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By M. Rye





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The Beloved Son



THE CHILD CHRIST.

Rye, Amy Has an

The Beloved Son

By M. RYE



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P R E A M B L E

FOR many hundreds of years before Jesus was born into the world, God had taught the Jews, a people dwelling in Asia, by making Kings and Prophets His Messengers to instruct them in His ways and to bid them keep His laws, and they became a special nation set apart from others and worshipping God in their Temple at Jerusalem, which was their chief city.

But in the course of time their hearts grew cold to God, and though they followed the teaching of their priests, and remembered all the forms and ceremonies of their ancient religion and insisted on

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their observance, they forgot to be just and loving and merciful, and to worship God as they had done at first.

And then, too, they lost their freedom and had to submit to the rule of the powerful Romans and be governed by them.

So God in His great love for the world, and for its salvation, sent His Son Jesus Christ to be born into it just as human people are born ; to live a human life, and to teach the poor, who had been left untaught ; to heal the sick, who in their misery and pain had no one to go to ; to give hope to the wicked and tell them plainly what was the result of sin, and to give comfort and courage to all who desired to follow him and be like him.

He came a New Teacher into the world to make religion a living thing instead of

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its being a dead creed of forms and observances as taught by the priests. But his life and teaching displeased the priests, and roused their anger and jealousy, until in the end they wrought his death.

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CHRISTMAS DAY

The Beloved Son

The STORY OF JESUS CHRIST

¶ CHRISTMAS DAY

THE story of Jesus begins with Christmas Day, because that is the day on which he was born into our world.

Ever since his birth, Christmas has been made a time of great rejoicing and gladness, for it celebrates the coming of the very best and noblest; the most truthful and loving man who ever lived on this earth. And this man, Jesus Christ, was God's own son in human form, and his life and teaching so changed and lifted up the ways and thoughts of men, that we cannot be glad enough on his birthday or be too grateful to God for the gift.

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Jesus did not begin his life here as if he were coming to rule and govern as a sovereign. He was born in the midst of very simple surroundings, and at the time very, very few people thought or cared about him.' For the most part his countrymen went their own busy ways as usual, not knowing what great event, full of meaning for the whole world, was taking place in their midst; but there were one or two strange things that happened at his birth that, in spite of their indifference, forced themselves upon the notice of many and gave them much to talk over and think about, both then and long afterwards.

The first of these strange things was: Some shepherds, looking after their sheep in the fields one night, suddenly saw a great and most brilliant light.

When the shepherds saw this light, which was quite unlike any they had

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ever seen before, they were very much frightened and wondered what its meaning could be, and they were more surprised still when there appeared in the sky a white and shining Angel. But the Angel, who was most beautiful to look upon, gently told them not to be afraid; that there was no need of fear, for that instead of coming to alarm them he was there to say something that would make them gloriously happy, and then he told them that he had been sent from God in Heaven to bring them the good news, that at that very instant the most wonderful and holy child had been born into the world, a child of Heaven and of the Holy Spirit, who would bring to them — the poor shepherds — and to all who lived on the earth, Hope, Help, and Salvation in life and in death.

And while the glistening Angel was thus speaking other Angels came, flying

from Heaven, nearer and nearer to the earth, and the whole company of them broke out rapturously into a glorious hymn of praise, and peace, and divine love. Such heavenly music amazed the simple shepherds and they felt that for ever they could have stood there under the starry sky listening to the singing of that Choir of Holy ones. And in their hearts, too, there was singing at the news brought by the Angels.

The Angel who first spoke had told the shepherds where to find the babe and its mother, so when the heavenly song had ceased, and the divine Singers had gone from those quiet fields and returned to their own bright home, the shepherds left their flocks and, obeying the directions given them, found the little child and his young mother Mary. They told of the visit of the Angels and of the words that had been spoken to them; of the bright



THE STAR IN THE EAST. (BIDA.)

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light and of the sweet singing of the white-winged, angelic chorus. And Mary and her husband Joseph, and every one who listened to the shepherds' story, were astonished and surprised at the wonder of it.

And at the birth of Jesus a new star was seen in the sky. Perhaps only those people who cared very much for stars, who knew their names and their position in the sky, would have noticed a new one where there are such vast numbers; but this new star was discovered by wise men, who lived far away from Judea, and who for long years had watched the stars at night. And their books told them that this new star had appeared in the sky as a sign of the birth of Jesus; that they were to visit and worship the new-born child who was the long-expected Christ, the Saviour of the world.

So [obediently] they travelled to Judea

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from their far away homes, and as by their reading they were led to believe that the babe was a royal babe, they came bringing presents fit for a king, beautiful ornaments of gold and valuable spices and perfumes.

But Jesus, the king they had come to adore, was not born in a palace among splendid surroundings. He, whom God was sending with his message to the poor and sinful, began his life among the lowly in a stable; his cradle was a manger of straw and sweet-scented clover, and about him were the animals whose home it was. Cows with their dear kind eyes looked down upon the Christ Child, wondering at his presence there, and horses ate their food beside him, lifting up their heads to gaze at him.

Now I will tell you how it came about that Jesus was born in a stable, and not in his own mother's home. It was a very

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busy time just then at Jerusalem, the great city of the Jews, for all the people of Judea had been ordered by their rulers to come up from all parts of the country with their wives and families, that their names and all particulars concerning them might be taken down and carefully written out, so that it would be exactly known how many families there were in the land. With the rest came Mary and her husband Joseph. The people came travelling up to Jerusalem in such numbers that every inn and house was full, not only in the city of Jerusalem itself, but in all the villages near. Many found it difficult, and some impossible, to get shelter anywhere. Fortunately, as I told you, it was so warm and sunny in that land that people could be quite happy out of doors, and were contented if they could but find some sleeping-place for the women and children when night came on. So it happened

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that Mary and her family could only get a stable to rest in; every other place was occupied. And there in that stable, the very night they arrived, Jesus was born, and there he was found by the wise men. But not directly, for these wise men met some difficulties by the way.

When they arrived at Jerusalem they inquired where the king lived, and, being taken to Herod, who, under the Roman Governor, ruled over the Jews, they told him they wanted to find the "King of the Jews."

This made Herod very angry and jealous, and frightened him, because he considered that he himself was the king of the Jews; and he knew nothing about this wonderful new child whom these wise men called king, and, knowing nothing, he could not tell them where to find Jesus. So they left him, and, looking up, they saw their star — the very star that

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had appeared in the sky to tell them of the coming of the Christ Child — and it was moving before them to guide them ; and, following it, they were led to the village of Bethlehem, where the infant Jesus and his mother were. And they went right into the stable, and there knelt down and worshipped and presented their royal offerings, for they were so wise that it made no sort of difference to them whether the Christ they had found was born in poverty or in splendour. They knew in their wisdom that he was the King of Kings. When they had given their birthday presents and had prayed and wondered in that lowly stable, they went quietly home to their own country, having done what they came to do, and we hear of them no more.

But King Herod was expecting them again, and when they did not return to

him his anxiety and suspicion increased, and in his anger he was very cruel and very wicked, for he ordered that every child that was two years old or younger should be put to death, thinking that the new-born king would thus be killed, and that afterwards he might feel perfectly sure there was no other living being who could claim to be king of the Jews but himself.

But though he had all these little children killed, and caused so many fathers and mothers to be heart-broken by his wicked deed, he did not succeed in putting Jesus to death. For Joseph one night in a dream heard a voice telling him to rise up quickly, and to take Jesus and his mother Mary with all haste into another country where Herod had no power, and to stay there for a long time until it was safe to return to his own land. Joseph obeyed the voice in

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the dream and they all three went with speed to Egypt, and remained there away from their friends till the death of Herod. Then they came back and lived at a place called Nazareth, and there it was that Jesus spent the years of his childhood.

Nazareth was a quiet country place, and here the child Jesus lived a simple home-life with Mary and Joseph. Joseph was a carpenter, and Jesus must often have watched him at his work, and picked up the curly shavings to play with, as children love to do. Sometimes, too, Mary would show him the golden ornaments presented to him by the wise men and tell him of the star that was their guide, and how the Angels sang together, and of the other strange things that happened at his birth.

It was a peaceful, gentle life, and we can imagine that the greatest excitement in the family was the journey to Jeru-

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salem every year; for Joseph and Mary always attended the great feast of their religion. Then the family would have a glimpse of the stirring city life, with its gay and crowded streets, and the hot, noisy, bustling people, all busy buying and selling at this season of the year. Then, too, at Jerusalem they would see the Temple, the great Church of the Jews, the building that they all loved so dearly, and of which they were so proud. Within the Church people were also buying and selling, just as if they had forgotten the story of their great Temple, and how it had been built of old by faithful Jews for God to dwell in.

When Jesus was taken here as a boy he noticed how God's temple was dishonoured by the noise and confusion made by those trading in it, and you will see later what he did to change all this when he became a man.



CHRIST DISPUTING WITH THE DOCTORS. (HOFFMANN.)

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Once during one of these visits to the city, when Jesus was walking through the Temple and looking at the beauty of the building and thinking about it, he saw a group of old men, very learned and serious, who were earnestly discussing deep questions concerning their religion. He listened to their talk and asked them many questions.

And the learned men were astonished at his questions and at his gracious bearing. And because the more men know the humbler they become, these doctors, who had so much knowledge, were able at once to see the wisdom of the Holy Child, and they talked to him with interest and delight.

But while he was spending his time in this way, and getting fresh thoughts and ideas from this visit to the Temple, Joseph and Mary thought that he had joined a party of friends, and had already left

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Jerusalem for home. For at these great Festivals the crowd was so great, and there was so much confusion and bustle in getting away from the city when the feast was over, that families were often separated and travelled home as best they could. So Joseph and Mary went towards home without Jesus, expecting he would arrive there before them, and only found out their mistake at the end of the first day's journey.

After many inquiries they began to fear he was lost, and at once returned to Jerusalem seeking him, for they were very anxious, and wondering greatly what could have happened to him.

