

THE LEGEND OF THE ASTER.

Many of you will see in your gardens the beautiful star-like flowers known as the asters. I want to tell you a very old legend about them. They were known in olden time by the name of "The Stars of St. John." The story will tell you why they were so called.

When Herod the King sent out his wicked order that all the young children of Bethlehem should be put to death because he wanted to kill the infant Jesus, Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, was afraid lest her boy should be killed along with the rest, so she took him and went away into a desert place, and the two lived together in a mountain cave.

Time passed on, and the boy grew. But on one sad day, while he was still very young, the mother died and he was left alone. It was a strange, solitary life he had now to live. He had no playmates but the wild creatures of the wood.

The shepherds often spoke to him when they brought their sheep to feed near the cave. They pitied the lonely, motherless boy. Often, too, travellers would pass near on their way to Egypt, and sometimes they would ask him to go with them. But nothing they could say could persuade the boy to forsake his desert life.

One day a party of travellers passed from Egypt. They were journeying by the desert route to their home. One of this company was a fair child, with golden hair and deep blue eyes.

As the travellers went on their

way, the desert boy was standing by a well, overshadowed by a palm tree. He saw the fair child, and, as he looked, their eyes met, and a strange thrill passed through

He gazed after the travellers, and then, though he could not say why he did it, he sat down and wept.

Suddenly a gentle voice said to him that he must not weep, and when he looked up to see who it was, he saw it was an angel of God. Then the angel told him that the fair Child was Jesus, and that He was returning from Egypt because Herod was now dead. Then he went on to tell him that Jesus was a relation of his own, and that He was the Great Prince for whom all the world was waiting.

Often, after this, the angel came to visit the lonely boy, and told him more and more about the Prince and his Kingdom, and that he himself was called of God to prepare for the coming King.

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This prophecy fired the boy's mind, and in his lonely walks by day, and in his dreams by night, he dwelt upon the thought of the future. He could think of nothing else.

The angel came again and again, and often brought other angels with him, and they taught him all the lessons the Herald of the Great King should know. And he grew strong and bold.

As the angels were about to leave him one evening, he said he wished they would always stay with him, but they answered that they could not do this, as they had many errands of mercy on which to go for their King. If, however, he would say what he would like to have as a token until they returned, he should have whatever he asked for. He looked up at the silent stars, which were then beginning to shine, and he answered that he would like the stars to be with him always.

The angels smiled, then kissing him, told him it was time he slept. When he awoke in the morning he looked out, and to his amazement he saw the ground around his cave dotted all over with flowers like the stars. These reminded him of the absent angels and their love for him.

The flowers were from that time



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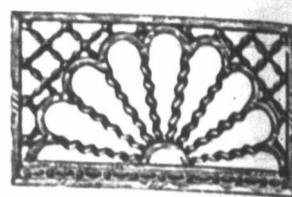
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known as "The Stars of St. John," though we now call them asters.

THINK BEFORE YOU STRIKE.

I remember reading in my boyhood about a merchant travelling on horseback, accompanied by his dog. He dismounted for some purpose, and accidentally dropped his package of money. The dog saw it, the merchant did not. The dog barked to stop him, and as he rode farther, bounded in front of the horse, and barked louder and louder. The merchant thought he had gone mad, drew a pistol from his holster, and shot him. The wounded dog crawled back to the package, and when the merchant discovered his loss and rode back, he found his dying dog lying there, faithfully guarding the treasure. The following little story, told by a friend of mine, is not as painful, but adds force to the thought:

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Think before you strike. When I was up in the m... shire, I was given a plough with a year old... walking... down in th... was provoked on the col... from rising... 'to break I... he said. 'I came by. I think wrong and let's f... ter.' He r... his harness at this colla... row, and... high, that... it slips by... that he cal... was; and b... should hav... creature a... because he... not breathe.

Boys, ad animals a... make their... Think creature th... T. Angel Friend.

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