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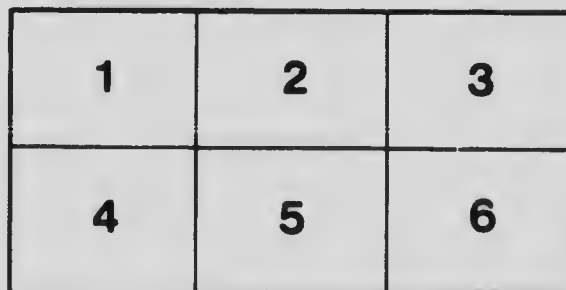
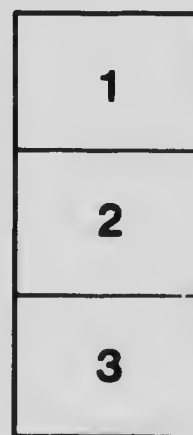
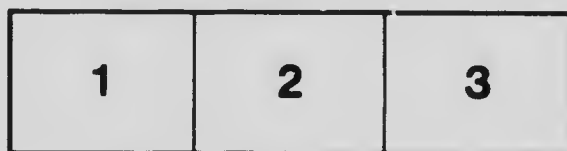
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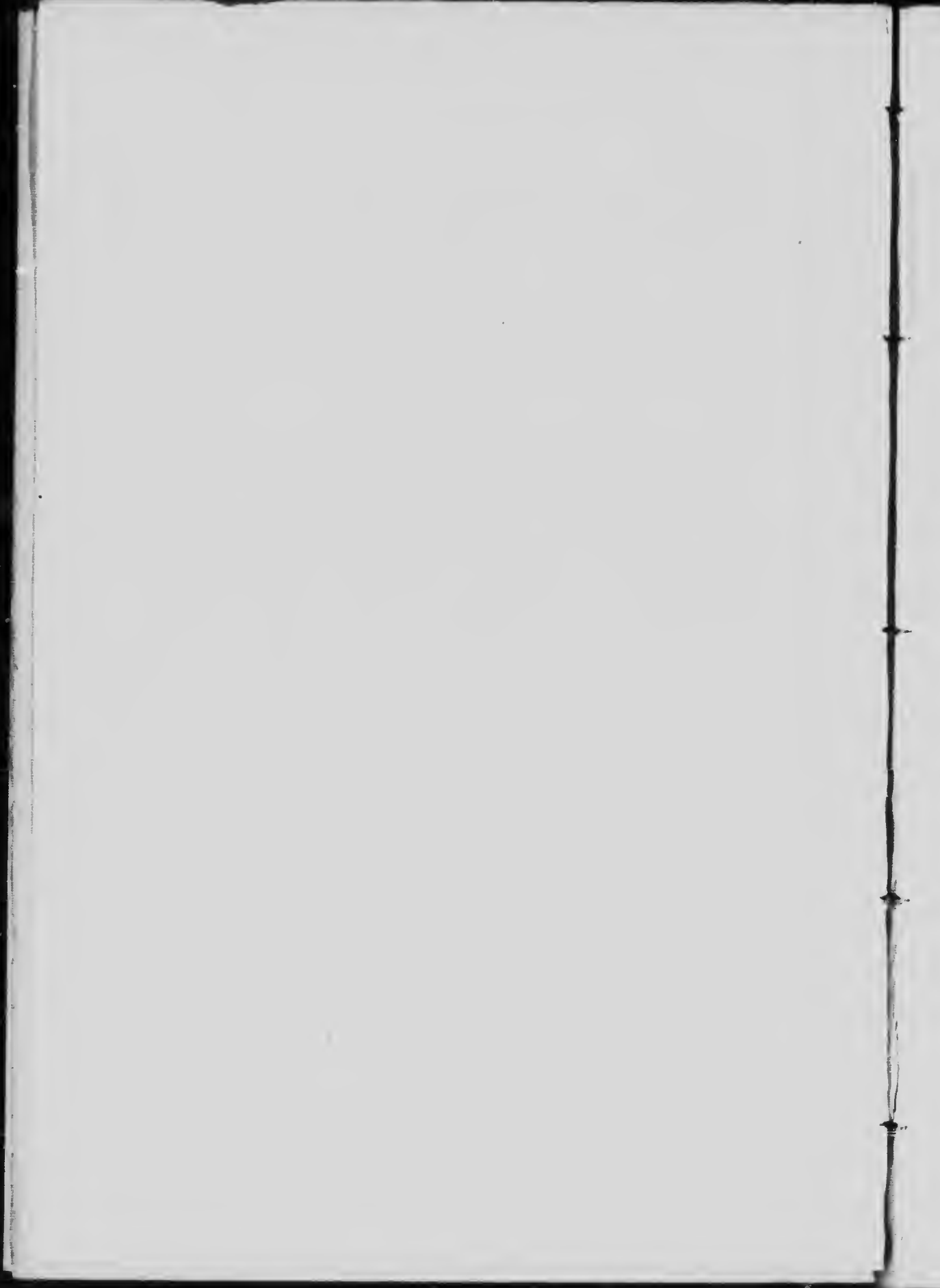
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