He was then only twelve years old, but being a child of the Spirit he knew that his work in the world would be unlike that of the grown-up people he saw around him, and that he must prepare for this work carefully and be ever learning from

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all things and in every way. Joseph and Mary had watched the Christ Child in his home and knew him to be different from other children, but they did not quite understand what kind of difference it was or know how sacred and divine was his mission. They saw him every day, and had perhaps become used to the beauty and goodness of his young life.

When on their return to Jerusalem in their search for him they arrived at the Temple, they rejoiced, indeed, to find him there in safety, and were amazed to see him in the midst of those learned Doctors of the Law talking so freely to them.

They told him how anxious they had been and how they had been looking everywhere for him, and he explained to them that God having given him a great work to do he was learning how to do it.

But though deep down in his young heart he felt intensely the responsibility

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of his life, he did not keep himself apart from other children, or behave as if he thought himself above them. When he was home again with Joseph and Mary in quiet Nazareth, simply and obediently he shared their life. The world that God his Father had made was very dear and lovely to him, and he rejoiced when learning its secrets. The lilies growing in the fields of his home were more beautiful to him than kings in their diadems and robes of glory. The birds, happy in each day's sunshine, building their nests while in full song, were flying messengers to him, telling of the sweet peace wrought by an abiding confidence in God's love.

He observed, too, all the creatures of the fields and woods. He saw with interest the foxes creeping into their holes for safety when they were frightened by unusual sounds, and years after, when he had no home of his own, and, spending

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his blessed life in doing kind and beautiful things for other people, had often nowhere to sleep, he remembered the nests of the birds and the homes of the foxes that he had watched so often as a boy.

So, too, the wind blowing strongly and bearing away in its raging might disease and many evil things, or wafting gently over the country the fragrance of fields and blossoming trees, spoke to him of that Holy and mysterious Spirit that moves the hearts of men, stirring them up to noble deeds or melting them to love or pity. A Spirit, too, coming and going like the wind, none can say whence or whither.

And the gold and red and purple of the morning and the evening — those burning colours right out of God's Treasure House that make such radiant pictures in the sky for all to love and wonder at — these were to him treasures that he also owned, and

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that later on he used to awaken into life the hearts of sinful men.

And he watched, too, in the spring the corn growing from green to the white of harvest, and the trees first coming into leaf and bud, and to the fulness of the ripened fruit.

All these he loved to see and to consider, and was ever in tender sympathy with living, growing things.

And he watched people in their everyday lives, and saw that some were led by God's Spirit into sweet, true ways, and that others fell away from what was good, and grew cold, cruel, and selfish.

And when people took pains to appear good, when all the time their hearts were proud and evil, it seemed to him strange and sad that they should do so. For, more than anything else, he hated falsehood and pretence of goodness. He loved whatever was truthful and honest and sin-

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cere, and by his own life and teaching made good things beautiful. Children were very dear to him, he loved their simplicity and obedience, and you will see all through his life how he drew them to him.

And all his childhood he felt within him that God had sent him into the world to find out and teach the weak and wicked, and that the time would come when he must leave Mary his mother and his peaceful home to go out into the world to tell to worldly men those wonderful thoughts of his that were ever growing stronger and clearer within him. He knew that his thoughts were different from the thoughts of other people, and his ways from their ways, and that very many would be angry at his teaching. For they would say: "We have lived long enough in the world to know quite well for ourselves what is best, and we

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have in many long writings the teaching and laws left to us by our fathers and grandfathers. These are enough for us."

Jesus knew they would say this, and many other things like it, and that their chief priests, who thought more of words than of deeds, would hate him and try to harm him. But the more he thought it over, and the older he grew, the surer he felt that whatever might happen he must fulfil his life by delivering the Message which God had entrusted to him.

And he must go forth alone, without money or friends or any possessions. Alone he must set out to make sound and well the souls and bodies of his fellow-men, by healing them and by teaching them to love all that was holy and lovable and true, and to hate what was cruel and unworthy and mean and degrading.

So Jesus went away from Nazareth and from his own people. But before he

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began his work as a teacher, two events happened in his life of which I must tell you. And the first of these was his baptism; for from Nazareth he went straight to his cousin John, who was called the Baptist, to be baptised by him. John was a great preacher, and he preached in wild and savage places to the people who came to hear him. And he sternly bade them to repent of their sins, and to give up their wicked ways and live new lives. And if at his words they truly repented, and promised to be good, he poured pure clean water over their heads as they stood in the river near to where he was preaching, and that was their baptism. Water, you know, makes things clean, and so it was used by John as a sign that they must be inwardly pure.

Jesus had never done anything to be sorry for, yet still he came to John as did

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those who were violent and sinful. John at first did not wish to baptise Jesus, thinking himself unworthy of such an office, and knowing him to be wholly good and without fault; but when he saw Jesus earnestly desired it, he obeyed him. And as he was pouring the water over him, in the act of baptising him, Heaven opened right above them, and a dove flew down and rested on Jesus, and every one wondered at the sight. And the dove was the Spirit of God, blessing this baptism and showing to all that God was present. Then God the Father spoke to His Son, that all might know by whom he had been sent into the world, and called him the "Beloved Son."

And Jesus, who loved God with adoration, now heard His very voice from Heaven, and received His Spirit in visible form, and knew that the life of service he was dedicating to his fellow-men was

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accepted by God his Father, and the gift made holy by these signs.

How amazed and awed John and those with him must have been!

This was a beautiful beginning for the work Jesus had to do, was it not?

The second preparation for his work was of a very different kind.

Full of happiness that he had heard the voice of God, had been visited by His Holy Spirit, Jesus left the scene of his baptism, and those who had gathered together to behold it, and wandered away by himself for a time of quiet meditation. And the place he chose for his retreat was a desolate and solitary spot far away from houses and people. So far away and lonely was it that wild and savage beasts dwelt there, and no one else came near. But though these animals prowled around they did not hurt him, nor was he afraid of them. But a far greater

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danger was near. Jesus had come there to pray — to be long hours alone with God, so that he might know Him better and love Him more. You know when we love people very dearly we want to speak to them very often, and make sure they think of us and are near us in thought. So it is in our friendship with God. If we love Him we like to speak to Him and pray to Him, and to be conscious by day and by night of His love and nearness to us. Very holy persons love to pray to God for long, long hours, and never get weary; and they are able to do this because their love is so great and their desire so intense to be closer to God.

So for forty days and nights Jesus was able to live in this desert place among the untamed beasts wholly wrapt in prayer and in communion with his Father. And at the end of that time, his strength

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being spent from want of food and long nights of watching, the Great Tempter, always at hand in moments of weakness, appeared to him.

And what the Great Tempter is like I cannot tell you, only I know that his coming fills all good people with horror and dismay, and that even to Jesus he brought strife, darkness, and temptation.

And the Tempter tried by evil and cunning ways to change the thoughts and wishes of Jesus.

God sent Jesus into the world to seek out the miserable and sinful, and He gave him great gifts so that he had powers unknown to mortal man ; also he was God's Love-bearer, that all that he might do and all that he would be should bring love into the lives of his fellow-men.

The Tempter, therefore, urged him to use these wonderful powers that he possessed to satisfy his own wants and needs,

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and in that great moment of his life tried to make him think of his own hunger, and to turn stones into bread that he might eat in that desolate spot where no food was to be had ; but Jesus would not listen, for his heart was full of God and Heaven and he had no thoughts for himself.

God sent Jesus into the world to teach people to be meek in spirit and lowly in heart. So the Tempter placed Jesus on the highest point of the Temple in Jerusalem, the same Temple he had wandered in when a boy, and, with mocking words, bade him throw himself down and show his belief in God by trusting to his Angels to save him. But again Jesus would not listen. That would be tempting God, and his faith in his Father's Love and Power were perfect.

God sent his Son into the world to be poor amongst the poor ; to be born amongst gentle animals in a stable ; to be known as

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the carpenter's son ; to be often without food or shelter ; and never to know what wealth and luxury were like.

The Tempter in one view showed Jesus the riches of the world ; showed him gold in the mines, pearls in the sea, treasures beyond count, all the possessions of kings, with the glory and splendour and honour such possessions bring. And all that he saw should be his, said the Tempter, if only Jesus would turn from God his Father, would give up his Mission to his unhappy fellow-men, and worship him, the Great Tempter.

But Jesus was true to God and to his purpose, and he would not bow his head to that Evil Spirit to be sovereign of the mightiest empire in the world.

And so the Tempter having tried every means in his power to turn Jesus from his faith, defeated and vanquished at every point, departed from him.

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Then in his loneliness and weariness after the strife God sent a ministering Angel to serve him, and the message that he brought so comforted Jesus that the savage mountain place no longer seemed desolate and terrible, but full of light and greenness and of sweet sound.

And when the Angel had gone away, Jesus, conqueror in that great Spiritual combat, was ready to begin his work amongst the people.

THE WONDERFUL
THINGS HE DID



THE WONDERFUL THINGS HE DID

JESUS, being now prepared by his baptism and his triumph over temptation for his divine Mission of leading the people back to the ways of faith and love, spent all his days healing and teaching. He had only three years in which to work and to show the world by word and deed what love and faith could do.

He began his work in the country, walking from village to village, and directly he met anyone in distress, or needing him in any way, he would listen to the tale of misery or sin and give comfort or help.

Sometimes he came across men who were busy at their own work, earning

their living, and seemingly quite absorbed in their employment; any ordinary looker-on might suppose them to be quite contented, but Jesus, who knew what was in the hearts of men, knew that such persons often went about their work feeling friendless and unhappy, and longing for a religion that brought them a clearer understanding of God and of eternal things. To such as these Jesus was indeed a friend, and walking and talking with him they learnt something of his faith and of the light that illumined his life.

Many of those who thus met him left everything for him, and became through the whole of his life his devoted followers, and were therefore called his disciples. There were twelve especially dear and close to him; they were friends of his own choosing, and of some of them you will hear again before this story is ended.

