

An Angel's Visit.

BY MAUD GREGG, JUN.

WHAT did you say, one month to-day,
Since our darling took wings and flew far away?
Oh yes, you are right; one month last night
I held my own darling, so loving and bright,
And sang the old lullaby just in this spot—
"Rock-a-bye baby, on the tree-top."

I watched his sweet eyes grow heavy with sleep,
And then the dear lashes were kissing his cheek—
"When the wind blows the cradle will rock;"
But then mamma knew she might as well stop.
To the sweet land of Nod my baby had gone,
And dream-nymphs had finished my lullaby-song.

One month ago! It seems a long time
Since for the last time I sang the old rhyme,
And saw my own darling asleep on my arm,
And prayed to my Saviour to "keep him from harm."
My prayer may be answered? Perhaps it is so.
Our eyes are so dim, our perceptions so slow,
To discover God's plan when it crosses our own,
Is a lesson for sinners—aye, Christians—to learn.

My boy was at play the very next morn,
When a radiant angel came floating along;
She paused, and took note of his infantile grace—
She took a long look in his beautiful face.
Drawing still nearer, she called him by name,
Hovering yet closer she spoke it again.

He saw her at last, his play lost its charms,
He gave a glad cry, and reached up his arms;
He forgot "Muzzie dear" in the light of her eye,
And though she called wildly he heard not her cry.
Still nearer she came, that angel of light,
And bore my sweet boy away out of my sight.

"Keep him from harm!" Yes, that was my prayer.
And is he not safe from all harm over there?
Then why all this anguish—these tears that are mine?
My prayer was not answered in my way, but thine.
Now, Lord, guide my lips, and teach me to say—
Grant my petitions just in thine own way.

I am but human, while thou art divine,
Thy will, oh Jesus, be done, not mine!
Of thine own kingdom my babe is a part—
Then crush out, I pray thee, this pain from my heart;
And make it a joy to contribute to thee
A blossom as stainless and spotless as he.

Toronto.

A SLATE PENCIL.

ONCE upon a time there were no slate pencils
and no writing slates in all the world. There was
not even any slate of which to make them. This
was very long ago, so long that I am obliged to
say "once upon a time," as the fairy stories do.

What then was there if there was no slate?
Only mud lying at the bottom of the sea.

And now you will have two questions ready for
me all in a breath and the first is, How did the
mud get turned into slate? The second is, Where
did the mud come from? Let us try to find an
answer to the second question first.

You have heard of volcanoes (which some people
wrongly call burning mountains), and perhaps you
know that some volcanoes break out, not on dry
land, but under the sea. Lava, ashes, and pieces
of rock are thrown up through a hole high into the
air, and fall back into the sea.

The ashes and dust mix with the water and
become soft, fine mud, which, when all the disturb-
ances are over, settles down at the bottom of the
sea, and in course of time gets covered over with
other things washed down by rivers from the land.

This sounds strange, does it not? Did you ever
think that the slate pencil which you hold in your
hand, which you break so carelessly and lose so
easily, was once, in the shape of ashes, sent flying
out of a boiling, steaming hole deep down under
the bottom of the sea? You will now have some
little respect for it.

It took ages and ages to make it hard and firm

enough for you to use, and we do not know all the
history of it very well. The older the slate—that
is, the longer it has taken to make—the better and
more perfect it is. It is found in some of the
oldest rocks in the world.

While it was lying as mud under the sea, it is
supposed that it was hardened by other rocks being
laid down upon it and pressing upon it. Then it
went through a great many changes caused by
more volcanic disturbances; got twisted, and set
on end, and upheaved, and bent, and broken, and
let down again, until—partly with all this treat-
ment, and partly with the fierce heat below—it
was gradually changed into what we call slate.

When slate is taken from the quarry it is sent
to a man called a slatemaker, who splits it into
blocks about two inches thick. He splits it by
driving a wedge along the line where it will most
easily break. This is called the line of cleavage.
A man, called a dresser, cuts each slate to the
right size and makes its edges tidy.

The slate pencils are first cut in long, narrow
strips, and then smoothed and rounded, and put
into little boxes for sale in the shops. I ought to
tell you, however, that they are not made of the
best slate. Most of the British slate would not do
for them; it is too hard. There is a softer kind of
slate found in Germany and Austria, and of that
your slate pencils are generally made.

LONG AGO.

MAY F. MCKEAN.

"PAPA, our teacher told us to-day that long ago
people did not travel in steam-cars as they do now:
but just then the bell rang and he did not have
time to tell us how they did travel. So will you
please tell us now?" asked George Hatton, one day.

