

JUST STORIES

The Kind That Never Grow Old

BY

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GOOD BOOKS are wise counsellors. They point out the right way in the devious paths of life. Have we not often stood at the juncture of two roads, the one of righteousness and the other of unfaithfulness, and was it not then that some golden little book acted the part of an opportune adviser and directed us down the highway of truth? Is there one of us who can truthfully say that good books have not been his loyal and trustworthy helpers, his vigilant guardians in life's intricate ways?

Introduction



HIS unpretentious little book of goodness stories, a companion volume to "Tell Us Another," must speak for itself. But should there be some who seek an explicit reason for its appearance they may perhaps find it in the following rather droll exposition—so be it that they diligently seek!

And, since this book must speak for itself, the reader of these lines is kindly invited to imagine that it speaketh thus:

One day while walking through a garden it so chanced that I saw a bee upon a blossom. I put out my hand and caught it. It stang me not. I wondered much and said, "Busy little bee, why dost thou not sting me?" Then did the bee buzz gently and say, "Why should I sting thee since thou art so near akin to me?" And I answered and said, "How is it that I am akin to thee, busy little bee?" And the bee said, "I fly from pretty flower to pretty flower. And I delve into the blossoms' deepness. And I take therefrom the hidden sweetness. And I change it into sweeter honey within my body's neatness. And then do I place it into the honeycomb for others to eat. That is why I am like to thee, little book."

Much more did I wonder at the bee's talk and again did I say, "But how am I like to thee, busy little bee? Do I delve into the blossoms' deepness? Do I take therefrom the hidden sweetness? Do I change it into sweeter honey within my body's neatness? And do I place it into the honeycomb for others to eat? My busy little bee, for you to tell me this is but meet."

Then did the bee seem to smile upon me. And it buzzed and whispered into mine ear and said, "Thou art the honeycomb. Thou art the sweetness. And with thee there are all kinds of neatness. Listen, little book. Thou didst fly from flower to flower and draw out booky sweetness. And thou didst change it into sweeter honey in words of booky neatness. And thou didst put that word-made honey into honeycombs of pages to be eaten by the loving minds of many spring-time ages."

Then did I smile a happy smile. And I petted the bee and said, "Wise little bee, how dost thou come to know it?" And the bee answered, "Oh, I saw thee at work amidst the blossoms here." Then I turned to look at the blossoms whose neatness had dropped into me.

And while I was looking, away flew the bee.

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The Little Girl Who Was Not Afraid



IT was during the fierce war between France and Russia. One evening a detachment of Russian soldiers, scouts, we might call them, I suppose, halted at the little village of Dijon in France. They straightway made it known that they would remain in the town during the night. And, because there was no other building large enough to shelter them all, the officer in charge declared that the men would take up their quarters in the church.

Wasn't that a dreadful thing to do? Of course it was! But in war all kinds of horrible things are done. The citizens of the place at once held a meeting, to see what steps were to be taken. Nothing could be done. They would have to submit. It would not have been so bad if the Blessed Sacrament had not been in the church. And the parish priest was away; he had been called to a dying person far out in the country and would not be able to get back before the next day.

"Well," said one of the townspeople, "friends, we ourselves must remove the Blessed Sacrament from the tabernacle into the sacristy, where it will be safe and not

exposed to desecration. Since the priest is not here we may and we even must do what he would do. Who will carry the Blessed Sacrament into the sacristy?"

They asked John, a youth who acted as sacristan. He shrank back. "No, I cannot; oh, I dare not!" he cried. Then each began to ask the other; but all gave the same answer, "No, I cannot; oh, I dare not!" They were afraid to go so near to Jesus.

Then one of the townspeople, a very poor man, spoke. "I have a little girl, Marie. She is just four years old. She is an angel girlie. I will take her in my arms, take her to the altar, let her take the Blessed Sacrament in her innocent little hands. Then will I carry her into the sacristy. Thus shall it come to pass that only her pure hands shall touch the sacred vessel!"

To this they all agreed with joy. So the father walked up to the tabernacle with the little one in his arms. Her tiny hands clasped the ciborium containing the Blessed Sacrament. Lovingly she pressed it to her heart, while the proud parent pressed her to his and hastened into the sacristy with the precious burden. There the sacred Hosts were safely put away.

Now, don't you really wish you were a Marie? How wonderful it must be to clasp

Jesus Himself to your heart and to whisper to His very Self words of adoring love!

Well, you can be a Marie, and more than a Marie, every single morning. Jesus comes right into your heart, you rest right in His arms, when you receive Holy Communion.

