

The Little Ones He Blessed.

BY MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

I wonder if ever the children
Who were blessed by the Master of old,
Forgot he had made them his treasures,
The dear little lambs of his fold.
I wonder if, angry and wilful,
They wandered afar and astray,
The children whose feet had been guided
So safe and so soon in the way.

One would think that the mothers at
evening,
Soft smoothing the silk tangled hair,
And low leaning down to the murmur
Of sweet, childish voices in prayer,
Oft bade the small pleaders to listen,
If haply again they might hear
The words of the gentle Redeemer
Borne swift to the reverent ear.

And my heart cannot cherish the fancy
That ever those children went wrong,
And were lost from the peace and the shelter,
Shut out from the feast and the song.
To the day of gray hairs they remem-
bered,

I think, how the hands that were riven
Were laid on their heads when Christ
uttered,
"Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

He has said it to you, little darling,
Who spell it in God's Word to-day;
You, too, may be sorry for sinning
You also believe and obey;
And 'twill grieve the dear Saviour in
heaven

If one little child shall go wrong—
Be lost from the fold and the shelter,
Shut out from the feast and the song.

J. Cole, the Boy Hero

BY

EMMA GELLIBRAND.

CHAPTER III.

In the beginning of October we arrived
in London. There had been much pack-
ing up, and much extra work for every-
body, and Joe was in his element.

What those long arms, and that willing
heart, and those quick little hands got
through, nobody but those he helped and
worked for could tell. Whatever was
wanted Joe knew where to find it. Joe's
knife was ready to cut a stubborn knot;
Joe's shoulders ready to be loaded with
as heavy a weight as any man could
carry. More than once I met him com-
ing downstairs with large boxes he him-
self could almost have been packed in,
and he declared he did not find them too
heavy.

"You see, Missis," he said, "I'm that
strong now since I've been here, with all
the good food I gets, and bein' so happy
like, that I feel almost up to carryin'
anything. I do believe I could lift that
there planner, if somebody would just
give it a hoist, and let me get hold of it
easy."

Yes, Joe was strong and well, and I
am sure, happy, and I had never had a
single misgiving about him since he
stood with his fading flowers and shabby
clothes at my window that summer day.

At last we were settled in town, and
the winter season beginning. Our house
was situated in the West End of London,
a little beyond Bayswater. One of a
row of detached houses, facing another
row exactly similar in every way, ex-
cept that the backs of those we lived in
had small gardens, with each its own
stable wall at the end, with coachman's
rooms above, the front of the stables
facing the mews, and having the en-
trance from there; the mews ran all
along the backs of these houses. On
the opposite side the houses facing ours
had their gardens and back windows
facing the high road, and no stables.
There was a private road belonging to
this, Holling Park, as it was called, and
a watchman to keep intruders out, and
to stop organ-grinders, beggars, and such
invaders of the peace from disturbing us.

In the morning the large, handsome
houses would seem asleep, nothing mov-
ing inside or out, except a tradesman's
cart, calling for orders, or workmen put-
ting up or taking down awnings, at some
house where there would be, or had been,
a ball or entertainment of some kind.
About eleven a carriage or two would be
driven round from the mews, and stop
before a house to take some one for a
morning drive, but very seldom was any-
body on foot seen about. In the after-
noon it was different; carriages rolled
along incessantly, and streams of after-
noon callers were going and coming from
the houses when the mistress was "at
home"; and at my door, too, soon began
the usual din of bell and knocker. Joe

was quite equal to the occasion, and en-
joyed Friday, the day I received. Dressed
in his very best, and with a collar that
kept his chin in what seemed to me a
fearful state of torture, but added to his
height by at least half an inch, Joe stood
behind the hall door, ready to open it
directly the knocker was released. He
ushered in the guests as though "to the
manner born," giving out the names cor-
rectly, and with all the ease of an ex-
perienced groom of the chambers.