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I will tell you the names of them when I come to speak about them more particularly by-and-bye. But these twelve were very intimately connected with Jesus, and are known as the twelve apostles.

And often as he walked with his friends on quiet country roads, or by fields of grass and corn, teaching them heavenly truths and helping them to understand his "new Commandment" to "Love one another," men who were crippled or blind or deaf came up to him imploring his pity, and others would bring their sick begging him to heal them; and his power and mercy were so great that he was as a great physician to them all. For at his word and touch the deaf heard, the blind saw, the lame walked, and the sick were restored to health.

And besides these afflictions of the body healed by Jesus, there were terrible

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diseases of the mind that he also cured. There was one dreadful disease of this kind that was but little understood, it was so strange and awful. The poor creatures who suffered from it had all their thoughts and feelings twisted and distorted. A dreadful despondency weighed them down, and everything seemed black and fearful to them. Everyone they met appeared unfriendly and cruel and ready to do them harm, so they had no peace in their hearts and were at strife with all mankind. Nothing that we think beautiful was beautiful to them, for they saw everything through mists of gloom and despair. They were miserable in their homes and in their beds, and always and everywhere. These unhappy, afflicted ones at once became more unhappy and vexed and feverish at the sight of Jesus and at the sound of his voice. For what was evil in them could not endure the

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presence of his holy purity. So when they met him they would call out loudly, and beg him to go far away from them, and leave them for ever alone in their wretchedness. But Jesus knew that the love he had for them could save them, and so powerfully did he use this great love that it prevailed, and conquered the cruel disease that was overwhelming them, making the bad, miserable, dark thoughts go, and leaving these poor people healed and freed.

These deeds of healing done by Jesus so surprised and astonished those that saw them, that they hastened to tell their friends and neighbours what they had witnessed, and they, of course, wanted to see Jesus for themselves. So people flocked to him from all the towns and villages round about and followed him wherever he went, watching his healing and listening to his teaching.

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Crowds often followed him all through the long day, each person trying to get as near to him as possible that they might miss nothing of what he did. For it was strange beyond words to the people to see men who had always been lame walking after him, the deaf attending to his teaching, and the blind gazing at him with gratitude.

And so eager were the multitudes to go where he went that Jesus and his twelve apostles had seldom time to be alone together, that he might instruct them more fully how they were to do his work after he had left them.

Sometimes when the crowd was very great, and had all the day been pressing round him, he and a few of his disciples, leaving the people, would take a little boat and cross the lake, hoping for an hour or two of quiet and rest. But it often happened that when they had rowed to the

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other side they found the eager multitude there before them; for, not bearing to lose sight of Jesus, they had, with great haste, walked round the end of the lake and so had met them on the other shore.

Jesus loved this lake, and enjoyed the peace and rest that he and his apostles often found there. Not that he was ever vexed with the people for following him so continually; he loved them too well for that, and was giving his life for them that they might be helped and healed. And though his own life was so good and perfect he had nothing but the greatest pity and sympathy for all who were weak and sinful. He could not bear to see people scorning others whom they considered beneath them, or keeping themselves apart from their fellows as if they were better than they. To him, the greatest and noblest life was the life of Service, and he

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wished to see his followers ever ready to serve others on equal terms, even in humble and lowly ways. So he hated to see men and women always pushing to the front, and each one wanting to be first. For he said the man that was really first was he who had the smallest thought for himself and the largest thought for other people, and the man who was really last was he who was thinking most of himself and least of other people.

This teaching was very difficult for even his own apostles to believe, and I am afraid the crowd, that was composed of all sorts of people, could not at all understand what Jesus meant by the highest being lowest and the last first, for this was not what had been taught them before by those in authority.

You have seen now how the common people followed him everywhere while he preached to them and healed them, and

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you know, too, that often he gave instructions of a higher kind to his twelve apostles, or most intimate disciples, away from the multitude. But you would not get a right idea of the life of Jesus if you did not realise that he was also very often quite alone. He spent whole nights in prayer to God on some unfrequented hill, and in those hours of sacred communion with his Father he found the strength which enabled him to live so bravely, and the Love which he gave again to his fellow-men.

I cannot tell you all the perfectly marvellous things done by Jesus during the three years he lived in this manner among the people. Some day you will read about them for yourselves in the four lives written of Jesus. But I will give you an account of two or three of these wonderful deeds to show you how great was his power to heal and restore.

Of the twelve friends chosen by Jesus,

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there was one named Peter. One day, not long after Peter had become attached to Jesus, his wife's mother was seized with a fever and became dangerously ill. Peter did not want her to die, so he went at once to Jesus to tell him of this great trouble. Jesus, ever ready to help, at once followed Peter to his home, where he found the poor woman in very great danger.

At the sight of Jesus and at the sound of his voice the sick woman knew immediately that someone was at hand who could heal, and the fever that was burning in her and the weakness that was draining her life away instantly left her, and at once she felt strong enough to rise from her bed. Filled with gratitude and happiness at the cure the family besought Jesus to be their guest, and so complete was the recovery of the sick woman that she went about the house as usual, taking

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a share in the preparations for the little feast.

So the day that had begun in such sorrow for all in Peter's house ended in thankfulness and rejoicing.

This woman never forgot what Jesus had done for her, and she, with many other grateful women who had received from him healing or help, gladly offered him their homes and services during the whole of his life, and at every opportunity and in many ways cared for him.

On another occasion he showed his great power in an even more astonishing way, doing a deed more wonderful than that of suddenly healing a person ill with a fever. For one day, he, with many others coming to the gates of a city, met a funeral procession passing through them, that was proceeding from the city to the burying place outside the walls. It was the funeral of a young man, who, on

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dying, had left his mother, who was a widow, quite alone in the world. She, poor thing, distracted with grief, was now following him to the grave, weeping bitter tears. Jesus marked the bowed figure of the weeping woman, and knew how her grief was overwhelming her. And it was just at the moment when everything was at its worst that Jesus was there, at her side, speaking to her words of tender encouragement. Then he approached the bier, and the bearers stopped; and, amid the silence of the wondering crowd, was heard the voice of Jesus, saying: "Young man, Arise." And even though he had been dead, and was prepared for his burial, the young man heard those words, the spirit returned to its body, and he arose as he was bidden. So Jesus gave the son back to the amazed and grateful mother, and how glad must have been the meeting between those two who had so lately said

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good-bye, never expecting to meet again on earth!

A great awe and dread fell upon those who had witnessed this wonder, but in the midst of the fear they were aware that God was very near to them that day, just as He had been near to their Teachers and Prophets in the old, far-off days that their fathers had told them of, and they knew that it was Jesus that had brought God so near to them, and solemnly they lifted up their hearts to God in whose great presence they felt they stood.

And not only did sickness and death obey the voice of Jesus, but the wild, unmanageable waves and the great strong tearing winds; even these became quiet and obedient before the force of his pure and strong spirit.

One evening after a long day spent in healing the sick and destroying the power of evil, Jesus, who with some of his fol-

lowers was crossing the lake, weary and worn out, fell asleep at one end of the boat. He had not slept long before a violent storm began to beat up; the water became suddenly rough; the waves high and covered with foam; the wind blew with all its force; and there was a mighty tempest. It grew very dark and the boats were tossed about hither and thither, so that it seemed they must upset and those in them be drowned. The disciples were in despair and believed themselves to be lost, and still Jesus slept peacefully, unheeding the fury of the storm; then in their fear they called out to him and implored him to wake up and come to their help. Trembling they asked him: Did he not care for them, and had he no thought for the great danger they were in?

Yes, he did care, only he had perfect trust in God's Love and Power, and their want of Faith saddened him. But when

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the disciples called to him in their alarm he roused himself from his sleep, and standing up in the little boat, with the storm wildly raging, amidst thunder, lightning, and torrents of rain, he spoke such solemn, calm, commanding words that at once all was quiet: the water became still, the wind hushed, the rain ceased, and all was as peaceful as his own soul.

These are only one or two of the amazing things done by Jesus during the three years he taught the people. Every evening when the sun was setting, and the great heat of the day was over, the poor, the wretched, and the sick would come to him from far and near to be helped and healed. The deformed and crippled came too, for, in the quiet evening time, at the end of the day's work, their friends had leisure to carry them or to help them along the road to Jesus. And no one sought him in vain; he comforted the sad

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ones, he gave peace to the troubled, he helped the sinner to walk in a better path, and he blessed them all.

You would think, would you not, that all those whom he thus healed would at least have been grateful? But sometimes they thought only of the relief they had obtained, and not at all of Jesus who had cured them, and on being restored went on their way unheeding. This was the case once, when on entering a village Jesus met ten men, all of whom were ill with a very dreadful and incurable disease, called leprosy, that made them terrible to look upon. And this disease was such a bad and dangerous one that the people who had it were forbidden to go near others, and were always driven away from inhabited places to live in lonely desolation without the pity or care of a single human being.

These ten men seeing Jesus, and know-

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ing that he had power to heal, at once called out loudly to him, begging him to have mercy on them and to cure them. Jesus listened to their piteous appeal, their shocking appearance not causing him to turn from them, for the greater the need the stronger was his sympathy. Deeply moved by their sad state he used his gift of healing on their behalf and freed them from their cruel disease, sending them away at once to the priests to obtain the necessary permission to live again with their fellow-men. Away they went happily with never a thought of Jesus now that they were cured. At least that was true of nine of them; one there was among them who had a better nature. In the heart of that one, as he went along, there suddenly sprang up a feeling of deep gratitude to his healer, and turning back he thanked Jesus with humble gratitude for what he had done for him.

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And this man was doubly blessed, for he only of them all had come near to Jesus and had had his own heart lifted up to higher things.

It did not make any difference to Jesus whether the people he healed were rich or poor. All were free to come to him. His Message was to everyone, for he wanted all people to be whole and sound both in mind and body that they might worship God and serve each other perfectly.

Amongst all these never-to-be-forgotten deeds of his was his care and consideration for those who might have to go for long periods without food.

