

THE GARDEN OF LILIES.

For the Carmelite Review.



BY M. B.

HAT a cold night it was! How the wind whistled past the street corners, and the snow was beginning to fall, driving in people's faces, and making them hurry along faster to their homes. As they passed one another they wished each other "A happy Christmas," for it was Christmas eve. A little girl—a small ragged creature—crept shivering into the porch of a church, from which the bells were ringing for evening devotions. It was a beautiful old church, with its stained glass windows, carved pillars, and stone arches. It was very large and dark and sombre, for it was only lighted by a few lamps which shone before the different shrines. Before the high altar there was a large silver lamp, more beautiful than all the others. It was the gift of a prince who had obtained a great favor. Its long silver chains hung from the ceiling, and its crimson rays shone down into the church. The little girl crept into a dark corner behind a pillar near the altar. The organ filled the church with its splendid strains, and the sweet voices of children singing were heard. Soon this lovely music stopped for a while and the calmness of the church overcame the poor little beggar girl and she fell asleep. When she awoke there was no sound in the church. The devotions were over, the people all gone and the church closed for the night. The man who closed the doors had not noticed a small dark figure curled up on a seat and had gone away to his home. So she was locked into the great church, but she did not mind. It was warmer in there than outside in the streets, and she had no home. She raised her head and looked up at the altar, and her eyes rested on the beautiful silver lamp, from which bright rays were streaming. How bright they looked! They seemed to the little girl like paths of light coming down to her. She watched them for a long time and at last they did really seem to become bright paths, not coming down from the lamp, but from heaven. She saw an angel come down towards her, and as he

came nearer she saw that he was smiling at her. He took her by the hand and led her along the bright path. They seemed to be no longer in the dark church, but in a beautiful garden. All around them lilies were growing—tall, pure lilies, which seemed to have little faces that smiled at the little girl as she passed. Each lily held some bright drops—some of them had only one or two, others a great many—which glistened like diamonds, only far brighter, for they were heavenly jewels. Soon sweet voices filled the air, rising and falling soft and clear. The sounds seemed to come from the lilies from all around and the beggar girl looking up in the angel's face exclaimed, "Oh, how beautiful, how beautiful! Angel, is this heaven?" "This, my child," said the angel, "is the garden of pure thoughts, and noble deeds. There is a lily there for everyone on earth. Whenever a pure or kind thought comes into their minds, or whenever they do a noble deed, a jewel springs up in their flower. Then when they die these jewels form a crown for them of great beauty. But sometimes the lily dies, for they cannot live without these lovely jewels, which are to them what the dew is to earthly flowers. This, my child," he continued, "is your lily. See what a number of jewels it contains." "But," said the little girl, "I never did anything to deserve such beautiful things." "Oh, yes," said the angel, "you did. Do you remember every morning you used to bring a little bunch of the flowers which you were going to sell to the poor little cripple who was so lonely, with nothing to cheer him all the day?" "It was only because I pitied him," said the child, "it was not a noble deed." "Pity," answered the angel, "is a lovely thing. This jewel," he continued, "sprung up when you ran almost under the horse's feet to save the little child from being killed. It is a very bright one. So you see, little one, that you have a great many jewels, but I cannot tell you about them all, now, for I have other lilies to show you. This one," he said, touching a tall lily whose jewels almost dazzled the little girl, "belongs to the little cripple. His jewels are for his patience. He will soon be coming to receive his crown. This lily," said the angel, "was almost dead. It belonged to someone who rarely thought of God, and who never