonely and forgotten. So she picked the baby up in her mouth carefully and ran home with him to her den in the rocks at the foot of the mountain. Here the little one, whose name was Ailbe, lived with the baby wolves, sharing their breakfast and dinner and supper, playing and quarreling and growing up with them. The wolf-mother took good care of him and saw that he had the best of everything, for she loved him dearly indeed. And Ailbe grew stronger and stronger, taller and taller, handsomer and handsomer every day, living his happy life in the wild woods of green Ireland.

Now one day, a year or two after this, a hunter came riding over the mountain on his way home from the chase, and he

happened to pass near the cave where Ailbe and the wolves lived. As he was riding along under the trees he saw a little white creature run across the path in front of him. At first he thought it was a rabbit; but it was too big for a rabbit, and besides it did not hop. The hunter jumped down from his horse and ran after the funny animal to find out what it was. His long legs soon overtook it in a clump of bushes where it was hiding, and imagine the hunter's surprise when he found that it had neither fur nor horns nor four feet nor a tail, but that it was a beautiful child who could not stand upright, and whose little bare body ran on all-fours like a baby wolf! It was little Ailbe, the wolf-mother's pet, who had grown so fast that he was almost able to take care of himself. But he was not quite able, the hunter thought; and he said to himself that he would carry the poor little thing home to his kind wife, that she might take care of him. So he caught Ailbe up in his arms, kicking and squealing and biting like the wild little animal he was, and wrapped him in a corner of his great cloak. Then he jumped on his horse with a chirrup and galloped away out of the woods towards his village.

But Ailbe did not want to leave his forest home, the wolf-den, and his little wolf brothers. Especially he did not want to leave his dear foster mother. So he screamed and struggled to get away from the big hunter, and he called to the wolves in their own language to come and help him. Then out of the forest came bounding the great mother wolf with her four children, now grown to be nearly as big as herself. She chased after the fleeting horse and snapped at the loose end of the huntsman's cloak, howling with grief and anger. But she could not catch the thief, nor get back her adopted son, the little smooth-skinned foundling. So after following them for miles, the five wolves gradually dropped further and further behind. And at last, as he stretched out his little arms to them over the hunter's velvet shoulder, Ailbe saw them stop in the road panting, with one last howl of farewell. They had given up the

hopeless chase. And with their tails between their legs and their heads drooping low they slunk back to their lonely den where they would never see their little boy playmate any more. It was a sad day for good wolf-mother.

But the hunter carried little Ailbe home with him on the horse's back. And he found a new mother there to receive him. Ailbe never knew who his first mother was, but she must have been a bad, cruel woman. His second mother was the kind wolf. And this one, the third, was a beautiful Princess.

For the hunter who had found the child was a Prince, and he lived in a grand castle by a lake near Tipperary, with hundreds of servants and horses and dogs and little pages for Ailbe to play with. And here he lived and was very happy; and here he learned all the things which in those days made a little boy grow up into a wise and great man. He grew up so wise and great that he was made a Bishop and had a palace of his own in the town of Emly. People came to see him from far and near, who made him presents, and asked him questions, and ate his dinners.

But though he had grown so great and famous Ailbe had never forgotten his second mother, the good wolf, nor his four-footed brothers, in their coats of gray fur. And sometimes when his visitors were stupid and stayed a long time, or when they asked too many questions, or when they made him presents which he did not like, Ailbe longed to be back in the forest with the good beasts. For they had much more sense, though they had never kissed the Blarney Stone, which makes one talk good Irish.

A great many years afterwards there was one day a huge hunt in Emly. All the lords for miles around were out chasing the wild beasts, and among them was the Prince, Ailbe's foster-father. But the Bishop himself was not with them. He did not see any sport in killing poor creatures. It was almost night, and the people of Emly were out watching for the hunters to return. The Bishop was coming down the village street

on his way from church, when the sound of horns came over the hills close by, and he knew the chase was nearing home.

Louder and louder came the "tantaratara!" of the horns, and then he could hear the gallopy thud of the horses' hoofs and the yelp of the hounds. But suddenly the Bishop's heart stood still. Among all the other noises of the chase he heard a sound which made him think—think—think. It was the long-drawn howl of a wolf, a sad howl of fear and weariness and pain. It spoke a language which he had almost forgotten. But hardly had he time to think again and to remember, before down the village street came a great gaunt figure, flying in long leaps from the foremost dogs who were snapping at her heels. It was Ailbe's wolf-mother.

He recognized her as soon as he saw her green eyes and the patch of white on her right foreleg. And she recognized him, too—how I cannot say, for he had changed greatly since she last saw him, a naked little sun-browned boy. But at any rate, in his fine robes of purple and linen and rich lace, with the mitre on his head and the crozier in his hand, the wolf-mother knew her dear son. With a cry of joy she bounded up to him and laid her head on his breast, as if she knew he would protect her from the growling dogs and the fierce-eyed hunters. And the good Bishop was true to her. For he drew his beautiful velvet cloak about her tired, panting body, and laid his hand lovingly on her head. Then in the other he held up his crook warningly to keep back the ferocious dogs.

"I will protect thee, old mother," he said tenderly. "When I was little and young and feeble, thou didst nourish and cherish and protect me; and now that thou art old and gray and weak, shall I not render the same love and care to thee? None shall injure thee."

Then the hunters came tearing up on their foaming horses and stopped short to find what the matter was. Some of them were angry and wanted even now to kill the poor wolf, just as the dogs did who were prowling about snarling with

disappointment. But Ailbe would have none of it. He forbade them to touch the wolf. And he was so powerful and wise and holy that they dared not disobey him, but had to be content with seeing their hunt spoiled and their prey taken out of their clutches.

But before the hunters and their dogs rode away, Saint Ailbe had something more to say to them. And he bade all the curious townsfolk who had gathered about him and the wolf to listen also. He repeated the promise which he had made to the wolf, and warned every one thenceforth not to hurt her or her children, either in the village, or in the woods, or on the mountain. And turning to her once more he said:—

"See, mother, you need not fear. They dare not hurt you now you have found your son to protect you. Come every day with my brothers to my table, and you and yours shall share my food, as once I so often shared yours."

And so it was. Every day after that so long as she lived the old wolf-mother brought her four children to the Bishop's palace and howled at the gate for the porter to let them in. And every day he opened to them, and the steward showed the five into the great dining hall where Ailbe sat at the head of the table, with five places set for the rest of the family. And there with her five dear children about her in a happy circle the kind wolf-mother sat and ate the good things which the Bishop's friends had sent him. But the child she loved best was none of those in furry coats and fine whiskers who looked like her; it was the blue-eyed Saint at the top of the table in his robes of purple and white.

But Saint Ailbe would look about him at his mother and his brothers and would laugh contentedly.

"What a handsome family we are!" he would say. And it was true.

Saint Rigobert's Dinner

Saint Rigobert was hungry. He had eaten nothing that morning, neither had little Pierre, his serving lad, who trotted along before him on the road to Rheims. They were going to visit Wibert, the Deputy-Governor of Rheims, to pay him some money which the Bishop owed—all the money which he had in the world. And that is why they had nothing left to buy them a breakfast, and why little Pierre gazed into the bakers' shops so hungrily and licked his lips as they passed. Good Saint Rigobert did not see the windows of buns and tarts and pasties as they went along, for his eyes were bent upon the ground and he was singing hymns over to himself under his breath. Still, he too was very faint.

Saint Rigobert was poor. He was a good old Bishop; but the King of France did not love him, and had sent him away from the court and the big, rich city to live among the poor folk in the country. Saint Rigobert did not mind this very much, for he loved the pretty little village of Gernicour where he lived. He loved the people who dwelled there, too; and especially he loved Pierre, who had come to his home to be his little page and helper.

The people of the village meant to be kind and generous; but they were mostly stupid folk who saw only what was in front of their noses. And they did not guess how very poor their dear Bishop was. They were poor, too, and had to be careful of their little bits of money. But they all had vegetables and milk and eggs and butter, and if every one had helped a little, as they ought—for he was always doing kind things for them—Saint Rigobert would not have gone hungry so often.

It made the Bishop sorry to find them so careless, but he

never complained. He would not tell them, nor beg them to help him, and often even little Pierre did not know how long he fasted. For he would give the boy all the supper and keep none himself But he was always cheery and contented. He always had a kind word for the people as he passed them on the street. And when he went to the big town of Rheims near by he never complained to the Governor there about what a poor, miserable parish he lived in, or how little the people of Gernicour did for their Bishop. For he liked to believe that they did the best they could.

And that is why, when the two came into Wibert's hall. Saint Rigobert paid the money to the Governor without a word of his hunger or his faintness. And even when he saw the great table laid for dinner and the smoking dishes brought in by a procession of serving men, he turned away resolutely and tried not to show how tempting the good things looked and smelled. He gathered up the folds of his robe, and taking his Bishop's staff in his hand, rose to go back to Gernicour and his dinnerless house. But as they were leaving the hall, Pierre trailing out very reluctantly with many a backward look, Wibert the governor called them back. Perhaps he had seen the longing in the eyes of little Pierre as the great haunch of venison was set on the board. Perhaps he had noticed how pale and hollow Saint Rigobert's cheeks were, and half guessed the cause. At all events he said kindly:—

"I pray thee, stay and dine with us, thou and the boy yonder. See, the meat is ready, and there is room for many more at table."

But Saint Rigobert had a service to hold in the church at Gernicour, and knew they had barely time to reach home if they walked briskly. Besides, he was too proud to accept charity, and for the sake of his people he feared to let the Governor see how very hungry he was.

"Nay," he answered gently, "I thank thee for thy courtesy, friend Wibert. But we may not tarry. The time scants us for a

dinner before the service in the church at Gernicour, and we must hasten or we be late. Come, lad, we must be stirring anon."

Tears of disappointment were standing in Pierre's eyes, he wanted so much to stay and have some of that good dinner. But he never thought of questioning his master's commands. The Governor pressed them to stay, but Rigobert was firm, and passed on to the door, Pierre following sulkily behind. But just as they reached the door there was a commotion outside, and the sound of quacking and men's laughter. And there came in a serving man bearing in his arms a great white goose, which was flapping his wings and cackling hoarsely in fright.

"Ho, what have we here?" said the Governor crossly. "Why do you let such a commotion into my hall, you fellow?"

"Please you, sir," answered the serving man as well as he could with the goose struggling in his arms, "this goose is a tribute from the widow Réné, and she begs your Honor to accept him as a poor present."

"A poor present indeed," said the Governor testily. "What do I want of the creature? We have more fowls now than we know what to do with. I wish him not." Then an idea came into his head, and he turned to Saint Rigobert. "Why, reverend sir," he said laughing, "since you will not stay to dine with me, I prithee take this fat fellow home with you, for dinner in Gernicour. 'T will be a good riddance for us, in sooth."

Saint Rigobert hesitated. But seeing the look of eagerness in Pierre's face he concluded to accept the gift, which was a common one enough in those days.

"Grammercy for your courtesy, Master Wibert," he answered. "We take your bounty of the fine goose, since it seemeth that your tables have space for little more. Now then, Pierre lad, take up thy prey. And look he bite thee not," he added as the boy made haste to seize the great struggling bird.

The goose pecked and squawked and flapped horribly while Pierre was getting his arms about him. But finally they

were ready to start, Pierre going first with the goose who was nearly as big as himself, and the Bishop following grasping his staff, his eyes bent upon the ground.

Pierre's heart was full of joy. He chuckled and laughed and could hardly wait till they should reach home, for thinking of the fine dinner at the end of the road. But Saint Rigobert had already forgotten the goose, he had so many other things to think about. That is the way he had taught himself to forget how hungry he was—he just thought about something else. But all on a sudden Rigobert was startled by a great cackle and a scream in front of him down the road. He looked up just in time to see a big white thing sailing away into the sky, and Pierre hopping up and down in the road screaming and crying.

The Bishop overtook the little fellow quickly. "Lad, lad, hast thou lost thy goose?" he asked gently.

"Oh Father," sobbed the boy, "our nice dinner! Your dinner, master! The wicked goose has flown away. Oh, what a careless boy I am to let him 'scape me so!" And he sat down on a stone and cried as if his heart would break.

"Nay, nay," the good Bishop said, patting him on the head soothingly, "perhaps the poor goose did not want to be roasted, Pierre. Can you blame him for seeking his liberty instead? I find no fault with him; but I am sorry for thy dinner, lad. We must try to get something else. Cheer up, Pierre, let the white goose go. All will yet be well, lad."

He made Pierre get up, still crying bitterly, and on they trudged again along the dusty road. But this time there was no dinner for them to look forward to, and the way seemed very long. Pierre dragged his feet heavily, and it seemed as if he could not go another step with that emptiness in his stomach and the ache in his head. But again Saint Rigobert began to hum his hymns softly under his breath, keeping time to the beat of his aged feet on the dusty road. The loss of his dinner seemed to trouble him little. Perhaps he was secretly glad that

the poor goose had escaped; for he was very tenderhearted and loved not to have creatures killed, even for food.

They had gone quite a little distance, and Rigobert began to sing louder and louder as they neared his church. When suddenly there came a strange sound in the air over his head. And then with a great fluttering a big white goose came circling down right before Saint Rigobert's feet. The good Saint stopped short in surprise, and Pierre, turning about, could hardly believe his eyes. But sure enough, there was the very same goose, looking up into Saint Rigobert's face and cackling as if trying to tell him something.

"I didn't mean to run away," he seemed to say. "I didn't know you were hungry, holy man, and that I was taking away your dinner. Sing on and I will follow you home."

Pierre turned and ran back to the goose and would have seized him by the neck so he could not get away again. But Saint Rigobert held up his finger warningly, and the boy stood still.

"Do not touch him, Pierre," said the Bishop earnestly. "I do not think he will run away. Let us see."

And sure enough, when they started on once more, Saint Rigobert still singing softly, Pierre, who kept glancing back, saw the goose waddling slowly at his master's heels. So the queer little procession came into Gernicour; and every one stopped along the streets with open mouths, wondering to see them pass. At last they reached the Bishop's house. And there Rigobert ceased his singing, and turning to the goose stroked his feathers gently and said:—

"Good friend, thou hast been faithful. Thou shalt be rewarded. Aye, ruffle up thy feathers, good goose, for they shall never be plucked from thee, nor shalt thou be cooked for food. Thou art my friend from to-day. No pen shall hold thee, but thou shalt follow me as thou wilt."

And the Saint kept his promise. For after that the goose lived with him in happiness and peace. They would take long

walks together in the fields about Gernicour. They made visits to the sick and the sorrowful. Indeed, wherever Saint Rigobert went the goose followed close at his heels like a dog. Even when Rigobert went again to see the Governor of Rheims, the goose waddled all the way there and back along the crooked road over part of which he had gone that first time in little Pierre's arms. And how the Governor did laugh as he stood in his door and watched the strange pair disappear down the road.

"He could not have been very hungry after all," the Governor thought, "or I should never have seen that goose again." Which shows how little even a Governor knows about some things.

More than this, whenever Rigobert went to hold service in his little church the goose escorted him there also. But he knew better than to go inside. He would wait by the porch, preening his feathers in the sunshine and snapping bugs in the grass of the churchyard until his dear master came out. And then he would escort him back home again. He was a very well-mannered goose.

But dear me! All this time I have left poor little Pierre standing with a quivering chin outside the Bishop's door, hopeless of a dinner. But it all came right, just as the Bishop had said it would. I must tell you about that. For when Rigobert returned from church that same day feeling very faint and hungry indeed, after the long walk and the excitement of the goose-hap, Pierre came running out to meet him with a smiling face.

"Oh Father, Father!" he cried. "We are to have a dinner, after all. Come quick, I am so hungry I cannot wait! The village folk have heard about the pious goose who came back to be your dinner, and how you would not eat him. And so they have sent us a basket of good things instead. And they promise that never again so long as they have anything to eat themselves shall we be hungry any more. Oh Father! I am so

glad we did not eat the goose."

And good Saint Rigobert laid his hand on Pierre's head and said, "Dear lad, you will never be sorry for showing kindness to a friendly bird or beast." Then the goose came quacking up to them and they all three went into the house together to eat their good, good dinner.

In God's Garden

Stories of the Saints for Little Children

By Amy Steedman

About This Book

There is a garden which God has planted for Himself, more beautiful than any earthly garden. The flowers that bloom there are the white souls of His saints, who have kept themselves pure and unspotted from the world.

In God's garden there is every kind of flower, each differing from the other in beauty. Some are tall and stately like the lilies, growing where all may see them in their dress of white and gold; some are half concealed like the violets, and known only by the fragrance of kind deeds and gentle words which have helped to sweeten the lives of others; while some, again, are hidden from all earthly eyes, and only God knows their loveliness and beholds the secret places where they grow. But known or unknown, all have risen above the dark earth, looking ever upward; and, although often bent and beaten down by many a cruel storm of temptation and sin, they have ever raised their heads again, turning their faces towards God; until at last they have been crowned with the perfect flower of holiness, and now blossom for ever in the Heavenly Garden.

In this book you will not find the stories of all God's saints. I have gathered a few together, just as one gathers a little posy from a garden full of roses. But the stories I have chosen to tell are those that I hope children will love best to hear.

Let us remember that God has given to all of us, little children as well as grown-up people, a place in His garden here on earth, and He would have us take these white flowers, the lives of His saints, as a pattern for our own. We may not be set where all can see us; our place in God's garden may be a very humble and sheltered spot; but, like the saints, we may keep our faces ever turned upward, and learn to grow, as they

grew, like their Master, pure and straight and strong—fit flowers to blossom in the Garden of God.

'Saints are like roses when they flush rarest,
Saints are like lilies when they bloom fairest,
Saints are like violets, sweetest of their kind.'

Saint Ursula

Once upon a time in the land of Brittany there lived a good king, whose name was Theonotus. He had married a princess who was as good as she was beautiful, and they had one little daughter, whom they called Ursula.

It was a very happy and prosperous country over which Theonotus ruled, for he was a Christian, and governed both wisely and well, and nowhere was happiness more certain to be found than in the royal palace where the king and queen and little Princess Ursula lived.

All went merrily until Ursula was fifteen years old, and then a great trouble came, for the queen, her mother, died. The poor king was heart-broken, and for a long time even Ursula could not comfort him. But with patient tenderness she tried to do for him all that her mother had done, and gradually he began to feel that he still had something to live for.

Her mother had taught Ursula with great care, and the little maid had loved her lessons, and so it came to pass that there was now no princess in all the world so learned as the Princess Ursula. It is said that she knew all that had happened since the beginning of the world, all about the stars and the winds, all the poetry that had ever been written, and every science that learned men had ever known.

But what was far better than all this learning was that the princess was humble and good. She never thought herself wiser than other people, and her chief pleasure was in doing kind things and helping others. Her father called her the light of his eyes, and his one fear was that she would some day marry and leave him alone.

And true it was that many princes wished to marry Ursula,

for the fame of her beauty and of her learning had spread to far distant lands.

Now on the other side of the sea, not very far from Brittany, there was a great country called England. The people there were strong and powerful, but they had not yet learned to be Christians. The king of that land had an only son called Conon, who was as handsome as he was brave. And when his father heard of the fame of the Princess Ursula he made up his mind that she should be his son's wife. So he sent a great company of nobles and ambassadors to the court of Brittany to ask King Theonotus for the hand of the Princess Ursula.

That king received the messengers most courteously, but he was very much troubled and perplexed at the request. He did not want to part with Ursula, and he knew she did not wish to marry and leave him. And yet he scarcely dared offend the powerful King of England, who might be such a dangerous enemy.

So to gain time he told the messengers he would give them their answer next day, and then he shut himself up in his room and sorrowfully leaned his head upon his hand as he tried to think what was best to be done. But as he sat there thinking the door opened and Ursula came in.

'Why art thou so sad, my father?' she asked, 'and what is it that troubleth thee so greatly?'

'I have this day received an offer for thy hand,' answered her father sadly, 'and the messengers are even now here, and because they come from the King of England I dare not refuse their request, and yet I know not what answer to give them when they return in the morning.'

'If that is all, do not trouble thyself, dear father,' answered Ursula; 'I myself will answer the messengers and all will be well.'

Then the princess left her father and went to her own room that she might consider what answer might be wisest to send. But the more she thought the more troubled she

became, until at last she grew so weary that she took off her crown and placed it as usual at the foot of her bed and prepared to go to rest. Her little dog lay guarding her, and she slept calmly and peacefully until she dreamed a dream which seemed almost like a vision. For she thought she saw a bright light shining through the door and through the light an angel coming towards her, who spoke to her and said:—

'Trouble not thyself, Ursula, for to-morrow thou shalt know what answer thou shalt give. God has need of thee to save many souls, and though this prince doth offer thee an earthly crown, God has an unfading crown of heavenly beauty laid up for thee, which thou shalt win through much suffering.'

So next morning when the messengers came into the great hall to receive their answer, they saw the Princess Ursula herself sitting on the throne next to her father. She was so beautiful, and greeted them so graciously that they longed more than ever that their prince might win her for his bride.

And as they listened for the king to speak, it was Ursula's voice that fell on their ears. She began by sending her greeting to the King of England and to Prince Conon, his son, and bade the messengers say that the honour offered her was more than she deserved, but since their choice had fallen upon her, she on her side was ready to accept the prince as her promised husband, if he would agree to three conditions. 'And first,' went on Ursula, leaning forward and speaking very clearly and slowly, so that the foreign ambassadors might understand every word, 'I would have the prince, your master, send to me ten of the noblest ladies of your land to be my companions and friends, and for each of these ladies and for myself a thousand maidens to wait upon us. Secondly, he must give me three years before the date of my marriage so that I and these noble ladies may have time to serve God by visiting the shrines of the saints in distant lands. And thirdly, I ask that

the prince and all his court shall accept the true faith and be baptized Christians. For I cannot wed even so great and perfect a prince, if he be not as perfect a Christian.'

Then Ursula stopped speaking, and the ambassadors bowed low before her beauty and wisdom and went to take her answer to their king.

Now Ursula did not make these conditions without a purpose, for in her heart she thought that surely the prince would not agree to such demands, and she would still be free. But even if he did all that she had asked, it would surely fulfil the purpose of her dream, and she would save these eleven thousand maidens and teach them to serve and honour God.

Ere long the ambassadors arrived safely in England, and went to report their mission to the king. They could not say enough about the perfections of this wonderful princess of Brittany. She was as fair and straight as a lily, her rippling hair was golden as the sunshine, and her eyes like shining stars. The pearls that decked her bodice were not as fair as the whiteness of her throat, and her walk and every gesture was so full of grace that it clearly showed she was born to be a queen. And if the outside was so fair, words failed them when they would describe her wisdom and learning, her good deeds and kind actions.

The king, as he listened to his nobles, felt that no conditions could be too hard that would secure such a princess for his son, and as for the prince himself his only desire was to have her wishes fulfilled as quickly as possible, so that he might set sail for Brittany and see with his own eyes this beautiful princess who had promised to be his bride.

So letters were sent north, south, east, and west, to France and Scotland and Cornwall, wherever there were vassals of England to be found, bidding all knights and nobles to send their daughters to court with their attendant maidens, the fairest and noblest of the land. All were to be arrayed in the finest and costliest raiment and most precious jewels, so that

they might be deemed fit companions for the Princess Ursula, who was to wed Prince Conon, their liege lord.

Then the knights and nobles sent all their fairest maidens, and so eager were they to do as the king desired, that very soon ten of the noblest maidens, each with a thousand attendants, and another thousand for the Princess Ursula, were ready to start for the court of Brittany.

Never before was seen such a fair sight as when all these maidens went out to meet the Princess Ursula. But fairest of all was the princess herself as she stood to receive her guests. For the light of love shone in her eyes, and to each she gave a welcome as tender as if they had all been her own sisters. It seemed a glorious thing to think they were all to serve God together, and no longer to live the life of mere pleasure and vanity.

As may well be believed the fame of these fair maidens spread far and near, and all the nobles and barons crowded to the court to see the sight that all the world talked about. But Ursula and her maidens paid no heed to the gay courtiers, having other matters to think upon.

For when the soft spring weather was come, Ursula gathered all her companions together and led them to a green meadow outside the city, through which a clear stream flowed. The grass was starred with daisies and buttercups, and the sweet scent of the lime blossoms hung in the air, a fitting bower for those living flowers that gathered there that day.

In the midst of the meadow there was a throne, and there the princess sat, and with words of wonderful power she told her companions the story of God's love and of the coming of our Blessed Lord, and showed them what the beauty of a life lived for Him might be.

And the faces of the listening maidens shone with a glory that was more than earthly, as they with one accord promised to follow the Princess Ursula wherever she might lead, if only she would help them to live the blessed life so that they too

might win the heavenly crown.

Then Ursula descended from her throne and talked with each of the maidens, and those who had not yet been baptized she led through the flowery meadow to the banks of the stream, and there a priest baptized them while the birds joined in the hymn of praise sung by the whole company.

But all this while the Prince Conon waited with no little impatience for news of Ursula. He had been baptized and joined the Christian faith, he had sent the companions she desired, and now he waited for her to fulfil her promise.

And ere long a letter reached him, written round and fair in the princess's own handwriting, telling him that as he had so well fulfilled her conditions, and was now her own true knight, she gave him permission to come to her father's court, that they might meet and learn to know each other.

It was but little time that Prince Conon lost before he set sail for Brittany. The great warships made a prosperous voyage over the sea that parted the two countries, and came sailing majestically into the harbour of Brittany, where the people had gathered in crowds to see the young prince who had come to woo their fair princess.

From every window gay carpets were hung, and the town was all in holiday, as Ursula stood on the landing-place, the first to greet the prince as he stepped ashore, and all that Conon had heard of her seemed as nothing compared to the reality, as she stood before him in her great beauty and welcomed him with gentle courtesy. And he grew to love her so truly that he was willing to do in all things as she wished, though he longed for the three years to be over that he might carry her off to England and make her his queen.

But Ursula told the prince of the vision that had come to her in her dream, when the angel had said she must first go through much suffering, and visit the shrines of saints in distant lands. And she told him she could not be happy unless he granted her these three years in which to serve God, and

begged him meanwhile to stay with her father and comfort him while she was gone.

So Ursula set out with her eleven thousand maidens, and the city was left very desolate and forlorn. But the pilgrims were happy as they sailed away over the sea, for they were doing the angel's bidding, and they feared nothing, for they trusted that God would protect and help them.

At first the winds were contrary and they were driven far out of their course, so that instead of arriving at Rome, which was the place they had meant to go to, they were obliged to land at a city called Cologne, where the barbarous Germans lived. Here, while they were resting for a little, another dream was sent to Ursula, and the angel told her that in this very place, on their return, she and all her maidens would suffer death and win their heavenly crowns. This did not affright the princess and her companions, but rather made them rejoice that they should be found worthy to die for their faith.

So they sailed on up the River Rhine till they could go no further, and they landed at the town of Basle, determined to do the rest of their pilgrimage on foot.

It was a long and tedious journey over the mountains to Italy, and the tender feet of these pilgrims might have found it impossible to climb the rough road had not God sent six angels to help them on their way, to smooth over the rough places, and to help them in all dangers so that no harm could befall them.

First they journeyed past the great lakes where the snow-capped mountains towered in their white glory, then up the mountain-road, ever higher and higher, where the glaciers threatened to sweep down upon them, and the path was crossed by fierce mountain-torrents. But before long they began to descend the further side; and the snow melted in patches and the green grass appeared. Then followed stretches of flowery meadow-land, where the soft southern air whispered to them of the land of sunshine, fruit, and flowers.

Lower down came the little sun-baked Italian villages, and the simple, kindly people who were eager to help the company of maidens in every way, and gazed upon them with reverence when they knew they were on a pilgrimage to Rome.

Thus the pilgrims went onward until at length they came to the River Tiber and entered the city of Rome, where were the shrines of Saint Peter and Saint Paul.

Now the Bishop of Rome, whom men call the Pope, was much troubled when it was told him that a company of eleven thousand fair women had entered his city. He could not understand what it might mean, and was inclined to fear it might be a temptation of the evil one. So he went out to meet them, taking with him all his clergy in a great procession, chanting their hymns as they went.

And soon the two processions met, and what was the amazement and joy of the Pope when a beautiful maiden came and knelt before him and asked for his blessing, telling him why she and her companions had come to Rome.

'Most willingly do I give thee my blessing,' answered the old man, 'and bid thee and thy companions welcome to my city. My servants shall put up tents for you all in some quiet spot, and ye shall have the best that Rome can afford.'

So the maidens rested there in quiet happiness, thankful to have come to the end of their pilgrimage and to have reached the shrines of God's great saints. But to Ursula an added joy was sent which made her happiness complete.

For the prince, whom she had left behind, grew impatient of her long absence, and the longing for his princess grew so strong he felt that he could not stay quietly at home not knowing where she was nor what had befallen her. So he had set out, and, journeying by a different route, had arrived in Rome the same day as Ursula and her maidens were received by the good bishop.

It is easy to picture the delight of Conon and Ursula when

they met together again, and knelt land in hand to receive the Pope's blessing. And when Ursula told him all that had happened and of the angels whom God had sent to guide and protect them, the only desire the prince had was to share her pilgrimage and be near her when danger threatened. And his purpose only became stronger when she told him of the vision she had had in the city of Cologne.

'How can I leave thee, my princess,' he asked, 'when I have but now found thee? Life holds no pleasure when thou art absent. The days are grey and sunless without the sunshine of thy presence. Bid me come with thee and share thy dangers, and if it be, as thou sayest, that it is God's will that thou and all these maidens shall pass through suffering and death for His sake, then let me too win the heavenly crown that we may praise God together in that country where sorrow and separation can touch us no more.'

And Ursula was glad to think that, through love of her, the prince should be led to love God, and so granted his request and bade her companions prepare to set out once more.

The Pope would fain have persuaded them to stop longer in Rome, but Ursula told him of her vision, and how it was time to return as the dream had warned her. Then the Pope and his clergy made up their minds to join the pilgrimage also, that they too might honour God by a martyr's death.

Now there were in Rome at that time two great Roman captains who were cruel heathens, and who looked upon this pilgrimage with alarm and anger. They commanded all the imperial troops in the northern country of Germany; and when they heard that Ursula and her maidens were bound for Cologne they were filled with dismay and wrath. For they said to each other:

'If so many good and beautiful women should reach that heathen land the men there will be captivated by their beauty and wish to marry them. Then, of course, they will all become Christians, and the whole nation will be won over to this new

religion.'

'We cannot suffer this,' was the answer. 'Come, let us think of some way to prevent so great a misfortune that would destroy all our power in Germany.'

So these two wicked heathen captains agreed to send a letter to the king of the Huns, a fierce savage, who was just then besieging Cologne. In it they told him that thousands of fair women in a great company were on their way to help the city, and if they were allowed to enter all chances of victory for his army would vanish. There was but one thing to be done and that was to kill the entire band of maidens the moment they arrived.

Meanwhile Ursula and her companions had set sail for Cologne, and with them were now Prince Conon and his knights and the Pope with many bishops and cardinals. And after many days of danger and adventure the pilgrims arrived at the city of Cologne.

The army of barbarians who were encamped before the city was amazed to see such a strange company landing from the ships. For first there came the eleven thousand maidens, then a company of young unarmed knights, then a procession of old men richly robed and bearing no weapons of any kind.

For a moment the savage soldiers stood still in amazement, but then, remembering the orders they had received in the letter from the Roman captains, they rushed upon the defenceless strangers and began to slay them without mercy. Prince Conon was the first to fall, pierced by an arrow, at the feet of his princess. Then the knights were slain and the Pope with all his clergy.

Again the savage soldiers paused, and then like a pack of wolves they fell upon the gentle maidens, and these spotless white lambs were slain by thousands.

And in their midst, brave and fearless, was the Princess Ursula, speaking cheerful words of comfort to the dying and bidding one and all rejoice and look forward to the happy

meeting in the heavenly country. So great was her beauty and courage that even those wicked soldiers dared not touch her, and at last, when their savage work was done, they took her before their prince that he might decide her fate.

Never before had Ursula's beauty shone forth more wonderfully than it did that day when she stood among these savage men and gazed with steadfast eyes upon the prince, as one might look upon a wild beast.

The prince was amazed and enchanted, for he had never seen so lovely a maid in his life before, and he motioned to the soldiers to bring Ursula nearer to him.

'Do not weep, fair maiden,' he said, trying to speak in his gentlest voice, 'for though you have lost all your companions you will not be alone. I will be your husband, and you shall be the greatest queen in Germany.'

Then most proudly did Ursula draw herself up, and her clear eyes shone with scorn as she answered:

'Does it indeed seem to thee as though I wept? And canst thou believe that I would live when all my dear ones have been slain by thee, thou cruel coward, slayer of defenceless women and unarmed men?'

And when the proud prince heard these scornful words he fell into a furious rage, and, bending the bow that was in his hand, he shot three arrows through the heart of Princess Ursula and killed her instantly.

So the pure soul went to join the companions of her pilgrimage and to receive the crown of life which the angel of her dream had promised her, and for which she had laid down her earthly crown as gladly as when in her peaceful home she laid it aside before she went to rest.

Saint Benedict

It was in the year of our Lord 540 that Saint Benedict was born at Spoleto in Italy, and he was only a boy of sixteen on the night when our story begins.

Such a cold night it was. Piercing wind swept over the mountains, whistling through the pine-trees and hurrying on to the great city of Rome that lay in the plains below. It was cold enough in the city where the people could take shelter in their house and sit warming their hands over their little pots of fire, but out on the bare hillside it was even worse. For the icy breath of the winter wind, which had come far over the snow, swept into every nook and corner as if determined to search out any summer warmth that might be lingering in a sheltered corner.

And there in a cave high up among the rocks, a boy sat listening to the wind, and thinking of many things, as he tried to wrap his worn old cloak closer round him.

He was a tall thin lad, with sad dreaming eyes and a face already sharpened by want and suffering. The cave in which he sat had little in it, except a heap of dried leaves which served him for a bed, and it was difficult to imagine how any one could live in so dreary and comfortless a place, so far from any other human being.

But he was thinking of a very different home, as he sat shivering in the cold that night. Only a year ago he had lived in a beautiful palace, where everything was pleasant and warm and bright. His father was the lord of the country around, and he, the only son of the house, had everything that he could want. They were all proud of him, he was so clever and brilliant, and as soon as he was old enough he was

sent to study in Rome, that he might become a great lawyer.

There the boy's eyes saw a different scene—the great city of Rome, where all was gaiety and pleasure, where all pleased the eye, the ear, and the taste, but where, alas, so much wickedness dwelt as well. He had tried to shut his eyes to things he did not wish to see, but day by day the sights and sounds around him, the talk of his companions, and the things they thought so pleasant had become hateful to him. And one day he had stolen secretly away from Rome, leaving everything behind, determined to go away into a desert place and live alone. This it seemed to him was the only way of truly serving God, to learn to deny himself in everything and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

A tender smile came over the boy's face as the next picture rose before his eyes. True he had left all and gone into the wilderness, but love could not so easily be left behind, and his old nurse had found out a way of following him, and would not be denied the pleasure of serving him and caring for his wants; even begging food, from door to door, that she might prepare a dainty meal for him.

It had been very pleasant, but its very pleasantness had warned him that he must deny himself still further. So he had once more stolen away, when his old nurse was asleep and had hidden himself in the cave among the rocks of Subiaco. Here he was indeed alone, and the only food he had was a little bread which a kind old hermit gave him daily, and his only drink the clear water of the mountain streams.

And here he seemed to live with God alone, seeing no one but the kind old hermit who brought him his daily bread. He was happy and peaceful, never ceasing to pray for those who in the busy world might forget to pray for themselves.

But this night the thoughts of past days were troubling him. And as he sat there listening to the wind he began to long for the things he had left behind. One beautiful face especially grew clearer than the rest, and smiling upon him

beckoned him back to the pleasures and comforts and earthly joys he had put away from him.

With a cry he sprang to his feet and rushed out of the cave. For a moment he felt as if his feet must carry him down the steep mountain-side, over the plain and back to the beautiful city; and then he stood still, and with a prayer for help to overcome this temptation of the Evil One, he threw himself into a thicket of thorny briars that grew by the side of the cave. There he rolled over and over until he was torn and bleeding; then slowly returning to the cave he lay down upon his bed of leaves, peaceful and contented. The evil thoughts had fled, the face that tempted him had vanished, and Satan was conquered.

So Benedict began his life of self-denial and solitary prayer. Years passed by and in spite of the loneliness of the place and the few people who ever passed by that way, it began to be known that one of God's saints lived in the mountain cave. The shepherds who fed their flocks on the lower hills would bring him little offerings of milk or cheese and ask his blessing, or perhaps a prayer for one who was sick. And gradually people began to call him their saint of the mountain, and to come to him for help in all their troubles. Thus the fame of his goodness spread wider and wider, until a company of monks who lived some way off sent and besought him to come and live with them and be their head.

Benedict was grieved to think of leaving his little cell which he had grown to love, and the simple mountain people, who so often came to him in their need. But he thought this was a call he ought to obey, so he sorrowfully set out and journeyed many miles till he came to the convent of the brothers.

It was all very strange to him after the stillness of his mountain cell, and he could not accustom himself to hearing voices all day long and to seeing so many faces. Still he strove to do his duty and soon made many changes in the convent life. He told the brothers plainly that there were many

comforts they must put away, and above all that they must eat less and work more.

Now the brothers did not like this at all, and they began to repent that they had asked so great a saint to come and rule over them, for he made their rule so hard and strict, that few of them cared to keep it.

Then one day a strange thing happened. The brothers were all dining together, and Benedict was silently eating his portion, his thoughts far away in the little mountain cell at Subiaco, when some one touched his arm and offered him a cup of wine. Benedict turned and looked searchingly into the brother's face, and then with upraised hand made the sign of the cross over the cup. Instantly it fell broken to the ground, and the wine was spilt upon the floor, for there had been poison in the cup, which the holy sign had destroyed.

Then Benedict looked round at the company of brothers, who sat with downcast eyes, ashamed and silent, and, without a word, he rose and left them. He returned, alone as he had come, back to his mountain home, where instead of human voices there was the song of the birds, where the wild flowers looked at him with pure, friendly faces, and even the wild animals did not count him their enemy and would do him no harm.

Here he hoped once more to live quite alone, but one by one men came and built huts close to his cave, that they might be near so great a saint, and before long there was a great company living around him.

Benedict's fame had spread even to Rome, and two of the Roman nobles sent their sons to be taught by him. One was only five years old and the other twelve, and it seemed a hard life for such children. But Benedict cared for them and watched over them, and they loved him as if he had been their own father.

And after all life was very pleasant on the mountain-side, when the sun shone and lessons and prayers were over. They

could play among the pine-trees and chase the goats over the rocks, and when the sun grew too hot creep back into the cave to rest. In spring there were the first flowers to hunt for, and they would come back with eager hands filled with violets and mountain anemones. And in autumn there were nuts and berries to be gathered, which they laid up like young squirrels for their winter store.

And among the daily duties there was nothing they liked so well as to go down to the lake to fetch water, when the mountain springs had run dry. One day it was the little one's turn to do this, and as he was leaning over, his foot slipped, and he fell into the lake, and before he could utter a cry the water closed over his head.

At that very moment Benedict, who was kneeling in prayer on the hill above, saw a vision of the boy's danger, and hastily sent the elder lad down to the lake to help the child.

He never stayed to question why he was sent, but sped down the mountain-side, and without a moment's delay threw himself into the lake, hoping to be able to reach the little dark head that had risen above the water for the last time. And lo! he found that the water grew firm beneath his feet, and he walked as if he was on dry land, and lifting the child, carried him safely ashore.

When Benedict saw that so many other hermits had taken up their abode on the mountain, he determined to form them into a company of brothers, and give them a rule to live by, and by and by they built a little chapel where they could meet for daily service.

Now, strangely enough, every evening at the hour of prayer, one young monk became restless and uneasy, and would steal silently out of the chapel and disappear down the hillside. None of the brothers could think what made him do this; but night after night the same thing happened just when prayers were about to begin. All were troubled and disturbed, till at last they went to Benedict, and asked him what it could

mean. Then the saint promised to watch, and that very evening he saw what no other eyes had seen.

Into the chapel came a little demon black as coal, and he seized the robe of the poor young monk, and dragged him out of the door. And though the demon was so tiny he was stronger than the monk, and easily led him swiftly away out of sound of the chapel bell.

Then Benedict followed, and touching the monk with his rod, bade the demon begone and trouble him no longer. And after that the young monk stayed in the chapel with the rest, and the demon was seen no more.

It seemed as if Benedict must always suffer from the malice of evil brothers, who disliked his strict rule; and even in his own mountain home the danger followed him. This time the poison was put into a loaf of bread; but Benedict knew that it was there, and while the wicked monk who offered it to him watched with evil eye, hoping to see him eat it, he turned to a wood near by, where a young raven sat. 'Come hither,' said Benedict, holding out the loaf towards the raven, 'come hither, and take this bread and carry it where the poison that is hidden within can do no harm.'

And the story tells us that the raven instantly obeyed, and carried off the loaf. And ere long Death, more powerful than the raven, carried off that wicked monk, so that the poison which lurked in his evil heart could no longer do harm to any one.

It troubled Benedict greatly about this time to hear that not very far off on Monte Cassino there was a heathen temple where the people worshipped false gods, and were living in darkness and sin.

It seemed terrible that such a thing should be suffered in a Christian land, so Benedict made up his mind to go himself and force the people to listen to him.

It was a strange contrast to see him in his coarse, poor robe and thin wan face standing preaching among the crowd

of gay pleasure-seekers, who cared for nothing but eating and drinking and making merry. They could not understand why any one should choose to be poor, and suffer pain and hunger for the sake of any god.

But as Benedict taught them day by day, the majesty of his face and the solemn notes in his voice forced them to listen half unwillingly. Then, as they began to learn about the true God, they saw that the gods they had worshipped were false, and they pulled down their temple, and built two chapels on the place where it had stood.

Here, too, Benedict built the first great monastery which was called after him; and after this the brothers began to be known by his name, and were called Benedictines.

But the Evil One saw with great rage that Benedict was taking away his servants, and destroying his temples, and he tried in every way to hinder the work. Once when the workmen were trying to raise a stone they found it impossible to move it, though they worked hard all day. At last, in despair, they besought Benedict to come to help them.

As soon as he came he saw at once what was the matter, for on the stone sat a little black demon laughing at the efforts of the workmen; knowing they could never move the stone while he chose to sit there.

'Get you gone, messenger of Satan,' cried Benedict.

And with a howl of rage the imp fled, and the stone was lifted easily into its place.

Upon a certain day, not long after the monastery was built, as Benedict was praying in the chapel of the convent, one of the brothers came to tell him that a great company of soldiers were coming up the hill, and at their head was Totila, king of the Goths, who had sent a messenger to ask the saint to receive him.

Benedict, who cared little for earthly kings, was yet too courteous to refuse any such request, so he went out to where the company was gathered on the mountain-side.

The rough soldiers stood with heads uncovered, and from their midst came one who wore a crown and sandals of gold and a kingly robe. He knelt before the saint, and said in a loud, clear voice:

'I, Totila, king of the Goths, have come to crave thy blessing, father, for thy fame hath spread even to the wild north country where I reign.'

The brothers, crowding behind Benedict, eager to see these curious strangers, were surprised to hear no answering words of welcome fall from the lips of the saint. And still more surprised were they when Benedict pointed an accusing finger at the glittering crown that shone on the king's head, and said:

'Why dost thou bear upon thy head the sign of royalty which belongs not to thy station? And why have thy lips framed this deceit? Go to thy master, and bid him come to me in truth, and think not that I could mistake a servant for a king.'

And to the amazement of all, the real king, who had disguised his armour-bearer to test the power of the saint, came quickly forward, and with no royal robe or golden crown, knelt low before the saint, confessing all, and praying to be forgiven. He was sure now that this was indeed a servant of God, and he listened humbly while Benedict reproved him for his many sins, and warned him of the fate that awaited him.

And so the years passed on, bringing much honour and earthly renown to him who had once lived a lonely boy upon the wild mountain-side.

Things had changed since those early days. He could no longer live quite alone as he had once loved to do, for the world had followed him even into the wilderness. But his heart was as pure and his purpose as strong as when he was a lonely boy seeking only to serve God.

Perhaps the one great pleasure of his earthly life was the yearly visit he paid to his sister Scholastica, who had for many

years come to live near him. She had formed a little company of nuns, who strove to live as the brothers were living, working and praying and denying themselves all earthly pleasures.

And as it was a great delight to Benedict to visit his sister, so to Scholastica the day of his coming was the happiest day of all the year. The only thing that grieved her was that the golden hours of that bright day seemed to fly faster than any other, while she listened to his words of counsel and advice, and told him all her troubles.

As it drew near the time for one of these yearly visits, Scholastica began to long for her brother as she had never longed before. Something told her that these bright summer days were to be the last she should spend on earth; and the longing to see and talk to her brother grew almost more than she could bear.

And when he came the hours slipped past even faster than was their wont, and before she could realise it the time had come for him to go. There was so much still to say, and she needed his help so sorely, that she prayed him to wait a few hours longer. But Benedict was persuaded that it was his duty to set off, and duty to him ever came before all else. He gently told her it could not be; that he must return to the brothers that night.

But while he spoke, Scholastica was not listening to his words, nor heeding what he said. With her whole heart she was praying God that He would grant her this one request, and prevent her brother from leaving her so soon.

And as she prayed the light suddenly died out of the sky, great clouds arose and, before Benedict could set out, a terrible storm began to rage. The thunder pealed overhead, the hail came down in a blinding shower, and it was impossible for any one to leave the shelter of the house.

Thus God answered the prayer of Scholastica, filling her heart with thankfulness. And afterwards the heart of Benedict was also filled with gratitude, for not many days later he

saw in a vision the soul of his sister flying like a white dove up to heaven's gate, and he knew he should see her on earth no more.

Benedict had lived a long, hard life, eating but little, suffering cold, and denying himself in all things. But though his spirit only grew stronger and brighter as time went on, his body was worn out, and at last he prepared to lay it aside, as men lay aside the worn-out robe which has grown threadbare.

And as he had longed to live alone, so, when death came, he prayed to be carried to the little chapel, and there to be left before the altar alone with God. Thus Benedict the Blessed went home at last, leaving his tired body in God's house, while his spirit returned to God who gave it.

Saint Christopher

Long ago in a far distant land there lived a boy called Offero. He was taller and stronger and braver than any of his companions, and he was called Offero, which means bearer, because he could carry the heaviest burdens on his broad shoulders, without stooping under their weight. His was the grandest kind of strength too, for it was not only strength of body, but strength of heart and soul besides.