You will remember, just after his baptism, when God called him the "Beloved Son," that he himself had fasted for a long time, so that he knew very well how it feels to be hungry. Now the crowds who followed him often came from long distances, and in their eagerness and longing

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to hear him frequently did not remember to supply themselves with anything to eat. But Jesus took the greatest care of them all — men, women, and children, and after he had been teaching them would not allow them to walk all the way back to their homes hungry and faint. And though there were often great numbers of them, even many thousands, and he and his friends had usually very little food with them even for themselves, yet he used his wonderful power in such a manner that in giving freely to the multitude all that he had, with a few loaves and fishes he fed them all, each one having enough and to spare.

I hope you have not forgotten that when Jesus was hungry himself and was visited by the Great Tempter, who tried to persuade him to turn stones into bread that he might eat, that he would not consent. Yet for these thousands of tired

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people who had taken long journeys to hear him tell them about God, and how they might become better men and women, he gladly put forth his power so that they might be fed. Jesus did not love power for its own sake, or desire it at all, except when it could be made useful and helpful to people in want.

THE BEAUTIFUL
STORIES HE TOLD



THE BEAUTIFUL STORIES HE TOLD

THE new thoughts and truths that Jesus wanted to teach his apostles and the people were very difficult to understand, for they were quite different from the old ways of thinking and teaching. So to make them simple and easy to remember Jesus made up beautiful little stories, and when the people came to think them over they found in them the most wonderful truths. And it was these wonderful truths that Jesus was born into the world to teach, for which he lived, and for which, sad to say, he afterwards died.

There are between twenty and thirty of these stories in the lives written of Jesus, and of these I will tell you two or

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three. By-and-bye you will read them for yourselves and try to discover their meaning.

These tales were told to the people of Judea as they followed Jesus in his walks by the blue Sea of Galilee, or under the shadow of the olive trees in that land of hot sunshine. You must imagine the people looking up to him, deeply interested and unwilling to lose a word, for tales have a great fascination for dwellers in the East.

There was one about a man who had taken a long journey through a lonely part of the country, where robbers were often in hiding. This man, as he was going along on his solitary way, fell into the hands of the robbers, who stole from him everything that he had, even his clothes, and they were so cruel and rough, that, to prevent him from calling out and bringing people to his help, they

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all but killed him, and then ran off, leaving him wounded and helpless. There he lay, suffering great pain, without a soul to help him. And then a priest passed by and saw him lying there. But he did not go to help him as a kind priest would have done, but was selfish and cruel, and walked past without taking the least notice of him.

The next person who was going that way had the same hard nature. Like the priest, he thought it was not for him to help, and he, too, continued his journey without showing any compassion for the wounded man.

After that there came a third traveller riding along the road. He came from a country called Samaria, and his countrymen were hated by the Jews and treated by them with great contempt. Yet this man of Samaria, when he saw the injured Jew lying there alone and in pain, did not

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stop to think to what nation he belonged, but sprang from his horse, and in the kindest, tenderest way dressed his wounds and wrapped him up, and then lifting him on his horse led him to the nearest inn. There he put him in charge of the innkeeper, to whom he gave money, that he might take good care of him and nurse him till he was well.

That is the end of the story, and I think Jesus wanted us to understand by it that it is not only to our own brothers and sisters, to our own personal friends, or even only to those who live in our own town, or belong to our own land, that we should be ready to show kindness; but that directly anyone is in pain or in distress he becomes our brother, and we must feel for him and help him. And if we do this we get to understand that we in this world are one big family, that God is our Father, and that Heaven is our true home.



CHRIST TAKES LEAVE OF HIS MOTHER. (PLOCKHORST.)



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Another story that Jesus told the people was of a man who had two sons. He was rich, and had many servants and much land. The younger son, when he grew up, wished for change, and begged his father to give him money that he might travel and see new countries.

Although it made his father sad that his child should wish to leave him, he gave him the money that was his inheritance, and the son gathering together all his possessions left his father and his brother and his home and went away into a distant land. And here at first he was very happy, and had many friends to whom he gave great feasts. And he forgot his father and his old home. And so the time passed gaily till a famine arose and the people began to die of starvation. And because the younger son had wasted all his money he had none left now with which to buy bread, and was thankful to earn a few

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pence by the humblest work, so he himself became a swineherd, and he was so poor and hungry that many a time as he watched them eat he envied his swine their food.

Then, miserable and lonely, he began once more to think of his father and of his father's house. And when he remembered that there the humblest servant shared in the abundance he wept and repented, for he felt that he had sinned, and he said: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.'"

So he left that strange country and the people in it, who had only cared for him when he was rich, and journeyed homewards, until, ragged and footsore, he reached his father's house. And when he was still a long way off his father saw

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him, and knew him. And his heart was filled with pity and with love. And he ran to him and took him into his arms and kissed him, and the son said: "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son." But the father in answer to these repentant words bade his servants bring him a rich robe, and shoes for his feet, and a ring of gold for his hand. Then a feast was made for him, and they began to be merry.

There was another story about a wedding and about ten Maidens who were invited to it. And each of them had a lamp to trim and fill with oil that it might give a brilliant light. With these lamps in their hands they were to meet the Bridegroom and walk in his procession to the Bride's home. The hour of his arrival was not known, and therefore they must wait and watch for him and light the

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lamps when he appeared. Now five of the Maidens were careful and anxious to add to the glory of the bright procession. So with their lamps they took a little store of oil, but the other five were careless and took none. As it grew late and the Bridegroom did not come the Maidens lay down and slept, and the lamps burnt on beside them. At midnight there was a cry that the Bridegroom was at hand, and they rose up quickly to meet him. And because their lamps had been long alight they needed fresh oil. And so the five who had their store of oil with them, quickly filled their lamps and were ready. But the other five who had none, begged for a share: "Give us some of your oil," they implored, "for our lamps are going out." But the wise ones said that they could not give of their oil because there was not enough, and while the others went away to buy the Bridegroom came, and

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the procession, made brighter by the lamps of the five wise Maidens, passed on its way into the Bride's house, and the doors were closed behind it.

The five foolish Maidens bought oil and filled their lamps and lighted them and still hoped to be in time. Inside the house the Feast had begun; they could hear the music and the happy voices, and through the chinks of the great doors they could see the bright light that filled the hall within. But it was now too late for them, the doors were shut and they must stay outside, and though they begged that they might be let in, as they had not been in the procession the Bridegroom said he knew them not.

You will remember that I said last week that Jesus taught by means of stories. In all of them the people had two ways, from which they might choose, set before them—a way that was good and noble and a

way that was base and selfish, and these stories were told to help them in their choice.

At times he spoke with great plainness and said many things difficult for us to understand; but his words were for the healing of people in great trouble—in sickness, sin, and death, and ever since he lived in the world the words of Jesus have brought untold comfort to many who, without them, would have sunk under their griefs. They have consoled the old and lonely and lightened their last days; they have made strong the despairing, and happy those who have been ill-treated or neglected; and they have given such mysterious courage to the persecuted that, in the name of Jesus, men and women have suffered torture and death with joy, being upheld by the power of those words and that life.

Now as Jesus spoke to *all* the world —

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not only to his twelve apostles and his disciples, or even only to the people of Judea, but to all the vast number of human beings who were born after him, and who have been living and dying in it ever since, for all these hundreds and hundreds of years, his words were for all time and all people, and that is why his teaching is sometimes difficult to understand if we apply it to one age only. I do hope you will understand a little even now, and more and more as you grow older.

There was one short story told by Jesus that I think you would like to hear — of a man who spent his life searching for pearls. And he could never find one round enough, or of pure enough colour, to satisfy himself, till one day he heard of a pearl that was larger and more lovely than any he had ever seen, but the price was far more than he could give. Therefore he sold everything he had in the world that he

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might buy that one beautiful pearl, and, having it, wished for nothing else.

Jesus many times said, when he told these stories, that the things he was speaking about were like the "Kingdom of Heaven." He said this great and rare pearl was like the "Kingdom of Heaven," and the story of the ten Maidens was like the "Kingdom of Heaven," and he said the same of many other stories that he told the people.

I think he wanted everyone to understand and to feel that the things that are really good and best in the world make a little kingdom all to themselves, and that of that Kingdom, unseen and but little thought of, Jesus is the King, and to be an inmate of that King's land, to belong to it, is above all other things holy and beautiful.

Jesus did not desire to rule over any country upon earth; he chose only to be

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King of this Spiritual Kingdom that no eye could see or hand could touch.

And the people who can belong to this land, and who are to be the citizens of it, must love it more than all else in the world, even more than life itself, just as the anxious merchant gave up all to obtain that one lovely pearl, and they are to help to make it bright and beautiful as the Maidens with their shining lamps at the bridal feast.

And the kind of people who are to dwell in that wonderful, invisible country are those who follow their Lord whithersoever he leads them, and like him are humble, loving, and true.

These can live for ever in the peace of that mysterious, golden land, where they find rest and joy unutterable.

But to people to whom it is not dear it seems all misty and far away and impossible, and they do not understand its mean-

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ing or believe that there can be such a Kingdom and such a King.

In one of the stories of Jesus, when he was telling about this Kingdom and describing it, he said it was as if a tiny seed were put into the ground, which grew and flourished until it came in time to be a great tree, so tall and strong and spreading that all the birds took shelter in it from the heat of the sun, and found refuge there in times of storm. You will see, I think, what was meant by this.

It was as if someone, wishing to follow Jesus humbly and meekly, had, by his love for him, entered into that consecrated Land. And dwelling long there had become so filled with love, so strong to do good, so active in work that meant help for others, so true and trustworthy, that all who knew him loved him and believed in him, and, like the birds in the great tree, rested in him and were protected by him.

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Such is the power of those who live always in that Kingdom.

It would fill quite a big book if I tried to tell you half the lovely stories Jesus told. There were stories of the beautiful things the world is so full of, and that we see every day of our lives and often do not heed. As he and his disciples walked through the pleasant country he thought of stories in which the wheat was used as an example, and as for the sheep he himself was the good shepherd and led his people like sheep into pleasant pastures.