The conservatory leading out of the
drawing-room was Joe's especial pride,
it was his great pleasure to syringe the
hanging baskets, and attend to the ferns
and plants. Many shillings from his
pocket money were spent in little sur-
prises for me in the form of pots of
musk, maiden-hair, or anything he could
buy; his wages were all sent home, and
he only kept for his own whatever he
had given to him, and sometimes a guest
would "tip" him more generously than
I liked, for his bright eyes and ready
hands were always at everybody's ser-
vice.

After my husband's return home, who
from the first became Joe's especial care,
as to boots, brushing of clothes, etc.,
it became necessary to give two or three
dinner-parties, and I must confess I felt
nervous as to how Joe would acquit him-
self.

In our dining-room was a very large
bear-skin rug, and the floor being
polished oak, it was dangerous to step
on this rug, for it would slip away from
the feet on the smooth surface, and even
the dogs avoided it, so many falls had
they met with upon it.

The first day of my husband's arrival,
we had my sister and a friend to dine,
and had been talking about Joe in the
few moments before dinner.

My husband had been laughing at the
size of my page, and scolding me a little,
or rather pretending to do so, for taking
a written character.

"Little woman," he said, "don't be
surprised if one night a few country
burglars make us a visit, and renew
their acquaintance with Mr. J. Cole."

"You don't know Joe," I replied, "or
you would never say that."

"Do you know him so well, little
wife?" said my dear, sensible husband;
"remember he has only been in our ser-
vice six months. In the country he had
very little of value in his hands, but
here, it seems to me, he has too much.
All the plate, and indeed everything of
value, is in his pantry, and he is a very
young boy to trust. One of the women
servants should take charge of the plate-
chest, I think. Where does this paragon
sleep?"

"Downstairs," I said, "next the
kitchen, at the back of the house, and
you should see how carefully every night
he looks to the plate-basket, counts
everything, and then asks Mrs. Wilson
to see it is right, locks it up, and gives
her the key to take care of. No one can
either open or carry away an iron safe
easily, and there is nothing else worth
taking; besides, I know Joe is honest—I
feel it."

"Well, I hope so, dear," was my hus-
band's reply, but I could see he was not
comfortable about it.

At dinner that day Joe had an acci-
dent; he was dreadfully nervous as
usual, and when waiting, he forgot to
attend to my guests first, but always
came to me. The parlour-maid, a new
one, and not a great favourite with Joe,
made matters worse by correcting him in
an audible voice; and once, when some-
body wanted oyster sauce, she told Joe
to hand it, the poor boy, wishing to obey
quickly, forgot to give the bear-skin a
wide berth, slipped on it, and in a mo-
ment had fallen full length, having in his
fall deposited the contents of the sauce-
turen partly into a blue leather arm-
chair, and the rest on to my sister's back.
The boy's consternation was dreadful.
I could see he was completely overcome
with fright and sorrow for what he had
done. He got up, and all his trembling
lips could say was, "Oh, please, I'm so
sorry; it was the bear as tripped me up.
I am so very sorry."

Even my husband could scarcely keep
from smiling, the sorrow was so genuine,
the sense of shame so true.

"There, never mind, Joe," he said,
kindly; "you must be more careful.
Now run and get a sponge and do the
best you can with it."

This fall of Joe's made him still more
nervous of waiting at table, and at last
when he had made some very serious
mistakes, I had to speak to him and tell
him I was afraid if he did not soon learn
to wait better, I must send him away,
for his master was annoyed at the mis-
takes he made, such as giving cold plates
when hot ones were required, handing
dishes on the wrong side, etc.

My little lecture was listened to quiet-
ly and humbly, and Joe had turned to go
away, when, to my surprise and distress,

he suddenly burst into a perfect passion
of tears and sobs.