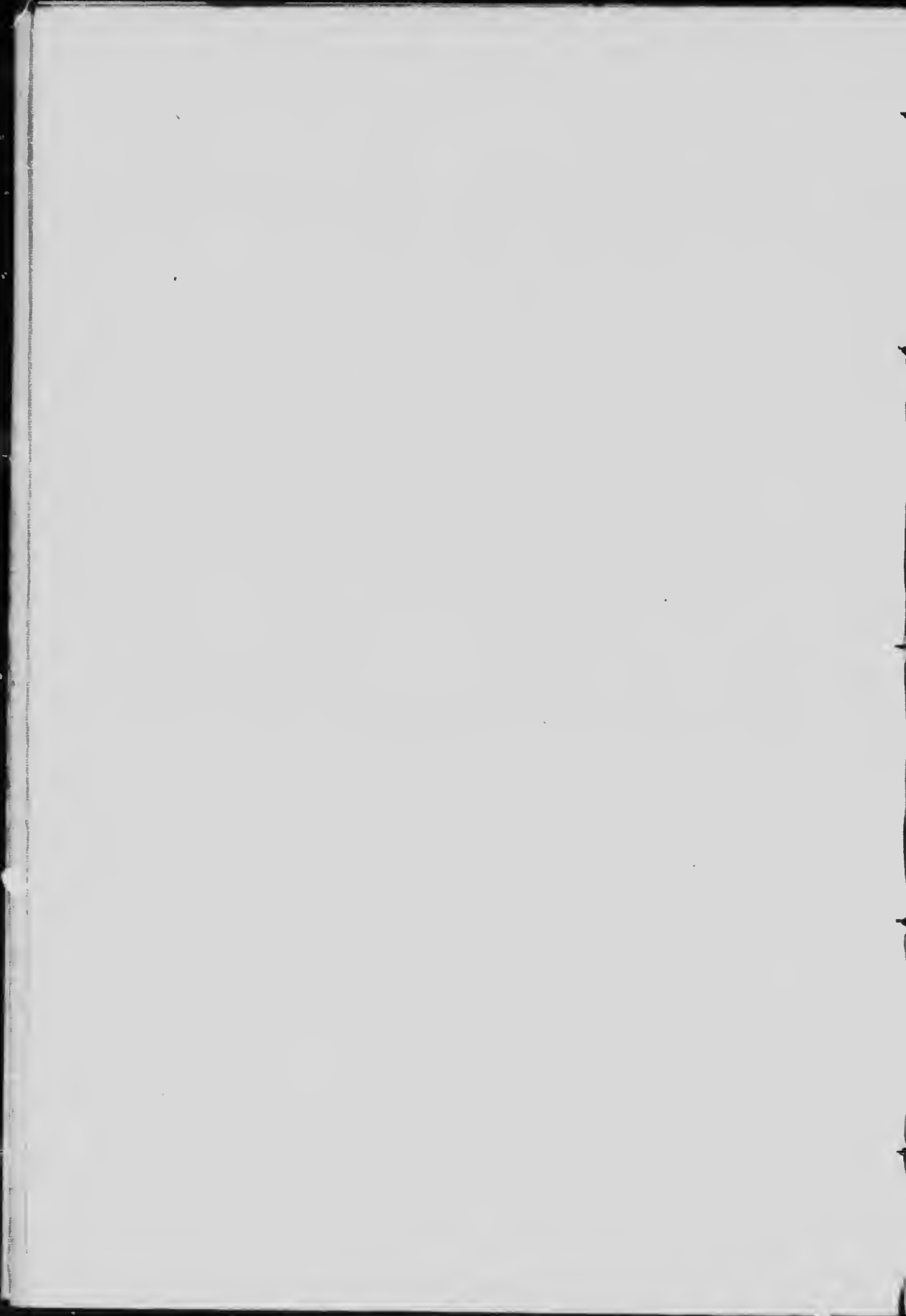
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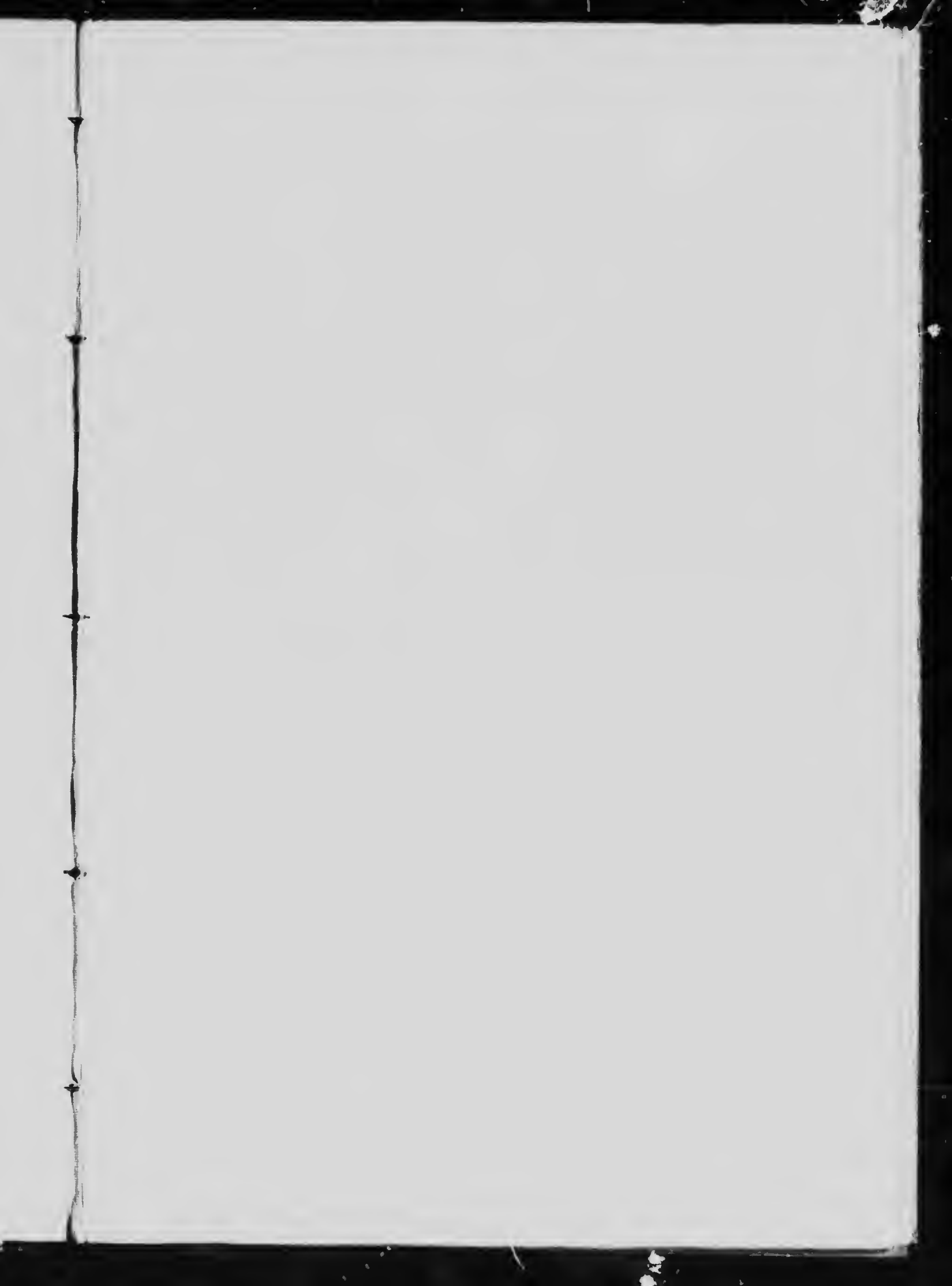
STORIES of the ANGELS