All the things that they could not help thinking of some day or other he told them stories about, that they might be reminded by them of what he wanted them to love most and to count most dear. So that when they worked or eat, when they married or built houses or went to law, or were engaged in the hundred and one things that go to fill a man's life,

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they might still be remembering his teaching. Perhaps when he had left them and they saw him no more, and no longer heard his voice ; when his days of tender service to the sick were over, these stories of his were remembered and many who had followed him must have wished that they had listened more carefully and loved him more truly. Some of them we know did listen very earnestly, and recollected them so well that we have them written down for us all to read now, though they were told so many, many hundreds of years ago.

HIS WAYS WITH
CHILDREN

HIS WAYS WITH CHILDREN

THERE were many children among those who followed Jesus, for he loved them dearly and understood them well. He carried them often in his arms, and many a time he stood by their little beds when they were ill, and had healed them. And tenderly he blessed them when they came to him, and though he was so great and wonderful, yet he never made them feel afraid to climb his knee or take his hand. In his love and strength they felt at home and safe.

There was a little girl I will tell you of who was once very ill, so ill that every one thought she must die. But her father, a ruler, whose name was Jairus, could not bear to give up all hope, for he dearly loved her. In his distress he thought of

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Jesus, for Jairus was a man of simple faith, and he felt sure that Jesus would save his little child's life.

He found Jesus by the sea-shore, for he had just crossed the lake. And when Jairus saw him he threw himself down on the sands at his feet, and told him how ill his little girl was, and how he had come to him, hoping and believing that he would save her.

And Jesus was sorry for this father whose love for his little daughter was so strong, and he set out at once to walk to the Ruler's house. But the people on all sides of him began to press forward and to gather closer round him, anxious to know where he was going and what new wonder was to be seen. And amongst them was a poor woman who had been ill for many years; she was afraid to speak to him, but she thought within herself, "If I do but touch him I shall



SIMEON AND THE INFANT CHRIST. (FRA BARTOLOMMEO)

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be made well," so she contrived to get through the crowd till she was near Jesus, and as soon as she succeeded in touching him she felt herself healed. But Jesus, though Jairus was close at his side and the eager people were all round him, knew what had happened, and asked: "Who touched me?" Peter thought that a strange question, seeing that so many were there; but the woman who had been healed understood that he meant "Who has been healed by me?" and she came forward trembling and confessed, and Jesus looked upon her so kindly and pitifully, as a parent might look upon an unhappy child, and called her "daughter," and praised her great faith, and sent her away in peace.

But this miracle and the crowding of the people hindered him and made progress to the house of Jairus very slow, — so slow, in fact, that before it was reached

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his servants came to Jairus to tell him that there was no need now to trouble the "Master;" it was too late, the child was dead. Jesus heard these words, but still spoke of hope to the poor father, who, though greatly distressed, clung to his belief in Jesus.

There inside the house the little girl lay still and white. Friends and neighbours had already been called in to begin the sad preparations for the burial. Into the midst of their loud weeping and wailing came Jairus the father and Jesus. Those in this house of mourning, who were so busy about the funeral ceremonies, were much surprised at the coming of Jesus, for they thought it now too late, and, knowing nothing of his great powers, said so. Jesus did not heed these clamouring people, but when he went into the room where the little girl lay dead he would not allow anyone to enter with him,

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except the child's father and mother and one or two of his own disciples who were always by his side.

And in that quiet room, anxiously watched by the father and mother, Jesus went up to the bed where the little girl lay, so still and cold.

And he spoke to her, and his voice reached her soul, and her soul obeyed that loving call, and she woke from her death sleep and came back to life. And the happy parents had their own dear child once more to hold and love, and in their hearts they rejoiced, devoutly thanking God in awe and amazement.

This little girl was the daughter of a rich man who was great and powerful.

But there was another little girl healed by Jesus who belonged to a people that the Jews despised. When this poor child was ill the mother in the agony of her grief sought out Jesus. But when she

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found him his followers would have sent her away, thinking her not fit to draw near to him. But she would not be driven off; her mother's heart was full of passionate sorrow, for her child was ill with a very terrible disease which affected her mind as well as her body. Jesus heard her cry for mercy and told his disciples that it was to help those who were poor and lost that he had come into the world; then turning to her he said that her love and faith had won for her that day all she most longed for; her child was saved.

Home she went with a glad heart, there to find how true were the words of Jesus and how great was his power, for her little girl was completely restored both in mind and in body.

There was a boy, too, whom Jesus cured, who was both deaf and dumb and at times tormented by an evil spirit so

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that his father was in despair about him. He had heard of the miracles done by Jesus, and taking his boy with him sought for him to implore his help. At the foot of a high hill he found some of the disciples and a great crowd of people waiting for Jesus, who with Peter, James, and John was on the heights. The boy's father in his eagerness besought the disciples to heal his son. But because their faith was weak they could not. As soon as Jesus had descended the hill the father hastened to tell him of his son and that the disciples could not help him, and in his agony prayed Jesus to heal the child, saying, "If thou canst."

Jesus looked at the father and repeated the words "If thou canst," and at the sound of that voice a new and solemn feeling came over the father and he knew himself to be in the presence of one who was able to save.

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The pure, strong feeling of Jesus overcame his doubt and weakness and his heart changed within him.

At once Jesus raised the suffering boy ; with a word drove out the tormenting spirit and healed him perfectly so that he could both hear and speak.

The disciples were so awed by the miracles done by Jesus that in their desire to show him the utmost reverence they would sometimes try to keep him apart, thinking him too holy to mix with common folk. And when mothers brought their little children to him to share his love the disciples would have sent them away, thinking that the coming of the children would hinder and interrupt him while he was teaching. But instead of hindering they helped him, for he wanted the children near him and would take the little ones from their mothers' arms and hold them in his own, loving them tenderly.

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He told those around him that he wished them all to be as children — simple, humble, obedient, trusting — and he said, too, that if they desired to belong to that Spiritual Kingdom of which he had so often spoken to them, they must first become like little children. For if they were not trusting and humble the gates of that Kingdom would not open to them. As children trust their fathers and mothers, so must they trust God, for there are many things in their little world that children do not understand, and they are so helpless that they have to trust to grown-up people to protect them from hurt and harm.

There is the Darkness, you know. Some children wish it would not come just when they are in bed and everybody else is far away down below, and upstairs it is all so quiet. They would rather that it came some other time. They do not understand

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the Darkness, so they ask grown-up people to explain it to them, and to sit by them and talk to them when it is there, or to give them a little light or to leave the door open, till by-and-bye, as they grow older, they find out that it is best that the Darkness should come when they are tired and the day's work is over, for people sleep better in the Darkness, and find it resting; or, if they do not sleep, through the window they see the stars — the beautiful bright lamps that God has set in the sky. To grown-up people comes Darkness of another sort, when they are sorry for their sins and first want to enter the Kingdom of Christ that I told you of; and, like the other things connected with that strange Land, this Darkness can only be felt. But it brings with it pain and dismay.

And Jesus taught people that if they would feel about that Darkness as the



“SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME.” (BIDA.)

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children do about theirs at bed-time; if they would trust God about it though they did not understand it; if they took it in the children's way, and asked for little lights and open doors, and listened for helpful words, they, too, would gradually find out that it was a beautiful and resting Darkness with stars in it. And if they found out that, they would have learnt a very great deal.

And Jesus wished everyone to be very tender and kind to children, and not to hurt their feelings, and, above all, not to teach them wrongly or ever to lead them astray; and some of the sternest words he ever spoke were against those who wronged little children, so deeply did he care for and love them.

SOME OF THE THINGS JESUS
TAUGHT THE PEOPLE

SOME OF THE THINGS JESUS TAUGHT THE PEOPLE

YOU know some of the stories that Jesus told the people, and that he constantly healed the sick. But sometimes, besides teaching them in these two ways, he spoke to them quite plainly of those things that would help to make them all through life better men and women ; and would carry them at last without fear through the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

He had a Message from God to the world, and he chose many ways of delivering it, so that none need miss receiving it, at least in part. But his own perfect life, lived in such sweetness, strength, and spotlessness, was the best lesson of all, for never before or since has there been any life so pure and holy as his.

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But I want you to know something, even if only a little, of what Jesus said to the people, although you may not understand very much, yet what you can understand will guide you in your little life now, and will help you greatly as you grow older and depend less on other people.

Jesus spoke very often of the Invisible Kingdom I have already told you something about, and of how it was *his* Kingdom, and he wanted no other honour than to be King of that Kingdom.

He told them what kind of people he would have them be if they would become his faithful followers.

He said that it did not so much matter what their outward life was — whether they were rich or of noble birth, or were poor working people. But that it was of very great importance how they felt about their position in life. It did matter if the

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rich looked down upon other people in scorn and were proud. It mattered, because as we feel, so we think, and so we act. And therefore it makes it so necessary to have right and true feelings, for if they are good our thoughts and actions are true and right also.

If our hearts are filled with love and we ourselves are humble, then we shall be a little like Jesus and nearer to God, and nearness to God means happiness — the greatest happiness possible.

And again, if we are at all like Jesus, we shall be full of kindness to everybody, and we shall kindly serve our fellow-creatures because we love them.

And Jesus told the people that the more they gave the more they would have, for that that was one of the rules of his Spiritual Kingdom.

The people who dwell in that Kingdom follow God with a single wish, and by

The B E L O V E D S O N

their pure thoughts grow to know much about its blessedness, and tell many wonderful and delightful stories of its pleasantness and peace, and of the strange and beautiful things they have seen there, which lift the soul and perfect it; stories that it would rejoice you to hear, and that would make you long to enter that Land.

And Jesus taught the people never, never to pretend to be what they were not. People who pretend to be good, but have bad hearts, want everyone to know what money they give away, and what poor they visit, and what prayers they say, and they expect and require much praise for these things. Jesus said we should wish to do everything for God, and not that men should commend us, so that it is only important that God should know our feelings and hear our prayers and see what we give away or do for others.