As Offero grew into manhood he began to tire of being first only in games and play, and he longed to use his strength for some real end, feeling sure there was work in the world waiting for his hand.

Sometimes as he strode across the olive-clad hills, and felt the wind in his hair, and drew in great breaths of life and strength, he would see before him a dim vision of some great purpose, ever beckoning him on, and in his ear a voice would sound, that bade him use his strength only for the highest.

Night and day Offero thought upon the vision, and it seemed to him that its meaning was that he should go out into the world and do a man's work. And, since for him the highest meant strength and fearlessness, he vowed that he would search until he found the bravest and strongest king and would take service only with him.

So Offero set out and, after many weary wanderings, he came to the gates of a great city. Here, in a palace built of alabaster, lived one whom the people called the greatest king on earth. He had more soldiers and horsemen and chariots than any other monarch, and the banner of crimson and gold that floated over the palace roof, had never been lowered in the face of any foe.

But Offero scarcely noticed all the glitter and splendour of the palace, or the crowd of waiting men. He was only eager to see the king, whom every one said was as brave and strong as a lion. No one stopped him as he strode on. Even the royal guards at the palace door stood back to let him pass. He was dusty and travel-stained, and his armour was dull and dinted by many a hard blow, but there was that in his walk and in his eyes, and the grasp of his great hand upon his sword, that made every one fall back to let him pass.

The king was seated upon his throne making wise laws for his people, when Offero entered the audience hall. Straight to the steps of the throne he went, and kneeling there placed his sword at the king's feet and offered to be his true servant. For a moment the king looked in wonder and astonishment at this giant, and the great sword that stretched along the widest step of his ivory throne. Then with a look of pride at the strength of the man kneeling at his feet, he bade Offero rise and use his sword henceforth only in the king's service.

So Offero became the king's servant, and not one of the king's enemies could stand against him. Wherever there was danger to be met or fighting to be done, there he was ever to be found, and he made his master's name more feared and honoured than that of any other monarch in the world. His work filled all his time and thoughts, and the vision he had seen grew so dim that it had nearly faded from his memory, when one night a minstrel came to the court.

This minstrel had a harp of gold and his fingers woke the sweetest music from the golden strings, but sweeter than all was his voice as he sang of brave deeds and mighty battles, the wisdom of the wise and the courage of the strong.

The heart of Offero was charmed by the music as he sat idly among the rest of the courtiers, listening in the great audience chamber.

But as the minstrel sang, Offero noticed that the king looked disturbed and once or twice made a strange sign with

his hand when a certain evil name was repeated in the song. It almost seemed to Offero as if at such times a look of fear came into his eyes.

Waiting behind the rest when the minstrel was gone, Offero looked gravely into the king's eyes and said:

'My liege, wilt thou tell thy servant, why thou didst make that sign upon thy forehead and what the look that came into thine eyes may mean—thou who fearest no man?'

Then the king answered Offero saying:

'That sign is the sign of the cross, and I make it upon my brow whenever I hear the name of Satan, the Evil Spirit, because I fear him, and because that sign alone can protect me from him.'

And Offero bowed his head, and standing there before the king he answered sadly:

'Fare thee well, O my king, for I may not serve thee longer. I have promised only to serve the greatest and one who feared nothing, so I must e'en seek this Evil Spirit. If thou fearest him, must he not be more powerful than thou?'

So Offero went sorrowfully out of the king's presence, and away from the splendid court and the fair city. And as he went the vision which of late had faded from him grew clearer, and seemed to beckon him on and on. And the voice that of old sounded in his ears spoke to him once more, so that his heart became light and his purpose grew strong.

Now after many days of toilsome wanderings, Offero came at last to the skirt of a great dark wood. The pines were so thick that never a sunbeam could pierce through their tops, and the trunks of the trees could only just be seen ghostly grey in the everlasting twilight that reigned there.

Deeper and darker grew the wood as Offero went on, until he came to the darkest part of all, and there he found the Evil Spirit and his court.

Offero could see nothing clearly in the gloom, but one great shadow stood out, bigger and stronger than any of the

other shadows that flitted about, and on its brow was the outline of a kingly crown.

'What seekest thou here?' asked the Evil One, in a deep strong voice, like the roar of distant thunder.

'I seek to serve the greatest and strongest king on earth, and one who knows no fear,' answered Offero.

'Then is thy quest ended,' said the shadowy king, with uplifted head and proud gesture, 'for I indeed am the greatest king of all, and I know not what that word fear meaneth.'

So Offero became one of the servants of the King of Evil, and his work was heavy and his wages light. But that seemed but a small matter to him, if only he had indeed found the highest.

Time passed on until there came a day when the Evil One rode out with all his servants and Offero at their head. And as they passed out of the wood they came to a cross set up by the wayside. It was only a rough cross of wood, standing out clear against the sky, the grass beneath worn by those who had knelt before it, and a bunch of wild flowers laid at its foot by some grateful hand. But when the eye of the Evil One fell upon it, he shuddered and, turning quickly round, plunged back into the wood, followed by all his servants. And Offero saw he was trembling from head to foot.

'Stop,' cried Offero, barring his way, for he was not afraid even of the great Shadow upon the fierce black horse. 'I would fain know what this meaneth, ere we go further. Didst thou not say thou wert stronger than all and feared nothing? and lo! thou tremblest like a child before a piece of crossed wood.'

'It is not the cross I fear,' answered the Evil One, 'but Him who once hung upon it.'

'And who is He that you should tremble at the very thought of Him?' asked Offero. 'Is He a greater and stronger king than thou?'

'He is greater, and He is stronger,' answered Satan, 'and He is the only one I fear.'

Then Offero rode away from the dark wood and the evil company, out into the sunshine and light. And as he looked at the blue sky, and felt the warmth of the blessed sunshine once more, the vision seemed to rise again before his eyes, ever beckoning him onward, and in his ear the same voice sounded, bidding him seek on, until he should indeed find the highest.

Far and near did Offero wander, asking all he met if they could tell him where he might find the Christ—this man who once hung upon a cross and who was greater and more powerful even than Satan, the King of Evil. And some said one thing and some another, but no one could aid him in his quest, until at last in his wanderings he came to a little hut in the midst of a desert.

Here a holy man dwelt, with no living soul near him, serving God day and night.

Most gladly did he welcome Offero, but gladder still was he when Offero eagerly asked him the question that had been upon his lips so long:

'Good hermit, canst thou tell me where I may find the King called Christ, He who once hung upon a cross, and who is stronger even than the King of Evil?'

'That can I,' answered the hermit, 'for He is the Master whom I serve, and in His name thou art welcome indeed.'

And taking Offero into his hut, the hermit gave him food and made him rest. Then in the cool of the evening, when the red sun was sinking behind the belt of distant palm-trees, and a mellow glow turned the sands of the desert into grains of gold, the hermit sat without the hut and told the wonderful Christ story to the listening ears of the giant who lay upon the ground at his feet.

Never had Offero heard words like these before. Even the vision had not prepared him for this. With all his soul in his eyes he listened. Filled with wonder was he at the thought that the King of all heaven should have deigned to come to

earth in the form of a little helpless child. But as the hermit went on and told of His power and majesty, His infinite compassion for the weak and helpless, His courage and fearlessness in the face of His foes, ending with the great sacrifice of the cross, Offero sprang to his feet, and grasping his sword in his hand, he raised it to heaven and vowed he would be Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end, and would fight under no other banner but His, the King of Heaven and Earth.

The hermit was startled as he looked at the gleaming sword, upheld by that strong arm, and in his calm, kind voice, he said:

'My son, the Lord Christ seeketh not to be served as an earthly king. His soldiers fight not with earthly swords, but with the weapons of prayer and fasting.'

'But, father,' said Offero, 'how can I fight with weapons I know nothing of? If He has given me this great strength, surely there must be a way that He would have me use it in His service.'

Then the hermit was troubled, for he saw that Offero must needs serve Christ in some other way.

All night he pondered, and in the morning he bade Offero come with him, and together they journeyed forth for many days until they came to the banks of a river. There the hermit stayed his steps.

It was a very deep and dangerous river and, because there was no bridge across it and the current was strong, many travellers lost their lives in trying to ford it.

This the hermit told Offero, and bade him stay and watch there, so that he might help those who wished to cross, and save the lives of those who might otherwise perish without his aid.

'And in helping others,' said the hermit, 'thou wilt be helping Christ, and it may be He will accept thy service, and will one day come unto thee and take thee for His servant.'

So Offero built a hut on the river bank, and pulling up a palm-tree that was growing there, he used it as a staff to lean upon when he waded through the deep water. He was so tall and strong that no matter how high the river rose he could always wade across it. He was ever ready to help the weary footsore travellers, and often when they were too weak to stand against the current, even with the support of his strong arm, he would take them up upon his broad shoulders and carry them safely across.

For a long time did Offero live in his little hut on the river-bank, doing his work well, in the hope that his Master might come to him as the hermit had promised. But weeks and months went by, and still the King did not come, and Offero began to fear that He never would pass that way.

Then one night a terrible storm began to rage. The wind howled round the lonely little hut, and the waters roared as they rushed past in the darkness.

'I need not watch to-night,' thought Offero, 'for no one will seek to cross the river in such a storm as this.'

But as he sat listening to the roll of the thunder and the clashing of the hail on the roof, he fancied he heard, above the noise of the storm, a little voice crying outside and a faint knocking at the door.

It sounded like the cry of a child, and Offero hastily rose up and, unbarring the door, looked out. For a moment he could see nothing in the thick darkness and blinding rain, but presently he heard the cry again, sounding quite close to where he stood, and looking down he saw something small and white, and heard the little voice sounding clear above the storm:

'Kind Offero, wilt thou carry me across the river to-night?'

Then Offero saw it was a little child who was standing out there upon the threshold—a child who looked up at him with pleading eyes, his golden curls lying wet against his cheek, and his little white robe drenched with the driving rain.

Very tenderly Offero stooped down and lifted the little one in his kind, strong arms, and asked him how it came that he was out alone on such a stormy night.

'I must cross the river to-night,' said the child in his soft, clear voice, 'and the water is deep and I am afraid. I saw thy hut and thought perchance one might dwell here who would help me.'

'That will I gladly do,' said Offero, as he felt the little arms clinging round his neck. 'The night is dark, and the river runs high indeed, but thou art such a tiny child, I shall scarcely feel thy weight. I will place thee high upon my shoulder, so that the water may not reach even thy feet.'

So Offero took his great staff in his hand, and placed the child upon his shoulder and stepped down into the roaring flood.

Higher and higher rose the water, stronger and stronger grew the current, as Offero waded on. Never before had his strength been put to such a test. And not only did the torrent threaten to sweep him off his feet, but the child upon his shoulder seemed to grow heavier and heavier with every step, until he could scarcely stagger on under the tremendous weight. But on he went, fighting for each step. And now he was past the worst and into the shallower water beyond. Putting forth all his remaining strength, with one last great effort he struggled up the farther side and with a sigh of relief he climbed upon the bank, and gently set the little child upon the grass.

Then Offero stood looking at him in great wonder and astonishment and said:

'How is it that thou, who seemest but a feather-weight, hast yet become heavier than any burden I ever bore in all my life before?'

And as Offero spoke, the child looked up into his face, and lo! a strange light seemed to shine round the golden head, and his white robe became bright and glistening as the light.

And the wonderful look of majesty in those eyes drew Offero down to his knees. And as he knelt there, scarce daring to lift his eyes before that wonderful gaze, he heard the sweet, clear voice of the little child again, and knew it for the same that had guided him since the vision of his boyhood.

'No wonder that I seemed to thee a heavy burden, for I bear upon my shoulders the sins and sorrows of the whole world. I am Christ, whom thou hast sought to serve. I came to thee in the form of a little helpless child, that I might prove thee, if thou wert indeed my faithful servant. And because thou hast been faithful in helping others, thou shalt be counted worthy to enter my service, and I will give thee the new name of Christopher, because thou hast borne Christ upon thy shoulders. Take now thy staff and strike it into the earth, and thou shalt know by a sign that I am indeed thy King.'

Then the light faded away, and the child was gone. But where Christopher struck his staff, behold, it took root and budded out into leaves of tender green.

And Christopher knelt on there in the darkness with a great joy in his heart, for he had seen the face of his King, and had found his Master at last. He knew that his search was ended, and that henceforth he would serve only the highest. And all the trouble and perplexity had vanished away, for he understood now that in ministering to others he would always be serving his King, even if the work seemed but small and mean.

So Christopher learned to be Christ's true soldier and servant even unto death, and because he fought manfully under His banner unto his life's end, he is called a saint. His old name of Offero has been long forgotten, and we know him only by that new name which the Christ-child gave him that stormy night, and call him Saint Christopher.

Saint Catherine of Siena

As the years pass by Father Time makes many changes in the busy town and quiet country, but there are some places he seems to have forgotten or passed over so lightly that they look very much the same to-day as they did hundreds of years ago.

One of these places, which Time has dealt so gently with, is in the heart of Italy, built high upon a hill. It is a town whose towers and palaces and steep, narrow streets are little changed from what they were five hundred and more years ago, when Catherine, the saint of Siena, was born there.

To-day if you climb the steep winding road that leads up to the city, and make your way through the gates and along the steepest of the narrow streets, you will come to a house with a motto written over the door in golden letters—'Sposae Christi Katharinae domus,' which means 'The house of Katherine, the bride of Christ.' And if you go in you will see the very room where Saint Catherine used to live, the bed of planks on which she slept, her little chapel, and the rooms which her brothers and sisters used.

It all looks just as it did when Benincasa, the dyer of Siena, lived there with his wife Lapa. They had more than twenty children, but each one was welcome, and when at last Catherine and a twin sister were born, there still did not seem one too many. The little sister lived only a few days, and perhaps that made the parents love Catherine all the more, and it was not only her own family who loved her. She was the favourite of all the neighbours, and however busy they were they would always find time to stop and talk to her as they passed. It was not that she was very beautiful, or even very

clever, but she had a way of making every one feel happy when she was near them, and she had the sunniest smile that ever dimpled a baby's face. It was like a sunbeam, lighting up everything near it, and it shone in her eyes as well, so that ere long the people found a new name for her, and called her 'Joy' instead of Catherine.

As soon as she could walk alone, Catherine would wander away, sure of a welcome at every house, and though at first when the other children cried, 'The baby is lost again!' the mother would be anxious, she soon ceased to mind, and only said, 'She is sure to be safe somewhere.'

And safe she always was, for every one would stop work to look after her as she toddled along, and wherever she went Joy carried the sunshine with her.

It happened that one afternoon when Catherine was about six years old, her mother sent her and an elder brother, Stephen, to carry a message to a house some way off. It was a beautiful evening, and as the children went hand in hand down the steep street and up the hill towards the great church of Saint Dominic, Catherine stopped a moment to look at the sunset. She always loved beautiful colours, and to-night the little fleecy clouds were all touched with crimson and gold, like fairy islands in a pale green sea, more beautiful than anything she had ever seen.

Stephen did not care for sunsets. He was much more anxious to be home in time for supper, so he ran on alone, calling to Catherine to follow quickly.

Catherine did not seem to hear his voice or to notice that he was gone, but stood there with eyes fixed on the sunset, her face shining, and her hair like a halo of gold round her head.

It was not the evening sky she was looking at, but a vision of heavenly beauty. For there among the rose-pink clouds she saw the Madonna seated upon a throne and holding in her arms the infant Christ. It was no longer the poor Madonna of

the stable, but the Queen of Heaven, her dazzling robe blue as the summer sky, and a jewelled crown upon her head. Only the same sweet mother-look was there as when she bent over the manger-bed. There are no words to tell of the beauty of the Christ-child's face. Catherine only knew that as He looked at her He smiled and held up His little hand as if in blessing, and that smile drew her heart to His feet.

Then suddenly Catherine's arm was roughly shaken and her brother asked her impatiently at what she was gazing.

'O Stephen,' she cried, 'did you not see it too? Look!'

But the vision had faded, and the grey twilight closed in upon the two little figures as they went slowly home, the boy vexed with his loitering sister, and she sobbing with disappointment to think that the window in heaven was shut, and that she might never again look within.

As Catherine grew older, she never forgot the vision she had seen, or how the hand of the Christ-child had been stretched out to bless her. And it made her think often how she could best please Him, so that some day He might smile on her again.

Catherine had heard a great deal about the good men who went to live in deserts to be alone with God—how they lived in caves and had scarcely anything to eat, and how God would sometimes send the ravens to bring them food. Now she was always fond of wandering, and the idea of living in a desert seemed a beautiful way of serving Christ. She had never gone beyond the walls of the town, and all outside was a new world to her; so she was sure if only she could pass through the city gates, she would soon find her way to the desert, where there would certainly be a cave ready for her to live in.

So one day Catherine set out very early in the morning, carrying in her pocket a small loaf of bread, just in case the ravens should forget to come to a little girl-hermit.

In those days it was not safe to live outside the city walls, and there were no farms nor houses to be seen as Catherine

slipped through the gates and began to find her way down the hillside, among tangled briars and over rough stones. Soon her feet grew very tired, and everything looked so forlorn and wild that she was sure this must be the desert at last, and there, too, was a little cave in the rocks waiting all ready for her.

It was very nice to creep in and out of the hot sunshine into the cool shade, and to rest until the sun went down. But as night came on and she knelt to say her evening prayer, she began to think of home, and the kind mother waiting there, and she knew she had done wrong to come away, even though she had meant to serve God.

Very quickly she left her cave, and as she ran home her feet seemed to fly over the ground. The desert had not been so very far away after all, and she reached the house before her mother had begun to grow anxious, but she never again wandered away to live a hermit's life.

As Catherine grew older she loved to listen to the stories of the saints, and there was one she was never tired of hearing. It was the life of Saint Catherine of Alexandria, the saint whose name she bore.

This young queen was said to be the wisest and noblest of all the saints, and when her courtiers wished her to marry, she said she would only marry a prince who was perfect in every way. Such a prince was of course impossible to find, but one night a poor old hermit had a vision in which the Madonna came to him and told him that our Blessed Lord, the only perfect Man, would accept the love of the young queen's heart and the service of her hands. And when the queen knew this her joy was great, and that very night the Virgin mother came to her in a cloud of glory surrounded by angels bearing crowns of lilies, and in her arms was the Holy Child, who smiled on the queen and placed a ring upon her finger, as a sign that she belonged to Him.

The more Catherine thought about this story the more

she longed that Christ would accept her heart and service too. And one night in a dream He seemed to come to her, just as He had come to the other Catherine, placing a ring upon her finger and bidding her remember that now she had given her heart to Him.

Thus it was a great trouble to Catherine when she was told by her parents soon after this that she was old enough to begin to think of marriage. She said she did not wish to marry at all. But this only made her parents angry with her, especially when one day they found she had cut off all her beautiful golden hair, thinking to make herself so ugly that no one would want her for his wife.

'Very well,' said her father, 'if thou wilt not marry as I bid thee, then shalt thou do the house-work and be our servant.'

He expected this would be a great punishment, but Catherine was glad to have hard work to do, and did it so well and cheerfully that her father began to feel his anger melt away. Then it happened one day that in passing her room he looked in, and there he saw her kneeling with clasped hands and upturned face, and eyes in which the peace of heaven shone, while around her head was a bright light that took the form of a snow-white dove resting there.

From that moment he ceased to be angry with Catherine, and said all should be as she wished, for surely the dove was a sign that God accepted her prayers and approved of what she did.

So she was allowed to have a little room which she made into a chapel where she could be alone to think and to pray. She wanted to learn to conquer herself before she could serve Christ in the world, and for three years she lived almost entirely alone, praying in the little chapel, struggling to overcome her faults and to grow strong to resist temptation.

But in spite of all her struggles evil thoughts would come into her heart, and it seemed impossible to keep them out. It was easy to do right things, but so terribly difficult to think

only pure and good thoughts. She knew that Satan sent the wicked thoughts into her heart, but the hardest trial of all was that Christ seemed to have left her to fight alone—He seemed so very far away.

At last one night, as she lay sobbing in despair, suddenly the evil thoughts left her, and instead she felt that Christ was near and that He bent tenderly over her.

'Why, oh why didst Thou leave me so long, dear Lord?' she cried.

'I never left thee,' His voice said quietly.

'But where wert Thou, Lord, when all was so dark and evil?' she humbly asked.

'I was in thy heart,' replied the voice; 'didst thou not hate the evil thoughts? If I had not been there thou wouldst not have felt how black they were, but because I was in the midst they seemed to thee most evil, and thus I gave thee strength to cast them out.'

So Catherine's heart was filled with peace, and she learned to love Christ more and more, and to deny herself in every way, sleeping on bare planks with a log for her pillow, and eating the things she cared for least.

It was not that she thought these things good in themselves, but she felt she must use every means to make her heart pure and fit to serve her Master.

And before very long Christ spoke to her again in the stillness of the night, and told her she had lived long enough alone, that it was time now to go out into the world and help other people to grow good too.

When Catherine thought of the busy, noisy life which other people led, compared to the quiet peacefulness of her little cell and chapel, she was very sad, and thought she had offended God that He was sending her away from Him to mix with the world again. But His voice sounded in her ears once more, and told her it was not to separate her from Himself that He sent her out, but that she should learn to help others.

'Thou knowest that love giveth two commandments—to love Me, and to love thy neighbour. I desire that thou shouldst walk not on one but two feet, and fly to heaven on two wings.'

So Christ spoke to her, and Catherine with fearful heart prepared to obey, only praying that He would give her strength to do His will. And after that her life was spent in doing good to others.

The smile that used to lighten her face when she was a little child had still the power of bringing peace and gladness to all, as she went amongst the poor, nursing the sick, helping every one in trouble, and teaching people more by her life than her words to love God.

And as, when she was a baby, they called her Joy, so now again they found a new name for her, and she was known as 'the child of the people.' In every kind of trouble they came to her, even asking her to settle their quarrels, so that she was the peacemaker as well as the helper of the whole town.

There was one special reason why people loved Catherine, and that was because she always saw the best that was in them. She knew there was good in every one, no matter how it was dimmed or hidden by the evil that wrapped it round. Where other eyes saw only evil temper or wicked spite, she looked beyond until she found some good that she could love. Every day she prayed to God that He would help her to see the beauty in each soul, so that she might help it to get rid of the sin that dimmed its beauty. And so, because she looked for good in every one, all showed her what was best in themselves, and for very shame would strive to be all that she thought them.

Catherine had joined the Dominican sisterhood and wore the white robe and black veil, but she did not live in a convent as other sisters did. Every morning when the sun began to gild the towers and roofs of the city, passers-by would see her leave her home and walk up the steep street towards the church of

Saint Dominic where she always went to early mass.

Strangers must have wondered when they saw the men uncover their heads as she passed, as if she had been a queen instead of a poor sister clad in a coarse white robe and black veil. But if they had caught sight of her face perhaps they would have understood, for her eyes seemed as if they were looking into heaven, and the holy peace that shone in her smile made men feel that she lived in the very presence of God.

One morning as she was going to church as usual in the first light of dawn, her thoughts far away and her lips moving in prayer, she was startled by the touch of a hand upon her robe and the sound of a voice asking for help. She turned to look and saw a poor man leaning against the wall, haggard and pale, and so weak that he could scarcely stand.

'What dost thou want of me?' asked Catherine pitifully.

'I only ask a little help for my journey,' the poor man said; 'my home is far from here, and the fever laid its hand upon me as I worked to provide bread for those I love. So I pray thee, lady, give me a little money that I may buy food to strengthen me before I start.'

'I would gladly help thee,' answered Catherine most sorrowfully, 'but I am not a lady, only a poor sister, and I have no money of my own to give.'

She turned as if to go on, but the eager hand still held her cloak and the man begged once more.

'For Christ's sake help me, for indeed I need thy help most sorely.'

Then Catherine stood still. She felt she could not leave him so. There was nothing at home she could part with, for that very morning she had given away all the food that was in the house. Her father and mother were good and kind, but she must not give away the things they needed. Sorrowful and perplexed, her hand felt for the rosary which hung at her side, for in every trouble she ever turned in prayer to her dear Lord.

Then as her fingers touched the beads, she suddenly remembered that here was at least one thing which was her very own—a small silver crucifix which she had had since she was a child, and which she had touched so often as she prayed that it was worn smooth and thin.

Still it was silver and would buy the sick man a meal, and she quickly unfastened it from the rosary and put it into his hand. The man's blessings followed her as she went, and though she had parted with the thing she loved best, she counted the blessings more precious than the gift.

And as she knelt in the dim church, after the mass was over, God sent a heavenly vision to reward His servant.

Catherine thought she stood in a great hall filled with things more beautiful than words can tell, and in the midst stood our Blessed Lord, holding in His hand the most beautiful thing of all—a cross of beaten gold, set with jewels of every hue sparkling so brightly that it almost dazzled Catherine's eyes as she looked.

'Dost thou see these shining gifts,' He asked, 'and wouldst thou know whence they came? They are the noble deeds which men have done for My sake.'

And Catherine kneeling there with her empty hands could only bow her head and say: 'Lord, I am only a poor sister, as Thou knowest, and have nought to give Thee. The service I can offer could not find a place among these glorious gifts.'

Then it seemed as if Christ smiled upon her, and holding out the golden cross He asked: 'Hast thou not seen this cross before, Catherine?'

'No, Lord,' she answered, wondering, 'never before have mine eyes beheld anything so lovely.'

But as she gazed upon it, her heart was filled with a sudden gladness, for in the midst of the gold and jewels, in the heart of the glorious light, she saw the little worn silver crucifix which she had given to the poor man that morning for

the love of Christ.

And as the vision faded there rang in her ears the words she knew so well: 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me.'

As time went on the fame of Catherine spread to other towns, outside Siena, and when there were disputes between the great cities of Italy they would send for Catherine, and beg her to act as peacemaker, and she helped them all just as she did her own poor people of Siena. Even the Pope came to her for advice.

In the midst of all this busy life Catherine fell ill. Her love for Christ was so real, and her sorrow for His sufferings so great, that she prayed that she might bear the pain that He had borne. We do not know how our Lord granted her request, but in her hands and feet and side appeared the marks of nails and spear.

All her sufferings she bore most patiently, but her heart was glad when the end came.

The same vision that had smiled on her that summer evening when she was a child, appeared in the sunset sky again, this time never to fade away, as Catherine, the bride of Christ, was led by the white-robed angels up to the throne of our Lord.

Saint Augustine of Hippo

The story of the life of Saint Augustine is different from almost every other saint story, because it is taken from his own words and not from what has been said about him. He wrote a wonderful book called "The Confessions of Saint Augustine," and in it we find all that he thought and did from the time he was a little child.

Augustine was born in 354 in the northern part of Africa, which then belonged to Rome, and was one of the richest countries in the world. His mother, Monica, was a Christian, but all her prayers and loving care could not keep her son from evil ways. He is often called the prodigal saint, because he wandered very far astray for many years into that far country of the youngest son in the parable; living in the midst of the sins and evil pleasures of the world, until he learned to say, 'I will arise and go to my father.'

And so Augustine's story comforts and helps us when we feel how easy it is to do wrong, and how we fail every day to do the good things we meant to do. There are so few days we can mark with a white stone because we have really tried to be good, and so many days we are glad to forget because of the black cross that stands against them. And yet, who knows but, if we fight on to the end, we too may be saints as Augustine was, for he won his crown through many failures.

The story, in Augustine's own words, begins from the time when he was a very little baby, not from what he remembers, but from what he had learned as he watched other babies in whom he saw a picture of himself.

First of all Augustine tells of the tiny baby, who does nothing but sleep and eat and cry. Then the baby begins to laugh

a little when he is awake, and very soon shows clearly his likes and dislikes, and kicks and beats with his little hands when he does not get exactly what he wants. Then comes the time of learning to speak and walk.

After that Augustine begins really to remember things about himself. For who could ever forget the trial of first going to school? Oh, how Augustine hated it, and how hard it seemed to him! The lessons were so difficult and the masters were so strict, and he loved play so much better than work, and when he went back to school with lessons unlearned and work undone, the result was of course that he was whipped. It did seem so unjust to him, for he could not see the use of lessons, and the whippings were so sore. And in his book he tells us how it made him say his first prayer to God—'I used to ask Thee, though a very little boy, yet with no little earnestness, that I might not be whipped at school.'

Augustine could not see the reason why he should be forced to stay indoors and learn dull, wearisome lessons, when he might be playing in the sunshine and learning new games, which seemed so much more worth knowing. How those games delighted him! He was always eager to be first, to win the victory and to be ahead of every one else. But then followed the whipping at school, and the little sore body crept away and sobbed out the prayer from his little sore soul.

He did not understand how it could all be meant for his good. We never quite understand that till we have left school far behind.

I wonder if we all wrote down just exactly what we felt and did when we were little children, whether we would have as many things to confess as Augustine had? There are some faults which no one is very much ashamed to own because they don't seem small and mean and pitiful. But who would like to confess to being greedy and stealing sweet things from the table when no one was looking? Who would care to own that he cheated at games, caring only to come out first

whether he had played fairly or not? Yet this great saint tells us he remembers doing all these mean things and looks back upon them with great sorrow. He warns other little children to kill these faults at the very beginning, for he knows how strong they grow and how difficult to conquer, when the mean child grows into a man whom no one can trust.

As time went on and he grew to be a big boy he went further and further astray. When he was little he stole things to eat because he was greedy or because he wanted to bribe other little boys to sell him their toys, but now that he was older it was out of mere pride and boastfulness that he took what did not belong to him. He thought it grand and manly to show off to other boys how little he cared about doing wrong.

Augustine tells us that in a garden near his house there was a pear-tree covered with pears neither sweet nor large. But just because it belonged to some one else, and he thought it fun to steal, he and his companions went out one dark night and robbed the tree of all its fruit. They did not care to eat the pears, and after tasting one or two threw all the rest to the pigs. There was no particular pleasure in this he allows, and he would never have done it alone, but he wanted the other boys to admire him and to think he was afraid of nothing.

And so years went on and Augustine grew up into manhood, and it seemed as if his evil ways would break his mother's heart. Through all his sin and foolishness she loved him and prayed for him but he paid no heed to her, and wandered further away into that far country, wasting all he had in living wildly and forgetting the God he had prayed to when a child.

One day when Monica was weeping over this wandering son of hers and praying for him with all her heart, God sent a comforting dream to her which she never forgot. She thought she saw herself standing on a narrow wooden plank, and towards her there came a shining angel who smiled upon her as

she stood there worn out with sorrow and weeping.

'Why art thou so sad, and wherefore dost thou weep these daily tears?' asked the angel.

'I weep over the ruin of my son,' answered the poor mother.

Then the angel bade her cease from grieving and be at rest, and told her to look and see that on the same narrow plank of salvation where she was standing Augustine stood beside her.

His mother told Augustine of this dream, and though he only laughed at it, it seemed to sink into his heart and he remembered it many years after. And to Monica it came as a breath of hope, and comforted her through many dark days. For she was sure that God had sent this dream to tell her that in the end she and her son would stand together in His presence.

But though Monica believed this she never ceased to do all that was in her power to help Augustine. And once she went to a learned bishop and begged him to talk to Augustine and try what he could do. But the bishop was a wise man and knew that by speaking he would do more harm than good, for Augustine was proud of his unbelief and had no longing in himself for better things. But Monica did not see this and could only implore the bishop to try, until the good man grew vexed with her and said at last, 'I cannot help thee in this matter, but go thy way in peace. It cannot be that a son of such tears should perish.'

And these words comforted Monica, as the dream had done, and made her sure that in the end all would be right.

The good bishop spoke truly, for after many years had passed Augustine began to be weary of his own way and to look for a higher, better life. He longed to turn his face homeward, but now he had lost the way, and for long he sought it with bitter tears.

At last, one day, he felt he could bear the burden of his

evil life no longer. His sins felt like a heavy chain dragging him down in the darkness, and there was no light to show him which way to turn. Taking a roll of the scriptures he wandered out into the garden and there, as he wept, he heard a voice close by chanting over and over again 'Take, read.' He thought it must be some game that children were playing, but he could remember none that had those words in it. And then he thought perhaps this was a voice from heaven in answer to his prayer, telling him what to do.

Eagerly he took the holy writings in his hand and opened them to read, and there he found words telling him what sort of life he should lead. In a moment it all seemed clear to him. His Father was waiting to receive and pardon him; so he arose and left the far country and all his evil habits and turned his face to God.

And then he tells how he went straight to his mother—the mother who had loved and believed in him through all those evil days, and he told her like a little child how sorry he was at last.

Then, indeed, was Monica's mourning turned into joy, and so at her life's end she and her son sat hand in hand, both looking up towards the dawning heaven; he with eyes ashamed but full of hope, and she with tears all washed away, and eyes that shone with more than earthly joy.

When his mother at last died and left him alone, Augustine did not grieve, for he knew the parting was not for long. All that was left for him to do now was to strive to make good those years he had wasted, and be more fit to meet her when God should call him home.

And so it came to pass that this great sinner became one of God's saints and did a wonderful work for Him in the world. He was made Bishop of Hippo, and was one of the most famous bishops the world has ever known.

There is one legend told of Augustine which has comforted many hearts when puzzling questions have arisen and

it has seemed so difficult to understand all the Bible teaches us about our Father in heaven.

They say that once when this great father of the Church was walking along by the seashore, troubled and perplexed because he could not understand many things about God, he came upon a little child playing there alone. The child had digged a hole in the sand and was carefully filling it with water which he brought from the sea in a spoon. The bishop stopped and watched him for a while and then he asked:

'What art thou doing, my child?'

'I mean to empty the sea into my hole,' answered the child, busily going backwards and forwards with his spoon.

'But that is impossible,' said the bishop.

'Not more impossible than that thy human mind should understand the mind of God,' said the child, gazing upwards at him with grave, sweet eyes.

And before the bishop could answer the child had vanished, and the saint knew that God had sent him as an answer to his troubled thoughts, and as a rebuke for his trying to understand the things that only God could know.

Saint Augustine of Canterbury

It was market-day in the great city of Rome, and the people were busy buying and selling and shouting, just as they do to-day with us, when market-day comes round. But there was a great difference between this Roman market and ours, a difference which would have seemed to us strange and cruel. For instead of sheep and oxen, or green vegetables from the country, they were selling men and boys, and even little maidens. There in the great market-place, with the sun beating down on their bare heads, they stood, looking with dull, despairing eyes, or with frightened glances at the crowds of buyers and sellers who were bargaining around.

Suddenly a hush fell on the crowd, and a stately figure was seen crossing the square. People stood aside and bent their heads in reverence as Gregory passed by, for he was Abbot of a great monastery in Rome, and was much beloved even by the rough Roman soldiers. He walked swiftly as if he did not care to linger in the market-place, for it grieved his gentle heart to see the suffering of the slaves when he could do nothing to help them.

But suddenly the crowd seemed to divide in front of him, and he stopped in wonder at the sight which met his eyes. It was only a group of little fair-haired English boys who had been captured in the wars, and carried off to be sold as slaves in the Roman market. But Gregory had never seen anything like them before. All around were dark-eyed, swarthy-faced Italians, or darker-skinned slaves from Africa, and these boys with their sunny, golden hair, fair faces, and eyes blue as the sky overhead, seemed to him creatures from a different world.

'Whence come these children, and what name do they

bear?' asked the bishop of a man who stood beside him.

'From a savage island far over the sea,' he answered, 'and men call them Angles.'

Then the kind bishop looked with pitying eyes upon the beautiful children, and said to himself, as he turned to go: 'They should be called not Angles, but angels.'

The sight of those boys, so strong and fearless and beautiful, made Gregory think a great deal about the little island of Britain, far away across the sea, from whence they had come. He knew the people who lived there were a fierce, warlike race, having a strange religion of their own, and that very few of them were Christians. But he knew, too, that though they were hard to conquer, and difficult to teach, still they were a people worth teaching, and he longed to win them to the side of Christ and to show them how to serve the true God.

In those days people in Italy knew very little about that far-away island, and it seemed to them as difficult and dangerous to go to England as it would seem to us if we were asked to go to the wildest part of Africa. True there were no lions nor tigers in England, but the tall, fair-haired giants who lived there were as savage as they were brave, and might be even worse to deal with than the wild beasts of other lands.

So it may well be believed that when Saint Gregory, who was now Pope of Rome, chose forty monks and sent them on a mission to this distant island, they were not very anxious to go, and set out in fear and trembling.

But at their head was one who knew no fear and who was willing to face any dangers in the service of his Master. This man was Augustine, a monk of Rome, whom Gregory had chosen to lead the mission, knowing that his courage would strengthen the others, and his wisdom would guide them aright.

It took many long days and nights of travel to reach the coast where they were to find a ship to carry them across to Britain, and before they had gone very far, the forty monks

were inclined to turn back in despair. From every side they heard such terrible tales of the savage islanders they were going to meet, that their hearts, never very courageous, were filled with terror, and they refused to go further. Nothing that Augustine could say would persuade them to go on, and they would only agree that he should go back to Rome and bear their prayers to Saint Gregory, imploring him not to force them to face such horrible danger. If Augustine would do this they promised to wait his return and to do then whatever the Pope ordered.

They had not to wait many days, for Augustine speedily brought back the Pope's answer to their request. His dark face glowed and his eyes shone with the light of victory, as he read to them the letter which Saint Gregory had sent. There was to be no thought of going back. Saint Gregory's words were few, but decisive. 'It is better not to begin a work than to turn back as soon as danger threatens; therefore, my beloved sons, go forward by the help of our Lord.'

So they obeyed, and with Augustine at their head once more set out, hardly hoping to escape the perils of the journey, and expecting, if they did arrive, to be speedily put to death by the savage islanders.

Perhaps the worst trial of all was when they set sail from France and saw the land fading away in the distance. In front there was nothing to be seen but angry waves and a cold, grey sky, and they seemed to be drifting away from the country of sunshine and safety into the dark region of uncertainty and danger. Nay, the island, whose very name was terrible to them, was nowhere to be seen, and seemed all the more horrible because it was wrapped in that mysterious grey mist.

But though they did not know it, they had really nothing to fear from the island people, for the queen of that part of England where they landed was a Christian, and had taught the King Ethelbert to show mercy and kindness. So when the company of cold, shivering monks came ashore they were met

with a kind and courteous welcome, and instead of enemies they found friends.

The king himself came to meet them, and he ordered the little band of foreigners to be brought before him, that he might learn their errand. He did not receive them in any hall or palace, but out in the open air, for it seemed safer there, in case these strangers should be workers of magic or witchcraft.

It must have been a strange scene when the forty monks, with Augustine at their head, walked in procession up from the beach to the broad green meadow where the king and his soldiers waited for them. The tall, fair-haired warriors who stood around, sword in hand, ready to defend their king, must have looked with surprise at these black-robed men with shaven heads and empty hands. They carried no weapons of any sort, and they seemed to bear no banner to tell men whence they came. Only the foremost monks carried on high a silver cross and the picture of a crucified Man, and instead of shouts and war-cries there was the sound of a melodious chant sung by many voices, yet seeming as if sung by one.

Then Augustine stood out from among the company of monks and waited for the king to speak.

'Who art thou, and from whence have come these men who are with thee?' asked the king. 'Methinks thou comest in peace, else wouldst thou have carried more deadly weapons than a silver charm and a painted sign. I fain would know the reason of thy visit to this our island.'

Slowly Augustine began to tell the story of their pilgrimage and the message they had brought. So long he spoke that the sun began to sink and the twilight fell over the silent sea that lay stretched out beyond the meadow where they sat before his story was done.

The king bent forward, thoughtfully weighing the words he had heard, and looking into the faces of these strange messengers of peace. At length he spoke, and the weary monks and stalwart warriors listened eagerly to his words.

'Thou hast spoken well,' he said to Augustine, 'and it may be there is truth in what thou sayest. But a man does not change his religion in an hour. I will hear more of this. But meanwhile ye shall be well cared for, and all who choose may listen to your message.'

Those were indeed welcome words to the company of poor tired monks, and when the kindly islanders, following their king's example, made them welcome and gave them food and shelter, they could well echo the words of Saint Gregory in the Roman market: 'These are not Angles but angels.'

And soon King Ethelbert gave the little company a house of their own, and allowed them to build up the ancient church at Canterbury, which had fallen into ruins. There they lived as simply and quietly as they had done in their convent in Italy, praying day and night for the souls of these heathen people, and teaching them, as much by their lives as their words, that it was good to serve the Lord Christ.

And before very long the people began to listen eagerly to their teaching, and the king himself was baptized with many others. The chant which the monks had sung that first day of their landing no longer sounded strange and mysterious in the ears of the islanders, for they too learnt to sing the 'Alleluia' and to praise God beneath the sign of the silver cross.

Now Augustine was very anxious that the Ancient British Church should join his party and that they should work together under the direction of Pope Gregory. But the British Christians were not sure if they might trust these strangers, and it was arranged that they should meet first, before making any plans.

The Ancient British Church had almost been driven out of the land, and there were but few of her priests left. They did not know whether they ought to join Augustine and his foreign monks, or strive to work on alone. In their perplexity they went to a holy hermit, and asked him what they should

do.

'If this man comes from God, then follow him,' said the hermit.

'But how can we know if he is of God?' asked the people.

The hermit thought a while and then said:

'The true servant of God is ever humble and lowly of heart. Go to meet this man. If he rises and bids you welcome, then will you know that he bears Christ's yoke, and will lead you aright. But if he be proud and haughty, and treat you with scorn, never rising to welcome you, then see to it that ye have nought to do with him.'

So the priests and bishops of the British Church arranged to meet Augustine under a great oak-tree, which was called ever afterwards 'Augustine's oak.' They carefully planned that the foreign monks should arrive there first, in time to be seated, so that the hermit's test might be tried when they themselves should arrive.

Unhappily, Augustine did not think of rising to greet the British bishops, and they were very angry and would agree to nothing that he proposed, though he warned them solemnly that if they would not join their forces with his, they would sooner or later fall by the hand of their enemies.

Greatly disappointed Augustine returned to Canterbury and worked there for many years without help, until all who lived in that part of England learned to be Christians.

And Pope Gregory hearing of his labours was pleased with the work his missionary had done, and thought it fit that the humble monk should be rewarded with a post of honour. So he made Augustine Archbishop of Canterbury, the first archbishop that England had known. It was a simple ceremony then, with only the few faithful monks kneeling around the chair on which the archbishop was enthroned, but Augustine's keen, dark face shone with the light of victory and humble thankfulness, for it seemed a seal upon his work, a pledge that the island should never again turn back from the

faith of Christ.

And could those dark eyes have looked forward and pierced the screen of many years, Augustine would have seen a goodly succession of archbishops following in his footsteps, each in his turn sitting in that same simple old chair, placed now in Westminster Abbey and guarded as one of England's treasures.

And he would have seen, too, what would have cheered his heart more than all—a Christian England venerating the spot where his monastery once stood, and building upon it a college to his memory. And there he would have seen England's sons trained to become missionaries and to go out into all the world to preach the gospel, just as that little band of monks, with Augustine at their head, came to our island in those dark, far-off days.

But though Augustine could not know all this, his heart was filled with a great hope and a great love for the islanders who now seemed like his own children, and he was more than content to spend his life amongst them.

And when his work was ended, and the faithful soul gave up his charge, they buried him in the island which had once seemed to him a land of exile, but which at last had come to mean even more to him than his own sunny land of Italy.

Saint Cecilia

It was in the days when cruel men killed and tortured those who loved our Blessed Lord that, in the city of Rome, a little maid was born. Her father and mother were amongst the richest and noblest of the Roman people, and their little daughter, whom they called Cecilia, had everything she could possibly want. She lived in a splendid palace, with everything most beautiful around her, and she had a garden to play in, where the loveliest flowers grew. Her little white dress was embroidered with the finest gold, and her face was as fair as the flowers she loved.

But it was not only the outside that was beautiful, for the little maiden's heart was fairer than the fairest flowers, and whiter than her spotless robe.

There were not many people who loved our Lord in those dark days. Any one who was known to be a Christian was made to suffer terrible tortures, and was even put to death.

But though Cecilia's father and mother knew this they still taught their little daughter to be a servant of Christ and to love Him above all things. For they knew that the love of Christ was better than life, and worth all the suffering that might come.

And as Cecilia grew into a stately maiden every one wondered at the grace and beauty that shone out of her face. And every one loved her because she loved every one. She was always ready and willing to help others, and she specially cared to be kind to the poor. In the folds of her gold embroidered dress she always carried a little book which she loved to read. It was the book of the Gospels, and the more she read and heard of Christ, the more she longed to grow like

Him. She could not bear to think that she wore fine dresses, while He had been so poor and suffered so much. And so, underneath her soft, white robe she wore a harsh, coarse garment made of hair. And when it hurt and rubbed her sorely, the pain only made her glad, because she wore it for Christ's sake.

Some say the meaning of her name Cecilia is 'Heaven's Lily.' And that name certainly suited this little Roman maiden. For as God plants the lilies in the dark earth, and presently they grow up and lift their pure white cups to heaven, so Cecilia seemed to lift her heart above the sins and sorrows of the world, where God had planted her, and to turn her face ever heavenwards.

And the poor people whom she helped and cheered with her kind sympathy loved to look at her, for the peace of paradise shone in her eyes, and it seemed to bring heaven nearer to the poor souls.

As soon as Cecilia was old enough, it was arranged that she should marry a young Roman noble called Valerian, and this made her very unhappy. She had so hoped to belong only to Christ, and this Valerian was a pagan who knew nothing of the Lord whom she served. But she knew that her guardian angel would watch over her and keep her from all harm, and so she obeyed her father's and mother's wishes, and was married to the young Roman noble.

When Valerian had taken Cecilia home and all the guests had gone, and they were left alone together, she told him that, though she was married, she belonged first of all to Christ, and that her guardian angel, who never left her, would guard and protect her from all danger.

'Wilt thou not show me this angel, so that I may know that what thou sayest is true?' asked Valerian.

'Thou canst not see the heavenly messenger until thou hast learnt to know my Lord,' answered Cecilia.

And as Valerian eagerly asked how he should learn to

know this Christ, Cecilia told him to go along the great Appian Way, outside the walls of Rome, until he should meet some poor people who lived in the Campagna. And to them he should say:

'Cecilia bids you show me the way that I may find the old man, Urban the Good.'

So Valerian started off and went the way Cecilia directed. And the people guided him as she had promised, until they came to a curious opening in the ground, down which they told him he must go if he wished to find Pope Urban.

This opening was the entrance to a strange under-ground place called the Catacombs.

There were miles and miles of dark passages cut out of the rock, with here and there a little dark room, and curious shelves hollowed out of the walls. It was here that many poor Christians lived, hiding themselves from those who would have put them to death. And the little shelves were where they buried the bodies of poor Christians who had died for Christ.

