

BOYS AND GIRLS



Hope Immortal.

Flowers die not in the winter-tide
Although they wake in spring;
Pillowed 'neath mounds of fleecy snow
While skies are gray and storm-winds blow
All patiently they bide,
Fettered by frost, and bravely wait
And trust in spring or soon or late.

Hope dies not in the winter-tide
Though sore it long for spring,
Cool morn may ripen to hot noon,
And evening dusks creep all too soon
The noon-day sun to hide,
But through the night there stir and thrill
The sleeping strengths of life and will.

For souls there comes a winter-tide,
For souls there blooms a spring;
Though winter days may linger long,
And snows be deep and frosts be strong
And faith be sorely tried,
When Christ shall shine, who is the Sun,
Spring-time shall be for everyone.

Oh, mighty God of winter-time!
Oh, loving Lord of spring!
Come to our hearts this Easter-day,
Melt all the prisoning ice away
And evermore abide,
Making both good and ill to be
Thy blessed opportunity.

—Susan Coolidge.

Is it Sprinkled?

A Passover Easter Story

(By M. Hickley, in the Australian 'Christian World'.)

'Is it sprinkled?' This was the anxious question asked by two little Jewish girls—one in Egypt and one in Rome, Irene, the little heroine of my story, asked it in Rome, thousands of years after it had been asked by that other in Egypt.

It was a lovely Roman Spring, A.D., 61. The Passover season was in full swing; but, as St. Paul had been preaching for many a year, there was a good result in many a poor Jewish home. The Passover Festival had for them a new meaning this year. In some humble hearts there was ringing for the first time the Easter song that echoes still louder and sweeter to-day, 'Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us therefore let us keep the feast.' In the

poor room of a small house beyond the Tiber, in the overcrowded Jewish quarter, a young widow was sitting. On a stool at her feet with her large dark eyes fixed upon her mother's face, listening, sat Irene, her only child. She was a delicate, timid child of eight, almost morbidly sensitive in temperament.

Though my story is of Irene, I must here say a word concerning her mother. She had married a Greek, through whose influence she had grown cold and indifferent to her Jewish faith. But a year ago she had lost her husband, and sickness and poverty had brought her to herself. First, there had been a return to the synagogue service, and recently she had been introduced by a friend to the prisoner Paul, from whom she had learnt the faith in Christ. Her desolate heart had readily opened to receive 'The Man of Sorrows.' And thus it came to pass that she was among the number of those to whom this Passover with its Easter light was the gladdest season she had ever known.

It was but the day before that on which our story opens that Irene had accompanied her mother to the wonderful stranger's lodging. What he said had passed unheeded over her little head, she was more taken up with the tall and rigid soldier who guarded him.

From physical suffering she had always shrank, and although so young had often been in bondage through fear of death; and the clank of the chain, as Paul, vehement and passionate in speech held up his hand, exclaiming, thrilled her heart with horror. But though she heeded not the prisoner's words, she never forgot the look on his face. Small and insignificant in person and looking the more so in contrast with his guard, there was just that in his face which arrested attention. Keen, eager, almost passionate as he denounced the hardness of the Jewish hearts around him in Rome, yet he melted into such intense pathos of tone and manner, that Irene almost wept, she hardly knew why. And when she and her mother left, the great Apostle had laid his chained hand gently on her dark head saying tenderly:

'God be gracious to thee, my child. May Christ, the Good Shepherd, gather thee in His arms.' And at the words Irene's heart went out towards him. To-day she had been sitting at her mother's knee asking questions about the chained prisoner, and her mother had been telling her the story of the Crucifixion and Resurrection which had brought to her own heart so much joy. From thence the talk had drifted into the past, and the story of the first Passover was retold. Irene's eyes grew large and eager, as she heard of that awful night in Egypt, and the slaying of the firstborn. Already her vivid imagination had pictured the scene, and she shuddered. She herself was a firstborn, how would she have felt had she been there? In an awestruck voice she asked, 'Suppose a father had forgotten to put the blood upon the door, albeit he had killed a lamb, thinkest thou, mother, that a little girl, firstborn, like me, must still have died?'

'Aye, my child, full surely,' answered her mother. 'For said not the Lord Jehovah, "When I see the blood I will pass over. Methinks that were it not on the door the Angel of Death must needs have entered."'

'And now, my little girl, will I tell thee a story, which thy question had brought to mind, a story which has come down from father to son. Thy grandfather was a learned Rabbi, and when I was a little one like thee, I sat on his knee and heard it from him.

'It came to pass that in a certain family in Egypt, there was but one little girl well beloved. With beating heart had she heard it said that, at midnight, the Angel of Death would be abroad slaying the firstborn in every house where no blood was sprinkled. Ere the sun was down she, in company with her parents, had partaken of the Passover lamb. She knew in truth that the lamb was slain, had she not also seen the basin and the hyssop laid ready? Soon was she in her little bed asleep. But her sleep was troubled, and in the evil dreams that haunted her she seemed to see the avenging angel approaching with the stroke of doom. Terrified she awoke.

'Father! father!' she cried. 'Hath the blood indeed been sprinkled?'

'Yea, my child, it hath,' so answered her father from anear, and—comforted—the tired eyelids closed again in sleep.

But not for long, many times during the evening the little one awoke, each time with the frightened cry—

'Father! father! hath the blood indeed been sprinkled?'

Each time had her father answered, 'Yea, my child, it hath.' And verily thought he that he spoke but the truth, for had he not deputed his most trusted servant to strike it there?

'But as midnight drew near once again woke the child, and sobbing, wailed she—'Father, oh my father art sure the blood is sprinkled? So grievous was her fear that her father entered and took the trembling one into his bosom and strove to soothe her. Then with arms tightly clasped around his neck she whispered—

'I would like to see it for myself, take me to the doorpost, father, that I may see with mine own eyes the sprinkled blood.'