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Now the priests and teachers of that day liked show and the praise of men. Vain, careful of their dignity, and demanding great respect, their chief thoughts were of the ceremonies of their religion and the old ways and customs of their forefathers. They desired admiration and flattery, but they took no pains to teach the ignorant and lowly, nor did they care for the poor or try to make the world better or brighter. These teachers and priests made Jesus feel very indignant, for besides being wrong in their own hearts and lives, they led the people astray and kept them in darkness, far from God and His Light.

And Jesus said—these proud and ignorant teachers were like the blind leading the blind and both falling into a ditch. As none of them knew the way to God's Kingdom, how could they take others there? They would all—teachers

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and taught — lose their way and stumble and fall as blind men.

And he told them that those who were content to have nothing in this world had for their own the Kingdom of Heaven, and that those whose lives were meek and gentle won their way on earth. That the people who were made sad by sin and by the sorrow of the world were those whom God Himself comforted. That the longing to be better and holier was a noble feeling and would be fully satisfied.

That to everyone who showed kindness and mercy, kindness and mercy would be shown. That those would come nearest to God whose hearts were pure and simple, and that they who made peace wherever they went were God's own children.

And I must tell you just a very little of what Jesus taught about Death. Be-

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cause though Death is such a very solemn and awful subject, and we do not speak much about it lest it should make us all too sad, yet it comes into the homes of us all, and even children know what it is to say a long good-bye to fathers and mothers and little brothers and sisters.

It is indeed a long, long good-bye that we have to say when Death steals into the house. And good-byes are very sad, and we like children to be glad and gay all the day long. But the good-byes we have to say when Death comes are very like the Darkness at bed-time. Death seems so dreadful because we do not understand it, but when we do understand it, as Jesus did, then we shall no longer fear it. Jesus had perfect trust in his Father's Love and Power, and knew that He cared for all His children, so he could not fear Death. To him Death was only a change. The dear ones taken away,

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who used to live with us and be so near, have only undergone a change. They cannot come back to us to stay, for they could not again live our life or do the things that we do, or have the same thoughts, because of this great change in them.

You would not expect a butterfly ever again to go and live with caterpillars and crawl slowly along by them and never, never use its wings, even though you knew that once upon a time the butterfly was a caterpillar, and was quite happy in only crawling and creeping.

So with those we call our Dead. They must now use their wings and be true to their new changed life; and, therefore, we cannot talk about them or think about them as doing the same things we do, for in their changed life all is new and different from their old home-life on earth.

And what that new life is — we cannot say. We cannot even imagine it. Many

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people try very hard, and fancy all sorts of things about that change and the new life away from here, but all that we really know for certain is that in the new life we shall be "as Angels in Heaven," because Jesus told us that one thing about it. And we have this comfort, too, that Death is not really a thing to be afraid of, because Jesus taught that there are things much greater and stronger than Death: the Love of God and the Power of God, and that, therefore, all must be well.

So we can console ourselves by thinking of our Dead as Angels, living the active, bright, joyous life of Angels, serving man and glad in such service, evermore dwelling in the splendour of God's Light and in the Satisfaction of His Love.

You remember, do you not, that at the baptism of Jesus before he began his work as a Teacher, God spoke to him in the presence of many and called him His

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“Beloved Son!” So now before the end of his life, when his work was nearly finished, God again spoke to him from Heaven, calling him by the same beautiful name.

I will tell you about it. One day Jesus and three of his apostles, wishing to be alone together, climbed up a mountain side to a lonely spot where they were by themselves. Suddenly, while they were there, Jesus became wrapped in a radiant light that streamed down from Heaven upon him and made a glory all around. And as he stood all white and shining, on each side of him appeared another form, not earthly at all, but bright from God’s home, and they talked together. The apostles, who were with Jesus, gazed through the brilliant light in amazement and in fear; and Peter was so moved by the presence of the Holy three, that he longed that they should all remain there,

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and, for a time, be dwellers on that hill. But, even as he spoke, a cloud came over the brightness; the light grew misty and dim, and the Voice of God the Father was heard telling the apostles to listen well to the words spoken by Jesus, for that he was the "Beloved Son."

And then all was still, and Jesus and his three disciples were once more alone on the mountain side.

But you must not suppose that every one who heard and knew about Jesus loved him and became his disciple. There were many who were full of wrath at his teaching, and some of the most important people were exceedingly jealous of his power. The old Teachers were angry that he drew the people after him away from them and their teaching, and many things Jesus did and said gave them great offence.

For they were so tied and bound by

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the old ways of doing things, and so blinded by ancient habit, that they could not see what was Beautiful and True. And they hated Jesus and wished to kill him because their own hearts were evil and he was good. So at last their one wish was for his death, and you will hear what they did to bring it about.

THE LAST DAYS
OF JESUS

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THE LAST DAYS OF JESUS

JESUS had long been aware of the gathering hatred of the Chief Priests and Rulers of the people, and had often told his disciples that the time would come when they would get him into their power and kill him. But his disciples could not believe that such a thing was possible. They knew that he spent all his life for others: how, then, they thought, could anyone wish for his death? At times they even imagined that his great power in healing must make him famous, and bring him great honour, and that the day would come when they would share that honour and be great too.

But Jesus told them that he would never be honoured in his lifetime; that

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this life of service, hardship, and poverty was his own choice, and that he had chosen it even though he knew it would lead to suffering and to death.

There was one among his apostles who was bitterly disappointed in him. He had hoped and expected that the marvellous powers possessed by Jesus would be a means by which he himself could become great. He had watched the wonderful effect of his look and touch upon people; he had noticed that his presence and words inspired many; and he knew that the poor loved him. So he thought, if Jesus would but use his great influence over others to gain profit and advantage for himself and his twelve apostles, so that they became rich and prosperous, that then they would be paid for the life of hardship that they had led with him. But when Jesus again and again explained to them that those who followed him and

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learnt of him must not care for wealth or wish for high position, then, though the eleven other apostles loved him just as dearly and stayed with him in faith and loyalty, this faithless one, whose name was Judas, turned against him. For he felt it keenly that no worldly gain would come to him by giving up all to share the life of Jesus, and so he became the enemy of Jesus and hated him, for he loved gold more than God, and for money sold his Lord.

But still he said nothing and tried to deceive Jesus and the other apostles by remaining with them and seeming to be the same, until one day he was made so angry that he could no longer disguise his real feelings.

Jesus was invited with his disciples to the house of a friend named Lazarus, where a little feast was made in his honour. Lazarus had been raised from the

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dead by Jesus, so the hearts of that little family were full of love and gratitude. Lazarus had two sisters, Martha and Mary. During the feast Martha served, but Mary stayed away till the end. Then she came in, bringing as a gift to Jesus, to show her love for him, a very precious and rare perfume used only by the rich and noble. And this perfume she poured over the feet of her Lord kneeling there. And with her long hair she wiped his feet, and all the house was filled with fragrance. Jesus knew of the great love in her heart and accepted the costly gift with tenderness and many kind words; but Judas complained of the waste, and said that such perfume should have been sold and the money given to the poor. But he said this, not because he cared for the poor but because he had charge of the money, and loved it. And from this time he began to plot and contrive to deliver

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Jesus his Master, at the first opportunity, into the hands of his enemies.

The time of year was close at hand when the people kept their principal Feast. Great preparations were always made for it, and during the days of the Feast there were many services in the Temple, which were attended by all good Jews in Jerusalem and also by many worshippers from the country. I daresay you will remember that Jesus used to come up from Nazareth to this Feast with Joseph and Mary when he was a boy, and all through his life he had kept this Festival.

Though he usually lived in the country, yet every spring he and his friends came to the city, and during the day lived the city life, walking out from the noise, confusion, and bustle when the night came on, to stay with friends in some peaceful little village.

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Jesus well knew that this Feast would be the last he would ever keep. It grieved his heart to think that anyone could hate his teaching, because he knew that he taught God's truth; and that they could hate the truth showed how far they had wandered from God, and nothing made Jesus sadder than knowing that God's children did not love His presence. For himself and his own safety he did not fear. He went to Jerusalem this year with the same high courage of former years, though he knew how the journey would end.

While the High Priests were growing every day more and more angry and more jealous, the people themselves, those who knew him and had followed him, believed in him more firmly than ever. When he set out for Jerusalem they went with him, and they turned his journey into the city into a triumphal entry. It was all very

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simple. Jesus rode on a meek ass, and by his side the people ran shouting and singing and waving great branches of palms in the air. They threw the fresh green boughs in front of his path, and even took off their garments and spread them on the road before him, to show that they loved and honoured him.

The Chief Priests and Rulers would have stopped the procession if they had not feared to rouse the people's anger, so they waited.

On entering Jerusalem Jesus went almost immediately to the Temple. The Temple was to him God's house. It had been built in old times by faithful Jews that the people might all together, and in one spot, offer to God their prayers, and for long, long years it had been to them a beloved and sacred building.

Here devout Jews had come to chant the Royal Psalms of David the King; here

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they had lifted up hands of supplication and bowed the head in bitter woe. Jesus thought such a sanctuary ought to be a holy, solemn place for quiet, peaceful thoughts or for secret tears of repentance.

But what did Jesus find when he entered this wonderful and beautiful Temple raised for God's Service and dedicated solemnly to Him by Kings and Priests ?

He found in it crowds indeed, but they had not come there to worship ; they were busy with their own affairs. Some were buying, some selling, some chattering about their bargains, the money passing from hand to hand, and a great trade was being done in the sale of doves and pigeons that were used for offerings during the approaching festival.

Jesus looked round on the noisy, chafing throng, and then sternly bade them go with their money and their wares, and even drove them out himself, till the House

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of his Father was left to those who loved Him and prayed to Him.

Instead of buyers and sellers there entered now the lame, whom he healed; the blind, to whom he gave sight; the poor, whom he taught. Little children sang their hymns there, and the great Temple was blessed and sanctified.