It was here that the old Pope, Urban the Good, lived, and he welcomed Valerian most gladly, knowing why he had come. He began at once to teach him all that he should know —how God was our Father, and Jesus Christ His Son, our Saviour. And as Valerian listened to the strange, wonderful words, the love of God shone into his heart, so that when the old man asked:

'Believest thou this?'

He answered with all his heart:

'All this I steadfastly believe.'

Then Urban baptized Valerian, and by that sign the young Roman knew that he was indeed a Christian, a servant of Christ.

All the world looked different to Valerian as he walked back along the Appian Way to Rome. The flat, low fields of the Campagna, fading away into the ridges of the purple

Apennines, seemed almost like the fields of paradise, and the song of the birds was like the voice of angels. He scarcely thought of the dangers and difficulties that were before him, or if he did it was only to feel glad that he might have anything to bear for his new Master.

And when he reached home, and went back to the room where he had left Cecilia, he found her there waiting for him, with a glad welcome in her eyes. And as they knelt together they heard a rustle of wings, and looking up they saw an angel bending over them, with a crown of lilies and roses in each hand. These he placed upon their heads, and to Valerian he said:

'Thou hast done well in allowing Cecilia to serve her Master, therefore ask what thou wilt and thy request shall be granted.'

Then Valerian asked that his brother, whom he dearly loved, might also learn to know Christ.

And just then the door opened, and the brother whom Valerian loved so much came in. He, of course, only saw Valerian and Cecilia, and could not see the angel, or even the wreaths of heavenly roses. But he looked round in astonishment and said:

'I see no flowers here, and yet the fragrance of roses and lilies is so sweet and strange, that it makes my very heart glad.'

Then Valerian answered:

'We have two crowns here, which thou canst not see, because thou knowest not the Lord who sent them to us. But if thou wilt listen, and learn to know Him, then shalt thou see the heavenly flowers, whose fragrance has filled thy heart.'

So Valerian and Cecilia told their brother what it meant to be a Christian. And after the good Urban had taught him also, he was baptized and became God's knight. Then he, too, saw the heavenly crowns and the face of the angel who guarded Heaven's Lily.

For a while the home of Valerian and Cecilia was like a

paradise on earth. There was nothing but happiness there. Cecilia loved music above everything. Her voice was like a bird's, and she sang her hymns of praise and played so exquisitely, that it is said that even the angels came down to listen.

But before long it began to be known that Valerian and his brother helped the poor Christians, and the wicked governor of the city ordered them both to be seized and brought before him. He told them that there were but two ways before them: either they must deny that they were Christians, or they must be put to death.

But God's knights did not fear death, and they went out to meet it as if they were on their way to a great victory. And when the soldiers wondered, and asked them if it was not sad that they should lose their lives while they were still so young, they answered that what looked like loss on earth was gain in heaven—that they were but laying down their bodies as one puts off one's clothes to sleep at night. For the immortal soul could never die, but would live for ever.

So they knelt down, and the cruel blows were struck. But, looking up, the soldiers saw a great pathway of light shining down from heaven. And the souls of Valerian and his brother were led up by angel hands to the throne of God, there to receive the crowns of everlasting glory which they had won on earth.

And so Cecilia was left alone. But she did not spend her time grieving. Gathering the people and soldiers around her, she taught them about the Lord of Heaven, for whose sake Valerian and his brother had so gladly suffered death. And it was not long before she also trod the shining pathway up to heaven and met the ones she loved.

For the governor was not satisfied with the death of Valerian and his brother, but ordered Cecilia to be brought before him.

'What sort of a woman art thou, and what is thy name?' he asked.

'I am a Roman lady,' she answered with grave dignity, 'and among men I am known by the name of Cecilia. But'—and her voice rang out proudly as she looked fearlessly into those angry eyes—'my noblest name is Christian.'

Then the enraged governor ordered that she should be taken to her house, and put to death in her bath. But the boiling water could not hurt her, and she was as cool as if she had bathed in a fresh spring.

This made the governor more furious than ever, and he ordered that her head should be cut off.

But even after she had received three strokes from the sword she did not die, but lived for three days. And these days she spent in quietly putting her house in order and dividing her money among the poor, ever singing in her sweet voice the praises of God.

And so at the end of three days God's angel came and led Cecilia home, and all that was left of her on earth was her fair body, lying like a tired child asleep, with hands clasped, gently resting now that her work on earth was done.

And in Rome to-day there is a splendid church built over the place where Cecilia's house stood. Some day if you go there, you will see her little room and the bath in which the boiling water could not hurt her. You will see too, a beautiful marble figure lying under the altar, and you will know exactly how Cecilia looked when she left her tired body lying there, and went up the shining path to God.

Saint Giles

It was in the beautiful land of Greece that Saint Giles was born, very far away from the grey northern city, whose cathedral bears his name. His parents were of royal blood, and were, moreover, Christians; so the boy was brought up most carefully, and taught all that a prince should know.

He was a dreamy, quiet boy, and what he loved best was to wander out in the green woods by himself, with no companions but the animals and birds and flowers. He would lie for hours watching the birds busily build their nests, or the rabbits as they timidly peeped at him out of their holes. And soon all the woodland creatures began to look upon him as their friend, and even the wildest would come gradually nearer and nearer, almost within reach of his hand; and they seemed to listen when he talked to them, as if they could understand what he said. One thing they certainly did understand, and that was that he loved them and would do them no harm.

Saint Giles could not bear to see anything suffer, and his pity was great for all those in pain; and often he would mend a bird's broken wing, or bind up a little furry foot that had been torn in a trap; and the birds and beasts always lay quiet under his hand, and seemed to know that he would cure them, even though the touch might hurt.

It happened that one day, when Saint Giles was kneeling in church, he saw a poor beggar lying there on the cold, stone floor. He had scarcely any clothes to keep him warm, and his face had a hungry, suffering look, which filled the heart of the saint with pity. He saw that the poor man was ill and trembling with cold, so without a moment's thought, he took off his

own warm cloak and tenderly wrapped it round the beggar.

The warmth of the cloak seemed to bring life back to the poor chilled body, and when Saint Giles had given him food and wine, he was able to lift himself up, and to bless the kind youth who had helped him.

And when the people saw what had happened they thought Saint Giles had worked a miracle, and cured the man by his wonderful touch; for they did not realise that all kind deeds work miracles every day.

It did not please Saint Giles that people should think he possessed this miraculous gift of healing, and he had no wish to be called a saint. He only longed to lead his own quiet life and to help all God's creatures who needed his care. But the people would not leave him alone, and they brought to him those who were sick and lame and blind, and expected that he would heal them.

It is true that many needed only a little human aid, and the food and help which Saint Giles gave them would soon make them well again; but there were some he could not help, and it wrung his heart to see their pleading eyes, and to watch them bring out their little store of hard-earned money, eager to buy the aid which he so willingly would have given had he been able.

So at last Saint Giles determined to leave his native city, for he had been all alone since his father and mother had died. He wished to escape from the anxious crowds that refused to leave him in peace; but first he sold all that he had and gave it to the poor of the city, an act which made them surer than ever that he was one of God's saints. Then he sailed away across the sea to a far-off country.

There Saint Giles found a lonely cave in which an old hermit lived. 'Here at last I shall find peace and quietness,' said he to himself, 'and men will soon forget me.'

But even here ere long his friends found him, for his fame had spread across the seas. So once more he set out and went

further and further away, by paths that few had ever trod before, until in the depths of a green forest he found another shelter, a cave among grey rocks overgrown with lichens, and hidden by the sheltering boughs of the surrounding trees. Saint Giles had always loved the woods and this was just the home he had longed for. A clear stream flowed not far off, and his only companions would be the birds and beasts and flowers.

Early in the morning the birds would wake him with their song, and the wild creatures would come stealing out of the wood to share his meal. And his silent friends, the flowers, would cheer and help him by their beauty, and remind him of God's garden whose gate would one day open for him, where he would wander in the green pastures beside the still waters of Life for evermore.

But of all his companions the one Saint Giles loved best was a gentle white doe, who came to him as soon as he settled in the cave. She seemed to have no fear of him from the first, and stayed with him longer and longer each time, until at last she took up her abode with him, and would never leave him, lying close to him when he slept, and walking by his side wherever he went.

This peaceful life went on for a long time and it seemed as if nothing could disturb its quiet happiness. But it happened that one day as Saint Giles was praying in the cave, and his companion, the white doe, was nibbling her morning meal of fresh grass by the banks of the stream, a curious noise was heard afar off. It came nearer and nearer, and then shouts of men's voices could be heard, the sound of horses galloping and the note of the hunter's horn. Then came the deep baying of dogs, and before the startled doe could hide, the whole hunt was upon her. With a wild halloo they chased her across the greensward and through the trees, and just as she disappeared into the cave, one of the huntsmen drew his bow and sent an arrow flying after her. Then they all dismounted and

went to see what had become of the hunted doe, and soon found the opening into the cave. But what was their surprise, when they burst in, to find an old man kneeling there. He was sheltering the terrified doe who had fled to him for refuge, and an arrow had pierced the kind hand that had been raised to shield her.

The huntsmen were ashamed of their cruel sport when they saw the wounded hand of the old man and the trembling form of the white doe as it crouched behind him, and they listened with reverence to the hermit's words as he spoke to them of man's duty towards God's dumb creatures.

The King of France, who was one of the hunting party, came often after this to see Saint Giles, and at last offered to build him a monastery and give him all that he could want; but the old man begged to be left alone in his woodland cave, to serve God in peace and quietness. So there he lived quietly and happily for many years, until God took him, and he left his cave for the fairer fields of paradise.

People loved the thought of this peaceful old saint who dwelt in the woods and was the protector of all sorrowful and suffering creatures, and so they often called their churches after Saint Giles, especially those churches which were built in the fields or near green woods.

The surroundings of many of these churches are to-day changed. There are no fields now round his great cathedral church in the old town of Edinburgh; but the poor and sick and sorrowful crowd very near to its shelter, and the memory of the pitiful heart of the gentle old saint still hovers like a blessing round the grey old walls.

Saint Nicholas

Of all the saints that little children love is there any to compare with Santa Claus? The very sound of his name has magic in it, and calls up visions of well-filled stockings, with the presents we particularly want peeping over the top, or hanging out at the side, too big to go into the largest sock. Besides, there is something so mysterious and exciting about Santa Claus, for no one seems to have ever seen him. But we picture him to ourselves as an old man with a white beard, whose favourite way of coming into our rooms is down the chimney, bringing gifts for the good children and punishments for the bad.

Yet this Santa Claus, in whose name the presents come to us at Christmas time, is a very real saint, and we can learn a great deal about him, only we must remember that his true name is Saint Nicholas. Perhaps the little children, who used to talk of him long ago, found Saint Nicholas too difficult to say, and so called him their dear Santa Claus. But we learn, as we grow older, that Nicholas is his true name, and that he is a real person who lived long years ago, far away in the East.

The father and mother of Nicholas were noble and very rich, but what they wanted most of all was to have a son. They were Christians, so they prayed to God for many years that he would give them their heart's desire; and when at last Nicholas was born, they were the happiest people in the world.

They thought there was no one like their boy; and indeed he was wiser and better than most children, and never gave them a moment's trouble. But alas, while he was still a child, a terrible plague swept over the country, and his father and

mother died, leaving him quite alone.

All the great riches which his father had possessed were left to Nicholas, and among other things he inherited three bars of gold. These golden bars were his greatest treasure, and he thought more of them than all the other riches he possessed.

Now in the town where Nicholas lived there dwelt a nobleman with three daughters. They had once been very rich, but great misfortunes had overtaken the father, and now they were all so poor they had scarcely enough to live upon.

At last a day came when there was not even bread enough to eat, and the daughters said to their father:

'Let us go out into the streets and beg, or do anything to get a little money, that we may not starve.'

But the father answered:

'Not to-night. I cannot bear to think of it. Wait at least until to-morrow. Something may happen to save my daughters from such disgrace.'

Now, just as they were talking together, Nicholas happened to be passing, and as the window was open he heard all that the poor father said. It seemed terrible to think that a noble family should be so poor and actually in want of bread, and Nicholas tried to plan how it would be possible to help them. He knew they would be much too proud to take money from him, so he had to think of some other way. Then he remembered his golden bars, and that very night he took one of them and went secretly to the nobleman's house, hoping to give the treasure without letting the father or daughters know who brought it.

To his joy Nicholas discovered that a little window had been left open, and by standing on tiptoe he could just reach it. So he lifted the golden bar and slipped it through the window, never waiting to hear what became of it, in case any one should see him. (And now do you see the reason why the visits of Santa Claus are so mysterious?)

Inside the house the poor father sat sorrowfully watching, while his children slept. He wondered if there was any hope for them anywhere, and he prayed earnestly that heaven would send help. Suddenly something fell at his feet, and to his amazement and joy, he found it was a bar of pure gold.

'My child,' he cried, as he showed his eldest daughter the shining gold, 'God has heard my prayer and has sent this from heaven. Now we shall have enough and to spare. Call your sisters that we may rejoice together, and I will go instantly and change this treasure.'

The precious golden bar was soon sold to a money-changer, who gave so much for it that the family were able to live in comfort and have all that they needed. And not only was there enough to live upon, but so much was over that the father gave his eldest daughter a large dowry, and very soon she was happily married.

When Nicholas saw how much happiness his golden bar had brought to the poor nobleman, he determined that the second daughter should have a dowry too. So he went as before and found the little window again open, and was able to throw in the second golden bar as he had done the first. This time the father was dreaming happily, and did not find the treasure until he awoke in the morning. Soon afterwards the second daughter had her dowry and was married too.

The father now began to think that, after all, it was not usual for golden bars to fall from heaven, and he wondered if by any chance human hands had placed them in his room. The more he thought of it the stranger it seemed, and he made up his mind to keep watch every night, in case another golden bar should be sent as a portion for his youngest daughter.

And so when Nicholas went the third time and dropped the last bar through the little window, the father came quickly out, and before Nicholas had time to hide, caught him by his cloak.

'O Nicholas,' he cried, 'is it thou who hast helped us in our need? Why didst thou hide thyself?' And then he fell on his knees and began to kiss the hands that had helped him so graciously.

But Nicholas bade him stand up and give thanks to God instead; warning him to tell no one the story of the golden bars.

This was only one of the many kind acts Nicholas loved to do, and it was no wonder that he was beloved by all who knew him.

Soon afterwards Nicholas made up his mind to enter God's service as a priest. He longed above all things to leave the world and live as a hermit in the desert, but God came to him in a vision and told him he must stay in the crowded cities and do his work among the people. Still his desire to see the deserts and the hermits who lived there was so great that he went off on a journey to Egypt and the Holy Land. But remembering, what God had bade him do, he did not stay there, but returned to his own country.

On the way home a terrific storm arose, and it seemed as if the ship he was in must be lost. The sailors could do nothing, and great waves dashed over the deck, filling the ship with water. But just as all had given up hope, Nicholas knelt and prayed to God to save them, and immediately a calm fell upon the angry sea. The winds sank to rest and the waves ceased to lash the sides of the ship so that they sailed smoothly on, and all danger was past.

Thus Nicholas returned home in safety, and went to live in the city of Myra. His ways were so quiet and humble that no one knew much about him, until it came to pass one day that the Archbishop of Myra died. Then all the priests met to choose another archbishop, and it was made known to them by a sign from heaven that the first man who should enter the church next morning should be the bishop whom God had chosen.

Now Nicholas used to spend most of his nights in prayer and always went very early to church, so next morning just as the sun was rising and the bells began to ring for the early mass, he was seen coming up to the church door and was the first to enter. As he knelt down quietly to say his prayers as usual, what was his surprise to meet a company of priests who hailed him as their new archbishop, chosen by God to be their leader and guide. So Nicholas was made Archbishop of Myra to the joy of all in the city who knew and loved him.

Not long after this there was great trouble in the town of Myra, for the harvests of that country had failed and a terrible famine swept over the land. Nicholas, as a good bishop should, felt the suffering of his people as if it were his own, and did all he could to help them.

He knew that they must have corn or they would die, so he went to the harbour where two ships lay filled with grain, and asked the captains if they would sell him their cargo. They told the bishop they would willingly do so, but it was already sold to merchants of another country and they dared not sell it over again.

'Take no thought of that,' said Nicholas, 'only sell me some of thy corn for my starving people, and I promise thee that there shall be nought wanting when thou shalt arrive at thy journey's end.'

The captains believed in the bishop's promise and gave him as much corn as he asked. And behold! when they came to deliver their cargo to the owners, there was not a bag lacking.

It is said, too, that at the time of this famine there was a cruel innkeeper in Myra who was wicked enough to catch little children and pickle them in a great tub, pretending they were pork. It happened one day as Nicholas was passing the inn-door that he heard the voices of children crying for help. He went in very quickly and made his way to the cellar whence the cries had come. There he found the poor

children, and not only rescued those who were alive, but by his prayers he brought to life those who had already been killed and cast into the tub.

Another time there were two men in Myra who had been unjustly condemned to death, and it was told the bishop how greatly they stood in need of his help. No one ever appealed to Nicholas in vain, and he went off at once to the place of execution. The executioner was just about to raise his sword, when Nicholas seized his arm and wrenched the sword away. Then he set the poor prisoners free and told the judge that, if he dared to deal so unjustly again, the wrath of heaven and of the Bishop of Myra would descend upon him.

There are many other stories told about the good bishop. Like his Master, he ever went about doing good; and when he died, there were a great many legends told about him, for the people loved to believe that their bishop still cared for them and would come to their aid. We do not know if all these legends are true, but they show how much Saint Nicholas was loved and honoured even after his death, and how every one believed in his power to help them.

Here is one of the stories which all children who love Saint Nicholas will like to hear.

There was once a nobleman who had no children and who longed for a son above everything else in the world. Night and day he prayed to Saint Nicholas that he would grant him his request, and at last a son was born. He was a beautiful child, and the father was so delighted and so grateful to the saint who had listened to his prayers that, every year on the child's birthday, he made a great feast in honour of Saint Nicholas and a grand service was held in the church.

Now the Evil One grew very angry each year when this happened, for it made many people go to church and honour the good saint, neither of which things pleased the Evil One at all. So each year he tried to think of some plan that would put an end to these rejoicings, and he decided at last that if

only he could do some evil to the child, the parents would blame Saint Nicholas and all would be well.

It happened just then to be the boy's sixth birthday, and a greater feast than ever was being held. It was late in the afternoon, and the gardener and porter and all the servants were away keeping holiday too. So no one noticed a curious-looking pilgrim who came and sat close to the great iron gates which led into the courtyard. He had on the ordinary robe of a poor pilgrim, but the hood was drawn so far over his face that nothing but a dark shadow could be seen inside. And indeed that was as well, for this pilgrim was a demon in disguise, and his wicked, black face would have frightened any one who saw it. He could not enter the courtyard for the great gates were always kept locked, and, as you know, the porter was away that day, feasting with all the other servants.

But, before very long, the little boy grew weary of his birthday feast, and having had all he wanted, he begged to be allowed to go to play in the garden. His parents knew that the gardener always looked after him there, so they told him he might go. They forgot that the gardener was not there just then.

The child played happily alone for some time and then wandered into the courtyard, and looking out of the gate saw a poor pilgrim resting there.

'What are you doing here?' asked the child, 'and why do you sit so still?'

'I am a poor pilgrim,' answered the demon, trying to make his harsh voice sound as gentle as possible, 'and I have come all the way from Rome. I am resting here because I am so weary and footsore and have had nothing to eat all day.'

'I will let you in, and take you to my father,' said the child; 'this is my birthday, and no one must go hungry to-day.'

But the demon pretended he was too weak to walk, and begged the boy to bring some food out to him.

Then the child ran back to the banquet hall in a great

hurry and said to his father:

'O father, there is a poor pilgrim from Rome sitting outside our gate, and he is so hungry, may I take him some of my birthday feast?'

The father was very pleased to think that his little son should care for the poor and wish to be kind, so he willingly gave his permission and told one of the servants to give the child all that he wanted.

Then as the demon sat eating the good things, he began to question the boy and tried to find out all that he could about him.

'Do you often play in the garden?' he asked.

'Oh yes,' said the child, 'I play there whenever I may, for in the midst of the lawn there is a beautiful fountain, and the gardener makes me boats to sail on the water.'

'Will he make you one to-day?' asked the demon quickly.

'He is not here to-day,' answered the child, 'for this is a holiday for every one and I am quite alone.'

Then the demon rose to his feet slowly and said he felt so much better after the good food, that he thought he could walk a little, and would like very much to come in and see the beautiful garden and the fountain he had heard about.

So the child climbed up and with great difficulty drew back the bolts. The great gates swung open and the demon walked in.

As they went along together towards the fountain, the child held out his little hand to lead the pilgrim, but even the demon shrunk from touching anything so pure and innocent, and folded his arms under his robe, so that the child could only hold by a fold of his cloak.

'What strange kind of feet you have,' said the child as they walked along; 'they look as if they belonged to an animal.'

'Yes, they are curious,' said the demon, 'but it is just the way they are made.'

Then the child began to notice the demon's hands, which

were even more curious than his feet, and just like the paws of a bear. But he was too courteous to say anything about them, when he had already mentioned the feet.

Just then they came to the fountain, and with a sudden movement the demon threw back his hood and showed his dreadful face. And before the child could scream he was seized by those hairy hands and thrown into the water.

But just at that moment the gardener was returning to his work and saw from a distance what had happened. He ran as fast as he could, but he only got to the fountain in time to see the demon vanish, while the child's body was floating on the water. Very quickly he drew him out, and carried him, all dripping wet, up to the castle, where they tried to bring him back to life. But alas! it all seemed of no use, he neither moved nor breathed; and the day that had begun with such rejoicing, ended in the bitterest woe. The poor parents were heart-broken, but they did not quite lose hope and prayed earnestly to Saint Nicholas who had given them the child, that he would restore their boy to them again.

As they prayed by the side of the little bed where the body of the child lay, they thought something moved, and to their joy and surprise the boy opened his eyes and sat up, and in a short time was as well as ever.

They asked him eagerly what had happened, and he told them all about the pilgrim with the queer feet and hands, who had gone with him to the fountain and had then thrown back his hood and shown his terrible face. After that he could remember nothing until he found himself in a beautiful garden, where the loveliest flowers grew. There were lilies like white stars, and roses far more beautiful than any he had ever seen in his own garden, and the leaves of the trees shone like silver and gold. It was all so beautiful that for a while he forgot about his home, and when he did remember and tried to find his way back, he grew bewildered and did not know in what direction to turn. As he was looking about, an old man came

down the garden path and smiled so kindly upon him that he trusted him at once. This old man was dressed in the robes of a bishop, and had a long white beard and the sweetest old face the child had ever seen.

'Art thou searching for the way home?' the old man asked. 'Dost thou wish to leave this beautiful garden and go back to thy father and mother?'

'I want to go home,' said the child, with a sob in his voice, 'but I cannot find the way, and I am, oh, so tired of searching for it!'

Then the old man stooped down and lifted him in his arms, and the child laid his head on the old man's shoulder, and, weary with his wandering, fell fast asleep and remembered nothing more till he woke up in his own little bed.

Then the parents knew that Saint Nicholas had heard their prayers and had gone to fetch the child from the Heavenly Garden and brought him back to them.

So they were more grateful to the good saint than ever, and they loved and honoured him even more than they had done before; which was all the reward the demon got for his wicked doings.

That is one of the many stories told after the death of Saint Nicholas, and it ever helped and comforted his people to think that, though they could no longer see him, he would love and protect them still.

Young maidens in need of help remembered the story of the golden bars and felt sure the good saint would not let them want. Sailors tossing on the stormy waves thought of that storm which had sunk to rest at the prayer of Saint Nicholas. Poor prisoners with no one to take their part were comforted by the thought of those other prisoners whom he had saved. And little children perhaps have remembered him most of all, for when the happy Christmas time draws near, who is so much in their thoughts as Saint Nicholas, or Santa Claus, as they call him? Perhaps they are a little inclined to

think of him as some good magician who comes to fill their stockings with gifts, but they should never forget that he was the kind bishop who, in olden days, loved to make the little ones happy. There are some who think that even now he watches over and protects little children, and for that reason he is called their patron saint.

Saint Faith

Among the many martyrs who long ago gave up their lives, rather than deny their Master, we love to remember one little maid—a child-martyr and saint. We do not know a great deal about her, for she lived so very long ago, but what we know makes us love and honour her, and speak her name with reverence.

Faith was the name of this little maiden, and her home was in France, in the pleasant country of Aquitaine. Her parents were rich and noble, and she was brought up carefully, and taught to be courteous and gentle to every one. But she did not need much teaching, for her nature was sweet and pure, and her face was fair, with the beauty that shines from within.

The town in which little Faith lived was called Agen, and lay at the foot of a high rugged hill, which seemed to keep guard over it. It was a quiet little place, and most of the people who dwelt there were Christians, living happily together with the good bishop at their head.

But one day a heavy cloud of dust was seen rolling along the highroad that led over the mountains to the city gates. And messengers came running breathlessly into the town, warning the people that a great company of soldiers was marching towards them. It was thought they had come from Spain, and the news spread like wildfire through the town that Dacian, the cruellest governor of all that country, was riding at their head.

In fear and trembling the people waited. They stood in little knots, talking under their breath of all the evil this man had done; or shutting themselves into their houses, they

scarcely dared to look out at the windows. And soon the great company came sweeping in, swords clattering and armour glittering in the sunshine, rough soldiers laughing carelessly as they rode past the frightened faces. And at their head a cruel, evil-looking man who glared from side to side, as if he were a wild beast seeking his prey.

Doubtless it pleased him to see how every one trembled before him, and he smiled scornfully to think how easy a task it would be to teach these Christians to deny their God and drag their faith in the dust.

And soon the reason of his coming was known to all, for he ordered it to be proclaimed in the market-place, that every Christian who refused to sacrifice to the heathen gods should be tortured and put to death. And to make his meaning quite plain, the soldiers spread out all the terrible instruments of torture, so that men might know exactly what lay before them if they refused to deny Christ.

But in the night the terrified Christians stole silently out of the town, and climbing the high hill that overlooked the city, they hid themselves in the great caves among the rocks.

Scarcely any one was left behind: even the good bishop was afraid to stay and face the danger, and it seemed as if Christ would have no one to fight on His side against the evil company.

But when morning came, and the furious Dacian discovered that every one had fled, he sent his soldiers to search and bring any who might remain hidden in the city, that he might wreak his vengeance on them.

And among the few that were left they brought to him the little maid Faith. She was only a little child, but she did not know what fear meant.

'You cannot hurt me,' she said, looking at the cruel, angry faces around her, 'because I am not yours, but God's.'

And then she signed herself with the sign of the cross, and with bent head prayed:

'Lord Jesus, teach my lips to answer their questions aright, so that I may do Thee no dishonour.'

Then Dacian looked in anger at the child standing there with clasped hands and steadfast eyes, and asked her roughly:

'What is thy name?'

'My name is Faith,' the little maid replied with gentle courtesy.

'And what God dost thou serve?' asked the cruel governor.

'I am a Christian, and I serve the Lord Christ,' replied the child.

'Deny Him, and sacrifice to our gods,' thundered the governor, 'else shalt thou endure every kind of torture, until there is no life left in thy young body.'

But Faith stood with head erect and hands clasped tight together. Not even the ugly instruments of torture could frighten her.

'I serve the Lord Christ,' she said, 'and you cannot hurt me, because I am His.'

Such a little maid she was, standing there among those rough, cruel men, offering her life gladly for the faith of her Master. Such a few years she had spent in this bright world, and so many stretched in front, holding pleasures and promises in store. And now she must give up all, must put aside the little white robe and golden sandals, and take instead the robe of suffering, and go barefoot to meet the pain and torture that awaited her.

And though they scourged her, and made her suffer many cruel torments, they could not bend her will, nor break her faith. Indeed it seemed as if she did not feel the pain and anguish.

And God stooped down, and gathered the little faithful soul into His bosom. And when the people looked, the child was dead.

But in the cave among the mountains that very day the

bishop sat, sad and troubled.

He was gazing away across the plain to where the town lay half hidden in the mist, thinking of those faithful few who had chosen to stay behind. And suddenly the mist broke in front, and a vision stood out clear before him. He saw the child Faith being scourged and tortured; he saw the flames leaping around her, and then, as he looked again, lo! her head was encircled with a golden crown set with precious stones, each jewel sparkling with light. And from heaven a white dove came gently flying down, and rested on the child's head, while from its wings a soft dew fell that quenched the flames.

And as the vision faded, the bishop bowed his head in his hands and wept. The thought of what this child had dared to endure for her Master, while he had shrunk from suffering aught for His sake, filled his heart with shame. He could not stay there in safety while any of his people might suffer as she had done.

So that night he returned to the city to help and comfort the few remaining Christians. Before long he too was called upon to suffer death for his Lord, and many others gave themselves up, led by the example of little Faith.

Some say that even the rough soldiers were touched by the child's death, and many became Christians. They began to think that such a religion was worth living for, if it could teach even a child to die so bravely.

And so, though she lived such a short time on earth, she did a very wonderful work for God, and we call her now Saint Faith, thinking often of her as we read these words:

'A little child shall lead them.'

Saint Cosmo and Saint Damian

It is difficult sometimes to learn a great deal about the saints who lived a very long time ago. So few people knew how to read or write in those old days, and the only way they had of remembering and handing on what was interesting was to tell it to their children; then these little ones, when they were grown up, would repeat it again to other little children, and so the stories were not forgotten.

But sometimes one thing would be left out and sometimes another, or different people would add wonderful stories of their own, which would become part of the true story. And so, when at last these histories come to us, we find we have lost a great deal, and perhaps not gained very much.

The two saints, to whose story we are going to listen to-day, are of this long-ago time, and the history of their lives has almost faded from men's memories. But whoever happens to go to Florence, that city of flowers, where the old Medici family has left its mark on every corner, will see the portraits of our two saints wherever they go. For the old painters loved to tell the saint-stories in their own beautiful way, and to-day the little dark-eyed Italian children can read them without books, for they are told more plainly and far more beautifully than in any written story.

Cosmo and Damian were brothers, and were born in Arabia three hundred years after Christ. When they were quite little boys their father died, and they were left alone with their mother. She was a Christian, and taught her boys, as soon as they were old enough to understand, that though they had no earthly father, God was their Father in heaven. She told them that the great King of Heaven and Earth called them His children, and he who could do a mean or cruel act,

or stain his honour by an untruthful word, was not worthy to be called a King's son. And because they were noble she taught them that they must do noble deeds, bravely defend and protect the weak, and help those who could not help themselves.

So the boys grew up straight and strong in mind and body. Their bitterest punishment was to feel that they had done anything unworthy of their King, and although they often made mistakes and did wrong thoughtlessly, they never went far astray since God's honour was their own.

Their mother was rich, for their father had had great possessions, but there were so many poor and suffering people around their home that it was almost impossible to help them all. So the boys learned early to deny themselves in many ways, and often gave up their own dinner to the starving poor. In that land there was a great deal of sickness and suffering, and this was a great trouble to Cosmo and Damian. They could not bear to see people in pain, and be unable to help them. They often thought about this, and at last determined to learn all about medicine, and become doctors, so that they might at least soften suffering when they could not cure it.

After years of patient study they learned to be very clever doctors, and their kind hearts and gentle hands soothed and comforted those who were in pain, even when skill could do nothing for them.

They visited rich and poor alike, and would take no money for their services, for they said it was payment enough to know they had been able to make the worlds suffering a little less.

And it was not only people they cared for, but God's dumb creatures too. If any animal was in pain, they would treat it as gently and carefully as if it had been a human being. Indeed, they were perhaps even more pitiful towards animals, for they said:

'People who can speak and complain of their ills are

greatly to be pitied, but these dumb creatures, made by our King, can only suffer in silence, and surely their suffering will be required at our hands.'

It ever seemed strange to these great men that boys who would scorn to ill-treat a younger child, or take mean advantage of a weak one, would still think nothing of staining their honour by ill-treating an animal, infinitely weaker and smaller, and less able to protect itself. It was one of the few things that raised the wrath of these gentle doctor saints.

Now it happened that a poor woman who had been ill for many years heard of the fame of the two young doctors, and sent to implore them to come to help her. She believed that though her illness seemed incurable these good men might heal her.

Cosmo and Damian were touched by her faith, and they went at once, and did for her all that their skill could devise, and, moreover, prayed that God would bless their efforts.

To the wonder of all, the woman began to grow better, and very soon was completely cured. In her great gratitude she offered all that she had in payment to the two doctors, but they told her that they could take nothing. Then she humbly offered them a little bag in which were three eggs, praying them not to go away from her quite empty-handed. But Cosmo turned and walked away and would not so much as even look at what she offered, for it was a very strict rule with the brothers that they should accept no payment or reward of any kind. Then the woman caught at a fold of Damian's cloak as he also turned to go and begged him, for the love of Christ, to take her little gift.

When Damian heard the name of his Master, he paused, and then took the present and courteously thanked the poor woman.

But when Cosmo saw what Damian had done he was very wrathful, and that night he refused to sleep with him, and said that henceforth they would be no longer brothers.

But in the stillness of the night God came to Cosmo and said:

'My son, wherefore art thou so wrathful with thy brother?'

'Because he hath taken reward for our services,' said Cosmo, 'and Thou knowest, Lord, that we receive no payment but from Thee.'

'But was it not in My name that he took the offering?' asked the voice. 'Because that poor woman gave it for love of Me, thy brother did well to accept it.'

Then Cosmo awoke in great joy and hurried to the bedside of his brother, and there begged his forgiveness for having misjudged him so sorely. And so they were happy together once more, and ate the eggs right merrily.

In those days there were many pilgrims passing through Arabia, and because the journey was hard and most of them were poor, they often fell ill and came under the care of Cosmo and Damian. One night a poor man was brought in, fainting and fever-stricken. He lay on the bed with his thin, grey face pinched and worn with suffering, and the kind doctors feared that he would die.

All night they sat by his bedside doing everything that their skill could plan to ease his pain, and they only smiled when the poor man said in his faint, low voice:

'Why do you take all this trouble for a poor pilgrim, who has nothing wherewith to repay you?'

'We would not take thy payment if thou hadst all the riches in the world,' answered the doctors, 'for we receive payment only from our King.'

Then when the first pale light of dawn began to steal through the little window, and the doctors anxiously watched the still form lying there, they started with surprise. For the face seemed to change in an instant, and instead of the bed of suffering they saw a cloud of glory; out of the midst of which Christ's face, infinitely tender, looked upon them; and His hands touched their heads in blessing as He said:

'All the riches of the world are indeed mine though I seemed but a poor pilgrim. I was sick and ye visited me, and surely shall ye receive payment from your King.'

Then Cosmo and Damian knelt in worship and thanked their Lord that they had been counted worthy to minister to His need.

But soon the fame of Cosmo and Damian began to be spread abroad, and the wicked Proconsul of Arabia heard about their good deeds. As soon as he knew they were Christians, and helped the poor and suffering, he was filled with rage, and sent and ordered that the two brothers should be cast alive into the sea.

Immediately Cosmo and Damian were seized and led up to the steep cliffs, and the guards bound them hand and foot. Not a complaint escaped their lips, not a sign of fear, as the soldiers raised them on high and flung them over into the cruel sea, far below. But as the crowd above watched to see them sink, a great fear and amazement seized the soldiers, for from the calm blue sea they beheld the brothers rise slowly and walk towards the shore, led by an angel who guided them with loving care until they were safe on land.

In a greater rage than ever, the Proconsul ordered that a great fire should be made and that the brothers should be cast into the midst of it and burnt to death.

But though the fire roared and blazed before Cosmo and Damian were cast in; as soon as it touched them it died down and nothing could make it burn again. It seemed as if God's good gifts refused to injure His servants.

After that they were bound to two crosses and the soldiers were ordered to stone them. But the stones did no harm to those two patient figures, but instead fell backwards and injured the men who threw them.

Then every one cried out that they were enchanters, and it was ordered that to make sure of their death they should be beheaded.

So the work of the two saint doctors was finished on earth, but for many years afterwards those who were ill would pray to these saints for their protection.

There is a legend which tells how a poor man in Rome had a leg which the doctors feared would cause his death. So he prayed to Saint Cosmo and Saint Damian and asked them to help him in his need. And that night when he was asleep, he saw the doctor saints standing at his bedside in their red robes and caps trimmed with fur. One held a knife and the other a pot of ointment.

'What shall we do to replace this leg when we have cut it off?' asked Saint Cosmo.

'A black man has just died and been buried near here,' answered Saint Damian. 'He no longer needs his legs, so let us take one of them and put it on instead.'

So they cut off the bad leg and fetched the leg of the black man, and with the ointment joined it on to the living man.

And when he awoke he believed he must have dreamt about the visit of the saints, but when he looked at his leg, behold! it was black and perfectly sound and well. Then they sent and searched for the black body, and on it they found a white leg. So the man knew that the doctor saints had heard his prayers, and had come to cure him.

That is one of the wonderful stories which have grown up round the names of Saint Cosmo and Saint Damian.

While we cannot tell if these things really happened, this we do surely know to be true, that these two brothers, who lived in an age when men were cruel and selfish, spent their whole lives in trying to help those who suffered pain, and then went bravely to death in the service of their King. And though we know but little about them, they have left us an example of patient kindliness and helpfulness; and they teach us that as servants of their King we also are bound in honour to protect the weak and help those who suffer, whether they are people like ourselves or God's dumb creatures.

Saint Martin

It was a cold winter's day in the city of Amiens, and the wind swept along the great Roman road outside the city gates with such an icy blast that the few people who were out of doors wrapped themselves closer in their cloaks, and longed for their sheltering homes and warm firesides.

But there was one poor old man who had no cloak to wrap around him, and no fireside of which to dream. He shivered as the searching wind came sweeping past him, and his half-blind eyes looked eagerly up and down the road to see if any one was coming who might help him in his need. One by one the people hurried past and paid no heed to the beggar's outstretched hand. It was much too cold to stop or to think of giving help, and not even a beggar could expect it on such a day as this. So they left the poor old man hungry and cold and homeless.

Then a young soldier came riding past, but the beggar scarcely thought of asking alms of him, for the Roman soldiers were not the kind of men to trouble themselves about the poor and suffering.

The old man closed his eyes, weary and hopeless, for it seemed as if there was none to help nor pity him. Then in a moment he felt a warm cloak thrown around his shoulders, and in his ears sounded a kind voice which bade him wrap it close around him to keep out the cold.

Half bewildered the beggar looked up, and saw the young soldier bending over him. He had dismounted from his horse and held a sword in his hand, with which he had just cut his own cloak in half, that he might share it with the shivering old man.

The passers-by laughed and hurried on, but the soldier did not care if they mocked him, for he was quite happy to think he had helped one who needed help so sorely.

The name of this young soldier was Martin, and he served in the Roman army with his father, who was a famous general. Most of Martin's fellow-soldiers were pagans, but he was a Christian, and served the emperor well, because he served Christ first.

The very night after Martin had divided his cloak with the beggar he had a dream, in which he saw his Master, Christ, among the holy angels, wearing the half cloak which Martin had given away that afternoon. And as he looked, he heard Christ's voice speaking to the angels, and saying:

'Know ye who hath clothed Me with this cloak? My servant Martin, who is yet unbaptized, hath done this.'

Then Martin awoke, and he did not rest until Christ's seal of baptism was set upon his brow, and he felt that he had enlisted truly in God's service.

Now Martin knew that to be God's servant meant doing everything day by day as well as it could be done, and serving his earthly master as faithfully and diligently as he tried to serve his heavenly commander. So it came to pass that for all the fourteen years he served in the emperor's army, he was known as the best and bravest soldier, and one who had never failed to do his duty.

But as he began to grow old, he longed to serve God in other ways, and so he went to the emperor and asked for permission to leave the army.

There was war going on just then, for Rome was ever fighting with the barbarians who came up against her, and the emperor was very angry when he heard Martin's request.

'You seek to leave the army because you fear to fight,' he said scornfully to Martin, who stood silently before him. 'A Roman soldier should scorn to be a coward.'

'I am no coward,' answered Martin and he met with

unflinching look the angry gaze of the emperor. 'Place me alone in the front of the battle, with no weapon but the cross alone, and I shall not fear to meet the enemy single-handed and unarmed.'

'Well said,' answered the emperor quickly; 'we will take thee at thy word. To-morrow thou shalt stand defenceless before the enemy, and so shall we judge of thy boasted courage.'

Then the emperor ordered his guards to watch Martin that night lest he should try to escape before the trial could be made. But Martin had no thought of escape, and was ready and eager to do as he had said.

Meanwhile, however, the enemy began to fear that they had no chance against the Roman army; and very early in the morning, they sent messengers to ask for peace, offering to give themselves up to the mercy of the emperor.

So Martin was set at liberty, and no one doubted his courage and faithfulness; since they believed that his faith in God had brought peace, and given them the victory over their enemies.

Soon after this Martin was allowed to leave the army, and he journeyed from place to place telling those who had never heard it before the good news of Jesus Christ.

In those days it was dangerous to go among the mountains unarmed, for robbers and brigands made their home there, and would swoop down on unsuspecting travellers and rob or murder them.

But Martin took no companions with him, and with no weapon but the cross, he climbed the mountain roads defenceless and alone.

One day, as he journeyed, a company of brigands appeared suddenly, as if they had started out of the rocks. They seized him roughly, and one of them aimed a blow at his head with an axe. But before the blow could fall, another robber turned the axe aside and claimed Martin as his prisoner. Then

they tied his hands behind him and bound him fast, while they made up their minds which would be the best way to kill him.

But Martin sat calm and untroubled, and seemed to have no fear of these terrible men.

'What is thy name, and who art thou?' asked the brigand who had claimed Martin as his prisoner.

'I am a Christian,' answered Martin simply.

'And art thou not afraid of the tortures which await thee, that thou dost seem so calm and fearless?' asked the robber, wondering at the peaceful look upon the prisoner's face.

'I fear nothing that thou canst do to me,' answered Martin, 'for I am a servant of the great King, and He will defend His own. But I do indeed grieve for thee, because thou livest by robbery and violence, and art therefore unworthy of the mercy of my Lord.'

The astonished robber asked him what he meant, and who this great King was whom he served; so Martin told him the whole story of God's love, and of the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

No words so wonderful had ever been spoken to this brigand before, and as he listened he believed that what Martin said was true. The first thing he did was to cut the rope which bound his prisoner's hands and to set him free; and after that he led him in safety through the mountain passes, until he reached a road that led to the plains below.

Here they parted, and the brigand knelt and asked Martin to pray for him that he might lead a new life. So there was one less robber on that lonely road, and one more Christian fighting the battles of the Lord.

Although Martin loved to dwell in lonely places, he was always ready to go where he was most needed, and so a great part of his life was spent in busy towns. When he was made Bishop of Tours and could no longer live in the solitude he loved, still he strove to be the best bishop it was possible to become, just as when he was a soldier he tried to be as good a

soldier as he knew how to be.

Now Martin was growing an old man, yet he was very little changed since that long ago day when he divided his cloak with the poor beggar outside the gates of Amiens. It is said that one day when he was serving at the altar, in all his beautiful bishop's robes, he saw a ragged beggar standing near shivering with cold. At first he bade his deacon give him clothing, but the deacon was too slow to please the kind heart of the bishop, and so he went himself and took off his gold-embroidered vestment and put it tenderly round the shoulders of the beggar. Then as the service went on, and the bishop held up the holy chalice, the kneeling crowd saw with wonder that angels were hovering round and were hanging chains of gold upon the upraised arms to cover them, because the robe Martin had given to the beggar had left them bare.

Now the Evil One looked with great mistrust and disfavour upon Martin, for the good bishop won more souls by his love and gentleness than the Evil One cared to lose. All the preaching and sternness of other good men were not half so dangerous to the plans of the Evil One as the pity and kindness of Martin. So one day the Evil One met Martin and began to mock at him.

'Thy faith is beautiful indeed,' he said scornfully; 'but how long do thy sinners remain saints? They have but to pretend a little sorrow for their sins, and lo! in thy eyes they are immediately saved.'

'Oh, poor, miserable Spirit that thou art!' answered Martin. 'Dost thou not know that our Saviour refuses none who turn to Him? Even thou, if thou wouldst but repent, might find mercy with my Lord.'

The Evil One did not stop to answer the bishop, but disappeared with great swiftness. Later on he returned, as we shall see.

The fame of Martin's life spread far and near, and the rich as well as the poor did him honour. The emperor and empress

invited him over and over again to come to their court, but Martin steadily refused, for he loved best to work among the poor.

A time came, however, when he saw that he might do great good if he could persuade the emperor to cease from persecuting the Christians; and so at last he agreed to attend a banquet at the palace and to be the emperor's guest.

Everything was as gorgeous and splendid as possible, for the emperor wished to do honour to the bishop, who was the one man who dared to speak truly to him and not to flatter him with mere words.

But Martin scarcely seemed to notice all the grandeur and brilliance of the entertainment. And when, at the banquet, the emperor took the wine-cup and passed it to his guest, expecting him to bless it and respectfully hand it back, Martin turned quietly round instead, and passed the jewelled cup to a poor priest who stood behind. This he did to show the astonished emperor that in his eyes the poorest of God's servants was to be considered before the greatest ruler upon earth.

It was not long after this that the Evil One again visited Martin. But this time he disguised himself that he might not be known.

It was evening and Martin was praying in his cell, when a bright light filled the place, and in the midst of the light he saw a figure clad in royal robes and with a crown of gold and jewels upon his head. His face was shining and beautiful, so that no one could have guessed he was the Evil One. Martin could only gaze upon him in dazzled silence, for his shining beauty was beyond all words.

Then the Evil One spoke, and the sound of his voice was like music.

'Martin,' he said, 'dost thou not see that I am Christ? I have come again upon earth, and it is to thee that I have first showed myself.'

But Martin still gazed silently at him and answered

nothing.

'Martin,' said the Evil One again, 'why dost thou not believe? Canst thou not see that I am Christ?'

Then Martin answered slowly:

'It seemeth strange to me that my Lord should come in glittering clothing and a golden crown. Unless thou canst show the marks of the nails and spear, I cannot believe that thou art He.'

At these words, with a horrible thunder-clap, the Evil One disappeared, and Martin saw him no more.

Years passed, and Martin lived a long and useful life; but he was growing weary now, and when God's call came, he gladly prepared to enter into his rest, and to leave the world where he had laboured so long and faithfully.