"I will try and learn myself," he
said, as well as his sobs would let him.
"Indeed I will. I know I'm stupid,
I set to myself every time company
comes. 'I'll mind wot I'm about, and
remember dishes left-anded, pourin's
out right, and begin with the strangerest
lady next to master's side, and 'olp
missis last.' I knows it all, but when
they're all sittin' down, and everybody
wantin' somethin', I don't know if Jane's
a-goin' to giv' it 'em, or I am, and I gets
stupid and my 'ands shakes, and some-
how I can't do nothin', but please don't
send me away. I do like you and the
master. I'll ask Jane to learn me better.
You see if I don't. Oh, please 'm, say
you'll try me!"

What could I say but "Yes," and for
a day or two Joe did better, but we were
a small party, and the waiting was easy;
but shortly we were to have a large
dinner-party, and as the time drew near,
Joe became quite pale and anxious.

About this time, too, I had been
awakened at night by curious sounds
downstairs, as of somebody moving
about, and once I heard an unmis-
takeable fall of some heavy article.

My husband assured me it was noth-
ing alarming, and he went downstairs,
but could neither hear nor see anything
unusual. All was quiet.

Another night I felt sure I heard
sounds downstairs, and in spite of my
husband's advice to remain still, I called
Mrs. Wilson and entreated her to come
down to the kitchen floor with me. It
was so very easy, I knew, for anybody to
enter the house from the back, and there
being a deep area all around, they could
work away with their tools at the ground
floor back windows unseen. Any one
could get on the top of the stable from
the mews, drop into the garden, and be
safe, for the watchman and policeman
were on duty in the front of the house
only; the back was quite unprotected.
True, there were iron bars to Joe's win-
dow and the kitchen, but iron bars could
be sawn through, and I lived in dread of
burglars.

This night Mrs. Wilson and I went
softly down, and as we neared the
kitchen stairs I heard a voice say in a
whisper, "Make haste!"

"There, Mrs. Wilson, did you hear
that?" I said.

"Yes, ma'am," she replied; "there's
somebody talking, and I believe it's in
Joe's room. Let us go up and fetch the
master."

So we returned upstairs, and soon my
husband stood with us at the door of
Joe's room.

"Open the door, Joe!" cried my hus-
band. "Who have you got there?"

"Nobody, please, sir," said a trembling
voice.

"Open the door at once!" said the
master, and in a moment it was opened.
Joe stood there, very pale, but with no
sort of fear in his face. There was no-
body in the room, and as Joe had cer-
tainly been in bed, we concluded he
must have talked in his sleep, and, per-
haps, walked about also, for what we
knew.

The day before the dinner-party, cook
came and told me she felt sure there
was something wrong with Joe. He
was so changed from what he used to be,
there was no getting him to wake in the
morning, and he seemed so heavy with
sleep, as if he had no rest at night. Also
cook had proofs of his having been in
her kitchen after he was supposed to
have gone to bed; chairs were moved,
and several things not where she had
left them. She had asked Joe, and he re-
plied he did go into the kitchen, but
would not say what for.

I did not like to talk to Joe that day,
so decided to wait till after the dinner,
and I would then insist on the mystery
being cleared up. I knew Joe would
tell the truth; my trust was unshaken,
although circumstances seemed against
him.

That night Mrs. Wilson came to my
door, and said she was sure Joe was at
his night-work again, for she could see
from her bedroom window a light re-
flected on the stable wall, which must be
in his room.

"How can we find out," I said, "what
he is doing?"

"That is easily done," said my hus-
band. "We can go out at the garden
door, and down the steps leading from
the garden into the area; they are op-
posite his window. We can look
through the venetian blinds, if they are
down, and see for ourselves. He won't
be able to see us."

Accordingly, having first wrapped up
in our furs, we went down, and were
soon at Joe's window, standing in the
area that surrounded the house. The
laths of the blind were some of them
open, and between them we saw dis-
tinctly all over the room.

At first we could not understand the
strange sight that met our gaze.