Still more furious grew the Chief Priests, and more determined to put an end to his teaching and his influence. But they were afraid of the people, and could do nothing openly, and now it was that Judas became of use to them.

And Judas, forgetting his apostleship, became a traitor to Jesus. For he bargained with his worst enemies, and offered for a price to give him quietly and without disturbance into the hands of those who hated him. Lest there should be resistance the Chief Priests were to help Judas with a body of armed servants,

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and that no mistake might be made, Judas, with a kiss, was to betray Jesus to them.

Jesus was now preparing to keep the Feast, as were all his friends and neighbours, and all the citizens of Jerusalem. He called his twelve apostles to him, the wicked Judas being among them, and told them what he wished them to do, and where their last Festival together was to be held. And a large upper room was made ready for them by a friend who was glad to serve Jesus by lending him his Guest Chamber.

Here, when it was evening, came Jesus and his twelve apostles. And when they were all together Jesus kneeling on the ground washed the feet of each. Peter wished to refuse this act of tender service, but his Lord would not be refused, so all were made pure and clean by that sweet washing. And Jesus washed the feet of

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Judas also, but the heart of Judas remained black.

And then they sat down to their simple meal, and with it there was bread and wine. And as they sat, sadly and solemnly round the table, Jesus told them that one of them — one of his own chosen twelve — was false to him. Then Judas kept very still and waited for the others to speak.

But the others were so sorrowful and so amazed that they knew not what to say. Could it be that in their hearts they were false to Jesus, their dear Lord? Peter asked, trembling: Is it I? — and so did John and James and each of them. And when they had all spoken Judas, too, said: “Lord, is it I?”

Then John, who was leaning on his beloved Master’s breast, said: “Lord, who is it?” and Jesus answered by a sign that it was Judas. And to Judas he

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turned, and, looking at him, told him he had better do what he had to do quickly. Judas rose and without explanation or excuse rushed from the room and down the stairs and out into the dark night—away from Jesus; away from his old friends; away from light and love; away alone with his own dark unrepentant soul!

In the room upstairs the little Feast went on without him, the eleven apostles listening to every word of Jesus, and watching each look.

His last hour was drawing near, a feeling of awe fell upon the little company. Soon his flesh would be hurt, his blood would be spilt. All these three years that he had been living amongst them he had known that what he had to give us could only be given at the cost of his life. The gift he gave was the example for ever of a Man's life spent perfectly, in absolute

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and unfaltering love — a love that healed and blest and saved.

And at the end of this last sad meal Jesus asked his dear friends and followers always to the end of all time to meet together and to keep this holy supper for his sake. And as he offered them bread to eat, and wine to drink, he spoke to them mysterious and solemn words about his body given for them, and his blood shed for them ; showing to them that at the Sacramental Feast all who eat of the bread and drink of the wine share in the life of Jesus Christ.

And that was the end of the holy Service and of the little Feast, and after they had sung a hymn Jesus and his apostles went out together into the darkness of the night, and climbing a neighbouring hill they rested awhile.

Then Jesus took the three most dear to him — Peter, James, and John — and

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went higher up the hill to a quiet garden, and there leaving them he went a short distance off by himself that he might be quite alone with God in his last struggle with the powers of evil.

What strong and noble souls suffer in the most awful moments of their lives we can but dimly understand. We know that so great and deadly was the agony of Jesus in this fearful hour, that, before the victory, drops of blood fell from his brow. It came to an end at last — this strange and fearful strife. Jesus won and was ready to endure to the end, and an Angel from God came to him with a message of comfort and peace.

Immediately on his return to his disciples, Judas, with his band of armed servants, appeared, for this was the time and place he had chosen for the betrayal of his Lord. Followed by a large number of people, all eager to see what



KISS OF JUDAS. (GRIGOR)

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would happen, Judas went up to Jesus and gave him the fatal kiss. And Jesus said to him: "Friend, do that for which thou art come." Then those armed men surrounded Jesus and took him.

And as he was led away a sudden fear seized his disciples, and in the darkness of the night they deserted him and fled away. They were so few in number, and without Jesus they felt so helpless, that they became alarmed lest they also should be taken prisoners and be tried for their lives.

Afterwards, when it fell to them to carry on the work Jesus had left them to do, they became as brave as lions, and faced every difficulty and all kinds of suffering in a way worthy of their Master Christ. But that was later, when they had learnt more perfectly the meaning of his holy life and painful death.

Only a short time before they forsook

him they had all been saying to Jesus that nothing would ever persuade them to leave him, whatever might happen, and Peter especially was determined to be faithful to the end. But Jesus knew how great their temptation to desert him would be, and told them that they were promising too much. And in the hour of danger Peter, who promised most, three times denied that he knew Jesus or belonged to him, just as Jesus told him he would do.

For when his Master was made prisoner in the garden and led away, Peter sadly followed him at a distance to see what became of him, and, thinking himself unobserved, ventured to enter the hall to which Jesus was taken, and there during the night three times he was pointed out as a follower of Jesus, and each time he said positively that he was not; and the last time that he denied knowing him,

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Jesus, though he was being examined by the judge and was closely guarded, turned round and gave Peter one look of tender reproach. That one look was enough. Peter called to mind all his promises and boastings, and at the remembrance his heart almost broke with sorrow and remorse. He left the hall where Jesus was that he might be alone in his misery, and then he wept long and bitterly.

THE PAINFUL
DEATH HE DIED

THE PAINFUL DEATH HE DIED

WHEN the band of armed men had Jesus safely in their hands, they brought him to the house of the High Priest of the Jews. Here he would be examined in the morning by the Priest and other members of the Council, that they might find out if he had done any wrong, and what was the evidence against him. All that night Jesus had to wait in the High Priest's house, and the men who had brought him there, and who knew and cared nothing about his gentle life and teaching, spent the time in ill-treating him. They had heard that the people spoke of him as a prophet. A prophet is one who has the gift of seeing the meanings of things

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very readily, and who is so wise that by his knowledge he can tell what is going to happen before it comes to pass. And so the people who loved Jesus called him "Prophet," finding him so wise and wishing to honour him. But these men in whose charge he was had no love for Jesus, and only called him "Prophet" to mock him. And to amuse themselves they blindfolded him, and, striking him, asked him to prophesy who it was who gave the cruel blow. And in many other ways they showed how they despised him.

So passed that dreadful night, and in the morning the Court assembled, and the High Priest and all his Council were ready to try him. But no evil could be found in Jesus. The evil was in the hearts of those who wished for his death.

He had led the people to love the truth, and for this the false-hearted priests,

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whom the truth shamed, hated him with a fierce hatred, and longed for their revenge.

As they were unable to find anything against him, they persuaded some persons to declare in the Court of Justice before the High Priest that he had said things that he had never said; but the witnesses contradicted one another so that their evidence was worthless.

And they tried, by altering words that he had used, to give them an entirely different meaning; and they asked him many questions which they thought he could not answer without angering his judges.

Then they dragged him to another Court and brought him before the Governor of the city, whose name was Pilate. Pilate was a Roman, and had command over the Jews in the city. Jesus was brought into his palace, and here he

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was examined by Pilate, who was surrounded by his Roman soldiers. Pilate was not much interested in the matter; he thought that it was only some dispute connected with the religion of the Jews. But after he had spoken to Jesus, and observed how noble and calm he was in the midst of the excited priests, who were half mad with anger, he said plainly that he could find no fault at all in him. Then the Chief Priests grew more furious, for they began to be afraid that Jesus would escape them, so they told Pilate that it would not be safe to let Jesus go back amongst the people, for he might stir them up to rebellion.

Still Pilate could find nothing against Jesus. There was a custom amongst the Jews by which freedom was given to one prisoner during the yearly Feast, Pilate therefore suggested that the prisoner to be freed this year should be Jesus; but

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to that the Chief Priests would not agree. They urged and persuaded the people, using every argument they could think of, to ask for the freedom not of Jesus — who had spent his life in doing good to the people — but of a robber; named Barabbas, who was then in prison for his crimes. And the crowd who had come to the court to watch proceedings listened to the Chief Priests and clamoured for the death of the Lord Jesus, and the release of Barabbas the robber. So Barabbas was set at liberty and the accusers of Jesus triumphed.

Pilate then, though he believed Jesus to be innocent, sent him to be tried at the court of Herod, a Jew, who had power in Galilee, the country where Jesus had lived. Herod, like all his countrymen and women, had come to Jerusalem to take part in the Feast, and was much pleased that Pilate had sent

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Jesus to him, for he had long wanted to see him and witness some of the wonderful acts that he had heard so much about in Galilee. These two rulers, Herod the Jew and Pilate the Roman, had been at enmity one with another, but they became reconciled when Pilate sent Jesus to be tried anew by Herod. When Jesus was brought into the presence of Herod, Herod at once desired him to perform some miracle for his pleasure. But the miracles of Jesus were not done for the amusement or surprise of the idle or curious, so, faithful to his divine Mission, he refused. This refusal of Jesus made Herod exceedingly angry, so angry that, being wicked, he became at once cruel.

He knew how the people adored Jesus, and how they looked upon him as a great teacher. He knew, too, in a confused way, that Jesus had often spoken to them of a Spiritual Kingdom, and of himself as

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a Spiritual King, so to hurt and pain him, and to hold him up to the contempt of the people, he and his brutal soldiers turned his Kingdom into a mockery and made a jest of his Kingship. They stripped him of his clothes and dressed him in gorgeous purple and scarlet, to imitate the state of a great earthly king. And as kings are crowned with diadems of gold and gems, so should this divine King of Sorrows wear a crown, and the soldiers made him one of thorns and pressed it on his head till it sharply pierced his forehead and the blood flowed; yet by his patience and meekness he showed them that he was indeed a king.

Then, as kings bear sceptres in their hands to mark their rule and command, these rude men, at Herod's bidding, put a long reed in that hand so often stretched out to bless, as a further token of the royalty they held in such scorn.