"Yes, I want to know about that too," said
Nellie. So both prepared to listen attentively.

"The advantages of travel which we enjoy are
comparatively recent," replies papa, laying aside his
book. "Although the motive power of steam has
been known since the third century B.C., yet
its practical application as a means of travelling was
not made until early in the present century. Wooden
railways, and afterward iron ones with heavy car-
riages drawn by horses, were already in use for
transporting ore and other heavy materials; but the
first passenger railway with steam power was used
in England in 1814, though we of to-day would
think six miles an hour slow travelling, I fear.
Since then almost every year has witnessed some
improvement in the means and facility of travel."

"But what did they use before that, papa?"

"Of course travelling afoot was much more
general then than now; but besides that horses,
mules, and camels would be found, according to the
country you were in. Of these, horses were in the
most general use; mules are surer-footed, and are
found in rough and mountainous regions; and
camels, which have great powers of endurance, are
found in the East, where, to this day, they are used
for crossing deserts, and taking other long journeys."

"I wonder when they were first used?" queried
George.

"The first mention we have in the Bible of camels
is in Genesis xii. 16, and we find Abraham journey-
ing down into Egypt with a great train of sheep
and oxen and servants and asses and camels. From
the frequent mention thereafter it is evident they
were commonly used thus. They are capable of taking
very long journeys without either food or water.
It is said that the singular-looking hump which you
observe on the back of a camel, is an accumulation
of fat, from which the animal draws its sustenance
during a long period of abstinence from food. The
Arab is careful that this hump is in good condition

before he crosses the desert, and always allows a
sufficient rest with plenty of food afterwards for
it to be replenished. We cannot look at any of
his creatures without seeing how wisely the Creator
has provided for all their wants and necessities."

"How fast can camels travel?" asked Nellie.

"When speed is necessary, they run with a long
swinging motion which is described as anything
but comfortable for the rider. Some authorities
state that the dromedaries (which sustains about the
same relation to the camel that the race-horse does
to our ordinary beast of burden) can travel as fast
a horse; this has been denied, however, by more
recent travellers. Twenty or twenty-five miles a
day was probably as far as a camel-rider could go
with any degree of comfort. You will remember
the Queen of Sheba came thus to see the wisdom of
Solomon, and two months and a half were probably
consumed in this journey."

"I remember that they used to have 'runners'
too," said George.

"Yes, these were men trained for this especial
purpose, and many of them were fleet-footed. In
later times we called them 'couriers,' and both they
and mounted couriers play an important part in
public affairs until a comparatively recent day.
When Ahasuerus wished to send a hasty word
throughout his one hundred and twenty-seven prov-
inces, it was by this means, as you will see by
reading Esther viii. 10."

"Well, I am glad we have railroads and post-
offices," said Nellie, with evident satisfaction.

"We may well be thankful that God has placed
our lines in such pleasant places, and amid so many
advantages," their papa replied.

A SHARP REBUKE.

A CERTAIN infidel, who was a blacksmith, was in
the habit, when a Christian man came to his shop,
of asking some one of the workmen if they had
heard about Brother So-and-So, and what he had
done. They would say,

"No, what was it?"

Then he would begin and tell what some Christian
brother, or deacon, or minister had done, and then
laugh and say, "That is one of the fine Christians
we hear so much about."

An old gentleman—an eminent Christian—one
day went into the shop, and the infidel soon began
about what some Christians had done, and seemed
to have a good time over it. The old deacon stood
a few moments and listened, and then quickly asked
the infidel if he had read the story in the Bible
about the rich man and Lazarus?

"Yes, many a time; and what of it!"

"Well, you remember about the dogs, how they
came and licked the sores of Lazarus?"

"Well," said the deacon, "do you know you just
remind me of those dogs, content to merely lick the
Christian's sores."

The blacksmith grew suddenly pensive, and has
not had much to say about failing Christians since.

REVERENCE.

"I WISH," said Robert Hall, speaking of a lady
who was wont to talk of the Supreme Being with
great familiarity, "I wish I knew how to cure that
lady of her bad habit. I have often tried, but, as
yet, in vain. It is a great mistake to affect this
kind of familiarity with the King of kings, and
speak of him as though he were a next-door neighbour,
from the pretence of love." To this he adds, quot-
ing an old divine, "Nothing but ignorance can be
guilty of this boldness: there is no divinity but in
a humble fear, no philosophy but shows itself in a
silent admiration."