The night that Martin died he was seen in a vision by one of his friends who loved him more than all the rest. The saint's robe was shining white and his eyes were like stars and, as the friend knelt and worshipped, he felt a soft touch upon his head and heard a voice that blessed him ere the vision faded.

And so Martin finished his earthly work, and went to hear from his Master's lips the gracious words: 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'

Saint George

Every nation has its own patron saint whom the people love to honour, and who is looked upon not only as their protector in war and peace, but as a model of all that is best and highest and most worthy to be copied in their own lives.

Ever since the days of the Crusades, when our lion-hearted King Richard went to fight the infidels in the Holy Land, the special saint whom England has delighted to honour has been Saint George. 'For Saint George and Merrie England' rang out the old battle-cry; and the greatest honour which our kings can bestow—the Order of the Garter—is really the Order of Saint George, and bears upon it the picture of his great adventure. And when you have heard the story of Saint George you will not wonder that England took him for her special saint, and as an example for all her sons to follow.

Saint George was born far away in Cappadocia, in the year 303 A.D. His father and mother were nobles of that country and were also Christians, although they lived under the rule of the heathen Emperor Diocletian.

Saint George's father, who was a soldier, was often away in the service of the emperor. So it was the mother who had most to do with the care and training of their only son. It must have been, then, from her that the boy learned that gentle reverence towards all women, which made him their protector and champion all his life.

When he was seventeen, he too became a soldier like his father, and the shining sword, which he then buckled on, was kept all his life as stainless as his honour. He never drew it in a wrong cause, but held it as a trust given to him to defend the right and protect the weak and helpless.

Now in the same country there was a city called Selem, whose people had once been as happy and prosperous as any in the land, but which was now the most miserable spot in all the world.

The city itself was beautiful with splendid palaces and gay gardens, and the king who ruled there was wise and good. But outside the city wall stretched a grey, sullen-looking lake, half marsh and half stagnant water, and in this gloomy bog there lived a dreadful monster called a dragon. No one knew exactly what he was like, for those who were so unfortunate as to have been near enough to see him plainly had been killed by his fiery breath, which came rolling out from his great yawning throat. He did not seem to walk nor to fly, although he had what looked like wings and huge flat feet, but always moved along with a crawling motion most horribly swift.

Nothing was safe from this terrible monster. One by one the sheep and oxen belonging to the city were devoured by him, and when the people had no more food to give him, he crawled towards the city, and his dreadful fiery breath warned them that he was coming closer and that they would soon be carried off, one by one, and devoured.

In their despair and terror, the king and all the people agreed to cast lots each day; and it was settled that the one on whom the lot fell should be put outside the gates to feed the monster, so that the rest might live in safety. This was done for many days, and the grief and suffering in that city was terrible to behold. But the darkest day of all was when the lot fell upon Cleodolinda, the king's only daughter. She was very beautiful, and the king loved her more than all else beside, so in his anguish he called his people together, and in a trembling voice, his grey head bowed with grief, he spoke to them:

'She is my only child—I cannot give her up. Take rather all my gold and jewels, even the half of my kingdom; only

spare my daughter, the one treasure of my heart.'

But the people were very angry, and would not listen to the king, for they too had lost their children, and it made them savage and cruel.

'We will not spare the princess,' they growled in low threatening tones; 'we have given up our own children, and why shouldst thou withhold thine? Didst thou not agree with us to cast the lots? Why shouldst thou make one law for us and another for thyself?'

And they threatened to burn down the palace and kill both the king and Cleodolinda if she was not given up to them at once.

Then the king saw there was no hope of deliverance, and he promised that in eight days the princess should be ready for the sacrifice. Those were eight sad days at the palace, for all was dark and hopeless there, and the only person who did not give way to despair was the Princess Cleodolinda herself. She spent her time trying to comfort her father, and told him she had no fear, but rather that she was glad to think she was to die to save his people.

So the fatal day arrived when the monster was to be fed, and the princess came out to meet the crowd stately and calm, dressed in her royal robes as befitted a king's daughter. And when she bade farewell to her father, she went forth alone, and the gates of the city were shut behind her.

Now it happened that at the very time that Cleodolinda went out to meet the dragon, and just as she heard the city gates clang heavily behind her, Saint George came riding past on his way to join his soldiers. His shining armour and great spear were the only bright things in that gloomy place; but the princess did not see him, for her eyes were blinded with tears, and even when he galloped up close to her she did not hear him, for the ground was soft and marshy, and his horse's hoofs made scarcely a sound as he rode past.

Slowly the princess walked along the desolate way

towards the sullen grey lake, where the monster was waiting for his meal. The path was strewn with bones, and no grass grew for miles around, for the fiery blast of the dragon's breath withered everything it passed over. Cleodolinda never dreamed that help was near, and started in amazement when she heard a kind voice speaking to her, and looking up, saw through her tears a young knight on horseback, gazing at her with pitying eyes. She thought that he had the handsomest, kindest face she had ever seen, and the gentlest and most courteous manner, as he leaned towards her, and asked her why she wept, and wherefore she was wandering alone in this dismal place.

Cleodolinda told him in a few words the whole sad story, and pointed with trembling hand towards the distant marsh, where already a dark form might be seen crawling slowly out of the grey water.

'See, there he comes!' she cried, in sudden terror. 'Ride fast, kind knight, and escape while there is time, for if the monster finds thee here, he will kill thee.'

'And dost thou think I would ride off in safety, and leave thee to perish?' asked Saint George.

'Thou canst do nothing,' answered the princess, wringing her hands; 'for nought can prevail against this terrible dragon. Thou wilt but perish needlessly in trying to save me, so, I pray thee, fly while there is time.'

'God forbid that I should act in so cowardly a manner,' answered Saint George. 'I will fight this hideous creature, and, by God's help and the strength of my good sword, I will conquer him and deliver thee.'

And while he was still speaking, the air was filled with a horrible choking smoke, and the dragon came swiftly towards them, half-crawling and half-flying, his eyes gleaming, and his mouth opened wide to devour them.

With a swift prayer for help, Saint George made the sign of the cross, and grasping his great spear firmly, spurred his

horse and rode straight at the monster. The combat was a long and terrible one, and the princess, as she watched from behind a sheltering tree, trembled for the safety of the brave knight, and gave up all for lost.

But at last Saint George made a swift forward rush, and drove his spear right down the great throat of the monster, and out at the back of his head, pinning him securely to the ground. Then he called to the princess to give him her girdle, and this he tied to each end of the spear, so that it seemed like a great bridle, and with it Cleodolinda led the vanquished dragon back towards the city.

Inside the city gates all the people had been weeping and wailing over the fate of the princess, which they feared might any day be their own, and they dared not look out or open the gates until the monster had had time to carry off his victim. So their terror and dismay was great indeed when the news spread like wildfire that some one had seen the great monster come crawling towards the town, instead of returning to his home in the dismal swamp.

They all crowded, trembling with fear, around the watch-tower upon the walls, to see if the dragon was really on his way to attack the city; and when they saw the great dark mass moving slowly towards them they thought that the end was come, for they could not see Saint George nor the princess, and did not know that she was leading the dragon a vanquished prisoner.

So it was all in vain for a long time that Saint George thundered at the city gates, and demanded that they should be opened. Even when the people saw that the princess was safe and that a knight was with her, while the monster lay quiet at their feet as if half-dead, they still hesitated to open the gates, so great was their terror and astonishment.

But when they were quite sure that the dragon was bound and could do them no harm, they threw open the gates, and every one crowded to see the wonderful sight, still half-

doubting if it could be true, and looking with fear upon the great beast which the princess led by her girdle fastened to the spear of Saint George.

Then the king came in haste from his palace to meet his daughter, and never was a morning of sorrow turned into such a day of joy.

Saint George and the Princess Cleodolinda led the dragon into the market-place, followed by the wondering crowd; and there Saint George drew his sword and cut off the head of the hideous monster. Then were the people sure that they were indeed delivered from their great enemy forever, and they burst forth into wild rejoicings. They would have given all they possessed to Saint George in their joy and gratitude; but he told them that the only reward he desired was that they should believe in the true God, and be baptized Christians. It was not difficult to believe in the God who had helped Saint George to do this great deed, and very soon the king and the princess and all the people were baptized as Saint George desired.

Then the king presented the brave knight with great treasures of gold and jewels, but all these Saint George gave to the poor and went his way; keeping nought for himself but his own good sword and spear, ready to defend the right and protect the weak as he had served the princess in her need.

But when he returned to his own city he found that the emperor had written a proclamation against the Christians, and it was put up in all the market-places and upon the doors of the temples, and all who were Christians were hiding in terror, and dared not show themselves openly.

Then Saint George was filled with righteous anger, and tore down the proclamations in all the public places, and trampled them under foot. He was seized immediately by the guards and carried before the proconsul, who ordered him to be tortured and then put to death.

But nothing could shake the courage of this brave knight,

and through all the tortures he bore himself as a gallant Christian should, and met his death with such bravery and calm joy that even his enemies were amazed at his courage.

And so through the many dark ages that followed, when the weak were oppressed and women needed a knight's strong arm to protect them, men remembered Saint George, and the very thought of him nerved their arms and made their courage firm. And boys learned from him that it was a knightly thing to protect the weak, and to guard all maidens from harm; and that a pure heart, a firm trust in good and true courage could meet and overcome any monster, however terrible and strong.

And of all nations it befits us most that our men and boys should be brave and courteous; for Saint George is our own patron saint, the model of all that an English knight should be.

Saint Francis of Assisi

In the sunny land of Italy, high upon hills covered with olive-trees, nestles the little town of Assisi. Such a strange little town it is, with its tall city walls and great gateways, its narrow, steep streets, and houses with wide, overhanging eaves. The road that leads up from the plain below is so steep, as it winds upwards among the silver olive-trees, that even the big white oxen find it a toil to drag the carts up to the city gates, and the people think it quite a journey to go down to the level land below.

Now, it was in this same little hill-town, many years ago, that Saint Francis was born.

They did not know that he was going to be a great saint—this little, dark-eyed Italian baby, who came to gladden his mother's heart one autumn day in the long ago year of 1182, when his father, Pietro Bernardone, was away in France. He seemed just like any other baby, and only his mother, perhaps, thought him the most wonderful baby that ever was born. (But mothers always think that, even if their babies do not grow up to be real saints.) She called him Giovanni at first, but when his father came home he named the little son Francesco, which means 'the Frenchman,' because he was so pleased with all the money he had made in France. So the child from that day was always called Francesco, which is his real Italian name, although we in England call him Francis.

Soon he grew into a happy, daring boy, the leader in all the games and every kind of fun. He was the pride of his father and mother, and the favourite of the whole town; for although he was never out of mischief, he never did a cruel or unkind thing, and was ever ready to give away all he had to

those who needed help.

And when he grew older he was still the gayest of all the young men of Assisi, and wore the costliest and most beautiful clothes, for his father had a great deal of money and grudged him nothing.

Then came a sad day when Francis fell sick, and for a while they feared that he must die. But, although he grew slowly better, he was never quite the same Francis again. He did not care about his gay companions, or the old happy life. There was real work to be done in the world, he was sure. Perhaps some special work was waiting for his hand, and with wistful eyes he was ever looking for a sign that would show him what that work was to be.

Walking one day along the winding road, dreaming dreams as he gazed far across the misty plains, catching glimpses of far-away blue mountains through the silver screen of the olive-trees, he was stopped by a poor old beggar, who asked him for the love of God to help him.

Francis started from his day-dreams, and recognised the man as an old soldier who had fought for his country with courage and honour.

Without stopping to think for a moment, Francis took off his gay cloak and tenderly wrapped it round the shoulders of the shivering old man.

He never thought that any reward would be given him for his kind action, but that very night Christ came to him in a glorious vision, and, leading him by the hand, showed him a great palace full of shining weapons and flags of victory, each one marked with the sign of the cross. Then, as Francis stood gazing at these wonderful things, he heard the voice of Christ telling him that these were the rewards laid up for those who should be Christ's faithful soldiers, fighting manfully under His banner.

With a great joy in his heart Francis awoke, and hurriedly left home to join the army, thinking only of earthly service,

and longing to win the heavenly reward.

But in the quiet night he heard again the voice of Christ telling him that the service he was seeking was not what Christ required of his soldiers.

Troubled and sad, Francis went back to Assisi and, when he was once more inside the city walls, turned aside to pray in the little ruined church of Saint Damiano. And as he prayed once more he heard the voice speaking to him, and saying, 'Francis, repair my church.'

Now, Francis thought this meant that he was to build up the ruined walls of the little church in which he prayed. He did not understand that the command was that he should teach the people, who make up Christ's Church on earth, to be pure and good and strong.

Francis was only too glad to find that here at last was some real work to be done, and never stopping to think if he was doing right, he went joyfully home and took some of the richest stuffs which his father had for sale. These he carried off to the market, and sold them for quite a large sum of money. Then, returning to the little church, he gave the money to the old priest, telling him to rebuild the walls and to make the whole place beautiful.

But the priest refused to accept the money, for he was afraid that Francis had done wrong in taking the stuffs, and that his father would be angry.

This was a great disappointment to Francis, and made him think that perhaps he had been too hasty. He was afraid to go home and tell what he had done, so he hid himself for some days. But at last, tired and hungry, with his gay clothes stained with dust, he slowly walked back to his father's house.

And very angry, indeed, was Pietro Bernardone when he found out what his son had done. He did not mind giving Francis money for fine clothes or pleasures of any kind, and he had allowed him to be as extravagant as he liked. But to want money to build up an old church, or to spend in doing

good, that was not to be thought of for a moment.

Out he came in a furious rage and drove Francis indoors, and there shut him up in a dark cellar, bound hand and foot, so that he could not escape.

But though his father was so angry, his mother could not bear to see her son suffer, whether he deserved it or not. So she stole down when no one was there, and, unlocking the cellar door, she spoke gently to poor Francis, and listened to all his story. Then she took off his chains and set him free, telling him to go quickly before any one should see him.

Francis had no place to shelter in but the little ruined church, and no friend who would receive him but the poor old priest, so back he went to Saint Damiano, leaving parents and home and comforts behind him.

His father, of course, was terribly angry when he found that Francis had escaped, and he went at once to complain to the bishop, and demand that Francis should be punished and made to give back the money he had taken.

The bishop spoke kindly to Francis, who promised gladly to give back the money which had brought him so much trouble. And there, in the market-place, with all the people looking on, he took off his costly clothes, now all stained and worn, and standing pale and thin, wearing only a hair shirt, he gave clothes and money back to his angry father, saying—

'Listen, all of you. Until this time I have called Pietro Bernardone father, but from this moment I will say no more "my father Pietro Bernardone," but only "my Father which art in Heaven."'

Then the good bishop came quickly up and wrapped his mantle round the poor shivering lad, and gave him his blessing, bidding him henceforth be a true servant of God. A poor labourer gave Francis his rough brown tunic, and the people were moved with pity and would have helped him, for they thought he had been treated very harshly.

But Francis wandered away alone into the world, seeking

to do all the things he had most disliked doing, even at one time nursing the poor lepers, and begging his bread from door to door.

Soon, however, he made his way back to Assisi, and to the little ruined church; and began building up the walls with his own hands, carrying the stones on his shoulders, happy and contented to be doing work for God.

And the more he thought of his past life and the wasteful splendour in which he had lived, the more he came to see that to be poor for Christ's sake was best of all.

'If Christ chose to become poor for our sakes,' thought he, 'surely it is but right that we should choose to become poor for His dear sake.'

It seemed to Francis that no one had really loved poverty since the days when our blessed Lord had lived amongst the poor on earth. And he began to think of poverty as a beautiful lady who had been despised and ill-treated all these long years, with no one to take her part or see any charm in her fair face.

For himself he made up his mind to love her with all his heart, to be as poor as his Master had been, and to possess nothing here on earth.

Even his coarse brown habit had been given to him in charity, and instead of a belt he tied round his waist a piece of rope which he found by the wayside. He wore no shoes nor stockings, but went barefoot, and had no covering for his head. And being so truly poor was the greatest joy to him. He thought the Lady Poverty was a fairer bride than any on earth, though her clothes were ragged and her pathway lined with thorns. For along that thorny path she led him closer to his Master, and taught him to tread more nearly in His footsteps than most of His servants have ever trod.

One day when Francis was reading the gospel, Christ's call seemed to sound in his ears just as it did to Saint Matthew of old. He had often read the words before, but that day they

had a new message for him: 'As ye go, preach, saying the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, neither two coats, neither shoes nor yet staves.'

Then he knew that Christ did not want him only to be good, but to teach others how to be good, and to look after Christ's poor and sick, always remaining poor and lowly himself. And as soon as he heard the call he rose up, left all, and followed his Master to his life's end.

Very soon other men joined Francis, eager to serve Christ as he did. They all dressed just as Francis dressed, and became quite as poor as he was. Their home was in the plain below Assisi, by the little chapel of Saint Mary of the Angels, which had been given to the brothers. But it was not often that they were there all together, for Francis sent them out to preach to all the world just as the gospel commanded.

In spite of their poverty the 'Little Poor Brothers,' as they were called, were a happy, cheerful little company. Francis had just the same gay nature and ready smile as when he was a boy in Assisi, and though he might have to go long solitary journeys on foot, sleeping in caves or in woods, hungry and footsore, he was never sad nor lonely. He seemed to love everything that God had made, and all the animals and birds were his special friends. They were never frightened of him, and when he walked in the woods the birds would come and perch on his shoulder and sing their good-morning to him.

And sometimes Francis would stand still and let them all come round him, and would preach a little sermon to them, telling them how they ought to praise God for His goodness.

'Little sisters' he always called them, and it is said they would listen quietly while he spoke, and then when he gave them his blessing, they would rise up to heaven singing their hymn of praise, just as if they had really understood their little service.

Once when Francis and some of the brothers were

returning home, they heard a great number of birds singing among the bushes. And when Francis saw them he said to his companions—

'Our sisters, the birds, are praising their Maker. Let us go into their midst and sing our service too.'

The birds were not in the least disturbed, but continued their chirping and twittering, so that the brothers could not hear their own voices. Then Francis turned to the birds and said—

'Little sisters, cease your song until we have given God our praise.' And they at once were quiet, and did not begin to sing again until the service was over.

And it was not only the birds that loved him, but every kind of creature came to him for comfort and shelter.

Now this is a story which was told about Francis after he was dead, when people tried to remember all the wonderful things that he had done, and perhaps made them a little more wonderful, out of love of Saint Francis.

Once when the saint was living in the city of Agolio a terribly fierce wolf began to prowl about the town. He carried off everything eatable he could find, and grew so bold that he even seized the children and made off to his mountain den with them. The whole town was terrified, and people scarcely dared go out of doors for fear of meeting the terrible wolf. And though the men hunted him, he always escaped and came prowling down at nightfall again.

When Saint Francis heard this he said—

'I will go out and meet this wolf, and ask him what he means.'

'He will kill you,' cried all the people, and they tried to persuade him not to go.

But Saint Francis set out, taking some of the brothers with him. They went bravely along for a short way, and then the brothers turned back afraid and ran home, leaving Saint Francis alone. And presently he heard a deep growling and

the sound of a terrible rush, and the great wolf, with blazing eyes and open mouth, came bounding towards him. But as he came nearer Saint Francis went forward to meet him, and making the sign of the cross, he said: 'Come hither, brother wolf. I command thee in the name of Christ that thou do no more harm to me nor to any one.'

And then a wonderful thing happened; for, as soon as the wolf heard the saint's voice, he stopped, and then came gently forward, and lay like a lamb at St. Francis's feet. Then Saint Francis talked quietly to him, and told him he deserved to be punished for all the evil he had done, but if he would promise to kill and plunder no more, the people of Agolio would promise on their side to give him food every day. And the wolf rubbed his head against Saint Francis's habit and gently laid his paw in the saint's hand. And always after that the good people of Agolio used to put out food for the wolf, and he grew so good and tame that he went quietly from door to door, and never did harm to any one again.

Whether all this really happened we do not know; but one thing we are certain of, and that is, that Francis loved all living creatures, and they seemed to know it and to love him too.

It was not long before the little band of brothers grew into quite a large company, and Francis went to Rome to ask the Pope, the head of the Church, to give them his blessing, and his permission to live together under their rule of poverty. All the world was astonished at this strange man, in his coarse brown robe, who preached to them that riches were not worth having, and that the greatest happiness was to be good and pure.

At first the Pope would have nothing to do with him. But one night he had a dream, and in his dream he saw a church leaning on one side, and almost falling. And the only thing that kept it from falling quite over was a poor man, barefooted and dressed in a coarse brown robe, who had his shoulder

against it and was holding it up.

Then the Pope knew that God had sent the dream to him, and that Francis was going to be a great helper in the Church. So next day he called for Francis and granted him all that he asked, and took the Little Poor Brothers under his protection.

Soon the company grew larger and larger, and Francis sent them all over the country, preaching and teaching men that they should deny themselves and love poverty rather than riches.

Still they always kept the little home at Saint Mary of the Angels, and the brothers returned there after their preaching was ended.

The convent was built close to a wood, and this wood was the place Francis loved best. For he could be quite alone there, to pray and meditate, with no one to disturb his thoughts. And often, when all the other brothers were asleep, he would steal quietly out and kneel for hours under the silent trees, alone with God.

Now there was a little boy at the convent who loved Francis very much, and wanted to know all that he did, that he might learn to grow like him. Especially he wondered why Francis went alone into the dark wood, but he was too sleepy to keep awake to see. It was a very poor convent, and all the brothers slept on mats on the floor, for they had not separate cells. At last one night the boy crept close to the side of Francis, and spread his mat quite close to his master's, and in case he should not wake he tied his little cord to the cord which Francis wore round his waist. Then he lay down happily and went to sleep.

By and by when every one was asleep, Francis got up as usual to pray. But he noticed the cord and gently untied it, so that the boy slept on undisturbed. Presently, however, the child awoke, and finding his cord loose and his master gone, he got up and followed him into the wood, treading very softly with his bare feet that he might disturb nobody.

It was very dark, and he had to feel his way among the trees; but presently a bright light shone out, and as he stole nearer he saw a wonderful sight. His master was kneeling there, and with him was the Blessed Virgin, holding our dear Lord in her arms, and many saints were there as well. And over all was a great cloud of the holy angels. The vision and the glorious brightness almost blinded the child, and he fell down as if he were dead.

Now when Francis was returning home he stumbled over the little body lying there, and guessing what had happened he stooped down and tenderly lifted him up, and carried him in his arms, as the Good Shepherd carries His lambs. Then the child felt his master's arms round him, and was comforted, and told him of the vision and how it had frightened him. In return Francis bade him tell no one what he had seen as long as his master was alive. So the old story tells us that the child grew up to be a good man and was one of the holiest of the Little Poor Brothers, because he always tried to grow like his master. Only after Francis died did he tell the story of the glorious vision which he had seen that night in the dark wood, at the time when no one knew what a great saint his master was.

As time went on, Francis grew anxious to do more than preach at home; for Christ's message to him had been 'Go ye into all the world.' He had set out many times, but always something had prevented him from getting far, until at last he succeeded in reaching the land of the Saracens where the Crusaders were fighting. His great hope was that he might see the Sultan and teach him about Christ, so that all his people might become Christians. He had no fear at all, and when every one warned him that he would certainly be put to death, he said that would be a small matter if only he could teach the heathen about God.

But although the Sultan received Francis, and listened to all he had to say, he only shook his head and refused to believe

without a sign.

Then Francis grew more and more eager to convince him, and asked that a great fire should be made, and that he and the heathen priests should pass through it, saying that whoever came out unharmed should be held to be the servant of the true God. But the heathen priests all refused to do this, and so poor Francis had to return home, having, he feared, done no good, but hoping the good might follow afterwards.

These weary journeys and all the toil and hardship of his daily life began to make Francis weak and ill. Many things troubled him too; for the brothers did not love poverty as he did, and they began to make new rules and to forget what he had taught them. But in the midst of all trouble, he remained the same humble servant of Christ, always thinking of new ways to serve his Master.

There was no time Francis loved so much as Christmas. He loved to feel that all living things were happy on that day. He used to say that he wished that all governors and lords of the town and country might be obliged to scatter corn over the roads and fields, so that 'our sisters the larks,' and all the birds might feast as well. And because the ox and the ass shared the stable with the Holy Child, he thought they should be provided with more than ordinary food each Christmas Eve.

He wished every one to remember how poor and lowly our Lord was on that night when He came as a little child; and so on Christmas Eve he made a stable in the chapel, and brought in an ox and an ass and a tiny crib and manger. In the manger he placed the figure of a baby to represent the infant Christ, and there in the early hours of the Christmas morning, he chanted the gospel at the first Christmas Mass.

It was in the spring of the year that Francis first went to the hermitage among the mountains, which he loved better than any other place. It was a small hut high among the Apennines, among crags and rocks far away from any other

place. Here he could wander about the woods, which were carpeted with spring flowers, and hear his little sisters the birds singing all day long.

And here one day, as he knelt thinking of all his dear Lord had suffered, a wonderful thing happened. The thought of all that trouble and pain seemed more than he could bear, and he prayed that he might be allowed to suffer as his Master had done. And as he prayed, seeing only before him the crucified Christ with nail-pierced hands and wounded side, God sent the answer to his prayer, and in his hands and feet deep marks appeared, as though there had been nails driven through them, and in his side a wound as if from the cruel thrust of a spear.

And so Francis learned to suffer as his Master had suffered, and through all the pain he only gave God thanks that he had been thought worthy to bear the marks that Jesus bore.

Francis did not live very long after this for he grew weaker and weaker, and they carried him back to the old house at Saint Mary of the Angels. There the Little Poor Brothers gathered round him, and he spoke his last words to them, bidding them live always as he had taught them to live, in poverty and lowliness. And when evening came, and the birds he loved so much were singing their vesper hymns, his voice joined in their praise until his soul passed away to the Lord whom he had tried to serve so humbly, and in whose footsteps he had sought to place his own.

Our Island Saints

Stories for Children

By Amy Steedman

S. Alban

Long years ago, when Rome was mistress of the world and her soldiers and citizens were to be found everywhere, even the little island of Britain had its place among the colonies of the great empire. Here the Romans laid their roads and planted their towns, built temples to their gods, and ruled the barbarians with a firm strong hand. Many noble Roman families lived in Britain in those days, and although the life was ruder and rougher than that they were accustomed to in the wonderful city of Rome, still they made their houses as luxurious and comfortable as they could and tried to be content.

It was in one of these well-built houses, with inlaid floors and marble baths, that the little Alban was born, heir to a great Roman family. The parents had settled in the town of Verulam, on the banks of the little river Ver, but they always looked upon Britain as a land of exile, and planned to send their boy back to Rome as soon as he should be old enough to be taught and trained to be a Roman citizen.

But the child himself was very happy in his island home. The little stream that ran past the town was in his eyes a wonderful river which would carry his boats far out to sea. The green hill on the opposite bank was a playground fit for the gods, with its carpet of golden-eyed daisies and yellow buttercups, and the smooth grassy slopes that were so soft to roll upon. The great forests that looked so dark and gloomy held him spellbound, and he loved to watch the grey mists come rolling over the marshy land, turning everything into a world of mystery.

Never was there a happier child in all the world; but the

reason of his happiness was not because he had so many pleasures, but because he was kind and generous to every one round about him. It seemed as if there was a little singing bird in the golden cage of his heart, a bird that was always singing happy songs, and its name was Unselfishness.

Now, as soon as the boy grew old enough, he was sent away to Rome as his parents had planned, for they wished him to learn many things which he could never be taught in the little island of Britain. It seemed to Alban as if he had come to a different world when first he entered the city of Rome. Accustomed as he was to the little town with its few well-built houses, the rude huts and wild marsh wastes, the rolling mists and grey skies, he had never dreamed of such a city as this. Palaces of white marble triumphantly rearing their columns up to heaven; temples of the gods more beautiful than a dream; baths luxurious as those of a king's dwelling; and above all the blue sky, such a blue as he had never even dreamed of, and sunshine which kept him even warmer than his fur coat had ever done.

There was much to learn and much to do in this new world of wonder and magnificence, but as Alban grew into a man, he found that there was something he loved better than all this splendour and luxury. Far away on the banks of the little river, in the island of the mist and grey skies, there was something which bound his heart with a golden thread of love and memory which nothing could snap. Although the house at Verulam was no grand palace; although the country was rough and wild and often cold and bleak, it was home. The great forests, the green flowery hills, the rolling mists seemed to be calling him. It meant home to him, and he loved it better than all the glory of Rome.

So Alban returned to the island of the mists, and lived once more in the house where he was born, on the banks of the little river. He was rich and powerful and had everything that heart could desire, and he was as happy as ever, for he

was so kind and generous that every one loved him. Rich and poor alike were welcome at his house, and no one who needed help asked for it in vain. Travellers always stopped at his gate, and he never refused hospitality to any guest.

It was late one night, when doors were barred and every one had gone to rest, that a knocking was heard at the outer gate. It was an urgent knocking although not very loud, and the servants at last went to see who it was that sought shelter at that unseemly hour. A weary looking man dressed in a long cloak was standing there, and he begged that he might be taken in secretly and hidden from his pursuers, who were even now close at hand.

The servants, knowing their master's will, brought him quickly in, and one went to his lord to tell him of the new arrival. 'He hath a strange cloak and seemeth to be a teacher, and one of those whom men call Christians,' said the servant, as he told his tale: 'he saith that even now he is pursued and hath endured great persecutions.'

'See that he is made welcome,' said Alban, 'and that he is hidden secretly, and let no man prate of his presence here.'

The poor hunted man, who was indeed a Christian priest, was brought in and secretly hidden, as Alban had commanded, and for a while his pursuers sought for him in vain.

Alban knew well how cruel were the tortures and punishments which these Christians endured, and he looked to find his guest stricken with terror and fear, but to his surprise the priest's face was calm and even happy.

'Art thou not afraid that thy persecutors may track thee here?' asked Alban curiously.

'My Master is stronger than they,' answered the priest calmly. 'He will protect me.'

'Who is thy master?' asked Alban wonderingly.

'The Lord Christ,' answered the priest.

'That poor man who died the death of a criminal?' said Alban, in a mocking voice.

'The King of Heaven, who deigned to come to earth as a helpless child,' answered the priest, 'and who became Man that He might teach us to be men.'

'And what reward dost thou receive for thy service to this King?' asked Alban, looking at the worn clothes, the weary thin face of the man before him.

'They who serve Christ have no thought of reward,' answered the priest. 'Their only thought is how much service they may offer their Master. Stripes, persecutions, tortures, death, these are the rewards which His faithful soldiers gladly suffer, that they may be fit to call Him "Lord." Wilt thou listen to the story of my King?'

'These are strange sayings of thine,' said Alban, 'but I will hear no more. Tis almost like a call to battle in my ears, and yet I know it is but foolishness. Be silent; I will have no more of thy idle talk.'

Disturbed and angry, Alban turned to go, but all that day the words he had heard rang in his ears. How royally was this King served by His followers! Who was He that could command such splendid service? He had heard of this God of the Christians, but had never troubled himself to learn what His life had been.

Then when night came and he lay sleeping, a dream was sent—a dream which told him the story of the King, which he had refused to hear that day. He saw the Man, crowned with the wreath of thorns; he saw the face of majesty and power gazing so pitifully at the cruel throng who seized Him and nailed Him to the cross. He saw the body laid in the tomb, and then the figure of the living Christ ascending with great glory into heaven. And sweeping upwards, there followed a great multitude in white robes, following Him who had conquered death, for whom they too had laid down their lives.

Early next morning Alban went to the secret chamber to seek the priest and ask what that dream could mean.

'God has been very gracious to thee, my son,' answered

the priest solemnly. 'He has taught thee Himself what thou didst refuse to hear from me.'

'Tell me more,' said Alban humbly; 'I will listen to every word that thou canst tell me now.'

With a glad heart the priest told over again the story of his Master's life, and Alban listened eagerly. Again the battle-call sounded in his ears, and he longed to serve a Master such as this.

'But hast thou indeed counted the cost of such a service?' asked the teacher. 'It is no pleasant service which He offers.'

'I seek no pleasant service,' answered Alban.

'A cruel death may be thy only reward,' said the priest again. 'Dost thou not repent the kindness which made thee harbour a Christian?'

'Nay,' replied Alban; 'thou hast brought me life instead of death. I have never yet repented of one kind or merciful act which I have done to any man.'

Then the priest could no longer refuse to baptize the new soldier into the service of the King; but as they knelt in prayer together the servants came hurriedly to the door telling of a band of soldiers who had entered the courtyard and demanded to search the house for the hidden fugitive.

Alban sprang to his feet, and caught up the heavy cloak and cowl of the priest. 'Quick! quick!' he cried, 'escape thou in my mantle, and I will stay here in thy place. They will scarce discover who I am until thou hast escaped far away out of their reach.'

'How can I do this?' said the priest. 'Thou wilt suffer in my stead.'

''Tis my first call to arms,' said Alban gladly. 'Let me thus begin to serve the King.'

There was no time for words; the soldiers were at the door; but when they entered there was but one cloaked figure there, and he showed no resistance, but quietly gave himself into their hands.

The judge was in the temple, sacrificing to his gods, when they brought the fugitive Christian to receive his sentence. And when the cloak was thrown back and he saw the young Roman noble, he was doubly furious because he had been deceived.

'Thou has hidden a traitor in thy house, and well dost thou deserve to bear his punishment,' he cried angrily. 'Perhaps thou too art a Christian. Sacrifice at once to the gods, and beg for mercy.'

'It is as thou sayest; I am a Christian,' answered Alban calmly. 'I serve the King of Heaven, and will offer no sacrifice to thy false gods.'

There was a note of triumph in the voice of the young Roman, and the people wondered when they saw him standing there so fearless and triumphant. Did he not know what it meant to call himself a Christian? He was young and rich and powerful; all the pleasures of life, gay and alluring, lay spread out before him; all the great things which men strive after lay within his grasp; and yet he was choosing torture, dishonour and death. The wondering 'why?' was echoed in every heart.

But there was little time for wonder. The soldiers, by order of the judge, seized Alban and dragged him away to be tortured, and then he was led out to be executed in the arena on the opposite side of the river.

All the inhabitants of the town came out to see the sight, and some looked on with pity, remembering the kindness they had received at the hands of the young Roman noble. Others again came out to mock. How gallant and happy he had always looked. There would surely be no smile on his face now! But when they pressed forward, and caught sight of that pale young face, their mocking words were silenced, and a feeling of awe fell upon the crowd. Yes, the old happy look was there still, but there was something higher and purer added to it. A light of wondrous happiness seemed to shine forth, and the

people as they looked felt as did those men who gazed upon S. Stephen. 'They saw his face, as it had been the face of an angel.'

Down to the little river they led him; but when they came to the bridge there was no room to pass, for the crowd was so great. The order was given to ford the river, but the legend tells us that before S. Alban could step down, the stream dried up, and he crossed over, without so much as wetting his feet.

Then the old legend goes on to tell how the executioner, who watched this miracle from the opposite bank, was struck with fear and remorse. How could he put to death a man whom heaven itself so carefully guarded? He would not fight against the God of Alban, so he threw down his sword and refused to touch him.

But Alban walked steadfastly on to the place of execution. Up the grassy slopes of the green hill he went, along the flowery path of scented thyme and golden-eyed daisies, where he had loved to play as a little lad. On this bright June day the hill was starred with flowers, and they seemed indeed a fitting carpet to spread beneath the feet of the first English martyr.

There were other executioners ready to do the bidding of the governor, and there, on the green hillside, the first faithful English soldier in the noble army of martyrs laid down his life.

A clear spring of water, it is said, sprang up to mark the spot where S. Alban was put to death, near the little town of Verulam which now bears his name; but the miracle was scarcely needed. The memory that sprang from the life laid down in merciful kindness for another, in the service of the King, is a spring of living water that can never fail or be cut off.

S. Kentigern

The night was dark, and never a star shone in the blackness of the sky. The wind howled as it swept across the troubled waters of the Firth of Forth, and there was no light on sea or land to guide any belated fishing-boat to a safe haven. It would have been a difficult and dangerous task for any sailor to steer his boat on such a night, and yet the one frail little barque that was tossing about in the stormy waters made its way surely and steadily towards the land.

It was indeed but a frail little boat that so gallantly held its way. Over the framework of wooden laths was stretched a covering of hides, scarcely strong enough to withstand the lash of the waves. There were no oars and no rudder, and the boat seemed empty save for a dark form that crouched at the bottom with white upturned face.

But though there was no one to guide the boat, still it went steadily onward, rising like a cork over the crests of the threatening waves, so that scarce a drop of their spray fell upon the dark figure that clung there so desperately.

Presently there was a grating sound, and then a wild sweep upward, as the boat was lifted on the crest of a wave and dashed high and dry upon a sandy shore, while the sea sank sullenly back. Then the dark figure rose quickly, and tried to peer with her wild sad eyes into the blackness around. She was but a maiden yet, and very beautiful, but her beauty was dimmed by the look of suffering and weariness that had paled her cheek and dulled her eyes. A king's daughter this, driven out by cruel hands, but carried by the pitiful waves to a safe haven.

All was very black and very still as the maiden gazed

around, but presently a tiny glow of light showed through the darkness, and, stumbling as she went, she managed to reach the place where a few dying embers in a circle of rude stones marked the spot where some shepherds had left their fire to die out.

With a sob of thankfulness the tired traveller knelt and, with trembling breath, coaxed the ashes into a glow, and gathered some of the sticks that were scattered around to lay upon the embers. How good it was to feel the warmth stealing through her stiff frozen limbs; how comforting to see the merry little red tongues of flame lighting up the darkness that was so lonely and so terrible!

But another light had now begun to melt the darkness of the night. Far away in the east the long-looked-for dawn was lifting with its rosy ringer the grey curtain of morning twilight. And with the light there came to the lonely maiden by the little fire, the light and joy of her life—her baby son, sent by God to comfort her. Poor little wailing child, he had but a cold welcome to this world of ours. There was no roof to cover him, no soft garments to enfold him; only his mother's arms to wrap him round, only the little red fire to warm him and bid him welcome.

It was thus that another Baby had come to earth in the stable at Bethlehem long ago; and this little one too, like the King of Heaven, found friends among the kindly shepherd folk. Not far off from the sandy beach the shepherds had been herding their flocks, and as they looked seaward in the dim light of dawn, they saw a thin curl of blue smoke rising from the shore. Surely, then, their fire had not died out, and it would be good to warm themselves in the chill morning air. They were rough strong men these shepherds, accustomed to a rough rude life, but when they came to the sandy beach and saw the poor young mother with her little newborn son, like the shepherds of old they too knelt down in reverence and with tender hands wrapped their warm coats about the

mother and child, and brought out their poor breakfast, offering all that they had.

We must away and tell the good Saint Servan, said one. 'He will care for these poor strangers.'

'Hasten, then,' cried another, 'and we will follow on and gently bear the mother and her little one to the dwelling of the saint.'

So it was arranged, and two of the younger shepherds started in hot haste to tell the good saint of the adventure that had befallen them. They knew that they would find him ready to listen to their story, for he ever rose with the dawn to offer his daily service to God.

'Father, father,' they cried, as the old man came forth from the little church to meet them. 'We have a strange thing to tell thee. On the shore of Culross we have but now found a fair young maiden with her newborn son. The child was born at dawn of day, and we would know if we may bring them both hither to thee.'

A wonderful light shone on the face of the old man as he listened to the words. A child born at the dawn of day! Why, that must have been the meaning of the angel's song which had fallen on his wondering ears as he knelt before the altar! His heart had been lifted up in prayer when the song 'Gloria in Excelsis' came floating down, and he waited for some sign to show what it all should mean.

Scarcely had the breathless shepherds finished their tale when the others followed on, one gently bearing the weary mother, while the other tenderly held the tiny babe in a fold of his cloak.

The old saint hurried forward with eager steps and held out his trembling hands to take the child.

'My dear one, my dear one,' he cried, 'blessed art thou that hast come in the name of the Lord.'

So the old saint took the child to his heart. The echo of the heavenly voices still rang in his ears, and he felt sure that

this little child sent to earth at the dawn of light would be one of the heralds of the True Light that had come into the world.

When a few days had passed and the poor mother had poured her sad tale into his kindly ears, S. Servanus brought the maiden and her child to the font of the little church, and baptized the mother by the name of Thenew. Then he took the baby in his arms and poured the water over its little downy head, giving him the name of Kentigern. But there was another name by which the child was often called, Mungo, or 'dear one,' the name used by the old man that early morning when he took the little one into his arms and into his heart.

Under the care of the good saint the child grew into a strong brave boy. He had no lack of companions, for many boys were gathered at the monastery to be taught and trained by the learned S. Servanus. With them he learned his lessons and played his games, but, although he was kind and generous, the boys did not greatly love him. It was not so much that they envied his quickness at lessons, or his beautiful voice which soared above all the rest in the daily hymn of praise: this they might have suffered, but they felt sure that the master loved him best, and this was more than they could bear. They began to wish with all their hearts that Kentigern would be tempted to do some mean evil deed and thus lose favour in the eyes of the old man, who took such a pride in his goodness and cleverness.

The saints of God have always had a special love for His dumb creatures, and have treated both birds and beasts with tender care. The blessed S. Francis was never so happy as when among his 'little sisters the birds,' while all animals came to him at his call as if to a friend. S. Servanus too had his favourite 'little sister,' a tiny robin-redbreast, so tame that it would come and perch on the old man's shoulder, hop upon his hand, and at matins would cheerfully chirp its little hymn of praise with the rest. It was so small and trustful, so sure of its welcome when it came hopping down, cocking its head on

one side and looking at him with its bright eye, that the saint would smile and call it his spoilt child. Before eating his own meals the 'little sister' had first her share.

Now the boys who were so jealous of Kentigern were inclined to hate the poor little robin too. Many a time had the master bade them take a lesson from his little favourite, mark its prompt obedience in coming at once when it was called, watch its busy ways, and note how cheerful was its song of praise. They answered never a word, but in their hearts they thought it was by no means pleasant to be sent to learn lessons from a silly little bird.

So the evil feeling grew until at last one night, when the saint had gone into the church alone, they found the redbreast chirping away on a branch outside the door, and, as it was so tame, they caught it with the greatest ease. At first they did not mean to harm it, only to frighten it a little, but their ways were rough, and ere long they took to quarrelling as to who should hold it, and began to snatch it from each other's grasp. Then before they half realised what they had done, the poor little bird lay dead in their hands, its feathers all torn and ruffled, its bright eyes closed, its head hanging limp and still. A dreadful hush fell on the noisy throng as they looked at their work.

'Oh! what will the master say?' cried one.

'We dare not tell him,' said another.

'He will know without any telling,' said a third.

'Oh! how we shall be whipped,' wailed all the rest in chorus.

A shiver went round at the words. Each one knew exactly how that whipping would smart, and almost felt it already.

'Here comes the good boy Kentigern,' cried another; 'he of course is safe from blame, just as he always is.'

The boys looked at one another. The same thought had struck them all. Why not put the blame on Kentigern and say that he had killed the bird? Would that not serve two good

ends? They would be saved from the master's wrath and that most certain whipping, and Kentigern would be humbled and cast out of favour.

Even as they hurriedly agreed to this plan, the church door opened and the saint came forth. His keen eye saw at once that something was wrong. The crowd of silent boys were all looking expectantly towards him, and in their midst stood Kentigern bending over something which he held in his hand.

'What mishap has befallen?' asked the old man, gazing at the eager faces.

'It is Kentigern,' they cried with one voice all together. 'He has killed thy little bird.'

The master said nothing, but looked at the silent figure bending over the little bunch of ruffled feathers. Kentigern did not seem to hear or to heed the loud accusation. Very gently he stroked the feathers and laid his cheek against the tiny body that was still warm. Then he knelt down, and, raising one hand, made the sign of the cross over the bird.

'Lord Jesus Christ,' he prayed, 'in whose hands is the breath of every creature, give back to this bird the breath of life, that Thy blessed name may be glorified for ever.' And as he prayed there was a faint stirring among the feathers, a ruffling of the wings, and the robin flew to its safe shelter on the shoulder of the master. Now the old chronicle which tells this tale does not add whether the boys received the whipping which they had feared, but we trust that their forebodings were smartly realised. If so, it may have taught them to treat God's creatures more gently, but it certainly did not cure them of the sin of envy and jealousy, for Kentigern continued to have but a hard time amongst them.

It was the rule of S. Servanus that each of the boys should in turn take charge of the lighting of the sanctuary lamps. Thus the boy whose turn it was to see that the lamps were trimmed and lighted was obliged to keep up the fires while all

the rest were in bed, so that there should not fail to be a spark ready to kindle light for the early service. When it fell to Kentigern's turn, the boys thought of a fresh plan to bring disgrace upon his head.

As soon as all the fires had been carefully made up, and Kentigern had gone to rest, the other boys crept silently out of bed and went the round of the monastery, raking out every fire. Not a spark did they leave that could light a single lamp, and then they went joyfully back to bed, feeling well satisfied with their work.

At cockcrow Kentigern rose as usual to go and make ready for the early service, but he found every fire black and dead. Search as he might, there was no means of kindling a light, although he had built up each fire carefully to last until morning.

Then the boy's heart was full of anger. All the wrongs he had suffered patiently, all the unkind tricks of the other boys rose up in his memory, and he felt that he could bear it no longer. It was all so mean and underhand. They did not dare stand up and openly defy him, for they knew he was brave and fearless, but in the dark they plotted and planned how they might punish and disgrace him. No; he would stand it no longer; he would leave the monastery and make his own way in the world.

So forth he went, swinging along with great angry strides until he came to the hedge that bounded the monastery lands. By this time his anger had begun to cool and leave room for other thoughts. After all it was rather cowardly to run away, even from injustice and persecution, for it meant also running away from duty and the good old man who was like a father to him. What would the master say when he entered the church and found it in darkness, the altar lights unlit, the lamps untended?

Very slowly, then, Kentigern retraced his steps, holding in his hand the hazel twig which he had broken off from the

hedge when he stood debating which road to take. He was thinking deeply as he walked, and it suddenly flashed across his mind that there was a way of obtaining the light he needed which as yet he had not tried. Surely God would not fail to help him. So, just as he had prayed in faith over the dead bird, he knelt down on the dewy grass and, making the holy sign over the little twig, prayed God to kindle in it a living spark that might light the lamps for His service. The legend tells us that as he prayed God did indeed send down fire that lit into a tiny torch the hazel twig, and that it burnt steadily until all the lamps in the church were lit, one by one.

Again there is no mention of the whipping which those boys deserved, but Kentigern was no talebearer, and this his enemies knew full well.

