

CONSOLATION

By Miss Dorothy L. Warne

It was night. The fitful gleams of an April moon shone in ragged streaks of silvery light through the uncurtained window. They rested, as if in mute sympathy, on the bowed head of a Mother, who gazed on a tiny, still form, lying with folded hands, on a couch of lilies and roses. Golden curls fell on a halo round the delicate features, from which all traces of human suffering had vanished. That morning the Children's Angel had hovered very close to the earth, and as the East was brightening with the splendour of a new day, had gathered the weary little flower close in his arms, and softly flown to place it with the blossoms in God's Garden.

A shaft of golden light fell across the eyes of the Mother, and gently she fell asleep.

* * *
* * *

Sleeping, she dreamed. She was leading her boy, now grown older, by the hand. But as they go a curious change passes over him; she sees him in the midst of a boisterous company. The boyish vigour, the elastic step are gone; the brand of the gambler is on his brow; those hands are restless and uneasy. Behind him gleam the roseate hues of a wonderful boyhood; in front looms the darkness of destruction and ruin. But he does not look back. A gentle, pleading face, the face of his boyhood's counsellor and guide rises before him, but, pushing it ruthlessly aside he struggles blindly on.

Once more the scene changes. From out of the mists there arises a building, gloomy and forbidding. The mother hastens towards it. As the heavy gates swing apart with a hollow clang she stops, and gazes at the scene before her. Surely that is a face that once was framed with golden curls; surely those eyes once gazed up into hers; and those hands folded themselves in baby prayer at her knees? Now that head is golden no longer, but, whitened by a wasted life, is bowed with the burden of shame, and those hands are folded together by the merciless grip of the handcuffs. Without a sign of recognition he passes, and with a bitter cry the mother sinks down, outside the prison gate.

* * *
* * *

The dawn of another day broke in bars of saffron and grey, and its rosy fingers raised the eye-lids of the sleeping mother.

She opened them slowly, and their gaze fell on the lilies and roses and the peaceful form of her baby. Then, remembering the vision, she turned towards the brightening sky, and a smile of peace illumined the grief-worn features.