Marie was not a bit afraid to go so near to Jesus. The others were afraid; Marie was not. Why not? Because she was a good, innocent little darling. Be a Marie now, and come, innocent and unafraid, to rest a while each day on the bosom of Him Who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me."

"The New Children Innocents"



YOU hear so much about crusades nowadays, children's crusades, mission crusades, all kinds of crusades. So you know, of course, just what a crusade is; for every time we think of modern crusades our minds go back to the seven or nine great military expeditions undertaken by the Christians in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries for the recovery of the Holy Land from the Mohammedans. They are pre-eminently *the* crusades, from which others derive their name.

Now, one of those holy crusades—the one I have in mind—put people who lived in Europe at the time to shame. It was the one of which Pope Innocent III exclaimed, "These children put us to shame; while we are buried in sleep, they are courageously flying to the defense of the Holy Land!"

Yes; that is just what they were doing, strange to relate. The Children's Crusade started in the village of Clois, in France. Etienne, a simple shepherd boy, wrote to the king and declared that the Savior had bidden him—yes, Etienne—to preach a crusade among the children. It was in 1212.

He preached as one inspired and with such

saintly fervor and natural eloquence that, as he passed from village to village, his army of children who were to fight the dreaded Turks grew and grew. Miracles, it is said, strengthened his influence.

Like wild-fire the Children's Crusade spread throughout Europe. Not only boys and youths, but also tender maidens flocked to the standard of Etienne. The followers of the shepherd lad grew to a veritable army. On they went, with ever-increasing numbers, and when the astonished people asked them whither they were going, they replied, "Toward God! We go to find the holy Cross beyond the seas. The Most High has called us to Jerusalem to the relief of the Holy Land!" What bravery!

In spite of all opposition Etienne finally reached Marseilles with an enthusiastic army of several thousand little ones. There some merchants basely betrayed them. "For the love of God we will transport you free of charge over the seas to the Holy Land." That is what they said; but their intention was to sell all the children to the Turks as slaves and thus enrich themselves. What a shameful thing to do! Surely, such a crime must cry to heaven for vengeance.

Oh yes; that strange army actually set sail in seven large ships. But two of the vessels

were wrecked near the Isle of St. Peter, and all on board were drowned. The other five ships were guided by the traitorous merchants to a place where the Saracens were waiting, and the poor children were sold as slaves to those whom they had set out to conquer. Theirs was a fate worse than death.

To mark the spots where the two ships had been wrecked, Pope Gregory IX later on erected a church on the shore of the Isle of St. Peter, in which he entombed those bodies of the little martyrs that had been thrown up by the sea. And he dedicated the church to "The New Children Innocents." They had given their lives for the Faith.

Is not this a touching story? Surely, Etienne, the shepherd-boy leader, won a martyr's crown! And so did his followers. And it seems, yes, it seems, that God used these little ones to put their elders to shame and to stir them up to generosity in responding to the appeals of the Holy Father.

And also now children are God's crusaders in many a way. They are enthusiastically doing big things, those little people are. Take the missions, for instance. Why, boys and girls are giving just the fairest example to everybody.

Honesty Rewarded



HERE she stood on the street, crying as though her heart were breaking, and vainly looking for something in the trampled snow. Margaret was her name.

"Why are you crying so, my child?" asked a benevolent gentleman who happened to be passing by.

"Oh," sobbed the girl, "my mother sent me to the store with fifty cents to buy groceries with, and I lost the money here in the snow. And I—I can't find it."

"Well, now, that was careless enough of you," said the gentleman. "You ought to be more careful."

"Yes, I know," said Margaret, "but there was a funeral starting from the house across the street, and I stopped to watch and forgot to hold the money tight, and it slipped from my hand into the snow. And oh, sir, it's not because of the punishment I will receive, but because it will hurt mother so. She must work so hard and every penny means so much. . . . Oh, I wish I had been more careful!" And the poor girl began sobbing again.

The gentleman was moved. Here was a

girl who really thought much of her mother and who looked at her carelessness in the right way. "Now, don't take it so hard, child," he said kindly. "Here's half a dollar. Just run along and buy the groceries with it and be more careful in the future." With that he passed on.

He had only gone about two blocks when a breathless girl overtook him. It was Margaret. "Oh, sir," she began—

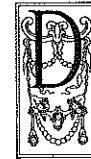
Ah, could it be that she had been playing a dishonest trick on him and that she was going to try it again? But no—

"Oh, sir," said Margaret, "I found my money after you left, and here's your fifty cents back again. But I'm still so grateful to you. You were so good to me."

"Well, well," said the benign gentleman in surprise, quite taken aback. "Little girl, you're the right kind—God love you! No; just keep the money. And here's another dollar for yourself. Such beautiful honesty is worth it—and unspeakably more."