So time went on, and Kentigern grew into a tall lad, the comfort and joy of his master. He was almost a man now, and it was time that he should leave the monastery and his sheltered life there, and find his own work in the world.

Not in anger this time did he plan his departure, but with a humble heart, and he prayed to God for guidance. Not only was he the cause of much quarrelling and jealousy among the rest, but, what was even worse, people had begun to praise and flatter him and call him a wonderful boy, and he felt sure that it was time he should go. So he made up his mind to leave the monastery, and early one morning, after his work was done, he started forth.

It was to the river that Kentigern bent his steps, scarcely knowing which way to turn, but drawn to the place where the shepherds' fire had warmed him as a tiny baby, where the cry of the sea-birds and the moan of the sea had drowned his first feeble wail. Journeying on and on by the side of the winding Forth, he reached at last a place where a bridge spanned the silver river. The water was flowing quietly beneath him as he crossed the bridge, but when he had reached the other side it rose higher and higher in a great spate until the bridge was

entirely swamped. Then, as Kentigern stood and watched the furious torrent, he saw his old master on the opposite bank, leaning with one hand upon his staff and with the other beckoning him to return. The aged saint had followed him all the long way from the monastery, and his voice came sounding mournfully across the rushing waters.

'Alas, my son, light of my eyes, staff of my old age, wherefore dost thou leave me?'

'My father,' cried Kentigern, 'it grieves me sorely, but I must go forth to my work. Thou knowest that as truly as I do.'

'Then let me come with thee, my son,' cried the old man. 'Thou hast been mine since the day when the angels sang of thy birth, and the shepherds placed thee in my arms.'

'I know it,' said the boy, and he stretched out his arms with a loving gesture towards the old man, 'but I must go forth, and my work lies yonder, while thy work lies behind. Fare thee well, and God guard and keep thee until the time when He shall take thee home.'

S. Servanus knew that the boy was right, and that he must finish his life-work alone, while the strong young lad, the herald of the dawn, should carry the light into the dark places of the land. Sorrowfully, then, he returned to the monastery, and Kentigern journeyed on alone.

For a while Kentigern lived and worked at Camock, but as the years went by, the fame of his holy life and the good deeds which he did reached the ears of the king of that country.

The Church was then in evil plight, for although the people had been taught the true religion in days gone by, they had sadly lapsed, and many had learned to worship idols and believe in strange gods, as did the pagans who had invaded their land.

The King and the clergy, therefore, of the Cambrian region sought to strengthen and fortify the Church, and what better weapon could they find for their purpose than this

wonderful young man, whose influence over people was so marvellous and who lived such a pure and blameless life?

But when they came to tell Kentigern that they had decided to make him a bishop, he was amazed and dismayed.

'I am too young,' he said.

'Thy ways are staid, and thou hast much learning,' they answered.

'It would take me from my prayers and meditations,' urged Kentigern.

'There are other souls to be saved besides thine own,' they gravely answered.

Then Kentigern bowed his head, and said sadly, 'But I am not worthy'; and they answered, 'Because thou thinkest thyself unworthy, we are all the more certain that thou art the one man we seek.'

There was more talk after this, and at last Kentigern saw that there was no other way but to accept the post of honour and difficulty. A bishop from Ireland was ready to consecrate him to his high office, and he was made Bishop of Glesgu, a little place on the banks of the Clyde. There a wattled church was built and a fortified monastery, and there, in the midst of a wild country and a still wilder people, Kentigern began his rule. Little by little, houses were built close around the church and monastery until a village was formed. Then the village became a town, and as the years rolled by the town grew into the great city of Glasgow.

But in the days of S. Kentigern Glesgu meant only 'the dear family,' for so the saint named the little gathering of God's servants who dwelt together under one rule and had all things in common, seeking only to do God's service.

There was no jealousy or ill-feeling now for Kentigern to fight against, for the brethren all loved their bishop and obeyed him as their master. But it was no life of ease to which he was called, but one of difficulty, hardship, and strenuous work. Early in the morning he rose from his bed, which

boasted no soft pillow nor warm covering, and however cold the morning, he plunged into the river close by to brace his body for his day's work. The clothes he wore were rough and coarse below, but above he wore a pure white alb or cloak and the stole of his office over his shoulder. And well might the white folds of his mantle be to men a sign of the pure childlike soul that dwelt in the strong man's body.

It is said that, as he knelt before the altar, the prayers which rose from 'the golden censer of his heart' seemed to reach to the very gates of heaven, for often as the faithful people knelt around him they saw a white dove with a golden beak descend and hover above his head, overshadowing with its snowy wings the altar and the kneeling bishop.

There was little rest for the servants of God in those days. Far and near they journeyed among the people scattered around the wild countryside. However far the journey, Kentigern always went on foot, and there was no hardship which he shrank from enduring if he could but bring one lost sheep back into the fold. Preaching, teaching, building churches, strengthening and leading back those that had wandered from the True Light, his work went on from day to day.

But once in the year, when the season of Lent came round, Kentigern left his brethren and went to dwell alone in a far-off cave. It was the time when our Lord had gone into the wilderness to wrestle with the tempter, and well did Kentigern know how blessed it was to be alone with God.

In the lonely cave there was nothing to chain his thoughts to earth and men. The song of the birds, the rippling laughter of the burns unlocked from their winter bonds of ice, the little grey furry caps of the willow buds, the soft green of the sprouting grass, everything fitted in with the praise and prayer which filled his days.

Then when Good Friday came he returned to his brethren, wan and wasted indeed with fasting, but with a face that

seemed to reflect the light of heaven, so near to its gates had he dwelt.

But although Kentigern fasted and endured many hardships, he had always a happy cheerful face, and he had no belief in gloomy looks. Often he would tell his brethren that what he disliked above all was a hypocrite who went about sighing with eyes cast down and a long face. They seemed, he said, to think they were walking after the manner of turtle-doves, whereas in reality it was the peacock they resembled. And what was the use of looking down on the dust when eyes might be lifted to heaven? No, hypocrisy was one of the little foxes that spoiled the grapes, and God loved those who did their work with a cheerful countenance and simplicity of heart.

So many years passed away and then evil times befell the 'dear family' at Glesgu. Another king now reigned, one who hated the Church and talked with scornful contempt of the bishop and his workers. The seasons, too, had been bad and the harvest poor, and Kentigern found that there was no corn to feed the brethren nor to give to the poor who came to him for aid.

It was surely the duty of the King to help his people, so the bishop went boldly to the court and asked that out of his abundance the King would spare corn for his hungry people.

The King laughed aloud at the request and answered with mocking words.

'Thou who teachest others to cast their burden upon the Lord, should surely practise thyself the same. How is it that thou who fearest God art poor and hungry, while I, who have never sought the kingdom of heaven, have all things I can desire, and Plenty smileth upon me? Therefore what thou preachest is a lie.'

Calmly then did Kentigern make answer that God has often seen fit to afflict the just and allow the wicked to flourish like a green bay tree.

This enraged the King still further, and he bade Kentigern work a miracle if he could.

'If, without the aid of human hands and trusting only in thy God, thou canst transfer to thy house all the grain that is in my barns, I will yield it to thee as a gift,' he said, with a mocking laugh.

Kentigern left the King, carrying with him an anxious heavy heart. There were so many hungry mouths to fill and all depended upon him. But not for a moment did he lose his faith in the goodness of God, and he prayed earnestly to Him that the daily bread might be provided.

That very night a great storm came sweeping down the river and the waters began to rise. Higher and higher swelled the torrent until it overflowed the river bank, and swirling round the King's barns, it lifted them bodily from the ground and carried them out on to the river. There the current caught them and swept them along till they reached the place where Kentigern dwelt, where it left them high and dry, with not so much as a grain of corn spoilt by the water. So God took the King's gift to feed His people.

The mocking King was filled with fury when he learned what had happened, and so cruel became his persecution of Kentigern and his brethren, that they at last determined to leave the monastery and to seek afar off some place where they might dwell in peace.

Travelling southward, Kentigern dwelt some time in Cumberland, where, as was his custom wherever he rested, he erected a stone cross, as a sign of his faith, at a little place still known as Crossfell. Then, travelling on by the seashore, he sought in the wild country for some convenient place where he might found another home.

There is a legend that tells of a white boar that guided him, but it was more likely a kindly stream like his own river Clyde which led him by its silver thread to a place which seemed all that he could wish.

They were no mere dreamers these monks of old, and they did not look for miracles to work for them when the work could be done with their own hands. The wilderness was soon humming as with a hive of bees, and in a wonderfully short space of time trees were cut down, fashioned into beams, fitted together, and a great wooden church and monastery was built to the glory of God.

But it seemed as if Kentigern was never to be free from persecution, for scarcely was the monastery finished when the prince of North Britain came riding through the forest with his followers, and demanded what these strangers meant by settling on his land.

In vain did Kentigern answer peaceably. The prince would not be appeased, and in his anger he threatened to pull down the church and chase the builders off the land.

Then a strange thing happened, for suddenly the light of day faded from the eyes of the angry man and black darkness came swiftly over him.

'What is this?' he cried, staggering forward, stretching out helpless groping hands. 'The light is gone. I can see nothing.'

In haste his men came crowding round and lifted him up, but they saw at once that he was blind and they knew not what to do.

'Bring him hither to me,' said Kentigern, and the men led him forward, guiding his stumbling steps.

The heart of the good bishop was touched by the sight of the helpless man, and he earnestly prayed to God that He would lighten the darkness and restore sight to those dull eyes. Even as he prayed the light returned, and the grateful prince knelt at the feet of the saint and kissed the hem of his robe in reverence and thankfulness.

There was no more talk of pulling down the church or chasing the brethren, but the prince humbly sat at Kentigern's feet to be taught to know the True Light which alone could lighten the darkness of his mind.

So things prospered greatly at the new monastery, which grew even greater and more powerful than the old home at Glesgu. But just as Kentigern was beginning to dream of a rest in his old age and thought to end his days in his peaceful new home, he was called once again to fresh labours.

A new king had come to reign over the Cambrian kingdom; one who loved the Church, and strove to establish it once more in his kingdom. Surely, then, the first thing to be done was to send for the good bishop and bid the shepherd return to gather together his flock once more in the old home at Glesgu.

It was hard to leave the home he had made and begin all over again the old work and struggle, but Kentigern never hesitated. The new monastery was left under the care of a faithful brother, S. Asaph, and Kentigern once more turned his face northwards and returned to his native land.

Many years he laboured, and with him returned peace and prosperity, for the brethren were busy skilled workers, and they taught the people to work the land to the best advantage. The King, too, put all things in his kingdom under the rule of the wise bishop, so that his word was law throughout the country. And it is said that the holy Saint Columba journeyed from his island home to greet the saint whose fame had spread even as far as Iona.

So the herald of the dawn did indeed bring light into the dark places of his beloved land, and when his work was done on the morn of the Epiphany, when the silver lamp of the morning star was paling in the light of the coming dawn, the angels came to carry home the soul of him at whose birth they had sung their 'Gloria in Excelsis.' And surely now their song must have risen in still higher triumph, for his warfare was accomplished, the work of the weary old man was finished, and behold, his soul was still as the soul of a little child!

S. Patrick

It was a dark night of storm and wind, but the people in the little farm on the western coast of Scotland were accustomed to stormy winds and the sound of breakers dashing upon the rocky shore, and they paid little heed to the wintry weather. They were all tired out with their day's work, and thankful, when the darkness closed in, to bar the doors and shut out the wild night as they gathered round the fire within. A rough set of people they looked in the light of the great peat fire that burned on the hearth. Only one, a boy of sixteen, seemed different to the rest, and had a gentler, more civilised look, while he held himself as if accustomed to command.

This boy was Patrick, son of the master Calponius, who belonged to the Roman colony at Dumbarton, and he had been brought up with care and taught all that a young Roman citizen should know. His gentle mother, niece of the holy S. Martin of Tours, had brought with her many a cherished memory of courtly manners from the sunny land of her birth, and she had taught the boy to be courteous and knightly in his bearing. So it was that Patrick learned many things which were as yet unknown in the savage northern land where he dwelt, but chiefest among all was the faith of Christ, taught to him by his father and mother, who were both Christians.

But all these lessons seemed very dull and uninteresting to the restless boy. It was such a waste of the golden hours to sit indoors and learn those endless psalms. Prayers, too, took such a weary time, when he might be out on the hillside, as free as the happy birds and all the wild creatures that lived under the open sky. Sometimes in his heart he almost wondered whether it might not be pleasanter to be a heathen

rather than a Christian. The heathen had no psalms to learn and could do just as they pleased.

'Some day thou wilt grow wiser,' said his mother, 'and what is but a dull lesson to thee now will be like apples of gold in pictures of silver.'

But Patrick could not understand what she meant, and he was only too glad when lesson-time was over and he was allowed to go off to the little farm close to the sea, where he could work with his hands and not with his head. How he loved the rough free life there; the days spent in the fields and woods, the evenings when the peat was heaped high on the glowing hearth, and he listened to the stories of brave deeds and wild adventures which were told or sung in the flickering firelight! What cared he for shrieking winds and the roar of the breakers outside? It was fitting music to echo around the splendid tales that made his heart beat like a drum and his eyes glow like the fire.

'It is a wild night,' said one of the men, 'and black as the pit. We must needs have a wild song to match the night and chase away the blackness.'

So the rude chant of savage deeds and wild adventures was taken up one by one, until the roar of the storm was drowned in their ears and the wail of the wind became part of the mournful music.

But outside in the blackness the wind had sterner work to do than to act as chorus to idle tales. What were those mysterious long black boats that fought their way so stubbornly through the angry waves? They seemed like phantoms of the night, so silently they moved, showing never a glimmer of light from stem to stern. In vain the icy wind swept down upon them and strove to beat them back. Slowly but surely they crept on until they reached a sheltered bay where sand was smooth and it was safe to land.

Black and silent as their boats the pirate crew landed one by one, and, like the ghosts of sea-monsters, crawled stealthily

over the rocks and up the hill towards the farm that nestled in a hollow there. The light from the peat fire shone through the little window; a burst of wild song came floating out into the dark night: there was no thought of lurking danger or surprise.

Closer and closer crept the black figures until they too could listen to the story that was chanted by the fireside, and they laughed aloud to hear such brave words coming from the lips of men who sat safe and warm within, little dreaming of the real danger that beset them without.

'Hark!' cried one of the singers suddenly, 'surely the wind hath a strange voice to-night. To me it soundeth like the laughter of demons.'

With one accord the company started to their feet, for the sound they heard was no voice of the storm. The door was burst inwards with a tremendous crash, and well might the little company think for a moment that demons were abroad. Fearlessly and bravely they fought, but one by one they were overpowered, and either killed outright or bound hand and foot. The captain stood and looked at the row of sullen captives.

'Away with them to the boats,' he cried. Then, pointing to Patrick, he added, 'See that ye handle that one carefully, for he is a strong lad and will fetch a good price when we land on the other side.'

There was nothing to be done, no rescue to hope for, and resistance only made matters worse. Patrick lay stunned and despairing in the bottom of the boat which was to carry him away from his home and his friends. It was all like a bad dream, the tossing of that stormy sea, the long dark night, the landing in a strange country, and the knowledge that he was now a slave to be sold to the highest bidder.

So Patrick came to Ireland, and was sold to a man whom they called Michu, and sent out into the fields to feed his master's swine.

Strong and hardy as the boy was, the life which he had now to lead taxed his endurance to the uttermost. There was little rest or leisure, for a slave's work is never finished, and he was often so hungry and so bitterly cold that he felt half stunned with misery. Even when the snow was on the ground he had to drive out his herd of pigs to find food for them, and often he was out all night upon the hillside, sheltering in some rocky corner as best he could from the biting wind that swept over the mountains.

In those long dark nights there was plenty of time for thinking, and the boy's thoughts were always of the far-off home and all that he had lost. Strangely enough it was not of the happy careless hours that he dreamed, but rather of the times that had once seemed so tiresome and so long. He loved to think of his mother, and those dull lessons which had once made him so impatient. Little by little all that he had learned came back to him, but instead of being only tiresome lessons, the psalms and prayers held a curious comforting message, as if a friend were speaking to him. Then their meaning became clearer and clearer until he realised that they were indeed a message from a real Friend. Though he was alone, homeless and utterly friendless, God was still there.

'Our Father,' said the boy to himself, and the very words seemed to change everything around. God was here in this terrible unknown country, and God was his Father. To be a slave lost half its bitterness when he could stand upright and know himself to be God's servant as well.

For six long years Patrick served his master, Michu, diligently and well, for all this time he was learning also to serve God. With that love in his heart, he learned to care for all helpless things, and to see what was beautiful in common things around. Years afterwards, when he was a great teacher and the heathen priests scoffed at his teaching, and asked how he could explain the Trinity—'Three Persons in One God,' Patrick stooped down and plucked a leaf of the little

green shamrock, which had taught him one of his lessons on the lonely hillside, and, showing its three leaves in one, gave a simple illustration of the great Mystery.

It was at the end of his sixth year of slavery, that one night Patrick drove his pigs to a distant hill overlooking his master's farm, and there, under the stars, in the shelter of a rock, he lay down to rest. It was not long before he fell asleep; but in his sleep he heard a voice close at hand speaking to him.

'Thy fasting is well,' said the voice; 'thou shalt soon return to thy country. Behold a ship is ready for thee, but thou must journey many miles.'

Patrick started up, never doubting for a moment but that this was the message of an angel. He had lived so close to God that he was ever ready to receive His commands. In the story of his life, which he has written himself, he says, 'I went in the power of the Lord, who directed my way for good, and I feared nothing until I arrived at that ship.'

Weary, footsore, and worn after the long journey on foot, Patrick presented himself before the ship's captain, and prayed that he might be taken aboard and carried over to Britain. It was perhaps small wonder that the captain looked with suspicion at the wild figure of the runaway slave, and bade him angrily begone.

It was a bitter ending to Patrick's hopes, and he turned very sorrowfully away. The journey had been so long, and he had felt so sure that all would be well at the end. Then, as ever, his first thought was to turn to his One Friend, and so he knelt down on the shore and prayed for help and guidance. The answer came even as he prayed, and he heard a shout from one of the sailors, who had followed him.

'Come along,' he cried, 'they are asking for thee.'

Back went Patrick in all haste, and found that meanwhile the captain had changed his mind.

'Come, we will take thee on trust,' he said, meaning that Patrick should work out his own passage, or repay him when

they landed. 'We are about to sail, and hope to reach land in three days.'

Those were three days of great happiness to Patrick, as he saw Ireland growing fainter and fainter in the distance, and knew that before him lay freedom and home, and all that he had lost.

But although the ship reached land in three days, it was not the land he knew, and he was still far off from home. The crew of the ship landed somewhere on the coast of Brittany, and tried to find their way to some town, having to travel across a strange, desolate country where there were no inhabitants and nothing to guide them. Day by day their store of food grew less, until they had nothing left to eat, and it seemed as if they must die of starvation.

Now the captain had found that Patrick was to be trusted, and had watched him often at his prayers, and came to think there must be some truth in a religion that made a man so honest and ready to do his duty. So now he called Patrick to him to ask his advice.

'Christian,' he said, 'thy God is powerful; pray for us, for we are starving.'

'I will pray,' answered Patrick, 'but thou too must have faith in the Lord.'

So just as a hungry child turns to his father and asks for bread, Patrick knelt and prayed to God, and suddenly there was a sound of rushing and tearing through the wood, and a herd of wild boars came sweeping along. The men gave chase, and soon captured and killed enough to provide food for many days.

After many adventures Patrick at last reached home, and for a while forgot all the hardships he had endured in the joy and happiness of that wonderful home-coming.

But the careless happy days of boyhood were over now, and a man's work was waiting for him.

'Only let the work be here,' prayed his mother. 'O my son,

promise that thou wilt never leave us again, now that we have so wonderfully found thee.'

For a while that too was Patrick's only wish, never to leave the dear home and those he loved so well.

But, as he lay asleep one night, the heavenly messenger came once more to him and pointed out the path which God would have him tread. It seemed to Patrick that the angel held in his hand a bundle of letters, and on one was written 'the voice of the Irish.' This he gave to Patrick, who, as he read, seemed to hear the call of many voices echoing from the land where he had been a slave. Even the voices of little children rang in his ears, and all of them were calling to him and saying, 'We entreat thee, come and walk still in the midst of us.'

The thought of those poor untaught people who had never heard of God had often made him long to help them, and this call decided him. He would enter God's service as a priest, and then go back to the country of his captivity to carry the torch of God's love in his hand, and spread abroad the glorious light in every corner of the dark land.

After a long time of preparation and study, Patrick was at last consecrated bishop, and then set out at once to return to the country where he had suffered so much.

It was a very different coming this time to the arrival of the boy-slave many years before. With his train of clergy and helpers, the bishop, pastoral staff in hand, landed on the sandy shore of Strangford Lough, and he bore himself as a conqueror marching to victory.

Strangely enough, the first person to greet the band of strangers was a swineherd guarding his pigs, just as Patrick had done in those long years of slavery. The lad was terrified when he saw these strange men, and although Patrick spoke kindly to him in his own tongue, the swineherd fled away to the woods. With all haste he returned to his master, Dichu, and told his news.

'There are pirates landing at the bay,' he cried, 'strange men who come to rob and kill.'

Dichu in alarm immediately armed himself and his followers and set out to meet the enemy. But instead of the savage pirates he expected, he found a band of peaceful unarmed men, with one at their head whom it was easy to see was no robber.

Patrick came forward then to meet the chief, and the two men talked a while earnestly together.

'Put up your weapons,' cried Dichu, turning to his followers, 'these men are friends and not enemies.'

As friends, then, Dichu led them to his house and made them welcome. The fearless bravery of Patrick and his strong kind face had won the chieftain's heart, and he prepared to entertain him royally. But Patrick could neither rest nor eat until his message was delivered, and as Dichu listened to his burning words, they seemed to seize him with a strange power and made him long to hear more. Gladly would he have kept Patrick with him, but there was much work to be done, and the bishop wished first of all to seek out his old master Michu, and pay the money due to him as the price of the runaway slave.

How well he knew every step of the way to the old farm! It seemed as if he must be walking in a dream, that he must be still the barefooted, hungry, ill-clad boy of long ago. There were the woods through which he had so often driven his pigs, the banks where he had found the first spring flowers, the rocks which had so often sheltered him, the little green friendly shamrock which he had loved so dearly. Up the steep hillside he climbed, and at the top he paused and knelt in prayer, remembering the vision he had seen there and the message of the angel. Then, rising up, he looked eagerly towards the spot where his master's farm nestled in the hollow beneath.

Alas! he had come too late; nothing but a thin grey curl

of smoke marked the place where the smouldering ashes of the farm lay, and, saddest of all, his master too had perished in the fire.

So there was naught to do but turn back and carry the message to others. But Patrick's heart was sad for his old master.

The glad season of Easter was close at hand, but it held no meaning for the people of this dark land. True, they had their own religion, a strange worship of the sun, and their priests, who were called Druids, were said to possess magical powers and great wisdom. They had great festivals too in which all the people joined, and one of these was just about to be held at Tara. Here the Druids were all assembled to do honour to the sun, which was becoming powerful enough to put winter to flight and warm the spring buds into summer blossoms. For some days before the feast every fire was put out, and not a light was allowed to be kindled, on pain of death, until the great festal light should be lighted on the Hill of Tara.

Now Patrick was brave as a lion, and his heart was set on delivering his message and spreading the True Light in this heathen darkness, so there was no room for fear. The gathering of the priests and the presence of the powerful King Laoghaire seemed to him a splendid opportunity of righting the powers of evil.

Across hill and dale he travelled swiftly with his little band of followers until he reached the Hill of Slane, close to Tara. There, on Easter Eve, when the land was wrapt in darkness, when not the faintest glimmer of a light could be seen in the solemn blackness that brooded over Tara's Hill, he lit his Easter fire and watched the tongues of flame as they shot up and lighted the whole country round.

The King and his councillors the Druids came hastily together in anger and astonishment when they saw the glowing light.

'Who has dared to do this thing?' asked the King in a fury.

'It is none of our people,' said the priest: 'it is the challenge of an enemy.'

The wise men were troubled and talked together in half-fearful tones. There was an ancient prophecy which rung in their ears, and made them wonder if the man they had seen wending his way at the head of his little company that day to the Hill of Slane was possessed of some magic power.

Slowly one of the Druids chanted the verse, while the others listened sullenly.

'He comes, he comes with shaven crown, from off the storm-tossed sea,

His garment pierced at the neck, with crook-like staff comes he.

Far in his house, at its east end, his cups and patins lie.

His people answer to his voice: Amen, Amen, they cry. Amen, Amen.'

'Whoe'er he be, he shall not come to challenge our power,' quoth the King. 'We will go forth and punish this bold stranger.'

Down the dark silent hillside the King and his councillors rode furiously, and never stopped until they reached the Hill of Slane. But there the Druids called a halt.

'Let a messenger be sent to fetch forth the man,' they said; 'we will not venture within the line of his magic fire.'

'We will receive him here,' said the King, 'and let no man rise when he approaches lest he should think that in any way we seek to honour him.'

So the men sat down silently to wait until the messenger should return, and ere long Patrick was seen to come swiftly down the hill towards them. That was the man, there was no doubt of it. As he came nearer they could see the shaven crown, the robe pierced at the neck, and in his hand the crook-like staff, while from the hill-top could be heard the music of the Easter hymn and the chanting of the loud

'Amen.'

The company sat silent and unmoved as Patrick approached. Only one little lad, watching with intent eyes the face of the stranger, rose to his feet in reverent greeting, forgetting the King's command.

A gentle look came into Patrick's eyes as he noticed the eager greeting and, raising his hand, he blessed the little lad.

'Who art thou, and what is thy errand here?' thundered the King.

'I am a torchbearer,' answered Patrick. 'I bring the True Light to lighten this dark land, to spread around peace and goodwill. All I ask is that thou wilt hear my message.'

Alone and unarmed but quite fearless, Patrick stood up before the angry men next day, and spoke such words as they had never heard before. It was a new and wonderful teaching, and many of the wise men and nobles listened eagerly; and when he was done they came and asked to be baptized and enrolled under the banner of Patrick's God.

That was a glad Eastertide for the bishop, and as time went on the light spread far and wide. Many there were who shut their eyes and loved the darkness rather than the light, but Patrick was wise in his dealings with them all. He was never harsh or scornful of their beliefs, but always tried to lead them through what was good and beautiful in their own religion, using old customs and feasts to do honour to Christ, giving them a new meaning that linked them to His service.

Then, too, he wisely tried to win over the chief men of the land to become Christians, knowing that their followers would the more readily follow their masters. Young boys were also his special care, remembering as he always did his bitter years of lonely slavery, and these lads were to him as sons. The boy he had blessed on that Easter Eve on the hillside of Slane was now one of his followers, and years afterwards we hear of him as Bishop of Slane. It was one of these lads whom Patrick loved so well, whose bravery and loyal devotion once saved

the good bishop's life.

Coming one day to the spot where a great stone marked the place of the Druids' worship, Patrick overthrew the stone that he might set up an altar instead. This was considered a terrible insult, and one of the heathen chiefs vowed that, come what might, he would kill Patrick wherever he found him.

Now the lad who drove Patrick's chariot heard this threat, and accordingly guarded his master with increased watchfulness. At last, however, his enemy's opportunity came, for Patrick's journeying took him past the chiefs abode. The boy Oran knew that his master had no fear and would never turn aside to escape danger, so, as they neared the place, he thought of a plan to save him.

'I grow so weary with this long day of driving, my master,' he said. 'My hands can scarce hold the reins. If thou wouldst but drive for a space and let me rest, all would be well.'

'Thou shouldst have asked sooner, my son,' said the bishop kindly. 'I am but a hard master to overtask thy strength.'

So saying, Patrick changed seats, and gathering up the reins, drove on, while the boy sat behind in his master's seat, and prayed that the gathering darkness might close in swiftly, so that no one could mark the change.

Very soon they reached the outskirts of a dense wood, and from the sheltering trees a dark figure sprang out. The frightened horse reared for a moment, there was a singing sound of some weapon whizzing through the air, and when Patrick turned to see what it meant, the boy lay dead with a javelin in his heart—the murderer's weapon, which had been meant for the master. Well might Patrick, as he knelt there in his bitter grief, hear in his heart the echo of his Master's words, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'

Journeying on from place to place teaching the people, Patrick came at one time to Cruachan, and there, by the well

of Clebach, he stopped to rest in the early morning with his little band of followers. Very earnestly they talked together in the dim morning light, and they had no eyes to notice the glorious golden banners flung out in the east to herald the rising sun, nor did they notice two white-clad figures that came stealing up towards the well where they sat.

When the day is just awakening, and the stillness and mystery of the night still lies hid in sleepy hollows and shadowy woods, there is a magic spell upon the earth. It is the same old world, and yet all is fresh, all is good and beautiful. Fear is not yet awake. Wild creatures are tame and friendly. Who would hurt them in this magic hour? Every flower holds its drop of dew close at its heart; there will be time enough to open later on when the sunbeams steal in and drink the crystal drops. Some there are who call this time 'God's hour,' and say the strange hush and peacefulness are there because the good God walks through His world at dawn.

It was at this hour that King Laoghaire's two daughters, Ethne and Fedelin, stole up the hillside to bathe in the clear waters of the Clebach spring. Hand in hand they climbed, glancing half fearfully at the hollows where the shadows still lingered, and speaking in whispers lest they should frighten the fairies that had been dancing all night on the hillside.

Suddenly, when they came in sight of the well, they stopped in amazement and half in fear. Had they caught the fairies at last, or were these spirits, these quiet solemn men seated there like a circle of grey ghosts?

Slowly Ethne the Fair went forward and spoke to the spirit who seemed to be king among the rest.

'Whence do you come?' she asked, 'and what is your name?'

Fedelin the Ruddy then drew near to hear the answer. She was no longer afraid when she saw how kindly was the look in the stranger's eyes.

'Nay,' answered Patrick, 'it matters little who I am and

whence I came, for I must soon pass away. Better it were to seek to know the God whom I serve, for He liveth for ever.'

'Who is your God?' asked Ethne, 'and where is He? Is He in heaven or in earth, in the sea or in mountains?'

'How can we know Him?' asked Fedelin. 'Where is He to be found?'

'My God is the God of all men, and He is everywhere,' answered Patrick. Then, pointing to the rosy east, the mist wrapt mountains and homely meadowland, he told them how God had made the world and all that is in it, how He loved it, and had sent His son, born of a pure virgin, to redeem it.

'He is the King of Heaven and Earth,' said Patrick, 'and it is meet that ye, the daughters of an earthly king, should also be the children of the heavenly King.'

It was a wonderful story, and the two maidens listened with breathless attention. 'Teach us most diligently how we may believe in the heavenly King,' they said. 'Show us how we may see Him face to face, and whatsoever thou shalt say unto us, we will do.'

The clear water of the fountain was close at hand, and Patrick led the two fair princesses to the brink and there baptized them in the name of Christ.

'Yet can ye not see the King face to face,' he said, 'until ye sleep in death and your souls shall wing their way up to His starry chamber.'

The maidens earnestly prayed that they might not have long to wait, and the old story tells us that then they 'received the Eucharist of God, and they slept in death.' Like two fair flowers just opening their petals in the dawning light, the Master's hand gathered them before the heat and dust of the working day had time to wither their freshness or soil their spotless purity.

Many there were besides these gentle maidens who learned to believe in Patrick's God. His teaching came like a trumpet-call to the strong men and lawless chieftains who

ruled the land. They were brave and fearless warriors these heathen chiefs, men who met pain and suffering with unflinching courage and scorned to show their hurt; men after Patrick's own heart, fit soldiers to serve his King. There was one, Aengus by name, King of Munster, who gladly obeyed the call and welcomed Patrick to his palace, asking that he might be baptized and received as God's servant. The water was brought and Patrick, leaning on his crozier, did not notice that the sharp point was resting on the foot of Aengus. Deeper and deeper the point pierced the bare foot as Patrick went through the service, but not a sign did the brave man make. This, he thought, must be part of his baptism, and he was ready, nay, eager to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Not until Patrick tried to lift his staff did he perceive what he had done, and then, in spite of his sorrow, the sight of that pierced foot made him thank God in his heart for a brave man's endurance.

It was the custom of many of these chieftains, when they became Christians, to give Patrick a piece of land on which to build a church, so ere long churches and monasteries were built wherever Patrick journeyed, and there he left teachers to carry on his work. All who loved learning found their way to these monasteries, and among them were many of the Druids, who were the poets and musicians of that time. They tuned their harps now in God's service, and so beautiful was the music they made that it is said 'the angels of heaven stooped down to listen,' and the harp became the badge of Christian Ireland.

As a rule Patrick was allowed to choose which piece of land he wanted, but when he came to Armagh, the chieftain, whose name was Daire, would only allow him to have a piece of low-lying meadowland, and refused to give him the good place on the hillside which Patrick had wanted. Then, perhaps feeling a little ashamed of himself, he thought that he

would make it up to the good bishop by presenting him with a splendid present. This was a wonderful brass cauldron which had been brought from over the sea, and there was no other like it in the land. So Daire came to where Patrick was and presented the cauldron.

'This cauldron is thine,' said Daire. 'Gratzacham' (I thank thee), answered the saint. That was all, and Daire went home, becoming more and more angry as he went.

'The man is a fool,' he said; 'he can say nothing for a wonderful cauldron of three firkins except Gratzacham.'

Then, turning to his slaves, he added: 'Go and bring us back our cauldron.'

So back they went and said to Patrick, 'We must take away the cauldron.' And all that Patrick said was, 'Gratzacham, take it.'

Now, when they returned to Daire, carrying the cauldron, he asked them, 'What said the Christian when ye took away the cauldron?'

'He said Gratzacham again,' answered the slaves.

'He saith the same when I give as when I take away,' said Daire. 'He is a man not easily moved, and he shall have his cauldron back.'

And not only was the cauldron returned, but the chieftain himself came to Patrick and told him he should have the piece of land which he desired. Together they went to climb the hill, and when they came to the place they found there a roe lying with her fawn. The men ran forward and would have killed the fawn, but Patrick was quicker than they, and he lifted the little creature gently in his arms and carried it to another place of safety. The roe seemed to know he was a friend, and trotted happily by his side until he stooped down and gave her back her fawn once more. Some say that the altar of the great cathedral of Armagh covers the spot where once on the grassy hillside the fawn found a shelter in the arms of S. Patrick.

The years went by, and each day was filled by Patrick with service for his Master, until the useful life drew to a close. Then, in the spring of the year, when the March winds were blowing, when the shamrocks he loved were decking the land in dainty green, came the King's command, 'Come up higher.' It was but a gentle call, for he had dwelt so close to the Master that it was only a step from the Seen to the Unseen, and he needed no loud summons, for his feet were on the threshold of home.

'Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ within me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ at my right, Christ at my left, Christ in the fort, Christ in the chariot-seat, Christ in the ship.'

So runs part of the beautiful old hymn of S. Patrick, and we do not wonder that he who was so truly a follower of Christ came to be called a saint.

A helpless captive, a hard-worked slave, a lonely swine-herd! Who would have dreamed that to him would have belonged the honour of leading into freedom and light the land of his captivity? Who would have thought that the lowly slave would be the torchbearer of the King, the patron saint of the green isle of Erin?

S. David

There is an old legend which tells us that the good S. Patrick, before he returned to the Green Island where he had been a slave, stayed for a while in Wales and thought to make his home there. He loved its wild mountains and deep glens dearly, its dancing streams and purple cliffs rising so straight from the edge of the blue sea. There was much work there, too, waiting to be done, and he thought that he was the man to do it. But one evening, as he sat at sundown upon the steep rock of Cam Ilidi, a messenger of God was sent in a vision to change his purpose. It was a fitting time and place for a heavenly vision. Below him the heathery moors sloped down to the edge of the sea, whose blue waters stretched out their shining glory of sapphire and gold in the sunset glow, and above in the sky the clouds were flinging wide their banners of rose and crimson. So full was the very air of wondrous light and colour that the angel who stood beside him seemed but a part of the shining glory.

'Dost thou see,' said the angel, 'beyond yon golden sea, a dim blue line beneath the sunset edge? That is the land where thou shalt dwell and wage thy warfare for God, the land from whence thou shalt enter into thy rest. This country is not for thee, but is reserved for one who shall be born thirty years hence.' So it was that S. Patrick went to Ireland, while Wales waited for the saint whom God should send.

Full thirty years then passed away before S. David, patron saint of Wales, was born. His father, it is said, was kin to King Arthur, and his mother was a poor Irish nun. Leaving her monastery, the gentle nun went to live in a cottage at the edge of the cliffs, above a little bay which is still called by her

name. Here, while the wild winds dashed the spray far up the cliffs and shrieked like demons around the little cottage, her baby was born.

Perhaps the favourite name of all others in Wales has ever been David or Dewi. Sometimes it is spelt Dafyd, and the old nickname 'Taffy' may have been the way which English tongues pronounced it. It was this name of David which they gave to the baby born in the wind-swept cottage that stormy night, little guessing that it was to be the name of the patron saint of Wales.

Like other children wild and free, he grew up strong and hardy; learned to climb the rocks like a young goat and to live his life out of doors, the sky above for his roof and the thymy grass for his carpet. But that was when he was but a little boy. Growing older, there were lessons to be learned and duties to be done, and so young David was sent to be tamed and taught at the monastery school.

Paulinus, his master, loved the boy, and found him quick to learn and easy to teach. In the old stories of S. David's life there is not much told of his childhood, but it is said that 'David grew up full of grace and lovely to be looked at. And he learned at school the psalms, lessons of the whole year, mass and communion; and there his fellow disciples saw a dove with a golden beak playing about his lips, and singing the hymns of God.'

Pure lips from which no ugly word ever fell, kindly speech that turned quarrels into friendliness, straightforward truth and honour, that was what his companions noted when they watched young David, and this was why perhaps they spoke of the dove with golden beak that played about his lips.

One other thing the old story tells about the boy. Paulinus the master suffered once from a dreadful pain in his eyes. For a time he could see nothing and feel nothing but his misery, and he did not know when David came and stood beside him in pitying silence. But presently he felt cool hands laid on his

aching eyes, a tender touch that gently stroked the hot suffering eyelids until in some miraculous fashion it charmed the pain away.

As the Master of old in Galilee brought peace and healing by the touch of His kind hand, it is not strange that those who walk closest in His footprints should have learned from Him the virtue that lies in a tender loving touch.

There were rough times to be faced when David grew to manhood and became the head of his monastery. Not only was the land continually plundered by foreign foes, but there were still many bards and chieftains who hated Christianity and looked upon David as their foe. The love of music and poetry was as strong in the land as the love of the sword, and these bards were the teachers of the people, poets who sang of the great deeds of heroes, and told in flowing verse of their victories and defeats. Thus it was a great matter to win these bards to the service of Christ, and David counted it a great victory when they listened to his teaching and were willing to enter Christ's service. The monasteries welcomed them eagerly, knowing that the music of their harps lifted men's souls to heaven.

So the banner of Christ floated more and more triumphantly over the land, and one by one the monasteries were founded by David, and filled with men eager to take service under that banner. It was no easy life that tempted men to become monks in those days. S. David's rule was so strict that only those who were willing to endure hardness could have found pleasure in living as they did. Clothes rough and coarse, made from the skins of animals, food of the simplest, work of some sort from morning till night, this was what S. David's followers willingly endured. Every moment of the day had its duties, either prayer or hard work in the fields. Instead of oxen or horses, the monks themselves were harnessed to the plough, and patiently plodded through the work given to them to do.

But through it all the love of beauty and music and poetry was never crushed out, but rather grew stronger in these simple monks. One thing they loved above all, and that was to make copies of the Holy Book, and each one strove to make his copy as fair and exquisite as skill could achieve. So much did they love this work that a special rule was obliged to be made, which ordered that when the church bell rang the brothers were to stop work at once, the sentence be left unfinished, and even the word left half written. Instant obedience was one of the first things David's monks learned, and it taught them how to conquer the world.

Upon the same rock of S. Patrick's vision David built his own beloved monastery, and there, in sight of the sea he loved and those purple hills of glory, he too received the heavenly messenger and heard the summons, 'Friend, come up higher.'

S. Molios

In the days of long ago, an old legend tells us, there lived a holy man whose heart was so filled with tender compassion for others that it even grieved him to think that there lay in the churchyard poor forgotten dead people for whom no one cared.

So, when the busy work of the day was done, this holy man made his way to the churchyard, and knelt and prayed there beside the lonely graves. He prayed so earnestly that he never noticed that the sun had set and the twilight was creeping on, and he never saw the silver moon as it rose over the hill. Hour after hour passed, and all the village lights were out, but still the saint knelt on in the churchyard. And then it was that the angels came.

They came in solemn procession, robed in white, with silver censers in their hands, but there was no great glory or heavenly light around them, and the saint thought they were a company of priests passing through the churchyard. Only their garments were whiter than any earthly robes, and the perfume that rose from the silver censers was sweeter than anything on earth.

Here and there among the grass-grown mounds the procession stayed, and the censers were swung as if before the shrine of a saint. They were but poor neglected graves by which the white-robed angels stopped, some without even a name to mark them, and some among the nettles, where the grass grew so high and rank that there was scarcely a trace to show a grave was there at all. But even there the silver censers were swung on high, and the incense, sweet as the breath of flowers, floated up to heaven.

Each night the holy man returned to pray in the quiet churchyard, and each night the white-robed figures came and went, and the saint longed to ask them what they did. At last, taking courage, he stopped them and put his question. But even as he spoke he knew that these were no earthly priests but a company of angels.

'We are God's messengers,' answered one of the white-robed throng, 'sent by Him to do honour to His saints whose bodies lie forgotten here. Even their dust is dear to Him, and although the world has forgotten them, He marks their hallowed graves. Each night He sends us to His garden, where His seeds are sown which shall one day, like the flowers, blossom into a more glorious body.'

It is a beautiful thought which this old legend teaches us—the thought that even the dust of God's saints is precious in His sight. It comes as a comforting message when we find how quickly the busy world forgets even the names of those saints to whom it owes so much; when the visions which have kept the world in touch with heaven have been forgotten and faith grows dim.

Among the many half-forgotten churchyards there is one in the little clachan of Shiskine among the Arran hills, where perhaps there is many a humble mound over which the angels swing their silver censers; and we know at least one saint by name whose dust lies there. A flat grey stone covers the grave, and on it is cut the name of S. Molios, and his story still lingers in the memory of the old folk in the country round, although to the young ones he is little more than a name.

But when winter comes, and the evenings are dark and long, the children often ask for a story, and are content then to listen to the tale of S. Molios. The old grandmother in her white mutch sits in the armchair close to the fire, while the children gather round on their little stools. The sweet scent of peat smoke fills the kitchen and wraps everything in a blue haze, so that the oil-lamp which hangs from the rafters above

scarcely lifts the shadows from the dark corners where cupboard-beds can dimly be seen.

'Och ay,' says the grandmother, a smile on her sweet old face as her mind goes back to the past, 'he was a good man was he they ca' Saint Molaise. Folk say he lived a terrible strict life over yonder in the Holy Isle, close to Lamlash. His house was a wee bit cave, high up among the rocks, and a' he had for a bed was a shelf cut oot o' the side o' the rock, scarcely wide eneuch to turn in. He had a bath too, doon by the sea, for he was aye fond o' the water, and summer and winter he would go in to wash.'

Here for a moment her eye rested upon a little grimy upturned face, which blushed and hid itself against her petticoat.

'He knew it was a good thing to keep the body clean as well as the soul. All alone he lived with no a body to help him, and all the time he had for idleness he was praying and praising God. 'Twas him that brocht the Gospel to the Arran folk, and aften he would cross the hills and come awa' doon to the clachan here, and teach and preach the Word o' God.

'If ony o' the folk were in trouble and needed a friend, it was to Molaise they turned, and he was aye ready to help, not only with the words o' comfort, but with kind acts as well. The poor loved his very name, and the bairns would rin by his side haudin' on to his hand: they likit fine to look up and see the smile on his face. Awa' doon by his cave the sea-birds would come fleein' roond as if they too had come to listen to the good words o' the saint, and the wild deer in the bracken would just gie him a friendly look and go on chumping away at the grass as he passed. They werena feart for him, for a' beasts ken well eneuch that when a man loves God he loves God's craturs too.

'There were few graveyards in Arran in those days, and they carried most o' the dead to the wee kirkyard here; and so, when the good man died, they brocht his body across the

island and laid him there at the foot o' the hills, where the burn is aye singing; where the grey stones stand so straight and solemn, pointing up the glen.

'They made a picter of Saint Molaise cut oot o' the stone, and put it there to show where he was laid. And there it lay, winter and summer, for hundreds and hundreds o' years, so they say. And when I was a bairn we had no gran' picter books like what ye have now. The only picter we had was the old stone of Molaise, and we a' loved it and thocht it awfu' bonnie. And when we had a holiday frae the schule it was always there we went, to the wee kirkyard to see the picter on Molaise's stone.

'Whenever a baby was born in the clachan, its mother would go and pit a silver saxpence on the old stone, a kind o' thanksgiving they ca'ed it. But the saxpence never bade there for long, and we bairns aye thocht it was ta'en awa' by Sandy the herd. He was a puir body was Sandy, no quite like ither folk, and he was aye sae joyful when he heard o' a birth in the clachan. There's a queer kind o' crack across the old stone just above where the saint's knees would come, and my mither would sometimes be telling us the tale of how that happened. It was one day, she said, when they would be bringing an old man from the north end o' the island to be buried at Shiskine. There were no roads then where they could drive a cart, so they had to carry the chest on long spakes; and one o' the young men when he got to the kirkyard would be very tired and kind o' impatient, for it had been a heavy job. So he flung down the spake while he would be swearing, and it fell across the saint's stone and crackit it clean across by the knees. An' that very night, when the young man was finding his way home above the cliffs o' Drumadoon, he slippit and fell, and they found him next morning with baith his legs broken clean across, in the very same place where he had cracked Molaise's stone. Mind I'm no sayin' that was the reason he slippit and hurt himself. Maybe it was, maybe it

wasna. But ye can see the crack across the old stone to this day.

'Och ay, but ye wunna find the stone in the old place now. They couldna let it bide in the place where it had always been, but they must take it up to be an ornament for the gran' new kirk, and poor Molaise's picter stands there now, and the grave has only a plain grey stone to mark it.

'Never a hand in the clachan could be bribed to lift that stone, and so they brocht men from the ither side o' the island and took it away in the mirk when no a body saw. Ay, but they say that after moving the saint's picter, one o' the men driving home in the cart met with a terrible accident, for the wheel came off the cart, and the man was coupit oot and was very near killed.'

