

He was going to his Father, and his Saviour was with him. The Angels of God would sing for joy. What a home-coming! His funeral bell was truly a 'home-chime.'

What *we* saw was only a poor suffering body; what the *Angels* saw was a ransomed

soul made white in the blood of the Lamb—an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ, going home to receive his inheritance. He was happy in the expectation of that joy, but what must the reality be to him now! Ah, none of us can realise that bliss. 'For ever with his Lord!'

Carlotta.

HAVE you ever been in Italy? Can you realise that there are men and women there—working men and working women, poor and rich, great and humble, good and bad, just as there are in any part of our own country? Lives may be somewhat different, but hearts are the same.

Here are two gentlemen walking leisurely home from their offices in a great Italian city. They do not look very unlike Englishmen—a little darker in hair and complexion, a little brighter in dress and livelier in manner, but after that, much like two well-dressed men in London streets.

What are they saying to each other? They look very earnest. Let us listen.

'What is the use of religion?' says the one whom his friend calls Antonio; 'I would certainly like to have your faith, old fellow, it seems to make you so comfortable. But there! I haven't got it; I have never been able to believe that which you believe, and when I begin to think of such things, I only involve myself in a sea of doubts, so I just let things be. I say the prayers my mother taught me as a child from force of habit, and there it all ends. What matter? God won't punish a man for not being able to believe.'

Francis, a fine broad-shouldered man of middle age, turned a serious face towards his friend. He loved Antonio; it was a grief to him that with the honest, pleasant fellow, he could only speak happily of the things of this life.

'Look here, Antonio,' he began, 'you were born with a good head and fair abilities—I

should say God gave you them; but never mind that, you weren't born a fool, were you? Well, then, you ought to use your intellect for the best purposes, and that seems to be the seeking out the things of religion. Not sitting down calmly saying, I can't believe, and so I won't try, and yet God mustn't blame me. That is sheer wilful laziness. Of course it will be toil and labour to read, and compare, and search into the foundations of the faith, but you should do it because of the enormous importance of the matter.'

'Aye, that life after death is a poser,' said Antonio, with a sigh. 'As I said before, I would willingly have your religion, Francis, but after thirty years of unbelief and indifference, it will take a miracle to make a Christian of me. Why, it's coming on to rain, heavily too; here is a restaurant—shall we step in and have something while the shower lasts?'

While Antonio ran through the list of dishes Francis walked to the window. He seemed to be looking at the rain-washed street, but his thoughts had gone higher than earth, right up to heaven.

'O Lord,' they said, 'this my friend needs Thee, needs Thy help. Teach him that no trouble is too great to gain faith. I do not ask a miracle of Thee for his sake; but, if it seems good to Thee, show Thyself to him now in this our common life, and call him to Thy faith and fear.'

Often and often had Francis sent up such short prayers to heaven for his friend Antonio; they had seemed hitherto to have been in vain, but he remembered that his Blessed