Thus was Margaret's honesty rewarded. If this virtue is so pleasing in the eyes of men, how precious it must be in the eyes of God!

A Letter to St. Joseph



WID this really happen? Yes. When? At the close of the seventeenth century. Where? At Laimgrube, a suburb of Vienna, Austria.

Now we have a start. So here's the lovely story.

Paul Merten, the famous musician, was seated in his room with Josephine, his sixteen-year-old daughter. The room was poor and cold, and Mr. Merten was hungry; for those were hard times, because of the wars with the Turks, and he was in bitter poverty, in actual destitution.

"Father," said Josephine, "tomorrow I am going out to look for work. I am your daughter, and I must help you in your need; for both of us must live. Won't you please let me?"

"What!" exclaimed the musician. "Do you also want to leave me as all my friends have done? You are all I have, and do you, too, want to go?" Paul Merten was bitter. He was even beginning to rebel against the benign providence of God.

"No, father," said the girl soothingly. "It's just for your sake, you know. I've written

to relatives asking for help and have not yet received any answer."

"Very little assistance one may expect from such false friends!" exclaimed Mr. Merten hotly. "They are all alike, faithless in time of need!"

"Oh!" cried Josephine suddenly. "I know what I'll do! I'll write a letter to dear St. Joseph! Why didn't I think of it before! Why, he always helps, and in everything."

"Just as though that poor carpenter could alleviate our distress!" said the father, with a half-contemptuous smile.

"Oh, but he will! And I'll write him a note at once and have my turtle-dove carry it to him. Poor little dove! I could not even give it a piece of bread today."

So Josephine wrote the following letter: "Hail, O St. Joseph! Have pity on us in our great affliction. We have no work nor any means of sustenance. Pray our dear Lord that He may help me find work, for my father is suffering from hunger. From thy faithful child, Josephine Merten." She fastened it round the neck of the little white turtle-dove and let the poor creature fly out through the window. Then she waited.

Half an hour passed. Suddenly there was a rap at the door. A stranger entered. "Is this Mr. Paul Merten's home?" he asked.

"Yes," said Mr. Merten in a short, irritated manner. "What do you want?"

"I have been sent by St. Joseph, to whom I have a special devotion," said the visitor meekly. "He tells me that you are seeking employment. My name is Joseph Charles Hirte, a jeweler of this city, and it happens that I am in need of help. I have just joined the choir of the Carmelite church here and must now perfect myself by taking lessons. You are just the man who is able to give them to me. And, as I always pay in advance, here are five ducats. Can you begin the lessons tomorrow morning?"

Mr. Merten was too surprised for words. He merely nodded, thoroughly ashamed of his previous un-Christian conduct.

"And," continued Mr. Hirte, "I have heard that your daughter here is very skilful with the needle. I would be pleased indeed if she would give her time to the high-class embroidery that I have on hand."

"Oh, I would so gladly do that!" cried Josephine. "How good dear St. Joseph is!"

"Yes; go to Joseph always," said Mr. Hirte with a happy smile. "He is sure to help."

How did it happen? Why, the turtle-dove, weak from long fasting and burdened with the letter, could not fly far. About a block

away it noticed an open window and trustfully flew into the room and alighted—on Mr. Hirte's desk! Imagine how surprised he must have been! He saw the letter round the pigeon's neck, removed it, broke the seal and read the contents. It was just like a message from St. Joseph himself; and he hastened to obey his glorious patron in the way we have seen above.

How wonderful God's ways are! Dearest, never again say you do not see how God and His saints can do this or that for you. Just ask with childlike confidence. Ask and you shall receive.

Truly Wonderful



HIS would be a very long story, were I to tell it as well as it might be told. But that is what I am not going to do.

It happened in Poland. At Kiew St. Hyacinth had built a large and beautiful church. One morning, however, while he was devoutly saying Mass in it, the news was hurriedly brought to him that the Tartars, then his people's greatest enemies, were at the gates, prepared for bloodshed, pillage, and plunder. Everybody else trembled with personal fear; but not so the saint. He feared only for the Blessed Sacrament—feared that it might be desecrated, insulted, in the profanation of the church which was sure to follow. Quietly opening the tabernacle, he took therefrom the ciborium containing the sacred Hosts and placed it under his garments, on his breast. Then, turning to the frightened religious who were gathered around him, he said:

“Fear not. Trust in God. He will care for us. Just follow me.”

But as they were leaving the church a mysterious voice called out insistently, “Hyacinth! Hyacinth!”

The saint paused. The voice came from