So runs the old woman's story, and if you wander up the glen by the side of the surging burn, past the little ruined church to the old churchyard, you will find among the long dank grass the tomb of S. Molios. The purple heather grows close to the churchyard gate; the silent hills, like great watchers, keep guard over God's little garden there; and it seems a fitting place for the saint of Arran to take his rest 'until the day break, and the shadows flee away.'

S. Bridget

The mist of long years enfolds the story of Bridget, the dearly loved saint of Ireland. Though we strive to see her clearly, the mist closes round and only lifts to show us, here and there, a flash of light upon her life, and while we gaze in wonder the light is gone.

But all the time, behind the mist, we feel there is a gracious presence, a white-robed maiden with a pure strong soul, who dwelt in the green isle of Erin; a gentle saint who dwells there still in the hearts of her people to bless and comfort them as of old. The mist of years cannot dim the eyes of those who love S. Bridget's memory, nor can it bewilder their faithful hearts. Wise men may dispute the facts of her life, but to the poor, who love her, she is just their friend, the dear S. Bridget whose touch made sick folk well, whose blessing increased the store of the poor, who helped sad weary mothers, and bent in loving tenderness over many a tiny cradle in those long ago days.

So now it comforts the mother's heart, when there are many little hungry mouths to fill, to remember how S. Bridget's faith ever found a way to feed the poor and needy. When the cradle is made ready for the little one whom God will send, it is for S. Bridget's blessing that the mother prays, counting it the greatest gift that God can give. She is such a homelike saint this Bridget of the fair green island, and she dwells so close to the heart of the people, that it is their common everyday life which holds the most loving memory of her helpful kindness.

In the first days of early spring her little flame-spiked flowers speak to them from the roadside, and bring her message of

joy and hope, telling of the return of life, the swelling of green buds, the magic of the spring. We call her flower the common dandelion, but to S. Bridget's friends it is 'the little flame of God' or 'the flower of S. Bride.' She herself has many names. Bride or Bridget, 'Christ's Foster-Mother,' S. Bridget of the Mantle, the Pearl of Ireland.

Many stories and legends have grown up around the memory of S. Bridget, but all agree in telling us that she was a little maiden of noble birth, and that her father, Dubtach, was of royal descent. We know too that she was born in the little village of Fochard in the north of Ireland, about the time when good S. Patrick was beginning to teach the Irish people how to serve the Lord Christ.

Bridget was a strange thoughtful child, fond of learning, but clever with her hands as well as her head. In those days even noble maidens had plenty of hard work to do, and Bridget was never idle. In the early morning there were the cows to drive out to pasture, when the dew hung dainty jewels upon each blade of grass and turned the spiders' webs into a miracle of flimsy lace. The great mild-eyed cows had to be carefully herded as they wandered up the green hillside, for, should any stray too far afield, there was ever the chance of a lurking robber ready to seize his chance. Then, when the cows were safely driven home again, there was the milking to be done and the butter to be churned.

But in spite of all this work, Bridget found time for other things as well. There was always time to notice the hungry look in a beggar's face as she passed him on the road, time to stop and give him her share of milk and home-made bread, time to help any one in pain who chanced to come her way. The very touch of the child's kind, strong little hands seemed to give relief, and many a poor sufferer blessed her as she passed, and talked of white-robed angels they had seen walking by her side, guiding and teaching her. And sure it was that in all that land there was no child with so kind a heart as little

Bridget's, and no one with as fair a face.

Now the older Bridget grew the more and more beautiful she became, and her loveliness was good to look upon. She was as straight and fair as a young larch tree; her hair was yellow as the golden corn, and her eyes as deep and blue as the mountain lakes. Many noble lords sought to marry her, but Bridget loved none of them. There was but one Lord of her life, and she had made up her mind to serve Him.

'We will have no more of this,' said her father angrily; 'choose a prince of noble blood, and wed him as I bid thee.'

'I have chosen the noblest Prince of all,' said Bridget steadfastly, 'and He is the Lord Christ.'

'Thou shalt do as thou art bidden and marry the first man who asks thee,' said her brothers, growing more and more angry.

But Bridget knew that God would help her, and prayed earnestly to Him. Then in His goodness God took away her beauty from her for a while, and men, seeing she was no longer fair to look upon, left her in peace.

At this time Bridget was but a young maiden of sixteen years, but old enough, she thought, to give up her life to the service of God. The good Bishop Maccail, to whom she went, was perplexed as he looked at the young maid and her companions. Did she know what God's service meant, he wondered? Was she ready to endure hardness instead of enjoying a soft life of pleasure and ease?

But even as he doubted, the legend says, he saw a strange and wonderful light begin to shine around the maiden's head, rising upwards in a column of flame, and growing brighter and brighter until it was lost in the glory of the shining sky.

'Truly this is a miracle,' said the Bishop, shading his eyes, which were blinded by the dazzling light. 'He who, each morning, sendeth His bright beams aslant the earth to wake our sleeping eyes, hath in like manner sent this wondrous light to clear my inward vision and show my doubting heart that the

maiden is one whom God hath chosen to do His work.'

Even then the careful Bishop sought to know more of Bridget's life ere he trusted the truth of the miracle. But there was nought to tell that was not good and beautiful. Out on the green hills, at work in the home, all her duties had been well and carefully performed. Happy, willing service had she given to all who needed her help, and there was but one fault to be found with her.

'She gives away everything that comes to her hand,' said her parents. 'No matter how little milk the cows are giving, the first beggar who asks for a drink has his cup filled. If there is but one loaf of bread in the house, it is given away. The poor have but to ask, and Bridget will give all that she can find.'

'That is true,' said Bridget gently, 'but ye would not have me send them hungry away? Is it not Christ Himself we help when we help His poor?'

'Well, well, perhaps thou art right,' answered her parents; 'and this we must say, that in spite of all that is given away, we have never wanted aught ourselves, but rather our store has been increased.'

Hearing all this, the Bishop hesitated no longer, but laid his hands in blessing upon Bridget's head, and consecrated both her and her companions to the service of God. And it is said that as she knelt before the altar, while the Bishop placed a white veil upon her head, she leaned her hand upon the altar step, and at her touch the dry wood became green and living once more, so pure and holy was the hand that touched it.

At first there were but few maidens who joined themselves with Bridget in her work, but as time went on the little company grew larger and larger. Then Bridget determined to build their home beneath the shelter of an old oak tree which grew near her native village. It was from this oak tree that the convent was known in after years as 'the cell of the oak' or

Kil-dare. Here the poor and those in distress found their way from all parts, and never was any poor soul turned away without help from the good sisters and the tender-hearted Bridget. Here the sick were healed, the sorrowful comforted, and the hungry fed. Here the people learned to know the love of Christ through the tender compassion of His servant.

Far and near the fame of Bridget spread, not only in Ireland but over many lands, and the love of her became so deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, that even to-day her memory is like a green tree bearing living leaves of faith and affection.

There are so many wonderful stories clustering round the name of S. Bridget that they almost make her seem a dim and shadowy person, but there is one thing that shines through even the wildest legend. The tender heart and the helping hand of good S. Bridget are the keynote of all the wonders that have been woven around her name. We see her swift on all errands of mercy, eager to help the helpless, ready to aid all who were oppressed, and protecting all who were too weak to help themselves.

One story tells us of a poor wood-cutter who by mistake had slain a tame wolf, the King's favourite pet, and who for this was condemned to die. As soon as the news was brought to S. Bridget, she lost not a moment, but set out in the old convent cart to plead with the King for his life. Perhaps her pleading might have been in vain had it not been that as she drove through the wood a wolf sprang out of the undergrowth and leapt into the car. Loving all animals, tame or wild, S. Bridget nodded a welcome to her visitor and patted his head, and he, quite contentedly, crouched down at her feet, as tame as any dog.

Arrived at the palace, S. Bridget demanded to see the King, and with the wolf meekly following, was led into his presence.

'I have brought thee another tame wolf,' said S. Bridget,

'and bid thee pardon that poor soul, who did thee a mischief unknowingly.'

So the matter was settled to every one's satisfaction. The King was delighted with his new pet, the poor man was pardoned, and S. Bridget went home rejoicing.

Those sisters who dwelt in the Cell of the Oak seemed to be specially protected from all harm, and it is said that many a robber knew to his cost how useless it was to try and rob S. Bridget.

Once there came a band of thieves who, with great cunning, managed to drive off all the cows belonging to the convent, and in the twilight to escape unnoticed. So far all went well, and the robbers laughed to think how clever they had been. But when they reached the river which they were obliged to cross, they found the waters had risen so high that it was almost impossible to drive the cows across. Thinking to keep their clothes dry, they took them off and bound them in bundles to the horns of the cows, and then prepared to cross the ford. But S. Bridget's wise cows knew a better way than that, and immediately there was a stampede, and they set off home at a gallop, and never stopped until they reached the convent stable. The thieves raced after them with all their might, but could not overtake them, and so, crestfallen and ashamed, they had at last to beg for pardon and pray that their clothes might be returned to them.

In those days there were many lepers in Ireland, and when there was no one else to help and pity them, the poor outcasts were always sure of a kindly welcome from the gracious lady of Kildare. One of the stories tells of a wretched leper who came to S. Bridget, so poor and dirty and diseased that no one would come near him. But like our blessed Lord, S. Bridget felt only compassion for him, and with her own hands washed his feet and bathed his poor aching head. Then, seeing that his clothes must be washed, she bade one of the sisters standing by to wrap her white mantle round the man until his own

clothes should be ready. But the sister shuddered and turned away; she could not bear to think of her cloak being wrapped around the miserable leper. Quick to mark disobedience and unkindness, a stern look came into S. Bridget's blue eyes as she put her own cloak over the shivering form.

'I leave thy punishment in God's hands,' she said quietly; and even as she spoke, the sister was stricken with the terrible disease, and as the cloak touched the beggar, he was healed of his leprosy.

Tears of repentance streamed down the poor sister's face, and her punishment was more than tender-hearted S. Bridget could bear to see. Together they prayed to God for pardon, and at S. Bridget's touch the leprosy was healed.

So S. Bridget lived her life of mercy and loving-kindness, and because the people loved and honoured her above all saints, they placed her in their hearts next to the Madonna herself, and, by some curious instinct of tender love and worship, there came to be woven about her a legend which has earned for her the titles of 'Christ's Foster-Mother' and 'S. Bridget of the Mantle.'

It was on that night, so the legend runs, when the Blessed Virgin came to Bethlehem, weary and travel-worn, and could find no room in the village inn, that S. Bridget was sent by God to help and comfort her. In the quiet hours of the starry night, when on the distant hills the wondering shepherds heard the angels' song, S. Bridget passed the stable door and paused, marvelling at the light that shone with such dazzling brilliance from within. Surely no stable lantern could shed such a glow as that which shone around the manger there. Softly S. Bridget entered and found the fair young Mother bending over the tiny newborn Child, wrapping His tender little limbs about with swaddling bands.

There was no need to ask who He was. Bridget knew it was the King, and kneeling there, she worshipped too. Then very tenderly she led the young Mother to a soft bed of sweet

hay and prayed her that she would rest awhile.

'Sweet Mary,' she implored, 'rest, and I meanwhile will watch and tend the Child.' And Mary, looking into Bridget's kind blue eyes, and feeling the touch of her tender strong hands, trusted her with her Treasure, and bade her take the Child and watch Him until the morning should break.

So Bridget took off her soft mantle and wrapped the Baby in it, and, sitting there, rocked Him to sleep, crooning to Him all the sweetest baby songs she knew.

Perhaps it was S. Bridget's tender love for little children, and her gentle care for all poor mothers, that helped to weave this curious legend, but there is a beautiful truth hidden deep in the heart of the strange story too. For did not Christ Himself say of all kind deeds done to the poor, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me'; and again, 'Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother.'

So it is that S. Bridget bears the name of Christ's foster-mother and is linked in this loving way with the Mother of our Lord. Year by year her memory lives on, and when February, the month of S. Bride, comes round, when the bleating of the first lambs is heard on the hills, and the little flower of S. Bridget lights up the wayside with its tiny yellow flame, the thought of good S. Bridget, Christ's foster-mother, fills many a poor mother's heart with comfort. Did she not care for all young things and helpless weary souls? Did she not show how, by helping others, she helped the dear Lord Himself? Does she not still point out the way by which they too may find Him and live in the light of His love?

S. Cuthbert

In all the countryside there was no other boy so strong and fearless as Cuthbert, the shepherd lad who dwelt amongst the hills above the old town of Melrose.

It was in the time when life was hard and rough, and there were but few comforts or luxuries even in the houses of the rich. The children in those days early learned to brave many a danger and suffer many a hardship, and so they grew up sturdy and strong of limb, accustomed to an open-air life, little heeding the icy winds of winter or the snow-storms that swept their southern border-lands of Scotland.

But among all these hardy children of the hills there was none to compare with Cuthbert. In all their games of skill or strength he easily won the foremost place. Whether it was winter and they played at mimic warfare, with wonderful snow castles to be stormed and good round snowballs for their ammunition, or whether it was summer time and they ran and wrestled on the grassy slopes of the hillside, it was Cuthbert who led the attack on the victorious side, Cuthbert who was champion among the wrestlers and swiftest in the race. When others grew tired and cried for a truce, Cuthbert was still fresh and eager, ready to urge them on, for he never seemed to know what it meant to give in. And yet there were times when the boy stole away silently by himself to a lonely part of the hill that overlooked the little grey road beneath, and there sat as quiet and motionless as the rabbits that peeped out of their holes in the rocks beside him. So still did he sit that any one seeing him might have thought he was asleep, if they had not seen his keen bright eyes and guessed that he was as busy with his thoughts as he had been about his games.

But there was no one on the wild hillside to watch the silent boy; only his little furry friends the rabbits stole out and nibbled the grass about his feet, and the birds came hopping around him, knowing they had nought to fear from one who never harmed them, waiting for the meal which he always shared with these his friends. Sometimes impatient of his long thoughts, they would come nearer and peck at his bare feet, and Cuthbert would raise himself and chide them for their greediness, as he spread the crumbs which he had saved for them.

It was the little grey road beneath on which his eyes were fixed, and his thoughts followed its windings until it reached the old abbey of Melrose, the home of the holy monks, the servants of God. Sometimes he would see two or three of the brothers in their homespun cloaks passing beneath, and would listen to the soft notes of the vesper hymn as it floated upwards, and the eager light in his eyes grew ever brighter as he watched and listened. He knew what these good monks did for the people around; how they protected the weak, helped the helpless, nursed the sick, and went about unarmed and fearless through all the dangers that beset their path. There was something about the look of their kind strong faces that fascinated the boy, and drew him to watch for their passing and to dream of their work and their courage. Then he would softly sing over the fragments of their hymns which his keen ear had caught, and the sound stirred something in his soul.

'Who knows; some day I too may become a servant of God,' he would whisper to himself. And it was a wonderful thought to dream about.

Then came a day which Cuthbert never forgot. He was playing as usual with the other boys, who were leaping and wrestling, and in their wild spirits trying to twist themselves into every kind of curious shape. They were all laughing and shouting together, when a little boy, scarce more than a baby,

ran up and pulled Cuthbert by his coat.

'Why dost thou play such foolish games?' asked the child gravely.

Cuthbert stood still and looked down with surprise into the child's solemn eyes.

'Little wise one,' he answered with a laugh, pushing him aside, but with no rough touch, 'wilt thou teach us thy games of wisdom instead?'

The child turned away and with a sob flung himself upon the ground, crying as if his heart would break. The children gathered round, fearing he was hurt, but no one could find out what it was that vexed him, until Cuthbert lifted him up and soothed him with kindly words.

'Has aught harmed thee?' asked Cuthbert.

'No, no,' sobbed the child; 'but how canst thou, Cuthbert, chosen by God to be His servant and bishop, play at foolish games with babes, when He has called thee to teach thy elders?'

What strange words were these? The other boys had little patience with the crying child, and roughly bade him go home. But in Cuthbert's ears the words rang with a solemn sound, and he stored them up in his mind to ponder upon their meaning. What had the child meant? Was it possible that some day the words would come true and he would indeed be chosen by God to enter His service?

There was so much to think about that the lonely hours on the hillside grew longer and longer, and he but rarely joined in the games now. Even at night he could not rest, thinking those long thoughts. He knew that the holy monks spent many a night in prayer to God, and he learned to love the dark solemn stillness when he crept out on the bare hillside to say his prayers under the starlit sky.

It seemed to be a link between him and those servants of God, and he thought in his childish way that if the angels were there to carry the holy prayers up to God's throne, they might

in passing take his little prayer as well, and in that goodly company God would accept the best that a child could offer, knowing it was the prayer of one who longed to serve Him too.

As Cuthbert grew older there was less time for dreaming or for play. The sheep that were entrusted to him needed constant watchful care, for it was no easy task to be a shepherd in those wild days. Many an enemy lurked on the hillside, ready to snatch away a lamb if the shepherd was not careful. Not only did wolves prowl hungrily around, but men, not too honest, were as ready as the wolves to rob the flock, and it behoved the shepherd to be ever watchful and wary.

At night-time the shepherd lads would gather their sheep together and spend the hours in company watching round the fire, which they piled high with dried heather and dead branches from the wood. It was no hardship to Cuthbert, for he loved the long quiet nights on the hillside, and often while the others slept he watched alone, using the time for prayer.

He had helped to make the watch-fire as usual one night and had seen to the safety of the sheep, and then, one by one, the shepherd lads had fallen asleep in the warmth of the glowing fire. There was no need to rouse them, for he could keep guard alone, and he stole away a little apart to spend the night in prayer, as was his custom.

It was a dark night; the sky was velvet black, without even a star to prick a point of light through its heavy blackness, and the reflection of the fire served only to make the darkness more dense on the lonely hillside. Cuthbert could scarcely see the outline of the sheep, huddled together for warmth, and in that great silence and solitude God seemed very near. Then, as he knelt in prayer, gazing upwards, a vision such as that which gladdened the eyes of the shepherds of Bethlehem burst upon his view. A great stream of dazzling light broke through the darkness, as if a window in heaven had been opened, and in that white shaft of light a company of angels

swept down to earth. It was no birthday message which they brought this time, but their song of triumph told of a good life ended, the crowning of a victor in a well-fought fight, as they bore upward the soul of one whose warfare was accomplished and who was entering into the joy of his Lord.

A great awe and joy filled the soul of Cuthbert as he gazed. Long after the last gleam of heavenly light had vanished, the last echo of the angels' songs had ceased, he knelt on there. This then was the glorious end of those who entered the service of God. 'Fight the good fight: lay hold on eternal life'; was that an echo of the angels' song, or how was it that he seemed to hear the words spoken clearly in his ears?

With a cry Cuthbert sprang to his feet and ran back to the fire where the sleeping shepherds lay.

'Wake up, wake up,' he cried, shaking them by the shoulders as he spoke. 'How can ye sleep when ye might have beheld the vision of God's angels?'

The startled lads jumped up, wondering at first whether it might be an alarm of wolves or robbers, but even they were awed when they caught sight of Cuthbert's face and saw the light that shone upon it. With breathless interest they listened to the tale he had to tell of the angels' visit and the soul they had carried up to God. What could it all mean? They wished that they too had spent the night in prayer, instead of sleeping there.

Early in the morning, as soon as it was light and he could leave the sheep, Cuthbert found his way to the nearest hamlet, and there he learned that Aiden, the holy Bishop of Lindisfarne, had died that night.

So it was the soul of the good Bishop whose glorious end, nay rather whose triumphant new beginning, had been heralded by the angel throng. Cuthbert was awed to think that his eyes had been permitted to gaze upon that wondrous vision, and he felt that it must surely be a sign that God had given ear to his prayers, and would accept him as His servant.

It was a call to arms; there should be no delay. He was eager and ready to fight the good fight, to lay hold on eternal life.

Before very long all his plans were made. It was but a simple matter to follow the example of the disciples of old, to leave all and to follow the Master. Only the sheep were to be gathered into the fold and their charge given up; only the little hut on the hillside to be visited, and a farewell to be said to the old nurse who dwelt there. Cuthbert had lost both father and mother when he was eight years old, and the old woman had taken charge of him ever since. She was sorely grieved to part with the lad, but she saw that his purpose was strong and that nothing would shake it. With trembling hands she blessed him ere he left her, and bade him not forget the lonely little hut on the hillside and the old nurse who had cared for him.

So at last all was ready, and Cuthbert set off down the hillside and along the little grey road that led to the monastery of Melrose, beside the shining silver windings of the Tweed.

Snow lay on all the hills around, and the wintry wind wailed as it swept past the grey walls and through the bare branches of the trees that clustered round the abbey. So mournful and so wild was the sound that it might have been the spirit of evil wailing over the coming defeat in store for the powers of darkness, when the young soldier should arrive to enrol his name in the army of God's followers.

At the door of the monastery a group of monks were standing looking down the darkening road for the return of one of the brothers. The prior Boisil himself was among them, and was the first to catch sight of a figure coining towards them with a great swinging stride. 'A stranger,' said one of the brothers, trying to peer through the gathering gloom.

'It is no beggar,' said another. 'Methinks it is a young knight. His steps are eager and swift, and he hath strong young limbs.'

The prior said naught, but he too eagerly watched the

figure as it came nearer. A strange feeling of expectancy had seized him. Something was surely about to happen which he had half unconsciously long waited for. Then, as the boy drew near and lifted his eager questioning eyes to the prior's face, the good man's heart went out to him.

'Behold a servant of the Lord.' Very solemnly the words rang out as Boisil stretched out both hands in welcome, and then laid them in blessing upon the young fair head that was bowed before him.

The greeting seemed strange to the brethren gathered around. Who was this boy? What did their prior mean? But stranger still did the greeting sound in the ears of Cuthbert himself, and he could scarcely believe that he heard aright. 'A servant of God': did the holy man really mean to call him, the shepherd lad, by that great name?

'Father,' he cried, almost bewildered, 'wilt thou indeed teach me how I may become God's servant, for it is His service that I seek?'

The prior smiled kindly at the anxious face, and bade him enter the monastery in God's name.

'My son,' he said, 'there is much for thee to learn, much to suffer, much to overcome, but surely the victory shall be thine.'

So Cuthbert entered the monastery and the gates were shut. The old life was left behind and the new life begun.

The prior himself taught the boy his new lessons, for his love for the lad grew stronger and deeper each day. Boisil felt sure there was a great future before the youth, and he often dreamed dreams of the greatness in store for him and the work that he should do for God in the world.

'Who knows,' he would say, 'what honour God hath in store for thee. If heaven sends dreams, then is thy future sure, for I have seen thee wearing the bishop's mitre and holding the pastoral staff.'

As for Cuthbert himself, he was too busy to think much

of dreams or make plans for the future. Just as he had played his boyish games with all his might, so now he threw his whole soul into the work of the monastery. Lessons, prayer, fast and vigil, all were diligently attended to, and it was pleasant to see his glad cheerfulness when he was set to labour with his hands. The harder the task the more he seemed to enjoy it, and he rejoiced in the strength of his body which made him able to undertake much service. Although he now lived in the sheltered convent of the valley, his thoughts would often fly back, like homing birds, to the green hillsides, the glens and rocky passes, back to the little lonely weather-beaten hut where the old nurse lived. He never could forget the people who lived up there among the hills poor shepherds, work-worn women and little children. It was a hard life they lived, with never a soul to bring them a message of hope or good cheer. Little wonder that their ways were often crooked and evil, and the thought of God but a far-off, dim, half-forgotten dream. Little wonder that black magic and witchcraft should still have power to enchain them in their ignorance and fearfulness.

The good prior often talked with the eager young brother about these wandering sheep, and when the time came he sent Cuthbert out with his blessing to work amongst the hills once more, to gather the flock into the true fold.

How well did Cuthbert know those steep mountain paths! With what a light heart did he find his way over the rough hillsides where no paths were, to reach some cluster of huts where a few poor families lived, or even a solitary dwelling where some poor soul needed his care. There was something about the young monk that won a welcome for him wherever he went. Perhaps it was because he was so sure that all would rejoice to hear the message he brought; perhaps it was because he looked for the best in every one and so they gave him of their best.

From place to place Cuthbert went, and it mattered not

to him how rough was the road or how terrific the storms that swept over the borderland. The snow might lie deep upon the hills, and he might be forced to spend the whole day without food, but no difficulty ever turned him back or forced him to leave one hut unvisited.

Far and near the people began to look anxiously for his coming, and to listen eagerly to his teaching. There was always much for him to do; many a tale of sin to listen to, many a sinner to be taught the way of repentance. There were children, too, to be baptized, and this was work which Cuthbert always loved. They were the little lambs of the flock to be specially guarded from the Evil One, who was ever prowling around to snatch them from the fold. The hut where the old nurse lived was often visited, for Cuthbert never forgot his friends.

There were other friends too that Cuthbert remembered and loved. His 'little sisters the birds' soon learned to know and trust him again, and the wild animals of the hills grew tame under his hand. It is said that on one of his journeys, as he went to celebrate Mass with a little boy as server, they had finished all their food and were obliged to go hungry. Just then an eagle hovered above their heads and dropped a fish which it had just caught. The little boy seized it gladly and would have promptly prepared it for their meal, but Cuthbert asked if he did not think the kind fisherman deserved his share. The boy looked at the eagle and then at the small fish; but he knew what the master meant, so the fish was cut in half and the eagle swooped down to secure its share of the dinner.

There is another story told of the kindness shown by his furry friends to S. Cuthbert, and it is a story which many people have remembered even when the history of S. Cuthbert's life has been wellnigh forgotten.

It was when Cuthbert went to visit the holy Abbess of Coldingham, that, as was his wont when night came on, he wandered out to say his prayers in silence and alone. Now one

of the brothers had long been anxious to know how it was that Cuthbert spent the long hours of the night, and so he stole down to the seashore and hid among the rocks, watching to see what would happen.

It was a cold bleak night, and the sea lay black and sullen outside the line of breakers, but Cuthbert seemed to have no fear of cold or blackness. Reaching the edge of the waves, he waded in deeper and ever deeper until the water rose as high as his chest. Standing thus, he sang his hymn of praise to God, and the sound of the psalms rose triumphant, hour after hour, above the sob of the sea and the wail of the wintry wind. Not till the first faint gleam of dawn touched the east with rosy light did Cuthbert cease his vigil of prayer and praise. Then, numbed and half frozen, he waded out and stood upon the shelving beach once more, and from the sea there followed him two otters. The watcher among the rocks saw the two little animals rub themselves tenderly against the frozen feet, until their soft fur brought back some warmth and life to the ice-cold limbs; and when their work was done they stole quietly back into the water and were seen no more. It is this legend of the kindness of the otters which has never been forgotten whenever the name of S. Cuthbert is mentioned.

For fourteen years Cuthbert remained at Melrose, and when the good Boisil died the brethren chose the favourite young monk as their prior. But it was not long before he left the abbey of Melrose and went to the monastery of Lindisfarne, on the wild bleak island known as Holy Island. Here for twelve years he did his work as thoroughly and bravely as he had done when he was a monk at Melrose, and within the monastery his gentleness and infinite patience, his kindliness and wise dealing, smoothed away every difficulty, and brought peace and happiness to all the community.

It was no easy life he led on that bleak, bare, windswept island of the North Sea, but still Cuthbert sought for something harder and more difficult to endure. He longed to follow

the example of the hermit saints of old, and he made up his mind to seek some desert spot where he might live alone with God, far from the world with its love of ease and its deadly temptations.

From the monastery of Lindisfarne, Cuthbert had often gazed across to the little islands which in summer-time shone like jewels set in a silver sea, and in winter seemed like little grey lonely ghosts wrapped in their shroud of easterly *haar*, or lashed by the cruel north wind until only the white foam of the breakers marked the spot where they stood. It was whispered by the brethren that evil spirits had their haunt upon the wildest of those little islands, and it seemed a fit place for the powers of darkness to work their will. There was not a tree and scarcely a plant upon the little island of Farne, for the bitter winds blew the salt spray in from every side, and only the wild sea-birds, gulls, kittiwakes, puffins, and eider-ducks, found shelter among the rocks to build their nests.

It seemed exactly the spot that Cuthbert sought for his retreat, and he only smiled when the brethren sought to dissuade him, and talked of the dangers that awaited any one who dared to land upon that island.

'Have we not ourselves heard the demon shrieks and their wild wicked laughter on stormy nights?' said one brother solemnly.

'Ay, and have we not seen the glitter of the demon lights set there to lure poor fishermen to their destruction?' said another.

'The greater need, then, that I should go,' said Cuthbert. 'Christ's soldier is the fittest champion to fight the powers of darkness.'

So Christ's soldier went out to seek a home on the desolate island, and all alone there he set to work to found a little kingdom of his own. Whether the demons fled at the approach of the holy man, or whether they fought for their kingdom and were cast out by the might of S. Cuthbert, or

whether he found only the shrieking wind and wail of the wild birds instead of the howls of a demon crew, we know not. But certain it is that when at last some of the brothers ventured over, half timidly, to see how their prior fared, they found only Cuthbert and the wild birds there in peaceful solitude.

The hut which he had built for himself against the rocks was almost like a sea-bird's nest, for it was hollowed out deep within, and its walls were of rough stones and turf, its roof of poles and dried grass. It must have been a work of great labour to build that wall, and some of the stones were so large that it seemed as if it would have needed three men to move them.

'He could not have done it by himself,' whispered the brethren; 'it is God's angels who have helped him.' And when, too, they found a spring of clear water gushing from the rock close to the little oratory, they said in their hearts, 'He who turneth the stony rock into pools of water, hath here again shown His care for His servant.'

At first it was needful that food should be brought to Cuthbert on the desolate island, but he was very anxious to provide for himself, for he always loved to work with his hands. The first crop of corn which he sowed came to nought, but the next thing he tried was barley, and that grew and flourished, and Cuthbert was content to think that now no longer was he dependent on others for his food. Yet it was but a scanty supply of grain that he had, and it was not without reason that the people whispered that the angels must bring food to the holy man, for he never seemed to lack the daily bread.

The wild birds that built their nests in the island of Farne soon grew accustomed to their new companion, and ceased to rise in white clouds when he came near. Of all the birds the eider-ducks were his special favourites and his special friends, and even to this day they are known by the name of S. Cuthbert's ducks. So friendly did they become that, when the sunny month of June smiled on the little island and the

mother duck was sitting upon her nest, she would allow S. Cuthbert to come near and gently stroke her, and even let him peep inside at the hidden treasure—the five pale olive-coloured eggs that lay so snugly at the bottom of the nest.

For eight years Cuthbert lived his life of prayer and self-denial in the little home he had made for himself, but at the end of that time God had other work for him to do. In the world of strife and human passions the Church had need of a strong arm and a pure heart, and it was decided that the hermit of Farne Island should be called forth and made a bishop.

A company of men landed on the island and brought the message to the lonely man in his little oratory, but Cuthbert would not listen to their pleading. The honour was too great for him, he said, and he prayed them to leave him to his prayers. Then it was that the King himself, with the bishops and great men of the kingdom, came in a wondrous procession and besought Cuthbert to come out and do battle for God in the Church. Cuthbert saw then that it was the will of God, and very sorrowfully he yielded. It was with a sad heart that he left his home among the wild birds and prepared to take his place in the world again as Bishop of Lindisfarne. The dreams of Boisil, the good prior of Melrose, had indeed come true. The shepherd lad of the hills, the monk of Melrose, the prior of Lindisfarne, the hermit of Farne, now held the pastoral staff and wore the mitre of a bishop.

It was no mere sign of office that Cuthbert held in his hand the pastoral staff. He was indeed a shepherd and bishop of men's souls, and he guarded and tended his flock as carefully as in the old days he had tended the sheep upon the hills. Once again he trod the rough hilly paths and brought comfort and help to those who were afar off, and lit the lamp of faith that had grown dim. Sometimes, in the wild waste districts where there was no church and but few huts, the people would build a shelter for him with the boughs of trees, and there, in Nature's green cathedral, they would gather the

children together for confirmation. Surely none of the little ones ever forgot that moment when they knelt before the good Bishop and felt the touch of his hand upon their bowed heads. The pale thin face was worn with suffering and hardship now, but the old sweet smile still drew all men's hearts out to him, and the love that shone in his eyes seemed more of heaven than of earth. He had always loved the lambs of the flock, and each little fair head upon which he laid his hand had a special place in his heart, as he gathered them into the fold of the Good Shepherd.

But it was not only the souls of his people for which Cuthbert cared, but for their bodies as well. Many an illness did he cure: many a stricken man owed his life to the Bishop's care. It seemed as if his very presence put fresh courage and strength into those who were thought to be dying, so that the touch of his hand led them back from the very gates of death. God had indeed given His servant special powers of healing, and who shall measure the power of a good man's prayers?

Once, in a far-off hamlet which had been visited by a deadly sickness, Cuthbert had gone from hut to hut, visiting and cheering each one of his people, leaving behind him courage and returning health. He was very weary and worn out, for the work had been heavy, but before leaving, he turned to a priest who was with him and said, 'Is there still any one sick in this place whom I can bless before I depart?'

'There is still one poor woman over yonder,' answered the priest. 'One of her sons is already dead and the other is dying even now.'

A few swift strides and the Bishop was by the side of the stricken mother. No thought had he of the danger of catching the terrible disease. His strong loving hands gently drew the dying child from her arms, and, holding the little one close to his heart, he knelt and prayed that God would spare the little life. Even as he prayed the child's breathing grew easier, and the cold cheek grew flushed and warm, and when he placed

him again in his mother's arms it was a living child she held and not a dying one now.

But Cuthbert's strength was waning fast, and the old splendid health and strength were gone. He knew his work was drawing to a close and the days of his usefulness were over, and with the knowledge came a great longing to creep away to the little seagirt island, and spend the last few months alone with God.

It was with heavy hearts that the brothers watched the little boat made ready which was to carry their beloved Bishop away from their care.

'Tell us, Reverend Bishop, when may we hope for thy return?' cried one.

'When you shall bring my body back,' was the calm answer. Then they knew that this was their last farewell, and they knelt in silence to receive his blessing.

The end was not far off. A few short weeks amongst the happy birds; a worn weary body laying itself down to rest before the altar in the little oratory; a glad soul winging its triumphant flight back to God, and S. Cuthbert's earthly life was over.

The end? Nay, there is no ending to the lives of God's saints, for they come down to us through the ages, a golden inheritance which can never die; stars in the dark night shining steadily on, with a light 'which shineth more and more unto the perfect Day.'

S. Edward the Confessor

King Edward of England, the last of the Saxon kings, sat in his chamber deep in thought and troubled beyond all measure. It was but a short while ago that he had been living in exile at the Norman Court, with little hope of returning to his native land, and now kind fortune had not only called him home but set him there as King upon the throne. One would have thought he had been granted more than his heart's desire and should have been content, but there were troubled lines on the King's forehead as he sat and thought of those days of exile.

Amidst all the gaiety and wild revels of the Norman Court, the exiled prince had seemed to live in a world apart from the pleasure-loving courtiers, with whom he had but little in common. He was a strange, dreamy boy, and even his appearance had something dreamlike about it. His soft shining hair was almost milky white in its fairness, and the rose pink of his cheeks made that curious whiteness seem truly dazzling by contrast. He had delicate hands, with long, thin, transparent fingers, and these hands, it was whispered, held a magic in their touch and could stroke away pain and charm away sickness. While others talked of warlike deeds and boasted of wild adventures, he dreamed his dreams of the saints of old and the good fight which they had fought. Of all those saints the one he loved the best was brave, headstrong S. Peter, so weak at first, so firm and faithful at last. And next he loved the kind S. John with his great loving heart and gentle kindly ways. These two dream friends were far more real to him than any of the gay companions among whom he lived, and it is little wonder that the boy prince with such

friends kept himself pure and unspotted from the world and earned the title of 'Confessor.'

The only thing outside his dream life in which Prince Edward delighted was in the chase. After long hours spent in church he would gallop off for days into the forest, hunting and hawking, no longer a dreamy youth with downcast eyes, but a keen alert sportsman whose eyes shone with daring and excitement.

It was while hunting one day that his horse stumbled on the edge of a dangerous cliff, and, with a swift appeal to his unseen friend, the Prince called upon S. Peter to save him.

'S. Peter,' he cried, 'save me, and I vow that I will make a pilgrimage to thy shrine in Rome to mark my gratitude.'

The stumbling horse recovered its foothold and Edward rode safely home. Going straight to church, he knelt there giving thanks for his safety, and while he was still on his knees there came a messenger from England bidding him return and rule over the people as their rightful King.

This good fortune made him more anxious than ever to keep the vow he had made that day. The saint had been his friend and helper in the time of exile, and now, when fortune smiled upon him, he longed to show his gratitude the more.

But Edward had soon to learn that a king belongs to his people and not to himself.

As soon as it was known that the new king desired to make a pilgrimage to Rome, the people were dismayed and horrified.

'We cannot allow it,' they cried. 'A king can only leave his kingdom with the consent of the Commons, and that consent we will not give.'

The wise councillors and advisers also shook their heads.

'The risks are too great,' they said. 'There are perils by road and sea, by mountain pass and river, dangers from robbers and armed foes. Who would venture among those Romans who are such villains, caring only for the red gold and

the white silver?'

So it was that the King was sorely troubled that day as he sat and thought of all these things. He had sent messengers to Rome to beg that he might be pardoned for breaking his vow, and now he was awaiting their return, wondering what answer the Pope would send.

Ere long the answer came, and the Pope's message cheered Edward's heart. Instead of making a pilgrimage to Rome to do honour to S. Peter, the King was to show his gratitude by building or restoring some monastery belonging to S. Peter, which should be for ever after under the special protection of the Kings of England.

It was a happy way out of the difficulty, and the King began at once to consider where the abbey should be built. He was deep in thought one day, sitting with his head resting on his hand, his dreamy eyes already seeing visions of a wonderful minster pointing its spires heavenward, when a servant entered and told him that a holy man, a hermit, begged to be allowed speech with the King.

'Bring him hither at once,' said Edward; 'it is not fit that a holy man should be kept waiting.'

It was very trying to be interrupted when his whole heart was filled with thoughts of the great plan, but he put them aside and turned to give a kindly greeting to the old man, who had perhaps come to ask a boon of his King. He little guessed that this very interruption was to bring him the help which he sought.

Very slowly and with trembling steps the old hermit came into the royal presence. King's palaces were strange abodes to one who lived in the caves and rocks of the earth. The green boughs of the trees were the only canopy which the old man knew; the daisied grass was his carpet, and for companions he had the squirrels and the birds, with whom he shared his meal of fruit and roots. But God had sent His servant with a message and he was here to deliver it to the King. The strange

city, the bewildering noise, and the wonderful palace were things which had nought to do with him. His one desire was to tell his tale. The King listened with earnest attention, for the message was a strange one.

'Three nights ago,' said the hermit, 'as I knelt at prayer, behold there appeared to me in a vision an old man, bright and beautiful like to a clerk, whom I knew to be S. Peter. He bade me tell thee that thou wouldst even now be released from thy vow, and commanded instead to build an abbey. The place where thou shouldst build the abbey, said he, should be on the Isle of Thorns, two leagues from the city. There a little chapel of S. Peter already stands, and there the great abbey shall be built, which shall be indeed the Gate of Heaven and the Ladder of Prayer. As soon as the vision was ended I wrote all the words down upon this parchment, sealed it with wax, and now have brought it to your Majesty.'

So the spot was chosen on which the fair abbey should be built, and King Edward gave his whole heart and attention to the great work.

The little Isle of Thorns of which the hermit spoke had taken its name from the wild forest and thickets with which it was overgrown. It was also called the 'Terrible Place' in the days when it was the refuge for the wild animals which came down from the hills around. In those days it was said that a heathen temple had been built on the island, and that later, in the time of King Sebert, it had been turned into a Christian chapel and dedicated to S. Peter.

Now there was a curious old legend about the dedication of that little chapel in the midst of the wild thicket of thorns, and perhaps it helped the dreamy King to decide to build his abbey there.

The legend tells that in the days of King Sebert, when the monastery was finished, it was arranged that on a certain day Mellitus, the first Bishop of London, should consecrate the chapel. It so happened that, the night before the

consecration, a fisherman named Edric was casting his nets into the Thames from the Isle of Thorns when, on the opposite shore, he saw an old man, who hailed him and asked that he might be rowed across to the little island. The old man was dressed in a curious foreign robe and seemed to be a stranger, but he had a beautiful kindly face, and Edric willingly did his bidding. Across the dark stream they rowed, and when the old man landed on the island, Edric stood watching to see where he would go.

The stranger walked straight to the chapel door, and as he entered, lo! the whole chapel was flooded with a blaze of light, so that it stood out fair and shining without darkness or shadow. Then a host of angels, swinging their golden censers, began to descend from above and to ascend, linking earth with heaven, and the sweet blue breath of the incense trailed in thin clouds around the brightness of the heavenly torches. Slowly and solemnly the service of consecration was performed, while the awe-struck fisherman, forgetting his nets and his fishing, gazed in wonder at the heavenly vision.

Presently the lights faded, the angels vanished, and the little chapel was left in darkness once more. Then the old man came out of the chapel and greeted the wondering fisherman.

'How many fish hast thou taken?' asked the stranger.

Edric stammered out that he had caught no fish, and the old man smiled kindly upon him, seeing his confusion.

'To-morrow thou shalt tell the Bishop Mellitus all thou hast seen,' he said. 'I am Peter, Keeper of the Keys of Heaven, and I have consecrated my own church of S. Peter, Westminster. For thyself, go on with thy fishing, and thou shalt catch a plentiful supply. This I promise thee on two conditions. First, that thou shalt no more fish on Sundays; and secondly, that thou shalt pay a tithe of the salmon to the abbey of Westminster.'

Early next day came the Bishop Mellitus to consecrate the chapel, as he had arranged, and the first to meet him was the

fisherman Edric, who stood waiting there with a salmon in his hand. He told his tale, and presented his salmon from S. Peter, and then showed the Bishop where the holy water had been sprinkled, and all the signs of the heavenly consecration.

The Bishop bowed his head in reverence as he listened, and prepared to return home.

'My services are not needed,' he said: 'the chapel hath indeed been consecrated in a better and more saintly fashion than a hundred such as I could have consecrated it.'

In the days of King Edward the Isle of Thorns was no longer the Terrible Place, for the forest had been cleared and S. Peter's chapel stood in the midst of flowery meadows; but still the fishermen cast their nets in the river and caught many a silver salmon, and once a year S. Peter's fish was carried to the monastery in payment of the tithe which Edric had promised.

There were two other legends told of the little chapel which seem to have made King Edward love the place with a special love.

One story tells how a poor cripple Irishman named Michael sat one day by the side of the path which led to the chapel, watching for the King to pass. The kindly King at once noticed the lame man, and stopped to talk to him. Michael with piteous earnestness told his tale, and begged for help. There seemed no cure for his lameness, although he had made six pilgrimages to Rome, but at last S. Peter had promised that he would be cured if only the King would carry him up to the chapel upon his own royal shoulders.

The courtiers mocked, and turned their backs on the ragged beggar, but King Edward, with kind compassionate words, bent down and lifted the cripple, and carried him up to the chapel, where he laid him before the altar. Immediately strength returned to the poor crippled limbs: the man stood upright, then knelt and thanked God and his King, and blessed the little chapel of S. Peter.

The other legend tells of a wonderful vision sent to bless the eyes of the Confessor in the same chapel, as he knelt before the altar. Perhaps it was because his heart was pure and innocent and his faith so strong that his earthly eyes were opened to see the Christ-Child Himself standing there 'pure and bright like a spirit,' while a glory shone around.

It was small wonder, then, that the King was glad to choose this spot on which to build a great abbey to the glory of God and S. Peter. The work was begun at once, and the King came to live in the palace of Westminster that he might be near at hand and watch the building. A tenth part of all the wealth of the kingdom was spent upon the abbey, and it took fifteen years to build; but the King grudged neither time nor money in carrying out this, his heart's desire. Indeed the King had but little idea of the value of money, and was sometimes rather a trial to his steward Hugolin, who had charge of the chest where the royal gold was kept. Sometimes Hugolin lost all patience with his royal master, and shook his head over his dreamy ways.

Why, there had been one day when Edward had actually encouraged a thief to steal his gold! The money-chest had been left open in the King's room, and a scullion from the kitchen had come creeping in thinking the King was asleep. Edward had watched the thief help himself three times to the gold, and then had warned him to make haste and get away before Hugolin should return.

'He will not leave you even a halfpenny,' cried the King, 'so be quick.'

The words only added to the scullion's terror, as he gazed upon the white-haired King who was watching him so intently. He fled from the room, glad to take the King's advice and to escape before the steward's return.

'Your Majesty has allowed yourself to be robbed,' said Hugolin reproachfully, when he saw the empty chest and heard the King's story.

'The thief hath more need of it than we,' said his master; 'enough treasure hath King Edward.'

The King's treasure was indeed spent lavishly upon the building of the great abbey, and soon it began to rise from its foundations like a flower, growing in beauty and stateliness year by year, while the dreamy King watched over it, and added every beauty that his fancy could devise. Rough grey stone was cut and sculptured into exquisite shapes and designs; the daylight, as it streamed through the rich stained glass of the windows, was turned as if by magic into shafts of purest colour—purple, crimson, and blue. Fair as a dream the abbey stood finished at last, built by a dweller in dreamland, but solid and firm as a rock upon its foundations, and as firmly to be fixed in the hearts of the English people, while they ever weave around it their dreams of all that is great and good—the honour and glory of England.

The King's life was drawing to a close just as the great abbey was completed, and Edward knew that this was so. All his life he had relied greatly on warnings and visions, and now strange tales were told of how the end had been foretold.

It was said that as the King was on his way to the dedication of a chapel to S. John, he was met by a beggar who asked alms of him.

'I pray thee help me, for the love of S. John,' cried the beggar.

Now the King could not refuse such a request, for he loved S. John greatly. But he had no money with him and Hugolin was not at hand, so he drew off from his finger a large ring, royal and beautiful, and gave it with a kindly smile to the poor beggar.

Not very long afterwards, the legend tells us, two English pilgrims far away in Syria lost their way, and wandered about in darkness and amidst great dangers, not knowing which road led to safety. They were almost in despair, when suddenly a light shone across their path, and in the light they saw an

old man with bowed white head and a face of wonderful beauty.

'Whence do ye come?' asked the old man, 'and what is the name of your country and your King?'

'We are pilgrims from England,' replied the wanderers, 'and our King is the saintly Edward, whom men call the Confessor.'

Then the old man smiled joyously, and led them on their way until they came to an inn.