THE REV. C. ENSOR SHARP, M.A.
Rector of S. Thomas' Church, Toronto.



*Dedicated to the
Children of the Cathedral
in Quebec*







The First Easter Dawn.

From the Painted by J. T. Thompson.

Stories of the Angels

The First Story

THE story of my dream was as follows. I had been sitting in my room one Sunday afternoon in the summer, and had read the parable of the Sower. After reading it I lay back in my chair and thought in a sort of idle way about what it meant, and my memory kept on saying to me over and over again, "The reapers are the angels," and then I must have fallen asleep and dreamed. I found myself sitting on a bare, brown side of a mountain in the Holy Land, beneath the vivid blue sky of a Syrian afternoon. Close by me was a little company of men resting in various attitudes upon the ground and they seemed to be grouped more or less round a man who looked exactly the same as they did, but who evidently was felt by them to be a sort of leader or teacher. From their dress and appearance they were all of them, except perhaps one or two, Galilean peasants. Their rather rough manner and the peculiar pronunciation of their words proved this. I was sitting quite close to them, but they evidently either could not see me, or did not notice me, except that before my dream was over the one who was their leader turned and gazed at me with a thoughtful look as if he were reading my heart and mind. For quite a while nothing was said by anyone, and all watched a crowd of people who were scattered up and down the side of the mountain. Some of them were hurrying, and some were sauntering, but all were going away, and the bright colours of their Eastern costumes as they moved in different directions made in conjunction with the even brighter colours of the wild flowers a dazzling picture over which in places lay the early shadows of evening.

Presently the group near me began to talk, and the subject of their conversation was the Parable of the Sower, and when one of them asked what it all meant, I knew that it was Our Blessed Lord and His disciples, and you can imagine with what intense interest I looked at Him and them, and how eagerly I listened to His explanation almost in the very words that I had so often read in the Gospel story. After a little pause one who had a very pleasing voice and who was reclining nearest to the Master, said, "The seed is the Word of God—but Master who is the sower?" The Master replied, "Blessed are your eyes for they see—now behold the answer to your prayer." Thereupon

there seemed to lift as it were a veil from over the face of nature, and we began to see more and more distinctly that the hill and sky and every place near and far was filled with heavenly beings. All of us were amazed and frightened, and it was some little time ere we were able to quietly and intelligently behold that which was laid bare to our eyes. There were angels everywhere, but especially were they grouped in great ranks of brightness over and around Him whom the others called Master. This multitude of the heavenly host rose in so many rows, one above another, that they formed a cloud of light stretching beyond our human gaze. We noticed also that every heavenly being glanced at our little group on the mountain with much interest as though it possessed some great attraction for them. When I began to consider more carefully the details of the picture I noticed angels who were leaving the world to disappear in the far distance, and others who were appearing from far off to light upon the ground. So numerous were they that they gave an appearance of constant ascending and descending. There was a wonderful variousness in them and in their brightness, and occasionally I would see some one or another so resplendent and glorious that it dazzled my eyes to watch them. Many were carrying burdens in their hands or their arms, and at times such an one, as he passed, would be saluted with great reverence or joy by all who chanced to be in his neighbourhood. What they carried was not always easy to perceive, while a great many who were flying very fast merely held their hands joined in front of them as though they were praying. At times a crowd of these would all rise from one spot and fly together upwards, and all others made way for them as if they recognized the importance of their mission. So I concluded they must be the angels of prayer hurriedly bearing intercessions to the throne of the Most High, and where several flew together that they were coming from some House of Prayer. I also observed many angels leaving the earth with sheaves or bundles of golden grain that sparkled and flashed in the sunlight. Sometimes the sheaves were very large and heavy, but I also saw an angel with just a few stalks of grain, and others with very tiny sheaves, and it was astonishing to see that the angel who had a few heads of grain in his hand was treated with a solemn and joyous respect that was full of mystery. As he passed the others would veil their faces with their wings, and move humbly out of his way, floating in stillness until he had gone by, and presently one, the most glorious of all that I had seen, came flashing like a blazing star out of the distance, and taking with reverence the heads of grain from the angel vanished afar off. My attention was also drawn to the many angels who carried something concealed in one of their hands, which hand they held clasped

