

Poor little fellow ! he could not even pray. He knew nothing of the common Father whose providence watches over all, and had never heard that in heaven above he had a Mother as sweet and gracious and tender as the one at home was harsh and cruel and unfeeling. Yet that night the Comforter of the Afflicted looked with compassion on the sufferings of little Richard, and was guiding his faltering steps through the storm. Thus it happened that he found himself all at once before a great door, which as often as it was opened let a flood of light and warmth escape into the cold night without. How could he resist so seductive an invitation ! Timidly following a party of four or five women and children who approached the building, the newsboy entered. It was a church. Many of those present were poor like himself, and there was especially a great number of children. Richard felt reassured.

Just as he had glided into a seat, a hundred voices rose in song, song that thrilled him through and through, for he had never heard anything so beautiful. Then when the hymn was finished, a priest appeared above the crowd; the glances of all turned to him, and he addressed the children.

Our desolate little friend knew, as we have said, nothing about the other world ; but the grace of baptism slept unknown in his young heart. And the Heavenly Mother who had directed his footsteps thither still bent a pitying glance upon him, so that when the priest spoke, little Richard understood the word of God. He learned then who had created him, who had loved him even to the point of dying for his sake, who in dying had given His Mother to him to be his very own, and who desired to have him near Him one day in the midst of beauty and splendor and joy that should never have an end. And he listened to all this with rapturous surprise and delight ; for he believed at once and fully the marvellous story of divine love.

When, after the sermon, the singing began again, when clouds of sweet perfume rose in the air, and all the people bowed their head low down, Richard understood that something very solemn was taking place in the great building, and bowed his head with the rest.

Outside, the chilly rain was still falling. He sought