'Know ye who I am?' he asked. 'I am S. John, the friend of Edward your King. This ring which he gave for love of me, ye shall bear back to him, and tell him that in six months we shall meet together in Paradise.'

So the pilgrims took the ring and carried it safely over land and sea until they reached the King's palace, when they gave it back into the royal hand and delivered the message from S. John.

It was midwinter when the abbey was ready for consecration. The river ran dark and silent as on that long-ago night when the fisherman rowed S. Peter across to the little chapel and the angels came to sing the service. Now all that earthly hands could do was done, and the greatest in the land were gathered there to be present at the consecration of S. Peter's abbey. Only the King was absent. He who had dreamed the fair dream and wrought it out in solid stone and fairest ornament, was lying sick unto death while the seal was set upon his work.

For a few days he lingered on, and then from the land of dreams he passed to the great Reality, and the old chronicles add the comforting words: 'S. Peter, his friend, opened the gate of Paradise, and S. John, his own dear one, led him before the Divine Majesty.'

They laid the King to rest in the centre of his beautiful abbey, and, ever since, our land has held no greater honour for her heroes than to let them sleep by the resting-place of

the saintly King.

All honour to those who, through the might of sword or pen, by courage or learning, have won a place within S. Peter's abbey of Westminster! But for the simple of the earth it is good to remember, that he who was first laid there won his place not by great deeds of courage or gifts of wondrous learning, but by the simple faith that was in him, the kindly thought for those who were poor and needed his help, the loving-kindness which even a child may win, though he miss a hero's grave in the King's abbey.

S. Columba

The Princess Eithne lay asleep, dreaming of summer days and happy hours spent in flowery meadows. Outside the stormy wintry winds swept the snowdrifts high among the mountain passes, and the howls of hungry wolves mingled with the shriek of the wind. It was cold and bleak at the castle of Gartan among the wild hills of Donegal when winter held sway, and then the Princess would watch the swirling snowflakes and the grey mists that wrapped the hills in solemn majesty. But in the springtime it was a different world, and Eithne could see from her window the length and height of the valley, and count the little mountain lakes that shone like diamonds in their emerald setting, and she thought it was the fairest spot in all the world.

There were so many beautiful things in the life of the Princess, so much to make her happy with the Prince her husband, that there seemed scarcely room for more joy; and yet, as she lay dreaming, she knew that the greatest happiness of all was yet to come.

It seemed to her that, as she dreamed of those flowery meadows, an angel stood beside her and placed in her hands a wonderful robe, more beautiful than anything she had ever seen. It was sewn all over with dainty flowers—the mountain flowers that are fairer and finer than any others because they grow closer to heaven. It was as if a rainbow had fallen into a shower of flowers upon this wondrous mantle and set it thick with buds and blossoms, crimson, white, and blue.

For a space the angel waited while the Princess held the robe and gazed upon its beauty, then very gently it was taken from her and Eithne found her hands were empty.

'Why dost thou take away my beautiful robe so soon?' asked the Princess, stretching out her hands towards the angel and weeping bitterly.

'It is too dearly prized for thee to keep it,' was the answer. And as Eithne looked with longing eyes, she saw the angel spread out the robe, and its beautiful folds floated further and further until it covered all that land.

Then in her ears there sounded the comforting voice of the angel bidding her grieve no more, but prepare to receive the little son whom God was sending to her. And Eithne knew that the vision of the robe was sent as a lesson to teach her that her son would belong not only to her but to the world, where God had need of him.

Soon after this the little Prince was born, and, as his mother held him in her arms, her heart was filled with the same great joy as when she had clasped the angel's robe.

More than fifty years had passed since the good S. Patrick had brought Christ's light to Ireland, and now most of the people there were Christians. The father and mother of the little Prince took early care that the baby should be baptized, and in the little chapel of the clan O'Donnel they gave him two names—Crimthann, which means a wolf, and Colum, which means a dove.

Perhaps it was the chief, his father, thinking of his wild brave ancestors living free among those mountains, who gave his little son the name of the wolf, and surely it was the mother, thinking of the angel vision, who wished him to be called by the gentler name.

There was no doubt from the first which name suited the child the best. Strong and fearless, and showing in a hundred ways that he came of a kingly race, there was nothing of the wild wolf nature about Columba. It was always Colum, the dove, that gladdened his mother's heart. Like a flower turning to the light, his heart seemed always to turn naturally to all that was beautiful and pure and good. He was eager to learn,

and loved to listen to the stories of those soldiers of Christ who fought against the Evil One, and brought light and peace into the wild dark places of the earth. When he grew up, he too would become one of those soldiers, and meanwhile there was nothing he loved so much as to steal away into the little chapel to join in the service of the Master he meant to serve some day.

The people wondered as they watched the boy leave his games and turn with a happy eager face towards the church whenever the bell called the monks to prayer.

'He should be called Columkill, Colum of the Church,' they said: and so it was that the old name of 'the dove of the Church' was first given to Columba.

At the monastery school the boy was quick to learn, and the monks told one another that he had the gift of genius. But the master, S. Finnian, wondered even more at the goodness than the cleverness of his pupil. Watching him one day, he was heard to say that he saw an angel walking by the side of Columba, guiding and guarding him as he went. And, indeed, the boy's face had ever the look of one who walked close to his guardian angel.

So Columba grew to be a man, and learned all the wisdom of the great monasteries, and then, strong and purposeful, he began his work for God, going throughout the land teaching, and founding monasteries and building churches.

But although he worked well and with all his heart, still his great desire had always been to carry God's message of peace and goodwill to the heathen lands outside Ireland, and many a time did he gaze across the sea to the faint blue line of distant hills, thinking of those poor souls in Scotland who knew nothing of God's love and mercy.

Still the years went by, and there always seemed more than enough work for him to do in his own land until, when he was more than forty years old, something happened which changed his life, and sent him forth to begin the new great

work.

Now you must know that Columba loved books and delighted in making copies of them, for in those days all books were written by hand. He was very skilful in this work of copying. He laid the colours on most carefully for the capital letters, and made the printing black and firm and even. Nothing gave him more pleasure than to have a new book to copy, and he was greatly pleased when one day he heard that his old master S. Finnian had a wonderful copy of the gospels, and might allow him to see it.

'My father,' he said to the old abbot, 'I would that I might see the fair copy of the gospels of which I have heard so much. Men say there is no other copy like it in Ireland.'

'Ay, my son,' answered the abbot proudly, 'it is, as thou sayest, a very fair copy. But thou hast a careful hand and knowest the value of such a book, so I will trust the treasure to thee for a space.'

Overjoyed at the permission, Columba carried the book carefully home, and the more he looked at it, the more he longed to have one like it. At last he began secretly and swiftly to make a copy, and not until it was done did he return the precious book to S. Finnian.

Before long, however, the matter came to the ears of the abbot, and he was very angry. He demanded at once that the copy should be given up, and bade Columba deliver it immediately.

'The copy is mine,' said Columba calmly, 'but if thou thinkest it is thine, we will let the King decide.'

So the matter was taken to the King of Meath, and he decided that Columba must give up the book.

'It is written in the ancient law of our land,' said the King, 'that to every cow belongs its calf, therefore it must be that to every book belongs its copy.'

There was a great outcry against this decision, and the clansmen of Columba went out to do battle with the men of

Meath, and by the time Columba's anger had cooled, many thousand men had been killed.

Bitterly repentant, Columba went to the old priest Molaise, and asked him what he should do to show his sorrow. Then Molaise bade him leave the land he so dearly loved, cross the sea to Scotland, and win for God from among the heathen as many souls as those whom his hasty quarrel had brought to death.

The long waves of the Atlantic rolled in and broke upon the beach, grey and cold in the light of early morning, when twelve sorrowful-looking men pushed off their frail boats from the Irish shore, and set sail for distant Scotland.

The boats were light, made only of wickerwork with skins stretched tightly over, and they rose gaily on the long waves which came sweeping in as if eager to overwhelm them. But there were heavy hearts in those light boats, and the men looked back with sad eyes at the dear green home they were leaving, seeing it but dimly through a mist of tears. They loved their home, but they loved their master Columba better, and so they were setting sail with him for the land of exile.

Through storm and tempest the frail boats held their way, and the hearts, if sad, were brave and hopeful too, for their faith was strong in God and in their leader.

The first landing-place was on the island of Colonsay, and there the little company waited on the shore while Columba climbed the hill, that he might view the land and see if it was a fit place to make their home.

With long strides he climbed up over rocks and heather until at last he reached the top, and then he stood quite still and looked around him. Yes, the island was just the kind of resting-place he was seeking, since he must no longer live in his own dear land. Lifting up his eyes then, he gazed longingly across the blue sea in the direction of home, and his heart leaped when he saw in the distance the faint blue hills of Erin. Then he sighed, and went slowly back to his waiting

companions.

'We must push on,' he said. 'If we stay here our hearts will be filled with a sore home-longing whenever we gaze across the sea. We must go further, where we cannot see the hills of home.'

So the boats were pushed off once more, and the men rowed on until they reached the little island of Hy or Iona. Not the faintest trace of the blue Irish hills could be seen from here, so it was decided that this was to be the place where they would make their new home.

The warm May sunshine was flooding the island as the boats were pulled high on the shore. Sunbeams sparkled on the deep blue waves, and the shining sand of the little bay was dazzling in its whiteness. The sea-birds, disturbed in their loneliness, swooped and screamed over the heads of the newcomers, but there was nobody else to dispute their possession.

Very soon the building of the new home was begun. Columba, tall and strong, with clever hands and clever brain, planned and worked himself, and directed the others. One by one the huts were finished and the little chapel built, and then the monastery was complete. The King of that part of the country, knowing Columba, gave him the island for his own, and so there was no fear that the monks would be disturbed. There were other sounds now besides the screaming of sea-birds to be heard on Iona. There was the chapel bell calling the brothers to prayer; there was the music of the morning and evening hymns, and the cheerful busy sounds of daily work.

Then when all was set in order—fields prepared for harvest, cows brought over to give milk, and everything arranged for the daily life Columba set out to begin the great work he had planned.

Far in the north lived the pagan King Brude, in a country where no Christian foot had ever trod. He was a strong and powerful King, and he sat in his grey northern castle fearing

no man, for there was no army strong enough to march against him, and no one dared to withstand his power.

Who then were these strangers who came so boldly up to the gates and demanded an entrance? They were not soldiers, for they carried no weapons; they wore only robes of coarse homespun, and their shaven heads were uncovered. Yet they bore themselves with a fearless air, and their leader spoke in a voice that seemed accustomed to command. Like a trumpet-call the words rang out, 'Open the gates in the name of Christ.'

'The gates shall not be opened,' swore the King. 'These men are workers of magic and of evil. Keep the gates barred.'

Then the leader, who was Columba, lifted his head still higher, and those who saw him wondered at the look that shone on his face, while the brothers, seeing that look, were cheered and encouraged as if they too could see the angel who stood near and guided him.

There was a breathless silence as the people waited to see what the strange man would do next, and they saw him slowly lift his hand on high and make the sign of the cross. At that sign, as if opened by unseen hands, the gates swung back, the guards fled to right and left, and the way was clear for Columba to enter. Not as an enemy or the worker of evil magic, as the King had feared, did the great man come, but rather as a dove bearing the olive-branch of God's peace.

And as the gates of iron had opened to God's servant, so the gates of the King's heart were unlocked as he listened to the words of Columba's message. The victory which no earthly force and weapons could win, was won by God's unarmed messenger alone. The King and many of his people were baptized, and the banner of Christ floated over the heathen citadel.

But although the King had become a Christian, there were still many people who hated Columba and his religion. The Druids, priests of the heathen religion, were very angry,

and tried in every way to harm this man who had brought a new religion into their country. They could not bear to see the people listening to his teaching, and when it was time for evensong and the brethren were singing their evening hymn of praise, these Druids strove to drown the sound by making hideous noises and raising a terrible din. Little did they know the strength of that voice against which they were striving. Loud and clear rose the hymn of Columba, swelling into a great burst of praise which throbbed through the air and could be heard a mile away. Each word sounded distinctly, and it drowned the evil sounds of those pagan priests, and rose up to heaven as clear and pure as the song of a lark.

Wherever Columba preached and taught he also built a little church, and left behind some of the brethren to go on with the work of spreading God's light. So through all the land there was a chain of churches and the light grew ever brighter and brighter.

But it was always to Iona that Columba returned, and which he made his home. There he worked and prayed and gathered fresh strength to fight the good fight. There in his cell he made fair copies of the books he loved, and was ready to help any one who came to him for advice and counsel. He was so kindly and patient, this great saint, that he never lost his temper, even when the visitors came and interrupted his work with unnecessary questions, and in their eagerness to embrace him knocked over his ink-horn and spilt his ink.

There was much work to be done by the brothers of the monastery besides their life of prayer and praise. There was the corn to be sown, the harvest to be reaped, cows to be tended, and there was also a seal farm to be cared for on one of the islands close by, where young seals were reared.

'Cross now to the island of Mull,' said Columba one day, 'and on the open ground near the sea search for the thief Erc, who secretly came last night from the island of Colonsay. During the day he is trying to hide himself among the

sandhills under his boat covered with hay, in order that he may cross over to the little island where our young seals are reared, and there, filling his boat with those he has cruelly slain, may return to his own dwelling.'

In great haste the brothers set out, and very angry they were when they found this Erc skulking beneath his boat, just as Columba had said. They dragged him to their master with no gentle hands, and waited grimly for him to receive the punishment he deserved.

But the kindly eyes of the abbot only looked sorrowfully at the thief.

'Why dost thou transgress the divine command so often and steal the things of others?' he asked,

'Whenever thou art in want come to us, and thou shalt receive whatever needful things thou askest.'

Then he ordered that he should be given food. The thief stood with downcast eyes, more truly punished than the brethren knew, and after that the young seals were left in peace.

Among the many travellers who came to Iona to see Columba and to be entertained at the monastery, there were sometimes kings and nobles of high degree, but their coming did not move the abbot as did the arrival of a single poor guest, for whom he would bid the brethren prepare a special welcome. In the midst of all his work he still had time to care for the weak and helpless of God's creatures. Calling one of the brothers to his cell, he gave him his directions.

'At the dawn of the third day from this,' he said, 'when sitting on the shore of the sea on the western side of the island, I would have thee keep careful watch. For a crane, a stranger from the northern part of Ireland, driven about by the winds through long flights, will come after the ninth hour of the day. It will be fatigued and very weary, and with its strength almost spent will light on the shore and lie down before thee. Treat it tenderly and carry it to a neighbouring

house, and there, when it hath been kindly received, do thou house and feed it three days and three nights. Then when refreshed after the three days' rest, it is unwilling to tarry longer with us, it will return with renewed strength to the pleasant part of Ireland from which it came. I earnestly commend it to thee, because it cometh from our own native place.'

The brother did as Columba bade him, and when the crane arrived, weary and spent, he carried it in his arms to a safe shelter and tended it until the third day, when it was once more strong and well. Then the happy bird prepared for its homeward flight, and rising ever higher and higher in the air, searched out its way and flew straight for home, strengthened and refreshed by its visit to the saint, just as many a human heart, fainting and sore, won healing from that same kindly heart.

As time went on, Columba returned once or twice to Ireland; but he never stayed there long, for his heart was in his work and the 'Island Soldier' was ever in the forefront of the battle.

It was once, when he was visiting the monastery of S. Ceran in Ireland, that a great crowd came out to meet him, and the monks were obliged to shelter him under a wooden frame to prevent the people from pressing too closely upon him. There were all kinds of people in the crowd, rich and poor alike, all eager to reach the saint and receive his blessing, and among them was a poor boy belonging to the monastery. Now this boy, living as he did amongst the good brothers, ought to have learnt to be clean and neat, obedient and diligent, but that was exactly what he was not. His face and hands were grimy and dirty; his clothes were torn and untidy; he scarcely ever did what he was told to do; and he never did any work that he could possibly help doing. You would not have thought that any good was hidden away under all that naughtiness, any more than you would think that a pearl

could be hidden in an ugly oyster shell. But yet the pearl was there.

This boy, whose name was Ernene, pressed through the crowd that day with half-idle curiosity to see the saint, but when he caught a glimpse of that kind beautiful old face, a wild longing filled his heart. Beneath all his naughtiness there had always been a longing after good and beautiful things, and he had dreamed dreams of doing brave and noble deeds and following some great leader. Here then was the leader he had dreamed of, and the sight of his face woke up all the old desires after goodness and a noble life. But it was all so difficult. He was only a poor boy, with no strength to fight against the snares of the Wicked One, no hope of coming out victor in the fight. Surely though, if he could but get near enough to the saint to touch his robe, some of the wonderful strength the saint possessed might be given to him.

Slowly, then, he crept behind the moving figure, ever nearer and nearer, until at last one grimy little hand was stretched out, and caught for a moment the hem of Columba's robe. It was a swift movement, but the saint was quicker still, and with a sudden swing of his arm he turned and caught the boy by the back of his neck and swung him round in front.

There was an instant halt, and angry voices rose from those around. 'Let him go, let him go,' they cried. 'Why touch that unhappy naughty lad?' But no one dared to thrust the child away while Columba's hand still held him close. 'Suffer it, brethren,' said Columba gently; 'suffer it to be so now.'

Then he looked down at the poor little quaking form, shaken with terror and confusion. 'My son,' he said suddenly, 'open thy mouth and put out thy tongue.'

The boy obeyed instantly. The saint might mean to punish him in some dreadful way, but he was ready to do whatever that voice commanded.

But Columba had seen the shining pearl lying deep down

in that little black heart, and he knew of that longing to do noble deeds. Very kindly he smiled into the frightened eyes of the child, and raised his hand, not to strike but to bless. Then he turned to the monks who stood wondering round.

'Though this lad now appears to you vile and worthless,' he said, 'let no one on that account despise him; for from this hour he shall not only not displease you, but shall greatly delight you. From day to day he shall gradually advance in good conduct, and great shall be his progress in your company. Moreover, to his tongue shall be given of God sound and learned eloquence.'

There was no more carelessness, no more disobedience, no more idleness for Ernene after this. Day by day, everything evil and ugly that hid the pearl of good desire was gradually cleared away, and the boy grew to be one of the best and greatest of those who served God in the monastery. There was many a fight before the Evil One was beaten, but the tongue blessed by Columba learned to speak only the words that were true and kindly and pure, and like the helm of a ship, although it was but a little thing, yet it held command over the whole body.

There is no room to tell of all the wonders and brave deeds and kindly acts of S. Columba. It seemed as if there was nothing that he could not do, for he always believed that God would answer his prayers. When his servant Diomit was dying, Columba knelt by his bedside and prayed for his life, and the life was given back. When the brethren were out one day on a stormy sea in one of the frail hide-covered boats, it was again Columba's prayers that saved them. He had worked with all his might baling out the water, while the waves dashed over the side of the boat and threatened every moment to sink it.

'Pray to God for us,' cried the brethren. 'That is our only hope.'

Then Columba stood up, drenched and blinded by the

spray, and he stretched his hands out to heaven and prayed to the Master who once, in a little fishing-boat with His disciples, had met just such a storm as this. And as he prayed, in an instant the answer came. Winds and waves, as of old, knew when to obey the voice of command, and 'there was a great calm.'

Like his Master, too, Columba loved to seek some lonely quiet place where he could spend the time in prayer, and the place he loved best was the little hill behind the convent. The brothers sometimes wondered why he stayed there so long, and once it happened that one of them, filled with curiosity, climbed up secretly to see what their abbot was doing. But the sight that he saw there put his prying eyes to shame, for it was a vision of angels that met his gaze. There, around the praying form of Columba, God's white-robed messengers hovered, waiting to carry his prayers up to the throne of God. So it is that the place is called the 'Angels' Hill' to this day.

The years passed by and Columba, growing old and frail, knew that his work was nearly done and the end drawing nigh. He had half hoped that at Eastertide God would call him home, but knowing that the Easter joy of the others would then be turned into sadness, he waited patiently for God's good time.

The month of June had come. The island looked its fairest, decked in tender greens and embroidered with late spring flowers. The sea was at its bluest under the cloudless sky, and everything spoke of life and joy. But the hearts of the brethren in the monastery were heavy and sad. Each day they saw their beloved abbot growing more and more feeble, and they too knew the end was near. His steps now were slow and painful, and it was with difficulty that he made his way to the granary to bless the corn, as was his wont. As he went he leaned upon the shoulder of his faithful servant Diomit, but even then he could go but slowly; and coming back he sat down to rest at the wayside, for he was very weary. The white horse belonging

to the monastery came by as he sat there, and seeing its master, stopped and looked with wise, sorrowful eyes at the tired figure resting by the roadside. All animals loved Columba, and many a kind word and handful of corn had this horse received from the master's hand as it daily carried the milk pails to the monastery.

But to-day, in some curious way, the white horse saw the shadow of death which was already beginning to steal up over the waning life of the saint, and it came nearer and nearer until it nuzzled its head in Columba's bosom, giving little whinnying cries of distress while the tears filled its eyes. Diomit would have driven the creature off, but Columba would not allow that.

'Suffer him, since he loves me,' he said, 'to pour out his grief into my bosom. Thou, though thou art a man, could in no way have known of my departure if I had not told thee, but to this animal the Creator in His own way has revealed that his master is about to leave him.'

Then, slowly rising, Columba lifted his hand and blessed the horse as it stood there with sorrowful hanging head.

Before returning home, the saint, weary as he was, climbed once more the little hill he loved, and there, looking down upon the monastery, he blessed it in words that have been carried down through all the years.

'To this place,' he said, 'small and mean though it be, not only the Kings of the Scots with their peoples, but also rulers of strange and foreign nations and their subjects, shall bring great honour in no common measure, and by the saints of other churches shall no slight reverence be shown.'

So the last blessing was given, and the work almost finished. Only a few verses of the Psalms remained to be copied, and these Columba sat writing when he returned to his hut.

'They that seek the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good.'

Slowly and carefully the words were written, and the work

was finished.

'Here I shall stop,' he said, and the pen was laid aside for ever.

The summer twilight lingered on long after the crimson banners of the sinking sun had faded into grey. Then one by one the stars came out, and a deep silence brooded over the monastery. Suddenly, as midnight struck, the chapel bell rang out clear and sharp, and in an instant there was a stir among the little huts as the brothers prepared to answer the call to prayer. Swiftly then a tall grey figure came running towards the chapel and entered the door. Diomit, hurrying after, paused and looked up at the windows in amazement. The whole chapel was filled with a blaze of light, and the glory was reflected in every window. What could it mean?

Hastening on he reached the door, but when he entered the light had faded and all within was thick darkness.

'My father, my father, where art thou?' cried Diomit, as he groped his way in with trembling outstretched hands. Then, as his eyes grew more accustomed to the darkness, he dimly saw a figure lying silent and still before the altar. In a moment he was kneeling by Columba's side and raising him in his arms, while the rest of the brothers, bearing lights, came hurrying in.

There was a wild outburst of sobs and cries of grief as the brethren gathered round, but all sounds were hushed when they looked at the face of their dying master. It was no earthly joy that shone there, but a glory of shining happiness reflected from the angel faces which only his eyes could see. Diomit, praying for a last blessing, raised the master's hand, and as the sign was given, Columba's soul went home to God.

Kneeling round, the brothers sang the usual midnight service, their voices choked with sobs; and in their midst lay the quiet figure, the vision of angels still reflected upon the calm happy face.

S. Margaret of Scotland

A grey sky overhead; a cold bitter wind sweeping the spray from off the crests of the great grey waves; a grey inhospitable-looking land stretching north and south. This was what the dim morning light showed to the eyes of the anxious watchers in the little boat which was battling its way along the shores of the Firth of Forth. Truly it was but a dark outlook, and the hearts of the little company on board were as heavily overshadowed by the clouds of misfortune, doubt, and foreboding, as the gloomy shores were wrapped in their folds of rolling mist.

It was a royal burden that the little boat bore up the waters of the Firth that wintry day of wind and mist. Edgar the Etheling, grandson of Edmond Ironside, driven from his kingdom by the all-conquering William, had fled northwards with his mother and two sisters, Margaret and Christina. Some faithful followers had thrown in their lot with the royal fugitives, but it was but a small company all told. No wonder that their hearts were heavy that wintry morning. Obliged to flee from their own country, driven out of their course by the raging tempest, what welcome awaited them in this bleak land, of which they had heard many a savage tale? Would they be treated as friends or looked upon as enemies? The royal family had meant to return to Hungary, where Edgar and his sisters had spent the days of their happy childhood, but the winds and waves had proved as furious and unkind as those subjects from whom they had fled, and there seemed nothing to do now but to seek some landing-place along the rocky shore, some shelter from the pitiless storm.

Among the weary, spent travellers there was one who was

calm and untroubled, whose face reflected none of the gloom of the skies overhead, on whom the dreary foreboding of the future cast no shadow. Fair and stately as a lily the Princess Margaret stood gazing across the angry waters, marking the desolate rocky shores, watching the white sea-birds as they swooped and rose again, as confident and unruffled as one of those white birds herself. For Margaret knew that a greater than an earthly king was with her, and that He, her Lord and Master, held the grey waters and their uncertain fortunes in the hollow of His hand, able as ever to calm the winds and waves of this troublesome world with that comforting command, 'Peace, be still.'

'To the right, to the right,' shouted a sailor on the look-out; 'yonder is a little bay where methinks we should find shelter and means to land.'

'Ay, if there be no rocks to guard the way,' said the captain cautiously. But nevertheless he turned the boat landwards, and eager eyes scanned the shore as they approached. It seemed indeed a haven of refuge, a peaceful little bay, gathered in from the angry waters by a little wooded arm of land that guarded it so securely that the rough breakers went sweeping past, and the sandy beach sloped gently down to meet the little dancing waves, while the wet sand reflected the swooping white wings of the sea-birds that hovered about the shore.

The little company were thankful indeed to land at last, and to feel the firm earth under their feet once more. The mist too had begun to roll away, and a gleam of sunshine touched into warmer colour the bare hills around. Surely this was a good omen, and they might hope that the clouds of their evil fortune were also about to break. It is more than eight hundred years since that little company landed at the sheltered cove, and it might seem as if their very names were long since forgotten, but a faint memory of far-off romance is still linked to the place by the name it bears, Saint Margaret's

Hope.

With weary steps the travellers began to journey inland, where they hoped to find some town or village close by. The few country people they met stared at them with round eyes of wonder. Who could these people be? They were without doubt of high rank. Even the King did not wear such fine garments. The beautiful ladies did not look fit to walk such rough roads. They must have landed from yon boat which lay in the cove beneath. The one thing to be done was certainly to hasten to the court and tell of the arrival of the strangers.

Up hill and down dale the little company journeyed on, until at last even Margaret's brave spirit grew weary, and she begged them to rest awhile in one of the green fields, where there was a great stone that would make a comfortable seat for the tired ladies. 'Saint Margaret's Stone' the people call it still, and many a poor wayfarer, tired out with the tramp along dusty roads, sits and rests there now, as did the Princess Margaret long ago.

Perhaps in happier days afterwards, Margaret, looking back, may have often thought of that stone when she read the old story of Jacob and his stony pillow. Had not she, like him a weary fugitive driven from home, chosen a stone to rest upon? Had not a golden link with heaven been formed there too, and had not God's kind angels spread around her their tender care, leading her into the peaceful paths of light and happiness?

It was as they sat resting there that they were startled by the sound of many feet approaching, and a company of horsemen were seen coming towards them. Did they come as friends or enemies, was the swift thought that passed through each anxious mind. But fears were soon dispelled by the words of welcome that greeted them, and the rough men behaved themselves most reverently and courteously. They were come in the name of their King, Malcolm of Scotland, to bid the travellers welcome, they said. The royal palace close by at

Dunfermline was at their disposal. Their lord himself was far away in England fighting against the usurper, but he would ere long be back to give them his own royal welcome.

So with lightened hearts and less weary feet the travellers went on, and soon caught sight of the town, built like an eagle's nest upon the steep hillside.

Now the King, Malcolm Canmore or Great Head, had made up his mind to befriend the fugitive Prince, and to uphold his cause against the usurping Norman. He himself knew what it meant to be a homeless wanderer, for when but a boy, the treacherous Macbeth had seized his kingdom, and it was by the strength of his own right arm and dauntless courage that he had won back his crown. He had never forgotten the kindness he had received at the Saxon court at the hands of Edward the Confessor, and perhaps there too he had seen the boy Edgar and his beautiful sister Margaret. Margaret's beauty was not a thing to be lightly forgotten, and the Scottish King, with his lionlike head and lionlike nature, had a large heart which was very easily touched by beauty of any kind.

It was soon seen, after the King's return to his palace at Dunfermline, that he loved the gentle Margaret with all the devotion of his great heart. She seemed to him something so precious, so delicately fair, that he hardly dared dream of winning her. It was like roughly plucking a harebell which had bravely lifted its head among the stones on his mountain path, linked to earth only by that slender stem which one rough touch might break. But he did most truly love her, and as his Queen he would be able to shield and guard from any harm the flower of his heart.

Margaret, however, was sorely troubled. This was not the life she had planned. She had thought to leave behind her the cares and troubles of a court, and to find peace and quietness in a convent home, where she might serve God. Far away in Hungary, where she had spent her childhood, and in the peaceful old home in England, she had loved to listen to

stories of the lives of the saints, and especially had she pondered over the life of Saint Margaret, and longed to follow in her namesake's steps.

But there are more ways than one of serving God, and Margaret dimly saw that perhaps the path beset with most difficulties might be the one that her Master would have chosen. It would be sweet to serve Him in the peaceful shelter of a convent cell, but faithful and brave soldiers do not seek the safest posts, where duties are easy and dangers few. They seek to endure hardness and not ease. To be a good Queen might be a higher and more difficult task than to be a devout nun.

So Margaret at last consented to be wed, and when the first primroses were beginning to star the woods, and spring hastened to breathe a softer welcome to the English bride, the royal marriage took place at Dunfermline in the happy Eastertide.

But although the King had now attained the wish of his heart, he did not yet fully understand how pure and precious a gift had been bestowed upon him. Not very long after his marriage with Margaret, evil tongues began to whisper secret tales to which the King should never have given heed. They told how the Queen, when he was absent, stole out from the palace to meet his enemies in a certain cave not very far off in the woods.

Angry and suspicious, the King determined to find out the truth of the story, and one day, pretending to go out to the hunt, he returned secretly to the palace. With a heavy heart he watched his fair Queen quietly slip through the postern gate, and make her way through the woods to the fatal cave. He followed her silently, and when she disappeared, crept close to the opening and listened. Yes, it was true! A great wave of fury surged up in his heart as he heard the voice he loved so well speaking to some one inside the cave. Too angry to stir for a moment, he stood there listening to the words she spoke; but as he listened a look of bewilderment flashed across

his face, the red flush of anger faded, and he hung his head as if ashamed. For the voice he heard was indeed Margaret's, but it was to God she spoke. 'King and Lord of all,' she prayed, 'teach my dear King to serve Thee truly, to love Thee perfectly, and to walk in Thy light.'

There were no more suspicious thoughts, no more listening to evil gossip after this, but the heart of Malcolm was bound more closely by the golden thread of love to his dear Queen, and thus through her was linked to God.

The news of the King's marriage with the beautiful English Princess was carried far and near, and the people wondered greatly what manner of Queen she would make. They watched her narrowly, and at first were not quite sure if her manners and customs were to their liking. Was it pride that made this great lady dress herself in such fair robes—kirtles of rainbow hue that hung in graceful folds, mantles all broidered with gay devices in colours borrowed from the peacock's plumes? Yet as they looked at their own strong useful garments, grey and dun-coloured as the wintry skies, they allowed that perhaps a little cheerful touch of colour might not come amiss.

Margaret's speech too was soft and courteous, and they were fain to confess that her graciousness won their hearts, almost in spite of themselves. But they were suspicious at first of all the changes at the court. Why, even the King himself began to show more kingly manners and to live in greater state. The servants no longer did their work in a slovenly way; the common drinking cups and platters were replaced by silver goblets and golden dishes. The palace was royally furnished; all was fitly set out and well ordered. And yet the people very clearly saw that it could not be pride that made the gentle Queen insist on all this state. They soon found that a self-denying pitiful heart dwelt under her magnificent robes, that she was ready to give even her own garments to clothe the poor, and if she fed off a golden platter, the food was as

simple as that of the humblest of the land. But she was a Queen, and the simple rule of her life was that all things should be fitly ordered. Neither in this did she stop at her own palace gates. The whole kingdom soon felt the influence of the hand that could guide even the great-headed Malcolm.

Many abuses had crept into the ancient Church, and Margaret longed to set these right. It must have been a strange sight to see the Queen in her beautiful robes, seated in the midst of all the clever men when they were gathered together to talk the matter over. If she was in earnest, so were they. Many a frowning black look was cast at the maiden who dared single-handed to do battle for the right. But Margaret loved her Church, and like Sir Galahad 'her strength was as the strength of ten, because her heart was pure,' and in the end she triumphed. Little by little, too, she taught her people that Sunday was a holy day, a day of rest for man and beast—a lesson sorely needed then, and never since forgotten.

So it seemed as if the love of God which dwelt in Margaret's heart was already bringing light into the dark places, and making the crooked ways straight, and she rejoiced to find that she could serve Him in the world as well as in the cloister.

It soon became known that any one in want or in trouble would find a friend in the new Queen. Her pitiful heart was linked to a helpful hand, and no one was ever turned empty away. Many were the ransoms she paid for poor English prisoners carried off captive in the fierce raids of the Scots. Widows and orphans flocked to the court, sure that the Queen would always befriend them in their distress.

Sometimes the King would laugh, and say that none of his possessions were safe from those hands that were so ready to give. When her purse was empty, the Queen would take off one of her own garments to clothe some shivering beggar, and when money was needed she would dip her hands into the King's private store of gold, well knowing that he grudged her

nothing.

'Aha! I have caught thee now,' he cried one day as he found her hurrying from his treasure-chest with well-filled hands. 'What and if I have thee arrested, tried, and found guilty of robbery?'

Margaret smiled as she looked up into those kind laughing eyes.

'I plead guilty at once,' she said, holding out the gold.

'Nay, dear heart,' said the King, closing her fingers over the golden pieces. 'Thou canst not steal what is already thine own. All that I have, thou knowest, is thine.'

How truly the great rough King loved this gentle maiden! Everything she touched, everything she loved, was sacred to him. Often he would lift the books she had been using, and although he could not read the words she loved, he would hold the volumes lovingly in his great strong hands, and, half ashamed, would bend to kiss the covers which her hands had touched. Nothing, he thought, was quite good enough for his Queen. He could not bear that even the bindings of her books should be only of rough leather, and when he found a cunning worker in metals, he would have the covers overlaid with gold and precious stones, and with many a round white pearl, fit emblem of his Margaret, the Pearl of Queens.

It was one of these precious books, a book of the gospels, which Margaret loved above all the rest. Not only was its jewelled cover a token of the King's love, but the precious words inside were fitly illuminated with golden letters, and there were pictures of the four Evangelists most fair to look upon.

Now it happened that one day when Margaret was journeying from Dunfermline, a careless servant, who carried the book, let it slip from its wrappings into the midst of a river which they were fording. The man did not perceive that the book was lost, and thought no more of it until called upon by the Queen to deliver his precious burden. Long and

sorrowfully he sought for it, retracing carefully each step he had come until at last he reached the river. Then he grew hopeless indeed. If it should have fallen into the stream, it would mean the end of the Queen's precious book. Ah! it was too true; there, in a clear stretch of water, where the ripples scarcely stirred the surface, he saw the gleam of white parchment as the leaves were gently stirred to and fro by the moving water. He bent down and lifted it carefully, and holding it safe in his hands, he gazed with wonder at the open leaves. The little coverings of silk which protected the golden letters had been loosened and swept away, but upon the pages themselves there was not a stain or blur. Not a single letter was washed out; the fair illuminated pictures were as clear and unspoiled as ever; the gold shone undimmed upon the pure white parchment leaves; the water had not injured one of the precious words of the Queen's book.

It was not only with money, her own or the King's, that Margaret helped the poor. She served them with her own hands as well. Early each morning the Queen, in her dainty robes, as fair as the dew-washed flowers that were just lifting their faces to the morning sun, came forth from her room, where she too had been lifting her face to heaven. It was her way to begin her daily work by caring for the little children who had no one else to care for them. Nine baby orphans were gathered there, poor and destitute, and it always seemed to her as if her Master was so close that she could almost hear His voice as He bade her 'Feed My lambs.' How joyfully the babies stretched out their hands towards her, clutching at the bonny coloured robe she wore with their little eager hands. All children love fair colours, but it was not only the green embroidered kirtle, no, nor the steaming breakfast which she brought, that made them stretch out their arms to her. There was a kind mother smile in her eyes which drew them to her as if by magic, and as she gathered them by turns into her loving arms, they were perfectly happy. Then the bowl of soft

warm food was placed at her side, and one by one she fed each little orphan baby with her own golden spoon.

Later on each day there were gathered three hundred poor hungry people in the royal hall, and there the King, as well as the Queen, fed them and waited on them, giving to each the help they needed. Margaret never wearied of her work, for in helping the poor was she not waiting upon her Master? And as she knelt to wash the feet of some poor beggar, was she not washing the dust-stained weary feet of Him who had said—'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.'

But there was other work besides caring for the poor that filled Margaret's days. As time went on, God sent her children of her own to care for—six brave strong boys and two fair little maidens. Very carefully and very strictly were the children trained. Just because they were princes and princesses, they needed even more than others to learn to be obedient, gentle, brave and true. No one knew better than Margaret the truth of the old motto—'noblesse oblige.' There is no denying that the children were sometimes naughty, as all children will be; and then indeed there was no sparing the rod, for the governor of the nursery was charged that they should be well whipped when they needed it.

There was an old castle not far from the royal palace, called in those days the Castle of Gloom, which the royal children knew well. Its name was fitly chosen, for well might it have been the dwelling of Giant Despair. High hills frowned down upon it, almost shutting out the light of the sun. At the foot of the steep precipice on which it was built two raging streams, called Dolor and Gryff, roared their way along, and helped to make the place more gloomy. It was to this castle that the child who had behaved ill and needed punishment was sent, that in dismal solitude he might learn to be sorry for his naughty ways. Not only the boys, but the little maidens too, learnt their lesson at the Castle of Gloom. It seemed

strange and perhaps unkind that their gentle mother should have them whipped and sent away to the dark castle of punishment, but as they grew older and wiser, the children found that, strange as it had seemed, it was her very kindness and love that had made her punish them. Just as the hand of the gardener, who loves his garden, pulls up and destroys all the weeds, and prunes away everything that hinders the growth of his flowers, so the wise Queen tended her children, her special flowers. Thus it was that as her boys grew tall and strong and handsome, and her two little maidens became fair graceful women, it was not only the outward appearance that made such a brave show. In the garden of their hearts there were no evil weeds of selfishness, self-will and pride, but only the flowers of generosity, pity, self-forgetfulness, and the sovereign herb of obedience.

The gracious influence of the Queen was felt outside her household too, and the people around the court began to try and introduce the Queen's ways into their homes, and even to clothe themselves in gayer colours than their dull grey homespuns.

They were a hardy warlike people, as strong and rugged as their own grim grey mountain rocks, as wild and fearless as the mountain streams that came dashing down through the moorland waste.

But there are times when the mountains are no longer grim and grey, but tender and soft, in the blue haze that shows each peak against a primrose sky; when the mountain torrents sink into merry murmuring burns dancing along between the banks of fern and heather; when the bare moorlands are a glory of purple and gold as the heather merges into the autumn-tinted bracken. So these rugged northern folk had also their softer side, and deep in their hearts they felt the charm of fair colours and all things gracious and beautiful.

The merchants that came from all lands, bringing their wares at the bidding of the Queen, found the people eager

and willing to buy. Indeed, it is said by some that it was this love of colour, introduced by Margaret, which was the origin of the Scottish tartans.

'But why,' asked the Queen, 'should we buy foreign wares? Why not weave these softer fairer stuffs ourselves?'

'The people know not the art of weaving such stuffs,' replied her courtiers.

'Then they shall learn,' replied the Queen. 'They have as good brains and as deft hands as any of these foreigners, why should they not weave as well as others? I will see that my people are taught the art.'

The Queen was as good as her word, and sent abroad for workers to teach her people at Dunfermline how to weave the fair white linen, giving them thus an industry which has lasted to this day.

But into this peaceful life of tending the poor, watching over her children and her people, sewing her wondrous embroideries and founding many churches to the glory of God, there came many a dreary time of anxiety and distress. Malcolm the King loved his peaceful home, but his strong brave arm was often needed to defend his country and protect his people, and many an anxious hour did Margaret spend while he went forth to fight the enemy. Her two elder boys, Edward and Edgar, went with their father now, and that made the anxiety even harder to bear.

Then came a time when it was more difficult than ever for Margaret to be brave and fearless. She was weak and ill, and the fear of some calamity seemed to hang around her like a thick cloud. It was in the month of June, when tardy Spring was in no haste to make room for her sister Summer, that the Queen sat alone in the castle of Edinburgh praying for the safe return of her dear King and their two brave sons. But yesterday they had set out with blare of trumpets and roll of drums to punish the invader who had dared to seize their castle of Alnwick, but already it seemed as if she had waited

and watched for months.

Margaret did not greatly love the rugged castle of Scotland's capital. It was but a gloomy place compared to the dear home at Dumfermline, but still she made it homelike too. Its old name, the Maydyn or Maiden Castle, with its legend of Sir Galahad, pleased the Queen's fancy even if the place was somewhat rough. Often, as she sat gazing from the rocky height over the mist-wrapped town to where the line of the Forth showed like a silver thread, and across to where the great lion of Arthur's Seat and the Crags stood guard on one side of the city, she pictured the coming of the perfect knight. She saw him ride up the steep hillside and enter the ruined chapel there. She watched him as he knelt beside the altar praying for guidance, and heard too the voice that bade him ride on until he came to a great castle where many gentle maidens were imprisoned.

'There too thou shalt find a company of wicked knights,' continued the voice. 'Them thou shalt slay, and set the Maydyn Castle free.'

The Maydyn Castle was but a rough home for Queen Margaret, but even there were marks of her gracious presence. A little stone chapel was built upon the rock, and amidst the clang of weapons and sounds of war, the peaceful prayers of the Queen rose like sweet incense to heaven.

It was with difficulty that the Queen had managed to walk with feeble steps to the little chapel that sad June day; and as she prayed for the safety of her dear ones, who had ridden forth to meet danger and death, something seemed to tell her that they would never return. She felt as if even now misfortune was descending like a thick cloud upon the smiling land.

Her friend and counsellor Turgot, who writes the story of his Queen, tells how, when she had left the chapel, she turned to him and said with sad conviction: 'Perhaps on this very day such a heavy calamity may befall the realm of Scotland as has

not been for ages past.'

It was while she was speaking these very words of sad foreboding that at the castle of Alnwick the heavy calamity had indeed fallen.

The gallant Malcolm with his two sons riding at the head of his men had reached the castle and called upon the garrison to surrender. The Scottish army was encamped below the castle, waiting to make the attack should the garrison refuse to yield. While they waited, a single unarmed knight rode out from the castle gate, carrying only his long spear, on the point of which hung the heavy keys of the castle stronghold.

'I come to surrender,' he cried as he reached the camp. 'Let your King come forth to receive at our hands the keys of his fortress.'

There was no thought of treachery, and Malcolm with his visor up came out to meet the knight. As the King advanced the knight rode forward, and with a sudden swift movement, lowered his spear and drove its point straight into the eye of the King, piercing to his brain and killing him on the spot.

Then all was uproar and confusion. The infuriated Scots charged upon the enemy. Edward, the eldest son, rushing forward to avenge his father's death, was also slain. Little wonder that the heart that loved them both so dearly should feel the stroke, although far away.

With their King killed and their leaders gone, the Scottish soldiers lost heart, and were at last beaten back and utterly routed. There was no one left even to seek for the King's body, and it was left to two poor peasants to find it, and to carry it away in a cart to Tynemouth.

Four days passed before the news slowly travelled to the Maydyn Castle at Edinburgh, and it was Edgar, the second son, who brought the tidings to his dying mother.

She was lying peaceful and untroubled now, clasping in her hand that wonderful 'Black Cross' which she loved so

dearly. It was the cross which she had brought with her from England when she came a poor fugitive. Made of pure gold and set with great diamonds, it held in its heart something more precious still—a tiny splinter of her Lord's true Cross. It was her dearest possession, the most precious heirloom which she left to her sons, the youngest of whom, when he became King, 'built a magnificent church for it near the city, called Holy-Rood.'

The poor boy Edgar was almost heart-broken as he stood by his mother's bed. His father and brother were slain, enemies were already gathering round the castle, and his beloved mother lay here, sick unto death. He dared not tell her the direful news, lest it should snap the silver cord of life which already was worn so frail.

But his mother's eyes sought his, and he bent down to catch her feeble words.

'Is it well with thy father? Is it well with thy brother?'

'It is well,' replied the boy bravely.

'I know it, my boy,' she whispered with a sigh, 'I know it. By this holy cross, by the bond of our blood, I adjure thee to tell me the truth.'

Then the boy knelt by her side and very gently and tenderly told her the sad tidings. He need not have feared that the news would greatly trouble her. The veil had grown so thin that she could almost see into the glory beyond, and she knew that whatever her Master did was 'well.' A little while, and with a smile of great peace she welcomed the coming of the messenger of death, and to those who stood by it seemed as if they could feel the presence of God's angels as they stooped to bear away the soul of His faithful servant.

They robed the dead queen in the fairest of her royal robes, and there, in the rugged castle hall, she lay in state. Close around the castle thronged the enemies of the dead King, and those who greedily sought to snatch the crown from the fatherless boy.

It was well known that it had been the Queen's wish that her body should be laid to rest in the church she had built at Dunfermline, but every gate, every door of the castle was guarded and watched by the enemy, and it seemed as if the Queen's desire must remain unfulfilled. But men's strength is as nought when matched against Heaven's will.

Slowly there rolled up from the valley a dense grey fog, so thick that it blotted out everything in its heavy folds. The guards redoubled their watch at the gates, but there was one small postern door which they knew not of; and shrouded in the kindly mist, a little procession stole secretly through it, bearing the body of the Queen. Through the very midst of the enemy's lines the company passed in silence, unmolested and unseen. Behind them as they passed the mist closed in, and ere long they reached the banks of the Forth, at the landing-place called after Margaret, the Queen's Ferry. Then the friendly mist, no longer needed, lifted and rolled away, and the little company was able to cross the ferry and land at the bay of Margaret's Hope, the same little haven which had sheltered her, a fair young maiden, who now was carried home a loved and honoured Queen.

