

the halos of saints ; and doubtless, too, the end, the very end, of all these pains and torments that afflicted his poor little body.

II

Christmas drew near, with its cluster of feast and its abundant family joy. School-children returned home to be clasped in their mothers' arms ; and already great Christmas-trees were being trimmed and decked with bright-colored ribands and fruits and toys. But who thought of Richard ? Patience, little sufferer ; the Babe of Bethlehem was born for you as well as for the happy ones of earth, and He will provide you with Christmas gift.

It was the afternoon before the great festival. Sister Bridget, on a chance mission of charity, went to a tenement building ; and, her mission over, was preparing to descend the rickety stairway, when she heard a plaintive voice exclaiming : " O mother ! won't you shut the door ? I'm *so* cold ! " But the woman, to whom the appeal was made, staggered by the Sister, leaving the door still open. Turning back, the Sister glanced into the miserable apartment, and recognized her favorite of the mission prostrate on the wretched mattress. Almost dying now was poor little Richard. But unexpected happiness gave him new life ; and, with a cry of joy as Sister Bridget knelt by his side, he raised his shrunken arms toward his friend.

Then, for the first time, he told of his long-protracted sufferings, and also of his interior consolations. When the mother returned, the religious protested that she would no longer abandon to such cruelty this poor young victim, and readily obtained permission to take him at once to a hospital of her order. Richard was received there as one sent by the Infant Jesus. How happy he was in the warm and comfortable bed, at the foot of a statue of our Blessed Lady, who seemed to gaze at him with a loving smile, and surrounded by the garlands of holly that decorated the walls !

The priest who had first opened to his eyes the horizon of heaven came to receive his last confidence. He listened to his candid avowals. He bitterly reproached himself with some impatience during his greatest suffering,