

Children's Department.

BABY'S TOLL-GATE.

KNOCK at the door. Peep in; Lift up the latch, And walk in.

What a funny door— A forehead fair; House with a roof Of golden hair. And tangled curls From ridge to base, Over the eaves— Queer little place.

Two windows there, And baby peeps in; Finds the bright blue Where the sky went in, And a laughing elf Looks out to see Who raps so loud, And calls for me.

A dainty nose Turned up—beware! With thumbs and fingers Lift it with care. The portals open; Don't walk in! Bow to the dimple On the chin.

A kiss for toll Now you must pay, Or not come in At all to-day.

PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER.

THE Gospel for the second Sunday in Lent tells us of a woman, who constant in prayer, and undaunted by the apparent coldness of our Lord towards her, won from Him at last the object of her petition, the rescue of her daughter from the devil which had made her his prey. Her story reminds us of another mother whose long-continued earnest prayer for her child is related in ancient Church history, another mother whose child had also been possessed by a devil, though in a different manner from that Canaanitish maiden. The evil spirit of unbelief and impurity seized him; but by God's grace and his mother's prayers the unclean spirit was driven out, the brand plucked from the fire, and the prodigal son changed into a penitent, and finally a saint. Christian people now call him St. Augustine.

The mother's name was Monica. She was born A.D. 322, in Numidia, on the north coast of Africa, a country now, alas! given wholly up to the false prophet Mahomet, but then containing among its Pagan population many flourishing Christian churches. Monica was carefully brought up in a Christian family and taught the true faith. She always acknowledged with gratitude how much she owed to her nurse for the good principles she instilled into her, and the strict ways in which she trained her. This nurse taught the children of the family to be temperate at their meals, and would not allow them to drink even water at other times, because she thought it a self-indulgent habit. "You are now for drinking water," she used to say, "but when you come to be mistresses of the cellar, water will be despised, but the habit of drinking will stick by you." It seems strange that after such an education Monica should have married a Pagan, but it was so. Most likely, according to the customs of those times, she had no choice in the matter. Patricius, her husband, was, for a heathen, an upright, honourable man. He had also a naturally kind heart, but his temper was

hasty and violent. It was therefore matter of astonishment that he and his wife never quarrelled, and that he was never known to strike her, according to the custom of husbands in those rough times. Monica's patience and forbearance brought about this happy state of things. She never thwarted her husband in word or deed, never answered him when he was angry, only when his fit of temper was over she would quietly explain her conduct. When other wives would show the bruises left by their husbands' blows, and complain loudly of the cruelty they underwent, Monica would say to them, "You should lay the blame of it all on yourselves and your tongues." Her patience and forbearance gave her a right to speak, and she had her reward. Patricius was won over to the religion which his wife adorned, was baptized, and died a faithful Christian.

But we must turn to Monica as the mother of Augustine. He was the elder of her two sons, and most fondly loved by her. She brought him up in the fear of God, but he was not christened in infancy, either because his father was a heathen, or because it was the custom in those days to put off Baptism for fear of the greater condemnation of sin committed after it. Great pains were taken with the boy's education, and as he was naturally clever, he grew up a good scholar and a learned man. He lacked strength, however, to resist temptation, and while yet very young was drawn into heresy and a wicked life. Monica, not a widow, grieved more at this than if she had laid her son in the grave. Strong as was her affection for him, she did not think it right any longer to let him live in her house or eat at her table. She could only pray for him, and that she did incessantly with floods of tears.

In the depth of her sorrow she found some comfort in a dream. She thought she was standing on a platform of wood, weeping bitterly, and that a young man, in shining garments, bade her dry her tears, saying, "See, thy son is with thee;" on which, looking round, she saw Augustine on the platform by her side. She told this dream to her son, and he tried to argue from it that she would be brought round to his way of thinking; but she said quickly, "No, it was not told me that I should be with you, but that you should be with me."

Augustine was struck by this answer, but no change was wrought in him yet. For many years she continued praying for him, and begging one learned divine after another to expostulate with him. One aged bishop to whom she applied declined to do this. "The youth's heart," he said, "is still too stubborn, but God's good time will come, and then he will discover his error." But Monica would now be put off thus; she wept bitterly and still went on entreating him, till he sent her away, with the memorable words, "Go thy way, good woman; it is not possible that the child of such tears should perish," words which she received as a merciful intimation from heaven regarding her son.

At the age of twenty-nine, Augustine determined to go to Rome. His mother tried to divert him from his purpose, so he deceived her, and, pretending he had given up the journey, he set off one night secretly while she was engaged in prayer at a neighbouring church. Her grief at finding herself thus deserted was very great; she found no comfort but in prayer, and to these prayers her son always ascribes his recovery from a dangerous illness which seized him when he arrived at Rome. From Rome Augustine went to Milan, and under the teaching of St. Ambrose he renounced his errors, and gave up his bad course of life. Monica followed her son to Italy, and witnessed the answers to her many prayers in his conversion and his Baptism at Easter, A.D. 387.

Some of Augustine's Christian friends came to live with him, and his mother kept house for the little community. She cared for each one as if he had been her son. Yet she listened with humility

and joy to every word they said of heavenly things. One day, while she was talking with Augustine about the joys of Paradise, she said, "There is nothing now in this life, my son, which can afford me any fresh delight. What I have to do here any longer, or why I am still on earth, I know not, all my earthly hopes being now satisfied. The only thing for which I desired to live was to see you a Christian, and a child of Heaven, and God has done much more, in that I see you despising all earthly joys, and entirely devoted to His service. What further business then have I here below?"