As the procession moved in haste towards Dunfermline many a poor peasant stole out and stood bareheaded to see her pass, many a voice was lifted in sorrowful wail to think those gentle hands which had so often cared for them were still for ever.

At last Dunfermline was reached in safety, and there, in her own beloved church, they laid the saint to rest.

Long years have passed since that sad June day when they brought Queen Margaret's body home, but in the old churchyard, in what was once the Lady's Chapel, her tomb may still be seen, open now to the winds of heaven.

It is said that for many years after they laid her there to rest, flashes of light were seen glancing round the sacred spot, and that a sweet perfume as of flowers hung around the place,

while those who were ill or in trouble were healed and helped by touching any relic of Saint Margaret. Whether that is but a legend we cannot tell, but this we know, that down the ages the light of her example and holy life has shone clear and steadily on, that the sweet perfume of her gentle deeds still lingers in the grey northern land which she so nobly helped to brighten and to beautify.

S. Hugh of Lincoln

Evil days had fallen upon the little grey island of the north. Those who were strong used their strength to hurt the weak. Little heed was paid to law and order, and King Stephen's hands were too weak and helpless to govern a land that needed a strong stern ruler. Men said in their hearts, 'God has forsaken England,' for it seemed indeed as if the Evil One alone held sway.

But through the darkness there were faint signs of the coming dawn, and God's army was silently gathering strength to fight His battles and unfurl His banner.

Far away in the sunny land of France a little child was growing up at that time, knowing nothing and caring not at all about the woes of the little grey island of the north. Yet He who trains His saints to fight His battles was training the child to fight in many a hard struggle upon the battleground of England.

Little Hugh was born at the castle of Avalon near Grenoble, and was the son of a great noble to whom all Avalon belonged. Softly he was cradled and waited upon: the world was a place of sunshine and happiness to the son of the seigneur, and he had all that a child's heart could desire. But very soon a change came over his pleasant world and the sunshine seemed to fade. There was no mother to run to, no one to tell him where he might find her, only the strange sad words which he could not understand when they told him she was dead.

It was sad for little Hugh, but it was sadder still for his father, and the lord of Avalon felt he could no longer live in the castle that was now so dark and cheerless. So his thoughts

turned towards a house close by where men lived together who wished to serve God, and he determined to spend the rest of his life with them. Hugh was only eight years old, too young to be left behind, so together the father and little son entered the priory, and left the castle and lands of Avalon to the elder sons.

It seemed strange for such a child to share the solemn strict life of these servants of God, but his father was glad it should be so. 'I will have him taught to carry on warfare for God before he learns to live for the world,' he said, as he looked at the well-knit straight little figure with the fearless eyes, every inch a soldier's son. Then little Hugh squared his shoulders and gazed proudly into his father's face. He scarcely understood what it all meant, but he loved the sound of those warlike words, 'the warfare of God.'

Among all those grave and learned men the child might perhaps have been spoilt, for he had a wonderfully winning way and a keen love of fun, while he was so quick to learn, and had such a marvellous memory, that it was a pleasure to teach him. But the brothers were too kind to spoil the child, and the old chronicle tells us 'his infant body was made familiar with the scourge of the pedagogue.'

There was a school at Grenoble, close by, to which Hugh was sent, and there he soon became a great favourite. He was eager at games as well as at lessons, and excelled in both. But his father, watching him, would sometimes disapprove of too many games, and would remind him of that 'warfare of God.'

'Little Hugh, little Hugh,' he said, 'I am bringing thee up for Christ. Sports are not thy business.' Then he would tell him the story of other boys who had been brought up to serve God; about Samuel, who had heard God's voice because he listened so eagerly; of David, who learned to do things thoroughly, and to aim so straight at a mark that afterwards he could not fail to slay the giant and win a victory for the Lord.

So the boy grew into a youth, eager to begin the warfare

for which his father had trained him. But there was other service awaiting him first close at home. His father was now growing old and infirm, and needed daily care and patient tending. With skilful gentle hands Hugh served him. Even the commonest duty was a pleasure to the son who so loved his father. He washed and dressed the old man, carried him in his strong young arms, prepared his food, counting each service an honour, as the service to a king. When his father's eyes grew dim, when his hands were frail and trembling, when his feet could no longer bear him, and the pleasant sounds of the busy world woke no echo in his dull ears, Hugh was eyes and hands, feet and ears, giving above all a willing service. Many a lesson had the father taught his child in the days of his strength, but the best of all lessons he taught in the days of his weakness—the lesson of loving patient service. So the old man lived to bless the son whom he had trained for God, and that blessing was like a spring of living water in Hugh's heart. Long after, when many troubles came, and the saint had travelled far along the hot and dusty road of life, he told a friend how the remembrance of his father's blessing was like a cup of cool water which he loved to 'draw up thirstily from his eager heart.'

That service ended, Hugh's thoughts began to turn to the warfare of which he had always dreamed. He had already been ordained, and his preaching stirred the people, but he longed for some harder duties and a sterner life.

Far away among the heights of the snow-capped mountains, there was a house of holy men just gathered together by S. Brune. It was called the Great Chartreuse, and there the monks lived almost like hermits. They had little cells cut out of the bare rock, and their dress was a white sheep-skin with a hair-shirt beneath. On Sundays they each received a loaf of bread, which was to last all the week for their food, and although they had their meals together, they ate in strict silence, for no one was allowed to talk.

This was surely a place where one might endure hardness, and Hugh desired eagerly to join the brotherhood. Perhaps, too, he felt that he would be living nearer heaven up there amongst the snowy peaks.

But the prior looked somewhat scornfully at the young eager face.

'The men who inhabit these rocks,' he said, 'are hard as the rocks themselves, severe to themselves and others.'

That was exactly what Hugh was longing for, and made him desire more than ever to enter the service, and although there were many difficulties in the way, he persevered steadfastly, and at last was received as a Carthusian monk.

Like all the other brothers, he lived, of course, a silent solitary life, but for him there were friends and companions which were not recognised in the monastery. He had always loved birds and beasts, and in this quiet life he found they were quick to make friends with him. Little by little he learned their secrets and their ways, and taught them to love and trust him. When he sat down to supper, his friends the birds would come hopping and fluttering in, ready to share his meal, perching on his finger and pecking the food from his spoon. Then from the woods the shy squirrels came flitting in, looking at him boldly with their bright inquiring eyes, while they made themselves quite at home, and whisked the food from his very plate with saucy boldness. Life could never be very lonely for Hugh with such a crowd of companions.

Meanwhile, in the little grey island of the north, better days were dawning, and with the death of King Stephen, law and order began once more to be restored. Henry II. ruled with a firmer hand, and the fear of God, and the desire to serve Him, awoke again in men's hearts. Throughout the land many churches were built, and many a battle was fought for the right. Thomas à Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury, so foully murdered in his own cathedral, gave up his life willingly 'in the name of Christ, and for the defence of the

Church,' and his example roused the people to insist that God's house and God's servants should be properly respected.

The King himself, sorrowfully repentant of his share in the murder of the Archbishop, made a vow to found three abbeys, and invited monks from the monasteries abroad to come and settle in them.

Now one of the places chosen by the King for founding an abbey was Witham in Gloucester, but instead of building a proper home for the monks, Henry merely seized the land from the poor peasants without paying for it, and without finding them other homes. Of course the abbey did not flourish. The first abbot would not stay and the second died, and it seemed as if it was to be quite a failure, until the King thought of sending to the monastery of the Great Chartreuse to ask for an abbot who would rule with a strong arm and help to found a brotherhood.

'We must send our best,' said the prior; and when he said that, all the monks knew that Hugh of Avalon would be chosen. Strong and steadfast as the rocks amongst which he dwelt, he was as fearless and brave as a lion, and yet with a heart so gentle and tender that all weak and helpless creatures loved and trusted him.

So it was that Hugh of Avalon came to England, and we may claim him as one of our own saints.

As soon as the new abbot found out how unjustly the King had dealt with the peasants of Witham, he set about to put things right.

'My lord,' he said to the King, 'until the last penny is paid to these poor men, the place cannot be given to us.'

It was little wonder that from the beginning the poor people loved and respected their abbot, and his justice and fearlessness won the King's friendship too. There was no one Henry cared to consult more than this new friend of his, who was never afraid of telling him the truth.

When some time had passed, and the monks' houses still

remained unbuilt, three of the brothers went to remind the King of his broken promises.

'You think it a great thing to give us bread which we do not need,' said one of the brothers, who was very angry. 'We will leave your kingdom, and depart to our desert Chartreuse and our rocky Alps.'

The King turned to Hugh.

'Will you also depart?' he asked.

'My lord,' said Hugh quietly, 'I do not despair of you. Rather I pity your hindrances and occupations which weigh against the care of your soul. You are busy, but when God will help, you will finish the good work you have begun.'

'By my soul,' cried the King, 'while I breathe thou shalt not leave my kingdom. With thee I will share my counsels, with thee also the necessary care of my soul.'

So the monastery was built, and the King's friendship for the abbot increased. It happened just at that time also that, as Henry was crossing to Normandy, the ship in which he sailed came nigh to being wrecked by a great gale that swept suddenly down upon her. The King in his fear prayed to God to save him for the sake of the good deeds and holy life of his friend the abbot. Then as the storm sank and the ship reached land, Henry felt sure he owed his safety to that good man. The country people, too, were fond of talking of the miracles worked by their beloved abbot, but Hugh himself would not hear of them. In the lives of the saints it was the miracles he counted least of all.

'The holiness of the saints,' he would say, 'was the greatest miracle and the best example for us to follow. Those who look at outward miracles through the little doors of their eyes, often see nothing by the inward gaze of faith.'

It was a very different life at Witham to the hermit life among the snowy mountains, but Hugh remained just the same simple steadfast man. He still wore the rough hair-shirt and ate the same poor fare, and here as in his rocky cell the

birds flew in to make friends with him and eat from his plate.

But after eleven quiet years at Witham, Hugh was called to harder work, for it was decided to make him Bishop of Lincoln. It was sorely against his will that he accepted the honour, and it was with a heavy heart that he bade farewell to the quiet monastery life.

There was great excitement and delight, however, among the company that attended the abbot on his way to Lincoln. The canons wore their richest cloaks, and the gilded trappings of their horses made a brave show as they clattered along. But all their grandeur could not hide that one shabby figure in their midst. Hugh, clothed in his monk's robe, rode on his old mule, and behind him was strapped a large bundle of bedding, sheepskins, and rugs.

'Dost see our abbot?' said one to another. 'He will put us all to shame. Men will laugh at the sight of the new bishop riding thus, with his old baggage strapped behind.'

It was useless to suggest that the servants should take charge of the bundle. Hugh plodded on, too busy with his thoughts to notice the shame and discomfort of his companions.

At last, when twilight had fallen and night was coming on, one of his friends thought of a plan to save their dignity. One of the servants stole up softly from behind and cut the straps which bound the heavy sheep-skin bundle, so that it slipped off and was carried away to be placed among the other baggage, while Hugh went jogging on, dreaming his dreams and thinking little of earthly matters.

There was no thought of personal grandeur in Hugh's heart. Rather he felt like a sailor setting out on a perilous voyage, with storm-clouds already brooding close above the waves of this troublesome world. He walked barefooted to the cathedral where he was enthroned, clad only in his monk's robe. He was a strange shabby figure indeed among those gorgeous churchmen, but he walked with the bearing of a soldier

and the dignity of a king.

At his palace of Stow the Bishop found a new friend ready to welcome him, one of the kind of friends he specially loved. In the lake among the woods a wild swan had been seen to swoop down and take up its abode. It was so large and strong that it easily drove away or killed all the tame swans there, and then triumphantly beat the air with its great white wings over its new dominions, and cried aloud with a harsh shrill voice.

It seemed willing to be friendly with the servants, although it would allow no one to touch it, so with some difficulty it was enticed into the palace to be shown to the Lord-Bishop. Hugh, with his love for animals, soon made friends, and the swan came closer and closer, until it took some bread from his hand, and from that moment adopted him as a friend and master. It was frightened of nothing as long as Hugh was at hand, and it became so fiercely loving that no one dared come near the Bishop while the swan was on guard. Sometimes when he was asleep, and it was needful for his servants to pass his bed to fetch something that was wanted, they dared not go near him, for the swan would spread its great snowy white wings in defence, looking like a very angry guardian angel, and if they came nearer, would threaten them with its strong beak. Harsh and disdainful to every one else, the curious creature was always gentle and loving towards Hugh, and would often nestle its head and long neck up his wide sleeve, and lay its head upon his breast, uttering soft little cries of pleasure. When the Bishop was away from home, the swan would never enter the palace, but even before his return was expected by others, there was a sound of a great beating of wings and strange cries from the lake among the woods.

'Now hark ye,' the country people would say, 'surely our Lord-Bishop is returning home. Dost thou not hear that strange bird preparing his welcome?'

No sooner did the luggage carts and servants begin to

arrive than the swan would leave the lake and make its way with great long strides into the palace. The moment it heard its master's voice it ran to him, swelling its throat with great cries of welcome, and following at his heels wherever he went. Only at the end, when the Bishop's life was near its close and he came to Stow for the last time, his favourite had no welcome for him. Hiding itself among the reeds, it hung its head, and had all the ways of a sick creature. In some strange way it seemed to know that it was to lose its master, and the shadow of his coming death seemed already to have fallen upon it.

People have wondered much at this curious friendship between S. Hugh and the white swan, but they forget that for those of His servants who love and serve Him, God has said, 'I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground.'

Troubles soon began for the Bishop in his new life. He had a keen sense of justice, and could not bear to see the weak treated unfairly by the strong, and one of his first acts was to punish the King's own chief forester for oppressing the poor.

That was a bold act, but worse was to follow when the new Bishop refused to give a place in the cathedral stalls to one of the King's favourite courtiers.

'The stalls are for priests, and not for courtiers,' was the message he sent to Henry. 'The King has plenty of rewards for those who fight his battles. Let him not take their offices from those who serve the King of Kings.'

Henry was both hurt and angry, and ordered that the Bishop should come at once to him at Woodstock.

'He is both ungrateful and troublesome,' said the King. 'I will speak with him myself.'

It was a sunny summer day when Hugh arrived at Woodstock, and he was told that the King was awaiting his arrival in one of the cool forest glades. There, under the trees, upon the green sward among a company of courtiers, sat the King

in a leafy bower. The sunbeams filtered through the interwoven branches and threw patches of gold upon the green, while the birds in the boughs overhead sang in royal concert. But the song of the birds was the only sound that broke the stillness. The King and his courtiers sat sternly silent, and never a figure moved nor a word of welcome was spoken when the Bishop came through the trees.

'Good morrow, your Majesty,' said Hugh.

There was no answer. Every one sat silent, and no one as much as glanced at the Bishop. At length the King looked up and asked one of the attendants for a needle and thread. He had hurt one of his ringers, and the rag around it was loose. Very solemnly he began to sew, stitch, stitch, stitch, in unbroken silence, while the sunbeams danced and the birds sang.

A smile at last dawned on Hugh's face, for he began to guess what the silence meant. He was surprised, but not in the least afraid. Going round to where the King sat, he put both hands on the shoulders of the man who was sitting next to Henry and gently moved him to one side. Then he sat down in the vacant place, and with a mirthful look in his eyes, watched the King as he sewed in gloomy silence.

'How like your Highness is to your kinsfolk of Falaise,' said the Bishop thoughtfully.

The King tried to look dignified, then stopped his stitching, and burst out into a peal of laughter, rolling from side to side. The rest of the company were much amazed, but as soon as the King could speak he explained the joke.

'Know you,' he said, 'what sort of an insult this strange fellow has offered to us? I will explain it to you. Our great ancestor Duke William, the conqueror of this land, was born of a mother of no very high extraction, who belonged to a town in Normandy, namely Falaise. This town is very celebrated for its skill in leather-stitching. When, then, this scoffer saw me stitching my finger, straightway he declared me to be

like the tanners of Falaise, and one of their kinsmen.'

The Bishop's fearlessness and the good joke put Henry in a better temper, and he listened quietly to what Hugh had to say.

'I know well, sire,' said the Bishop earnestly, 'that you took great pains to get me made a bishop, and I would in return do my best to prove your choice a wise one. I acted justly in these matters, and because my actions were right I felt sure you would approve them.'

The King nodded his head, and once more the Bishop's faith in him met its reward. The forester was ordered to be flogged, and never again while Hugh was bishop did any courtier apply for a stall in the cathedral.

Many a time in after days did Hugh cross the royal will and fall under the King's displeasure, but he never swerved from the right, and faced the royal wrath so fearlessly, that in the end he earned for himself the title of the 'Hammer of Kings.'

All the clergy and the poor around loved their Bishop. Every one in trouble, the poor and the sick, came to him for help, and no one ever came in vain. But perhaps it was the children whom he specially loved. To people who did not understand that love, it seemed almost like a miracle to see how children were drawn towards him. Little faces brightened into smiles when they saw him; little sun-browned hands caught at his cloak as he passed, happy only if they might touch his robe. Even the babies, meeting his smile, stretched out their arms to go to him. It seemed as if he possessed some secret talisman to win their hearts. A miraculous secret the wise people called it, but children knew it was no secret at all, but just the old miracle of love.

Perhaps the saddest of all God's creatures in those days were the poor lepers, who lived apart and were shunned by every one because of their terrible sickness. And just because they were so sad and suffering, the good Bishop loved to go to

them and try to help and comfort them. Through the sunny world of light and laughter these poor lepers passed along like gaunt grey shadows, with the one dreadful cry upon their lips, 'Unclean, unclean.' Men and women drew back shuddering when the grey shadows passed by, warned by the harsh clang of the lepers' bell. Even children hid their faces in terror, and though some kind hearts would give them food and help, there was no kind hand that would venture to touch the leper.

But Hugh had no fear of the sickness and no horror of these poor souls. His Master's touch had healed many such an one in days gone by, and he felt that in touching them he 'touched the hand of Him who touched the leper of old in Galilee.' Gently and lovingly the Bishop tended the poor outcasts. He fed and clothed them, washed their weary painful feet, and often stooping down, he kissed their poor scarred cheeks. Perhaps above all it was the human touch they longed for, and looking into his kind eyes, they would have some faint idea of the wondrous love which the lepers of old had seen in the pitying eyes of our dear Lord Himself.

'Surely this is too much,' said his clergy, watching their Bishop with shuddering glances. 'What good can it do? We know of course that S. Martin, of blessed memory, healed the leper with his kiss, but the miracle does not happen now.'

The Bishop only looked at them with a quiet smile.

'Martin by his kiss brought bodily health to the leper,' he said, 'but the leper by his kiss brings health to my soul.'

It was men's bodies as well as their souls that Hugh cared for, and it vexed him sorely to see how carelessly the poor bodies were treated when the souls had gone home to God. No matter how busy he was, he would put everything aside to pay the last honours to the dead. Once, on his way to dine with the King, he found the body of a poor beggar lying by the wayside, and at once stopped to bury it. Messengers came to bid him come at once, as the King was furious at his delay,

but the Bishop went on calmly with his work and bade them tell the King he need not wait for him. 'I am occupied in the service of the King of Kings,' he said: 'I cannot neglect it.'

Very soon after King Henry's death, trouble arose between the Bishop and the new King Richard. He of the lion heart could not understand how one of his own subjects dare disobey his orders, and when the Bishop of Lincoln refused to make the clergy pay to provide soldiers for foreign service, he ordered him to come and explain his disobedience in person.

Hugh started at once for France, where the King awaited his coming near Rouen. Richard was in the chapel, seated upon his royal throne, and the service had begun when the Bishop arrived. But Hugh went straight up to him and demanded the usual kiss. Richard answered never a word, but turned coldly away.

'Give me the kiss, my lord King,' said Hugh, seizing the royal mantle and giving it a hearty shake.

'You do not deserve the kiss,' said the King in a surly tone.

'Nay, but I do,' answered Hugh, and he gave the robe a stronger shake, drawing it out as far as it would reach. 'Give me the kiss.'

King Richard was not at all accustomed to being shaken and spoken to in that tone of voice, but there was something about the man that even kings could not resist, and the kiss was given. Then Hugh went to kneel humbly in the lowest place in the chapel, until the service was over and he could explain why he had refused to send the money demanded of him. And not only did he convince the King of his justice, but he went on to calmly reprove Richard for some of his faults, and suggest many improvements in his behaviour. The King listened meekly, and was heard to say afterwards: 'If all bishops were like my lord of Lincoln, not a prince among us could lift up his head against them.'

Time passed on and Richard died. Then John, the false and mean, reigned over England, and many a warning word

did he hear from the lips of the good Bishop. But Hugh was nearing the end of his journey now, and with a thankful heart he prepared to lay down his arms after his long warfare in the service of God.

In the house belonging to the see of Lincoln at the old Temple, the faithful soldier and servant lay awaiting the messenger of the King of Kings.

'Prepare some ashes,' he directed, 'and spread them on the bare ground, in the form of a cross, and lay me there to die.'

The weary body, clad in the rough hair-shirt, was laid on the cross, and as the grey shadows of twilight gathered in the quiet room, the strains of the evening hymn came floating through the open window.

'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace,' chanted the choristers of S. Paul's, and even as they sang, the prayer was answered. Only the worn-out body lay upon the cross of ashes; the soul had indeed departed in peace, and the warfare of the faithful soldier was accomplished.

They carried the saint's body to Lincoln, and the whole countryside, rich and poor, high and low, came out to meet him, while King John and William of Scotland shared the honour of bearing him to his last resting-place.

'It may be observed,' says the old chronicle, 'that he who neglected kings to bury the dead, at his own burial was followed by kings.'

The loving memory of S. Hugh has faded and grown dim, perhaps, with passing years, but at Lincoln the great cathedral, which he helped to build with his own hands, speaks still in its strength and beauty of the bishop-saint, so strong in his steadfast courage, so beautiful in his tender love for the weak and helpless of the earth.

The Saints in Story

By Mrs. C.R. Peers

St. Margaret and the Dragon

St. Margaret was the daughter of Theodosius, Prince of the Idols at Antioch, a great and beautiful city in Asia Minor, where the people were heathens and worshipped false gods.

It was the custom that the children of rich people should leave their parents and be put under the care of a nurse, who generally lived at a distance from the city; so the little Margaret, when she was quite a baby, was sent to a farm far away in the hills where there lived a good old nurse named Anna, and there she remained for many years.

Her parents were proud and hard and did not trouble much about their daughter, so that she grew up knowing little of them, and when her father heard that she had become a Christian he was so angry that he died of rage; for the people of Antioch hated the Christians, and no one had been more bitter against them than Theodosius, Prince of the Idols.

St. Margaret lived a happy, peaceful life at the farm. All day long she looked after the sheep, and she grew to be the most beautiful maiden in all the country-side. Early one morning, in company with some other maidens, she was out on the hills minding the sheep; the sun was breaking through the mists, and everywhere the gossamers were glistening, and all the grass was shining and bent down with the weight of the dew, when suddenly a gay company of huntsmen came through a narrow pass in the hills; it was Olybrius King of Antioch and his courtiers, who were out hunting the mountain bears. As they passed by, St. Margaret looked up, and the King, astonished at her beauty, stared at her in silence before he passed on, and for the rest of the day he kept thinking of

her lovely face. He soon got tired of hunting and rode back with his courtiers to Antioch, but, try as he would, he could not forget the beautiful girl he had seen standing by her sheep in the morning light. At last Olybrius could bear it no longer, for he felt that he must see her again, so he sent for his servants and told them to go to the little farmhouse and bring the young girl back with them to his palace. While they were gone he could neither eat nor sleep, and he made up his mind that, no matter how poor and humble this girl might prove to be, he would marry her and keep her with him always. The servants did as they were commanded, and they forced Margaret to say goodbye to the good old Anna. The poor girl cried bitterly at being parted from her friend, but, once she was on the road to Antioch she soon dried her tears, for she suspected she was being taken to the great heathen city, and she was determined to be brave.

King Olybrius was sitting on his throne in his palace when she was brought before him, and as she stood there she seemed to him even more beautiful than when he had seen her for that brief moment on the mountains. He told her not to be frightened, but to answer these three questions: Who was her father? How was she named? And what was her religion? St. Margaret replied that Theodosius, Prince of the Idols, was her father, that her name was Margaret, and that in religion she was a Christian. Then said King Olybrius: "Your two first questions are well answered, O maiden! You come of a great and noble family, and Margaret is a fair name, well suited to so fair a maiden, but," he added sternly, "your third question is *not* well answered. Why are you a Christian? and why do you worship a God who was crucified?" St. Margaret answered calmly: "How do you, a heathen, O King, know of Christ crucified?" And he replied: "By the books of Christian men." Then said St. Margaret boldly: "For shame, O King! If you have read those books, you too should be a Christian. How can you remain a worshipper of false gods?"

At that the King grew very angry, and he commanded his servants to shut her up in prison.

The next morning St. Margaret was again brought before the King, and when he looked upon her she seemed to him to grow more beautiful every day, and he longed more than ever to marry her; but first he knew he must force her to worship the false gods of Antioch, for it was impossible for him to make a Christian his wife and Queen. He determined to try very hard to persuade her, so he took her alone into an inner room and besought her, saying: "O Margaret, worship I pray thee our gods of Antioch; if only you will do this you shall sit beside me on my throne and wear a golden crown, and be my wife and Queen of Antioch. I love you, for you are the fairest of women." But St. Margaret shook her head: "O King, it cannot be," she said. "I worship the God who made heaven and earth; how can I worship the false gods of Antioch?" Then Olybrius the King fell into a great rage, and, calling to his guards, commanded them to take St. Margaret and torture her until she worshipped his gods. The soldiers did as they were commanded, but she remained steadfast and utterly refused to worship the false gods of Antioch. And the people who stood about wept to see her suffering, and said: "O Margaret, truly we are very sorry for you! see how cruelly your body has been torn and hurt! Worship now our gods and you shall live;" but to that she only replied: "O evil counsellors, depart, it is better to die for the truth than to live in dishonour."

All this time the King stood by, hoping she would at last obey him; and again and again he besought her to do as he desired, but she would not, and for a long time she would not so much as answer him one word. At last, towards the end of the day, she spoke. "Wicked man," she said, "you have power to hurt and harm my body, but you have no power to hurt my soul, and you cannot make me say what is not true." Then St. Margaret cried out in a loud voice, so that all who stood by

might hear: "Your gods are false, O King; your gods are false!" Olybrius was so infuriated by these words that, instead of loving her, he began to hate her. He called his soldiers, and commanded them, saying: "Throw this obstinate girl into the dragon's den outside the city walls." The soldiers were unwilling to carry out the King's terrible order, for they were amazed at St. Margaret's courage and determination, but the King threatened to cast them too to the dragon, if they did not obey him instantly. So the soldiers unbound St. Margaret, and dragged her away through the town, past the city gate, and along a rocky path, until they came near the mouth of a deep, dark cave. There they hastily bound her hands and feet, and left her helpless, while they hurried away for fear the dragon should rush out and devour them. Poor unhappy St. Margaret was alone, and bound hand and foot before the cave of the dragon; it was cold and dark, for the night had come; she could see the monster's breath coming in great puffs from the mouth of the dark cave, but she thought that he must be asleep, for he made no sound. Hour after hour passed by, and at last the moon came up, and then, with a rush and a roar, the dragon, a huge, monstrous creature sprang forth, the moonlight glistening on his brazen wings and lighting up his cruel eyes. He seized St. Margaret in his powerful jaws, and returned to the cave, where, opening wide his mouth, with one tremendous gulp, he swallowed her. Scarcely had he done so when the rocks trembled and shook, there was a flash of light, and a tremendous roar, and the dragon burst asunder and disappeared, and in his place stood a young and handsome man, dressed in a grand and splendid fashion. St. Margaret, who was unhurt and saved by the bursting of the dragon, took no notice of him, but threw herself on her knees, thanking God for having saved her from the dragon.

While St. Margaret was kneeling, a strange change began to come over this princely-looking man. First he looked pale and frightened at hearing her prayer, then he began to

dwindle and grow smaller and smaller, and his face to become uglier and still more ugly, till, in a few moments, the tall, handsome young man had become a hideous imp. St. Margaret rose from her knees, and, looking at him, started back in fear, but she quickly regained her courage, and, making the sign of the cross, she demanded what he wanted. At the sign of the cross the imp shivered before her, and answered that he had come in the disguise of a young and princely man that he might the more easily deceive her, and persuade her to do the King's will and worship his idols. St. Margaret answered firmly: "Never will I worship the gods of the heathen; I will die rather than deny my Lord Christ."

Then the demon was conquered by Margaret's courage and the Name of Christ, and he shrank together and tried to slink away, but St. Margaret commanded him to remain, and most unwillingly he did so.

"What is your name?" she asked, and again against his will the demon was forced to answer. "My name is Veltis," he said, "and I am one of the demons who were fastened by King Solomon in a brazen box. After King Solomon died, it happened that the people of Babylon came upon the box, and they thought they had found a great treasure, so they broke open the lid, and when once the box was opened, we demons flew out and rushed away all over the world to plague and tempt good men to do evil deeds."

"You vile creature!" St. Margaret said.

"You disguised yourself as a young Prince on purpose to persuade me to worship the false gods. Begone, wicked demon!" she cried. She stamped her foot upon the ground, and the earth opened, and the demon was swallowed up, and was seen no more.

St. Margaret, tired out, lay down on the hard ground and soon fell asleep. The next morning the soldiers of Olybrius came to the entrance of the dragon's cave. They silently crept forward, in terror lest the dragon should hear them and spring

up at them from his lair. When they got near enough to look into the cavern, they were amazed to see St. Margaret lying asleep, resting quite quietly, with her arm doubled beneath her cheek, as though she were at home in the little farmhouse in the hills. Summoning all their courage the soldiers ventured into the cave, but they could find no trace of the dragon beyond the bones of the victims he had devoured. Trembling with fear and astonishment at the wonderful thing that had happened, they woke St. Margaret, and told her to come with them again before the King. As they went towards the city, they questioned her about the God whom she worshipped, and St. Margaret told them about Jesus Christ and His beautiful life, and how He loved all men, and gave His life for them. The soldiers, marvelling no less at her words than at the wonderful courage of so young a girl, were convinced that the God whom she served was the true God, and, falling on their knees, they begged her forgiveness, and said they would be Christians. They went straight back to the palace with St. Margaret, and confessed before the King that, convinced by her, they also had become Christians. At that the King's rage and fury knew no bounds, and, calling to his fiercest black soldiers, he told them to take St. Margaret and her guards to the market-place and there strike off their heads.

The market-place was crowded with the townsfolk of Antioch, who looked on silently while the headsman's heavy axe fell upon St. Margaret's tender neck, and severed her head from her body. After that, each in his turn, the soldiers who had guarded her were beheaded. The people watched in dead silence till all was over, and then with one voice they cried: "We, too, will be Christians; Margaret's God is the true God; we will worship Him." Then they rushed to the temples of the false gods, and threw down the idols and broke them in pieces. King Olybrius heard the tumult in the city, and sent to inquire the reason of all the noise, and when he heard that all the people had become Christians, he was very much

afraid; so he put off his kingly robes, and disguised himself as a poor man, and fled from the city, and was never seen again. The townsfolk gently took up the body of St. Margaret, and with tears and great sorrow they buried her near the market-place. In after years they built a beautiful church over her grave, and in the church they hung a picture of St. Margaret and the dragon, for the citizens loved to think that anyone so brave had been born in their city of Antioch.

You see, though St. Margaret was only a girl, she conquered the powerful Olybrius, King of Antioch. He thought that by torturing and threatening her with death he could compel her to worship his false gods, but St. Margaret chose to die rather than obey him and give up her religion. So by her courage in dying for Christ, she converted the whole city of Antioch to the true faith.

St. Francis and the Soldan

In the time of St. Francis of Assisi all Christian men hated the Saracens, for they were a rich and powerful nation, and to them belonged the Holy Land. The Christians were continually fighting with them to regain possession of Jerusalem, and as the Saracens were very fierce and cruel, and the Christian fighting-men were not much better, the wars between them were both long and bloody.

Now St. Francis, who loved all living things, could not find it in his heart to hate the Saracens. Instead of hating them he pitied them because they were heathens and had never been taught the faith of Christ, and at last he felt so sorry for them that he could bear it no longer, and he determined to leave his own country and go to the Saracens and tell them the story of the Saviour's life. So taking with him twelve of his companions, he set sail for the Saracens' land.

All travelling in those days was dangerous, for the roads were few and bad, and thieves and robbers were always on the lookout for any unarmed or lonely travellers; but if travelling on dry land was dangerous, a journey by sea was ten times more so. The ships were very small, and the sailors had no compasses or maps by which they might steer their course, but sailed their ships by the sun by day and by the light of the moon and stars by night, so they never ventured far out to sea, but kept close inshore, thereby running great risk of being wrecked on a rocky coast. St. Francis and his companions passed through many dangers and adventures, and the twelve companions were horribly afraid, and again and again they begged to be put ashore, but St. Francis, though he was so

kind and gentle, was as brave as any soldier, and he refused to give the order to turn back, so they were obliged to endure their miseries as best they could till they arrived at their journey's end. At last they reached the Saracens' land, and, bidding good-bye to the Captain and crew of the little ship, they left the seashore and directed their course inland.

All the passes by which Christian travellers could enter the Saracens' country were guarded by soldiers, especially chosen by their King or Soldan for their fierceness and cruelty, so that any Christian who dared enter his dominions should immediately be caught and tortured or put to death.

St. Francis and his companions had only gone a very short distance when a band of dark-faced warriors clad in bright armour and mounted on swift horses swept down upon them and took them all prisoners. The Captain roughly demanded what St. Francis and his companions were doing in the Saracens' country, and St. Francis answered that he had come to tell them about God and His Son Jesus Christ; but the Captain did not believe him, and laughed him to scorn. "I know what you are," he said. "You are a spy sent by our enemies the Christians to spy out the land." All in vain St. Francis repeated that he hated war, and that he had come to tell them about love and peace. The Captain, not believing him, and seeing that St. Francis was the leader of the little band, had him seized and tortured, to try and force him to acknowledge that he was a spy; but it was to no purpose, for St. Francis bore it all as bravely and uncomplainingly as he had done the perils of the voyage across the sea.

The Captain and his soldiers did not know what to think of this brave man, who, no matter how much they hurt him, did not cry out or abuse them, but only said again and again: "I am no spy. I have come to tell you how God loved the world." They were so puzzled that at last they determined to take St. Francis and his companions before the Soldan, who was with the army a few miles away. The soldiers each took

one of their prisoners behind him on his horse, and they rode straight for the Soldan's camp, which they soon saw before them in the distance. There were hundreds of white tents on the sand surrounding a little grass lawn, across which a little stream bubbled and sparkled, and in the middle of this green space was pitched a noble tent, hung with white silk, over which floated the green flag of the Saracens. The Soldan was sitting at the door of his tent in the cool of the evening, surrounded by his lords and captains. A dark and stately man was the Soldan, clad in silken robes, with a crown of gold upon his head. The Captain, halting his troop, dismounted and knelt humbly before his King.

"Speak on, O Captain," commanded the Soldan.

"Most noble Soldan," the Captain replied, "we seized these men as they were attempting to enter your dominions. They are Christians, and when I questioned their leader he told me a strange tale of coming to us in love and peace. We all know the love and peace of the Christians—it is the peace of fire and the sharp sword—so I believed him to be a spy; but he denied the charge, so I took him and had him tortured to force him to confess the truth, but he would not, and he steadfastly denies that he is a spy. Therefore, O King, knowing your wisdom, I thought it well to bring this strange man before you, that you may question him yourself."

"Is this that my servants tell of you true, Francis? Are you a spy?" asked the Soldan sternly.

"I am no spy, O King," replied St. Francis. "I have come from Italy, my own country, to tell you how God loves you, and sent His only Son to die for you."

The Soldan was silent for a moment, and then turned to the Captain at his side.

"Have you searched these men? Are they armed?" he asked.

"O King, the only things they carry are these crosses, as you see," he replied, pointing to the wooden crosses St.

Francis and his companions wore at their sides.

At that St. Francis, lifting his cross high in his hand (for he was now unbound), stepped boldly forward and spoke thus to the Soldan: "O King, I can prove that I am no spy, but a true servant of God. Cause a big fire to be made here in front of you, and let one of your servants walk with me through the fire, and he who is unburnt, his shall be the true God. I know that mine will prevail."

Now the Soldan was a brave man, and he loved all brave men, and when he heard St. Francis he determined he should not be slain at once, but given a chance of proving the truth of his words; so he ordered a big fire to be got ready, and when it was set alight St. Francis prepared to step into it, but no one came forward to join him from the Saracens' side. The Soldan turned to the lords and captains surrounding him, and said: "Is there no one among my servants who will come forward and enter the fire with this man?" But there was silence, and no one stirred, and the Soldan saw that not one of the Saracens would venture into the fire with St. Francis.

And the great King looked searchingly at St. Francis as he stood before him by the fire. "Many Christian men have I met," said he, "but I have met them in fair fight, horse to horse and sword to sword, they wishing to kill me and I them; but never before have I met a Christian like you. I will speak with you alone to-morrow, Francis. Take your prisoners and guard them carefully," he said, turning to the Captain, "and bring the man Francis to my tent at break of day."

The Soldan was a very wise Prince, and he thought to himself, "I know that this Francis is a brave man, but I can see by his torn and ragged garments that he is also very poor. Maybe, if I tempt him with presents of gold and silver he will confess he is a spy, and will tell me which King or Prince among my enemies has sent him." So the next morning the Soldan caused great bags of gold and silver and precious stones to be brought into his tent, and when St. Francis was

led before him he took him alone into the tent and there showed him all these riches.

"You see this gold and silver and these precious stones," said the Soldan; "they shall all be yours if you will confess that you are a spy, and if you will tell me whence you came and who sent you."

Then St. Francis, in his rough, torn garments, looked at the stately, gorgeous monarch with gentle honest eyes. "Most noble sir," said he, "I do not want your gold and silver and precious stones. I have told you the truth. I am no spy. God, whose poor servant I am, has sent me."

The Soldan now felt sure that St. Francis was speaking the truth. He looked at him, and the longer he looked the more astonished did he become. "Why," thought the Soldan to himself—"why should this man, who is evidently no strong warrior such as I have known among the Christians, why should this man come all the way from Italy to tell us about his God? Truly He must be a wonderful God if He has many servants like Francis." Then, turning to St. Francis, he said: "Say on, Francis, and tell me of your God." And standing before the throne St. Francis told him about the things of God, and when he had finished speaking the Soldan said: "This is a marvellous tale you tell, O Francis, of a God who is not angry with the world, but gave His only Son to die for the people in it. What you say may be true, but who can tell—who can tell?" he said sadly, and he sighed deeply, and leaned his head upon his hand.

St. Francis waited in silence, and then he humbly and earnestly begged the Soldan to give him permission to speak to the Saracens also of the things of God. For some moments the Soldan did not answer, and then he rose from his throne and called his soldiers to him, and commanded them that they were in no way to harm or molest St. Francis, and he gave him leave to go with his companions to any part of his kingdom; and St. Francis and his companions, with grateful

hearts, took leave of the Soldan and quickly departed, and went through all the Saracens' land teaching and preaching to the people. For many months St. Francis journeyed from place to place. He went through sandy deserts and crossed deep rivers, and everywhere he told the people about Christ, but the Saracens were dull and slow to believe his words.

At last St. Francis, seeing he could do no more good among this heathen people, decided he would return to Italy, so he gathered his companions together and took the road to the sea-coast, but before he left the country he went to the Soldan to bid him farewell. No sooner did the Soldan hear that St. Francis was in the camp than he sent one of his soldiers to lead him before him.

The King had never forgotten this small, delicate man in the ragged coat, who, with so brave a spirit, had come from far-off Italy, and he had thought continually of all St. Francis had told him of the birth and life and death of Jesus Christ, and the more he thought the more wonderful did the story seem, and he was overjoyed to see St. Francis again. After they had talked for a long time alone in the tent, the Soldan, looking gravely at St. Francis, said: "Brother Francis, I would most willingly belong to the religion of Christ, for I believe that what you tell me of Jesus is true, but I fear to become a Christian because my soldiers would rise up and kill both you and me, with all your companions. Now I do not wish to bring about your death and mine, for you can still do much good in your own country, and were I to die there would be no one left to guard my people from oppression and wrong. Tell me, therefore, brother Francis, what shall I do?"

St. Francis thought in silence for some moments, and then he answered gravely: "You cannot forsake your people, O King, for you are wise and strong, and they are weak and foolish. You must protect the poor and helpless, and see justice done to all your subjects, and rule them in truth and honour. And now, most noble sir, I must go from you and

return to my own country; but when, by the death of my body, I have given back my soul to God, I will not forget you, O King, for when in your turn you come to die, I will send two of my companions, and they shall baptize you in the name of Christ; and do you, in the meantime, think continually of the things I have taught you, so that you may be ready when my messengers come to you." And this the Soldan promised to do, and St. Francis bade him farewell, and returned to Italy with the twelve companions.

The Soldan kept his word most truly and faithfully. He took no thought for himself, but worked early and late for the good of his people, and he was greatly loved by them and greatly feared by his enemies. At last he grew very old and tired, and he felt that before long the promise St. Francis had made him would be fulfilled. So he told the soldiers who guarded the roads leading to Christian lands to watch for two poor men clothed in long garments, with wooden crosses hanging by their sides, and should these men come by they were to be led before him.

Now, at that time St. Francis, who had died long before, came down from heaven and appeared to two of his companions, and ordered them to go at once to the Soldan and baptize him into the Christian faith. So the companions set out immediately, clad in the long coats such as St. Francis and his companions had worn so many years before, and when they got to the Saracens' country they were stopped by the guards and taken before the Soldan.

The Soldan was very glad when he saw the two companions, for he was tired with his hard work and long life, and he longed to die a Christian and see St. Francis again; and he said: "Now I know God has sent me his servants to baptize me into the faith of Christ, as the blessed Francis promised," and after he had been baptized, in a great calm and peace he died.

St. Francis of Assisi will always be remembered as one of the most gentle and tender of Christian saints, but the

Soldan, who loved him, should not be forgotten either, for he was a brave and noble ruler and a "very perfect knight."

The Legend of Wulfstan,

Bishop of Worcester, and of How His Staff Was Fixed in the Confessor's Tomb

When William the Conqueror had got all England into his power, he began to meddle with the Church, and by the advice of Lanfranc his Archbishop he commanded that Wulfstan Bishop of Worcester should be summoned to Westminster, and there forced to resign his see, that it might be given to a man of greater dignity and learning, for Wulfstan was an Englishman, and knew no language but his own.

Now Wulfstan, though he did not know the Norman tongue, was a wise and holy man, and had been a friend of King Edward the Confessor, who had caused him to be made Bishop of Worcester.

He obeyed the King's commands and journeyed to Westminster, and when Lanfranc had told him the King's will, Wulfstan spoke thus to the Archbishop, standing before him and the Bishops in the Council Chamber.

"My Father, I know that I am a simple and unlearned man and not worthy to be the Bishop of Worcester. I knew it when the honour was thrust upon me, but I was compelled to take it by our good King Edward the Confessor. As, my Father, you wish me to resign my see, I will gladly do so, but not to you. I will resign it only to him who compelled me to take it;" and at that the good Wulfstan hurried from the Council Chamber to Westminster Abbey with his Bishop's staff in his hand.

He went straight to the new and beautiful tomb of Edward the Confessor and, kneeling before it, he spoke to King Edward as though he were still alive: "O blessed and holy

King, you know well I did not wish to be made a Bishop, but consented only that I might please you and do your will. We have now a King who makes new laws and speaks a new language, and he says, O King, that you were at fault in giving the Bishopric of Worcester to me, a simple and unlearned man, and that I was presumptuous in taking it. When you gave it to me you were only a man as I am, and might well have made a mistake; but now, O most blessed and holy King, you are with God and cannot be deceived. You gave to me the charge of the Bishopric, and here I resign it to you again. Take this, and give it unto whomsoever it pleases you." And with that he smote the staff into the hard stone of the tomb; and the stone became soft to receive it, and held it so fast that no man might move it.

After that Wulfstan took off his Bishop's robe and dressed himself in a monk's frock and cowl, and went back to his old place amongst the monks of Westminster that had been his before he was made Bishop of Worcester.

When all those at the Council who had demanded his resignation heard what had happened, they went to the Abbey Church, and one after another strove to pull the staff from the Confessor's tomb; but they could not move it, and when King William heard what Wulfstan had done, he commanded Gundulf Bishop of Rochester to go and fetch the Bishop's staff. Gundulf went at once to the tomb, and there, standing upright in the hard stone, was the staff. He tried to move it, but in vain, for the staff seemed to have grown into the stone, and astounded beyond measure he hastened back to the King and Lanfranc, and told them of the strange and wonderful thing. Together they went to the tomb, and knelt before it in prayer, and then Lanfranc put out his hand and tried to pull the staff from the stone, but he could not move it. At this the King and Archbishop were full of fear, and began heartily to repent that they had driven Wulfstan from his see. The King asked his courtiers who were standing by if

anyone had seen the good Bishop, and his courtiers eagerly sought for Wulfstan, and found him seated humbly amongst the monks in the choir. The King and the Archbishop went to him, and, kneeling before him, they asked him to pardon them; but Wulfstan begged them to rise, and, himself kneeling, besought a blessing from the Archbishop. Then Lanfranc spoke thus to him: "My brother, this day we have despised and made light of you because you are a simple and unlearned man, but the holy King Edward has shown us our fault. God loves humility and truth, wherefore, brother, come to your King and ours, the holy St. Edward, and receive from him your staff, for though he will not give it to us, doubtless he will deliver it to you."

Then Wulfstan, the servant of God, went to the tomb, where the staff still stood fast, and knelt down, saying: "O King Edward, blessed Saint of God, if thou still wishest that I, unworthy though I be, remain Bishop of Worcester, give back to me I pray thee this pastoral staff;" and at that he gently and with great reverence laid his hand on the staff, and immediately the stone gave way, and the staff came away from the tomb. Then all men at Westminster, from the great King William to the little servers in the choir, gave praise and thanks to God, and honour to his holy servant, King Edward the Confessor, and Bishop Wulfstan returned in peace to Worcester.

References

Brown, Abbie Farwell. (1900). *The Book of Saints and Friendly Beasts*. Boston & New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co.

Steedman, Amy. (1906). In God's Garden: Stories of the Saints for Little Children. London: T.C. & E.C. Jack, Ltd.

Steedman, Amy. (1912). *Our Island Saints: Stories for Children*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Peers, C.R. (1910). *The Saints in Story*. London: Adam and Charles Black.