

Benjamin's Little Friend.



NAZARETH lay buried under its December mantle of snow ; poor squalid little Nazareth, hemmed in by its bleak hills and forgotten or despised by the world beyond, yet sheltering, unknown even to itself, the Messiah, the Saviour, in the glory of His humility and love ! Near the outskirts of the village in a house, poor even for Nazareth, lay a little crippled child, Benjamin, the widow Miriam's only son. She pale and tired and sad faced, smiled at her work to see him busy and unmindful for a time of his affliction.

"What art thou doing, my son ?" she asked at last. A sweet innocent child's face it was that looked up to her as he answered rather timidly, showing her a rudely made toy :

"It is for my little friend Jesus. He will be nine years old to-morrow and He is so good to me that I want to have a little surprise for Him."

"Indeed, He has been good to thee, and because He loves thee will be pleased with thy gift," she answered smiling tenderly at the eager little face.

While Benjamin finished his poor paper toy his mother was thinking of the Child Jesus. In His visits to her little crippled boy He had won her heart by His gentleness and sweetness and His love for Benjamin. She recalled the day long months before, soon after the accident which had invalided him, when he lay by the open door peevish and fretful and longing to take part in the merry games of the boys who were shouting and laughing nearby. How it made her mother's heart ache to see her darling yearning for what she could not give him, for the health and freedom he could never have again. And then she heard a light step, and, looking toward the door, had seen a child whose face was so winning, so sweet, so loving, that her heart went out to Him and