

To his jester the lord gave a curiously carved staff, which he was charged to keep until he should meet with one who was a greater fool than himself, when the jester should deliver it over to such a one.

A few years passed, and the lord fell very sick, so that it seemed quite likely he would die. His jester came to see him, and as he stood beside his bed, the lord told him he must shortly leave him.

'And whither art thou going, my lord?'

'To another world,' was the reply.

'And when wilt thou return? Within a month?'

'No,' answered the lord.

'Within a year?'

'No.'

'And when, then, my lord?'

'Never.'

'Never? Then what provision hast thou made for thy journey whither thou goest?'

'None whatever.'

'None at all! Ah! here, take thy staff, then,' said the jester. 'Going away never to return more, and no provision made for thine entertainment there! Take thy staff again, for surely I never will be guilty of such great folly as this.'

We are none of us too young to die.—Let us learn wisdom from the foolish lord, and see that our sins are forgiven, and our trust is in Jesus; and so, whenever he shall call us to himself, we shall be ready to meet him in joy and peace.

'Better is a poor and wise child than a dull and foolish king.'—*The Appeal*.

Charles Wainfleet.

Charlie Wainfleet was, perhaps, one of the most remarkable children I have ever known, and that's saying a good deal; for I am an old man—a very old man, some would say; and those dark locks I used once to be proud of, are now silvered by time. Yet I am a very happy old fellow, for I can still take pleasure in many of the enjoyments of others.

I am very fond of children, and the little people usually like me; and so by one of those mutual attractions it was that Charlie Wainfleet and myself became such firm friends.

Charlie was an odd, dreamy child, with large lustrous eyes, which sometimes glittered, and softened again, with an expression almost unearthly. The poor village folks used always to bless the lovely boy when he passed; and many a one have I heard exclaim that he was "too good" for this world!

My acquaintance with little Charlie began on this wise:—I was walking one day down the lane to our river, when I heard a young voice calling "Mary! Mary!" So

I looked, and saw at a distance from me a beautiful boy, of from six to eight years old. I asked him why he was calling. He told me he had come out with his nurse and little brother, and had wandered from them to watch the water of the river ripple past. They had not noticed his absence, neither had he thought of them, till a few moments since, when he had lost his way; and after trying uselessly for some time to regain the right path, could not succeed in discovering it.

I found out where my little friend lived, and took him home. A few days after this I was out again and met Charlie. He began to talk to me; and in short I soon became so fond of the child, that I asked him to come and see me. And indeed, after his first shyness wore off, little Charlie would come very often and spend an hour or two with me.

Things had gone on like this for a long time when, some days having passed without any visit from Charlie, I called at his mother's house, and, on inquiry, found that the child was very ill; so I sent to Mrs Wainfleet, to ask if I might see my little friend. Presently a scrap of paper was given me, with these words, traced in a baby hand:—

"Do come to me. I am very ill and they won't let me get up. I have such funny dreams. "CHARLIE."

So I went up into the child's room, and found him lying on a couch by the open window. When I entered the room, Charlie tried to raise himself, but fell back, too weak for the exertion.

His hand clasped that of his mother—a lady about twenty-four years of age, dressed in deep mourning, and wearing a widow's cap. I used to like to look at her sweet pensive face in after days, for its loveable, gentle features; and the subdued, quiet melancholy reminded me of Charlie.

Well, when I entered the sick room, Charlie and I chatted for some time (poor fellow! his voice had grown terribly weak since I had last heard it), his mother joining sometimes in the conversation, but very quietly and gently. She seemed fearful of too much exercising her child.

Soon she left us alone; and Charlie quite suddenly asked me, "Do you ever think of heaven?" Now I am a cross-grained, queer old fellow, and a question of that kind takes one rather by surprise. However, I said, "Of course; every one thinks of that sort of thing!"

So Charlie said, "I must tell you a dream I had last night. I thought I was wandering by the river, and that it was getting dark. The sun was just going to rest, and a bright halo seemed spread over everything. I sat looking into the water, thinking of