In the middle of Joe's room was a
table, spread with a cloth, and on it
saucers from flower-pots, placed at in-
tervals down each side; before each
saucer a chair was placed, and in the
centre of the table a high basket, from
which a Stillon cheese had been un-
packed that morning; this was evidently
to represent a tall eporgne. On Joe's
wash-stand were several bottles, a jug,
and by each flower-pot saucer two ves-
sels of some kind—by one, two jam-pots
of different sizes, by another, a broken
specimen glass and a teacup—and so on;
and from chair to chair moved Joe softly
but quickly, on tip-toe, now with bottles
which contained water; we could see his
lips move, and concluded he was saying
something to imaginary persons, for he
would put a jam-pot on his tray, and
pour into it from the bottle, and then re-
place it. Sometimes he would go quickly
to his bed, which we saw represented
the dinner-wagon, or side-board, and
bring imaginary dishes from there and
hand them. Then he would go quickly
from chair to chair, always correcting
himself if he went to the wrong side,
and talking all the time softly to him-
self. So here was the solution of the
mystery: here melted into all the visions
of Joe in league with midnight burglars.

The poor boy, evidently alarmed at
the prospect of the dinner-party, and
feeling that he must try to improve
in waiting at table before that time
somehow, had stolen all those hours
nightly from his rest, to practice with
whatever substitutes were at hand for
the usual table requisites.

Here, every night, when those who had
worked far less during the day were
soundly sleeping, had that anxious, striv-
ing little heart shaken off fatigue, and
the big blue eyes refused to yield to
sleep, in order to fight with the nervou-
ness that alone prevented his willing
hands acting with their natural clever-
ness. I felt a choking in my throat,
when I saw the thin, pale little face,
that should have been on the pillow
hours before, lighted up with triumph
as the supposed guests departed, the
dumb show of folding the dinner nap-
kins belonging to myself and the master,
and putting them in their respective
rings, told us the ordeal was over. What
a weird scene it was! The dim light,
the silent house, the spread table, and
the empty chairs. One could imagine
ghostly revellers, visible only to that
one fragile attendant, who ministered so
willingly to their numerous wants. The
sort of nervous thrill that heralds hy-
sterical attacks was rapidly overcoming
me, and I whispered to my husband,
"Let us go now," but he lingered yet a
few seconds, and silently drew my at-
tention again to the window.

Joe was on his knees by his bedside,
his face hidden in his hands. What
silent prayer was ascending to the
Throne of Grace, who shall say? I only
know that it were well if many a kneel-
ing worshipper in "purple and fine
linen" could feel as sure of being heard
as Joe did when, his victory won, he
kneelt, in his humble servant's garb, and
said his prayers that night in spite of
the aching head and weary limbs that
needed so badly the few hours' rest that
remained before six o'clock, the time Joe
always got up.

The famous dinner passed off well.
Joe was splendid; his midnight practice
had brought its reward, and he moved
about so swiftly, and anticipated every-
body's wants so well, that some of my
friends asked me where I got such a
treasure of a page; he must have had a
good butler or footman to teach him,
they said; he is evidently used to wait-
ing on many guests. I was proud of Joe.

The next day he came to me with more
than a sovereign in silver, and told me
the gentlemen had been so very kind to
him, "and a most every one had given
him somethin'," though he never arat, or
waited about, as some fellers did, as if
they wouldn't lose sight of a gent till he
paid 'em. But," said Joe, "they would
giv' it to me, and one gent, he folloed
me right up the passage, he did, and
sez, 'Ere, you small boy, he sez, and he
give me a whole 'art-crown. Whatever
for, I don't know."

But I knew that must have been Dr.
Loring, a celebrated physician, and my
husband's dearest friend. We had told
him about Joe's midnight self-teaching,
and he had been very much interested in
the story.

You little thought, Joe, the hand that
patted your curly head so kindly that
night would one day hold your small
wrist and count its feeble life pulse beat-
ing slowly and yet more slowly, while
we, who loved you, should watch the
clever, handsome face, trying in vain to
read there the blessed word "Hope."

(To be continued.)