

'Yes, I will read it when I go home,' said Antonio. 'But now, little Lotta, tell me. How is it you believe and are happy, and I am uncertain and not content? How came you to find and trust this Jesus, who now seems to comfort you so?'

'I never found Him, He came to me,' said the little girl.

'Then why does He not come to me?' pursued Antonio.

'He does come—He wants to be good to you too. Father says He knocks at the door of all men's hearts, but some won't listen. He wouldn't listen once—he was too proud, he said; but he listened afterwards, and now I know the Angels have taken him to live with Jesus.' She glanced quite without fear—nay, with a certain rapture—at the quiet figure in the dark shade of the rafters.

Antonio looked too. Then he said, 'Child, you must not stay here. I will have you moved to a nice bright place—a hospital—where they will nurse you back to health, for you must not die. I want you, my little teacher.'

Carlotta smiled—a pretty, shy smile. But she shook her head. 'Nurse is coming back soon, she will tell you I must die, perhaps to-night. The doctor said it was hardly worth while moving me, it might stop my breath at once.'

Poor little girl! she was breathing painfully now. The nurse came in—a rough, coarse woman. 'If the gentleman means to stay awhile, I might do another errand,' she said; 'I'm driven here, there, everywhere. I hardly thought that child would have lasted so long.'

She looked as if she would have hurried the breath out of poor little Lotta.

'Wait here ten minutes,' said Antonio, slipping money into her hand, 'and when I come back, you may go for as long as you like.'

He returned very shortly with Francis. The friends would watch by the side of the dying child.

The nurse went gladly back to her family. Carlotta seemed to be asleep. The men conversed in low tones by her bed.

'I would give all I possess to have the faith and confidence of that little creature,' said Antonio. 'She is absolutely fearless of the future, nay, rapturous concerning it.'

'You need only give one thing—your will,' returned Francis. 'Bend that; do not resist grace.'

'Am I a subject for grace? Does not God turn His face from one like me?' asked Antonio.

'No, no. He is working now. He gave you the compassion for that poor child. You did what you could for her; she prayed for you; you are moved by her faith and love. That is no common feeling. Do not harden your heart now.'

'I will not,' was Antonio's answer. And then little Lotta woke with clear eyes and a smile for her friends.

'How nice! Lift me up,' she said. Antonio put a strong arm round the wasted form.

Very soon she turned her eyes towards the dark rafters; they could see her face shining with happiness.

'It is heaven!' she whispered rapturously; 'it is open—I see Jesus!'

And so, like the first martyr Stephen, this happy spirit passed away.

Antonio could hardly bear to loose his hold of the poor little body. He had never been so near heaven before, he felt.

It was Francis who laid the little corpse down on the hard bed.

Then Antonio broke out with his first prayer, 'O God, give me faith!'

A. WATSON.

