

# LITTLE FOLKS

## How Baby Rachel Went to Heaven.

(By Mrs. Sara B. Howland, of Guadalupe, Mexico, in 'Mission Dayspring'.)

She was a little, round, roly-poly baby, with bright black eyes and long, silky black hair; just as cunning as anybody's baby sister.

She was the youngest of four little girls, and they made a very pretty picture as they sat around their mother's knee; all bright, attractive children, neatly dressed and well trained, but Baby Rachel was the chubbiest, fairest, and prettiest of them all.

Often when I watched this dear little group, I thought of the first time I saw their mother, Herlinda, as she came to school, years ago, in the early days of our mission. She was sitting on the bench in the 'patio,' resting after her long ride from Tlajamulco on donkey back, and she had on a short pink frock and was swinging her little bare feet as she smiled shyly at the senorita who came to welcome her.

She was always a bright, lovable child, and soon became one of our best scholars. She stayed many years as a boarder in the school, and was one of the best English scholars we ever had. At our examinations Herlinda always had some English poem or reading, and her clear pronunciation brought her many compliments from American visitors. She had a very good memory, and learned chapter after chapter in her Spanish Bible, and became more familiar with its teachings than many a Sunday-School scholar in the United States.

Before she had time to graduate, however, one of the Christian young men persuaded her to make a home for him right away, so we had a pretty little wedding, and soon Herlinda was a housekeeper all by herself. Then, year by year, the baby girls came to brighten the home, and Herlinda made a devoted and happy mother, who tried faithfully to bring up her children as she had been taught. Her little ones were not tied tightly about the body, but wore tiny waists with buttoned skirts, and pretty yoked dresses and white caps, and she did not fear to wash their dear little faces and braid their hair in neat plaits. Sometimes she found it hard to follow her rules and feed them

only at meal times, because many of her relatives would exclaim that she was starving her children because she would not give them fruit and beans and 'chili' at all hours. But she did her best, and in all our church there was not a sweeter little quartet.

One day, in spite of all her care, the baby was taken sick. She lay with her chubby face pale and drawn, and her long lashes would not lift to give us a glimpse of those dark eyes. It seemed to be trouble with the brain, and though the best doctors were called and many remedies tried, nothing could help; and one morning early one of the little girls in the house called: 'Oh, mamma! here comes Herlinda with flowers. The baby must be dead.' And so it was. In the chill hour before the dawn the baby had gone home.

But the mother's face was not wholly sad as she told us the news, and we saw that she had been given strength to meet the trial. She said it had come to her some days before that, if God should call one of them, it was Baby Rachel who was best fitted to go. She was so sweet and so innocent, just the one who would be a fit blossom for the garden of the Lord. She asked us all to come and be with her when she laid the little form away, which must be the very next day, according to the laws of the country.

If you would understand the joy it gave us to see the sweet spirit of calmness and trust that the sorrowing parents showed, you must know the customs of the people. When a little baby dies, the tiny form is laid on a table covered with flowers, and all the friends come and have a ball, where there is plenty of wine and cigars, and the people dance and drink all night. Then the body is placed in a blue coffin, if the child is a girl, and red, if a boy, and is carried to the grave amid the piercing shrieks of the mother and nearest friends, amid the noise of rockets and Roman candles.

Everything is unutterably sad, with no hope of the little one's going to heaven unless the parents have money to pay for masses for the repose of the soul. And it is no wonder the parents strive to drown their sorrow in drink and

dancing, because they do not want to think of the future.

It is for this that the missionaries work in Mexico, to bring the joyful message to the sad mothers that the dear Saviour loves the little ones, and that of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. You would have felt the joy of answered prayer, and seen the blessed results of faith in Jesus as a comforter in sorrow, if you had been with us when Baby Rachel went to heaven.

It was a bright afternoon when we gathered in Herlinda's room at the usual hour of Christian Endeavor. The baby wore a fresh white dress and her dimpled hands were folded, but she was smiling as if asleep, and all the children gathered around her and could not bear to come away. The room was full of friends, and many who had never been in a service before came, out of respect to the father, who is a master workman and employs many laborers. We sang song after song, the old familiar ones rendered into the musical Spanish words, but with the well known tunes: 'I Think When I Read That Sweet Story of Old,' 'Around the Throne of God in Heaven,' and 'I Want To Be an Angel.' In all the hymns the mother's voice rang out sweet and clear, and two little sisters stood with the other children and sang, 'Jewels, Precious Jewels.' The words of Scripture were read, strong, triumphant words of hope and immortality, the missionary, with a little tremble in his own voice, prays for the Heavenly comfort which indeed is felt all about us, and then the father tenderly lays the baby in her narrow bed.

There are no wild cries and convulsive sobs when the little form is taken away and laid in the grave, only gentle tears of sorrow for the daily loss, brightened by the thought of the eternal hope, and as truly as the Saviour stood by the tomb of Lazarus, so truly was His presence with us when Baby Rachel went to heaven.

Shall we not hasten into many sad homes with the message? Is it not worth any labor and sacrifice to help bring the Comforter to these sorrowing mothers? Let the thought of the sweet home-going of Baby Rachel help us to work and pray that the dear little Mexican