The whole party set out the same autumn on their return to Africa, but Monica was taken ill at Ostia. She felt it was her last sickness, and spoke of it so cheerfully that her friends were astonished, and wondered that she did not dread being buried so far from home. But she said, "Nothing is far from God, nor need I fear but He will find my body and raise it with the rest." Five days later the fever came on; she swooned away and was for some time insensible. Her sons ran to her side, and when she recovered she said, "You will bury your mother here." Augustine was silent, but his brother began lamenting that she should die far away in a strange country. She looked at him with concern, as though grieving that so small a thing should trouble him, and said, "Place this body anywhere, do not distress yourselves concerning it." This was the more remarkable because she had always expressed a strong wish to be buried by her husband's side in a sepulchre she had prepared for herself.

After nine days' illness Monica expired at the age of sixty-five, A.D. 387. She died but the son of her prayers and tears lived to be a Bishop and Doctor of the Church, nay, he lives yet in his writings; teaching, warning, encouraging one generation of Christians after another. Let us then learn from Monica the African mother, as from the woman of Canaan, how to pray for those we love.

HOW LOSS IS GAIN.

AN artist was once engaged in painting a picture in fresco high up upon the wall of a lofty cathedral. One day he took a friend up with him, and they stood together on the little platform from which he worked at a giddy height above the ground. As the talked, the artist involuntarily step backward to view the better some detail of his painting. Another moment and he would have been dashed to pieces on the marble pavement below; but his friend, seeing the danger, quick as thought, flung against the picture a brush full of colour which he held in his hand. The artist sprang forward in horror at what seemed the wanton destruction of his work;—and was saved.

Does not God deal with us in a like manner sometimes? He sees us gazing fondly and admiringly on what our hands have wrought, or our own brains have planned; and He mars our schemes, disappoints our hopes, makes havoc of our enterprises. They perish, but we are saved. He sees that we are on the brink of destruction: another step, and we should have fallen head long through pride, even as Satan fell. And so, in His mercy, He interposes for our good. We ignorantly fret and chafe because our plans do not succeed, and our labour is lost. But He knows best. Our seeming loss is our real gain.

SHREWDNESS AND ABILITY.—Hop Bitters so freely advertised in all the papers, secular and religious, are having a large sale, and are supplanting all other medicines. There is no denying the virtues of the Hop plant, and the proprietors of these Bitters have shown great shrewdness and ability in compounding a Bitters, whose virtues are so palpable to every one's observation.—Examiner and Chronicle.

GUARDIAN ANGELS OF LITTLE CHILDREN.

THERE is a passage in our Lord's teaching which bears on the doctrine of the holy Angels, which I did not always understand, till it was explained to me by a poor uneducated man. After our Lord had said how terrible will be the punishment of those who injure the souls of little children, He adds, "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven."

One night, when I was a young man, before I was in holy orders, I was walking in Devonshire along a lane, and I caught up a walking postman; and as we were both going along in the same direction we walked together and fell into conversation. Presently the road came out on a wild moor covered with rocks, and far from any habitation. I said to the man, "Are you never alarmed travelling along such a desolate road, and in such a wild country, and almost always alone?" "No," he answered; "not now."

I pressed him for his reason; and then he said, "I used to be frightened at times of a night, for there are strange tales of these moors; but on Sunday our parson preached at church on the ministry of holy angels. He told us how an angel was sent by God to minister to each one of the baptized, and to be with him to the end of life. I have often thought of that, and it struck me much. So when I have been alone of a dark night, I think that my angel is beside me, and sometimes I pray, and sometimes I sing a hymn, and I like to think that the angel joins with me. I don't know that I hear his voice, but it seems to me sometimes as if I did. And then I speak to him, and I feel that I have a companion, and it takes all loneliness away."

After some talk, we came to speak of the text, "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven," and I told him that it was not intelligible to me; for that angels did not mean the souls of the children.

"No," said he; "I've thought of that text, and this is what I fancy it means. The angels of little children always see the face of God; they are always looking up to God, like this." The man's face was raised, and the full moon shone on it, lighting it up brightly. "But it is not so always; presently sin comes; bad example from parents or companions produces an evil act, and then a cloud comes between the face of God and the angel." As the man was speaking, with his eyes raised, an arm of black cloud stole across the moon, and a shadow fell on his face, and it was only dimly visible. "Like this," continued the postman; "and if sin continues growing more and more, it is like a bank of black cloud coming up and obscuring entirely the face of God, so that all is dark below. That is why we are pronounced against him that leads a little one into sin; he darkens the angel's face, and then the guardian angel of the child arms himself to be an avenging angel against the man that has done evil."

HAPPY THOUGHTS.

The mind is ever the dupe of the heart.

The Lord Himself, to whom angels ministered, thought good to carry a bag for example sake.

If we cheat ourselves with words here, we shall suffer punishment in deed hereafter.

It should be known that there are some who wear the dress of sanctity, and are not able to work out the merit of perfection; yet who must in no wise be numbered among the hypocrites, because it is one thing to sin from weakness, another from crafty affection.

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