

The priest raised his eyes to heaven. They were full of tears.

"Yes," he said, "you have deserved it well—the bread of angels. I will give you the God for whom you have given your life."

He opened the ciborium and laid the Sacred Host upon the tongue of the dying boy. He closed his lips softly with a smile of gratitude. They heard the murmur of a prayer, while his face shone with a light not of earth.

"Come," said the vicar, "let us hasten back to Rigny, that his parents may see him once more. They are in great grief."

The boat floated out of the chapel into the broad stream that had once been the main street of Graverolls. The sun shone out radiantly; Pierre opened his eyes to its soft, ineffable rays. The priest lifted the boy's head to his knee.

"I feel so happy now, mon Père," he murmured, with a sweet smile and a look of gratitude.

That night at Rigny in the midst of his family, the priest kneeling at his bedside, the boy opened his eyes for the last time.

The mother sobbed aloud. Pierre felt for her hand and laid his own upon it; then, closing his eyes he heaved a faint sigh, and his pure soul took his flight to heaven—one more innocent hostage for his unhappy country.
—*Ave Maria.*

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