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And now, crowned with his crown of thorns and bearing his reed sceptre, Jesus, the King, stood before them and they shouted loudly in their sport, and mocking him in derision and contempt they bowed their heads and knelt before him. But they could wring from Jesus no sound or look of fear; yet his courage only made them more brutal and savage, for, wearying of their wicked pastime, they began to strike him on the head and to spit upon him, and to heap insults upon him, till, finally, robed still in royal scarlet and purple, Herod sent him back to Pilate.

It makes one weep to think of the sweet and holy Jesus, so white and good, set in the midst of those hard, cruel men, ready to torture him even to death.

Pilate, indeed, could not make up his mind what to do with Jesus, but when

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the people, at the bidding of their chief priests, shouted out "Crucify him! Crucify him!" he gave way to them and delivered him into their hands, though he "found no fault with him." Pilate said if the people insisted on his death the people must take the blame; he himself washed his hands of the guilt. And so eager were the people for the death of Jesus Christ, that they took the guilt upon themselves at once. And he was condemned to death, and after he had been cruelly beaten he was led away to be crucified.

Crucifixion was the Roman way of putting to death persons who had committed crimes. It was a slow and terrible death, for the criminal was hung on a cross of wood and left there till, worn out by exposure, fever, and pain, life ebbed away.

This was the death that Jesus, the

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gentle Son of God, who had come into the world to heal and save his fellow-men, was to die at their hands.

He was to be crucified on a hill called Calvary, outside the city walls. He was to have carried his cross there himself, but he had suffered so much that he had not strength to bear so heavy a load, and he sank under the burden of it. It was then given to a passing stranger, named Simon.

Many, many people went with Jesus on that last sad journey. The women who were his friends, and who through his life had loved him tenderly, followed him now, sobbing and sorrowing and longing to rescue him. He knew they were there, and forgetting his own sharp pain he turned towards them, bidding them not to weep for him but for themselves and their children.

When at last they came to the spot



CHRIST BEARING THE CROSS. (RAPHAEL.)

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where he was to die the soldiers took the cross, and Jesus was fastened to the wood by nails driven through his hands and through his feet, and the cross was lifted up high on the hill so that all could see the dying Lord. And to show how utterly he was despised, two thieves were crucified at the same time, one on each side of him. These men had been condemned to death on account of the many wrong things they had done, but Jesus, who hung between them, had "done nothing amiss."

And of these two thieves, one turned and mocked him, even from his cross, just as did the enemies all around him; but the other, in that dreadful hour when he was so near death, thought of his own wasted life, and longed for the sympathy and love of Jesus.

And in those last hours it seemed to the penitent thief that, after all, there

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was nothing so beautiful as goodness, and worth so much, or so hideous as evil, which costs so much. And he felt in his heart that Jesus was wholly good, and that he himself was wholly bad. In his new sorrow and distress of mind he turned to Jesus for help and comfort, and Jesus, looking upon him with tender pity, promised him the great opportunity he asked for in words that brought hope and peace to that desperate man.

And a multitude of people stood beneath the cross to gaze at Jesus dying. And the more to make a mock of his royalty, those who hated him wrote above his head, so that all could see it: "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." And because he thirsted they offered him vinegar to drink, and no reverence or pity was shown to the dying Christ.

As he hung so patiently on the cross, some shouted out cruel words of scorn

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and contempt, telling him to use now his wonderful powers and save himself, while the soldiers on guard beneath him quarrelled over the right of possessing his garments. And in the midst of these confusing cries and dreadful sounds, watched and stared at by all those cruel, upturned faces, Jesus, with his heart only full of love for them, prayed to his Father, saying: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

And now came the most awful moment in his life. He was called upon to endure a suffering worse than the insults, the mockings, the weakness; worse than the great bodily agony he was bearing.

A darkness came over the land. A darkness came over his pure and holy soul. No eye could watch him now. Below, the muffled voices of the frightened people might still be heard, terrified at that strange, unnatural darkness. But

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though they were so near, and the thieves were hanging beside him, yet in that time of his greatest anguish Jesus was utterly alone. Alone—quite alone! For now alas! he felt that God his Father was no longer near him, that for some mysterious reason He was now beyond his reach, and that he was dying, lonely and forsaken.

This is very terrible to think of. Jesus, the world's Saviour and Light, dying deserted in a dark world.

It was a dreadful moment, and we cannot rightly understand the horror of it; it was, however, the last great pain that Jesus had to suffer.

As death drew nearer and nearer, the dark dread feeling passed away from his soul, and he was folded in the presence of God, and rejoiced in knowing once more that he was the "Beloved Son." In the strength given him by those Divine

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Words he had worked, and taught, and healed. In that strength he had suffered, and in that strength he died.

“Father,” in the darkness they heard him say, and they knew he was speaking alone to God, “into Thy Hands I commend my Spirit,” and so saying he passed away.

The weary, worn-out body still hung there on the cross for the people to gaze at curiously in the dim returning light, but the Spirit was in the care of God his Father, into whose Hands he had committed it as he died.

And at his death the earth shook, and many strange things happened; graves opened and rocks were split asunder. The watching people were filled with fear and knew not what to think. The very soldiers were amazed and felt the presence of a Great Power. The multitude, leaving the hill of Calvary now that all was

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over, returned to their own homes trembling and guilty, with new thoughts and feelings and with terror in their hearts.

What had happened they could not understand, but they were filled with wonder and dread. What had they wished for, what had they done? They had consented to the death of a righteous man, they had even watched him die, and now, too late, the knowledge came to them, and they felt "Truly this was the Son of God."

But stranger and more wonderful things were to happen yet, as you will hear.

Jesus was dead. His apostles and all who had loved and followed him were left to mourn him. They were, indeed, desolate. He had been to them Leader, Master, and dearest Friend, what comfort was there for them? How could they live now that he was gone!

HOW IN THE
END HE WON

HOW IN THE END HE WON

JESUS was buried in a garden belonging to a rich man named Joseph of Arimathea, not far from the hill where he was crucified. Joseph had loved him and been his friend secretly, but now that he was dead he went openly to Pilate and asked that the body might be taken down from the cross and given to him. Pilate consented, so, with the help of the faithful women, Jesus was laid tenderly to rest in a new tomb hewn out of a rock. He first saw the light of this earth in a country stable, and now his dead body lay among flowers and grass and trees and sweet out-door scents and sounds. All that love could do was done for him by his grieving friends who were obliged to leave the grave because the Sabbath

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was near. How sad must have been that Sabbath to his lonely apostles and friends! But, in the midst of their sorrow, the words Jesus had spoken to them comforted them. For he had told them that after his death he would rise again, and, though they did not understand what he meant by "rising again," yet their hearts were filled with hope. And, when the Sabbath was over, they returned to the tomb to wait and watch there.

The tomb was guarded by Roman soldiers placed there by Pilate, and a great stone was over the entrance. The first there were two of the women who had served him, both named Mary. When these two Maries reached the place where their dear Lord had been buried they saw that the stone which had been over the mouth of the grave had been rolled away, and on the stone was a mighty angel sent from God,

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blazing like lightning and shining in snow-white raiment. And the Maries trembled at the great brightness and knew not what to say. But the radiant messenger told them not to fear, saying that Jesus, who had been crucified, was no longer resting in the grave, but had risen from the dead and would be seen of them again.

Then the glad women made haste to tell the good news to the apostles, and on their way they met Jesus himself, walking in the garden. Jesus welcomed them, but they could not speak; they could only fall at his feet and worship him.

Their beloved Master then bade them go and tell his brethren that they had seen him and that he would meet them in Galilee.

The Maries hastened on with the glad message to the apostles, who received it with joy, and went to meet their Lord. He had said that they were to wait for

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him on a hill where they had often rested and prayed together.

And he came to them there, and his first words were: "Peace be unto you." These words of comfort gave them courage, and they no longer feared seeing one who had already passed through the gates of Death.

Then he told them what he wanted them to do to carry on his work of teaching and healing among their fellow-men. And the living presence of their risen Lord, whom they had seen so lately hanging dead upon the Cross, consoled them for everything, for they knew he was their own still, ready to be their Friend and Master for evermore.

And to many of his disciples he appeared in this way to help and cheer them before he ascended into Heaven. Once he came to them by the sea, and he taught them many things and gave

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them his parting commands, and said many farewell words.

He told them that they were to go forth without fear, trying to make people love God their Father, and their fellow-creatures who were their brothers, that many might become members of his Spiritual Kingdom, having peace in their hearts and ever serving Christ their Lord in deep humility. And he blessed them with his own great Peace — the Peace of God.

Jesus had now finished his human life, having completed the work given him by his Father to do. He was the Man of Sorrows no more; he had conquered death and had won the battle of life, and was now alive for evermore in God. There Jesus the Crucified would reign as Jesus the Crowned, the eternal Friend and Saviour of Man, and the sharer of his griefs.

It was in the country — where he had

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always loved to be — that he said farewell to them all. He led the way himself, and his disciples and friends followed him reverently and with loving devotion.

And when they were away from the noise of the city and had reached a quiet green retreat, once more, and for the last time, Jesus prayed to God for them all and blessed them, and as he was blessing them “he was parted from them” and they saw him no more, for a cloud hid him from their sight, and when it had passed away they were alone. The “Beloved Son” had gone home to his Father, never more to be seen on earth except in visions and in dreams.

His work on earth was done, but theirs was only just beginning. And as God had blessed him at his baptism, calling him the “Beloved Son,” so did Jesus give the apostles his loving blessing at his Ascension into Heaven.

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Jesus was gone! But they remained to remind the people of the words that Jesus had spoken; to tell of his acts of healing, and of all his tenderness and love to the poor and sick and sad.

And the apostles proved themselves faithful, and taught and suffered and even died for Jesus' sake; and it is through them — these dear friends of his, who were left behind when he died — that we know all the story of Jesus — of his life of simple service, of his death through treachery, of his rising from the grave, of his coming to them after his death, and of his passing into Heaven to live always with God. With God and yet with us, too, for he himself said:

“Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the End of the World.”





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