

## CHRISTMAS DAY.

"And the Old Grave perceived how winter was passing away; yet the graves had not settled which was the worthiest. So he spoke and said, "My friends, I have contrived a way whereby ye shall discover the most worthy. I will speak to the Archangel who comes hither this eve, and he shall decide for us; for, behold! is not this eve Christmas Eve, the eve of all eves, which angels and men keep together?" So the graves agreed to what the Old Grave said, and sang thus in honour of Christmas Eve:—"Sacred is the Eve of Christmas; sacred to the angels and to man. Already hath the holly been cut; the church is green with it. Wherefore hath the holly been cut? Wherefore is the church green? Because it is the eve of Christ's birth, when the world grew green again; for it was old with years and crime. But when Christ came, the ever-greens sprang up before him. Glory to the holly which grew up on that day! It is the same through all seasons! Its leaves are not sacred by the winter winds. They are prickly and bright. The beasts of the field touch them not. It grows in stormy places: its berries are round and red. Thick they cluster, that they may do honour to Christmas. They are revered by angels." When the graves had sung thus, they waited for the Archangel to come with his host: nor long did they wait, for presently, in the soft rays of the moon, with low melodies hovering about them, there came down angels in multitudes infinite, with their Archangel in the midst. Bright was their presence, though men saw it not: they filled the church-yard with peace."

We must omit the figurative dialogue between the Old Grave and the Archangel, who was called upon to settle the dispute, by pronouncing which was the most worthy grave.

"Behold where the first snow-drop shall spring up in the new year: that is the most worthy grave." For three days they looked, and saw naught; but on the fourth day, behold! there was a snow-drop on a lowly despised grave which lay in a corner, and was neglected by the other graves. No tombstone it had, and no tree by its side. So the graves were astonished among themselves, and said, "Why is the lowly grave exalted above us all? What hath it done that it should be so honored? Let us speak to it." So they asked of the despised grave; who answered and said,—"My friends, I cannot tell you this thing. Ask of the Angel of the Sabbath who lives among us all!" The Angel of the Sabbath answered, "Have ye forgotten the

Beggar's Grave which was crowned by angels when man had not crowned it? This is the Beggar's Grave. Much sorrow was in his life time, but he did not complain. He was deserted by the friends of his young days, but he remembered that he had a Friend who knew no change. His faith held fast in adversity. He knelt to say his prayers on the cold stone: silent in his affliction, silent before his Saviour. Therefore when he died, he was taken whither Lazarus went before him; and this his grave is honoured with a snow-drop rather than the other graves." Thus spoke the Angel of the Sabbath! whom the other graves answered, and said, "It is a just judgment. Let the Beggar's Grave be honoured from this time. The grave of *wealth* shall hide his head; the grave of *glory* shall boast no more. Our dispute is ended. Welcome, thou young snow-drop! White thou art as the virgin snow. Thou bringest pleasant tidings of the spring." So the graves gave honor to the Beggar's Grave, and it was exalted above all the graves from that time. And when the graves had given honour to the Beggar's Grave, they spoke to it and said, "Tell us what grave we must honour next to thee; and, for thy sake, we will honour it." And the beggar's grave answered, "No kin have I. I am a solitary grave. Let the Mother's Grave—the mother of the little maiden—be honoured next to me.

Also when the grandfather and granddaughter die, let their graves be honoured along with the Mother's Grave. What is so pleasant as a Christian family joined together in one hope under the same turf?" So the dispute of the graves was ended. And the little maid got well; and her brother came back from sea; and Spring came again, with its angels; and flowers sprang up anew in the church-yard. But of all the graves there, no grave was so fair as the Beggar's Grave; for with the sweetest of wild-flowers the angels planted it about. They guarded it by day and night, and moistened it with early dew."

Such is a small specimen of this sweet little book. We hail it as an omen that, though the minds of children are crammed with "Useful Knowledge," the imagination-starving system is about to give place to one permitting more generous nurture. This juvenile volume, we ought to say, is very prettily embellished.

[The reader will perceive that the tenor of the last remark is not such as to throw a slur upon the early instruction of children in that which is useful—but is rather a denouncement of that system which undoubtedly tends to cramp the tender mind of infancy.]