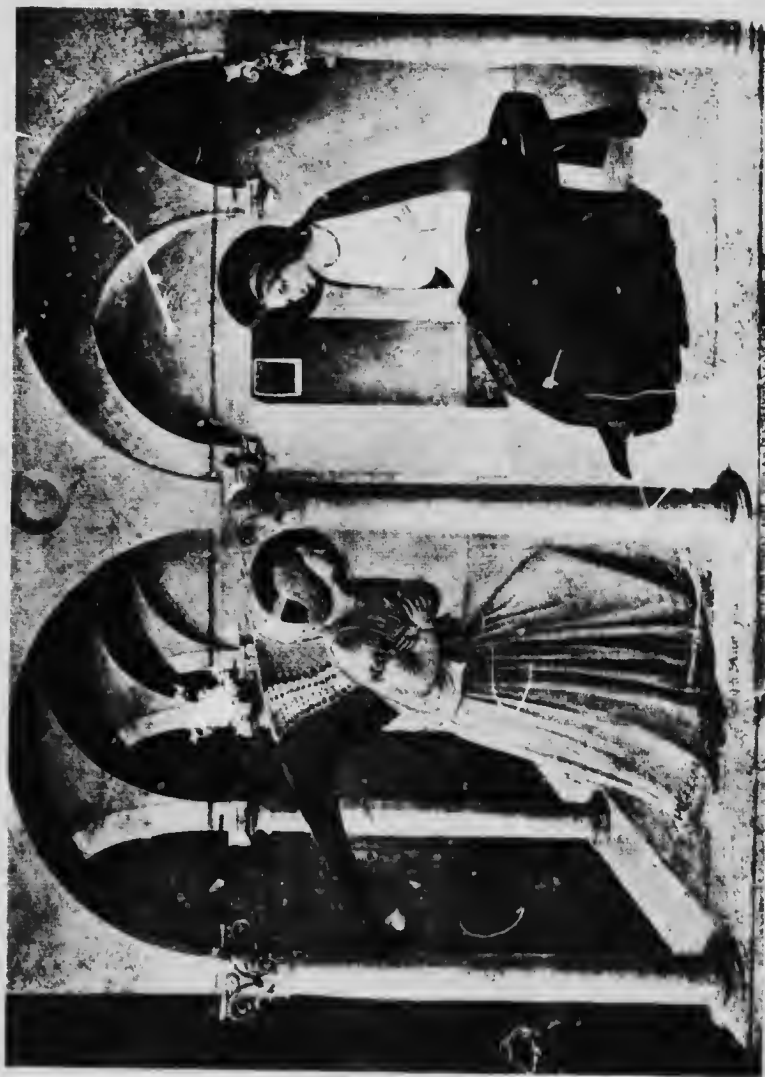
close to their heart as though it held something of very great price. These were always coming out of the distance towards the earth, and wherever they alighted, there they remained, or moved very slowly from place to place, but always they gazed into the distance, as those who see visions. All of these had that look of love and protecting care that we associate with the thought of Motherhood. Lastly I was attracted to some few angelic beings who were flying away with what looked like bundles of grass, and as one of them winged his way close by the hill I was awed at the look upon his face, for it was at the same time very stern and beautiful, and withal full of pity, while from his eyes there flashed a burning light that made one think of the words "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." All this vision was very confusing not only to me, but also, I perceived, to the men who were grouped nearby, and I was glad when one of them suddenly said, "Master wilt thou not read for us this vision of the angels." He replied, "All these heavenly beings are the angels of God going to and fro upon His business. There are also many other spiritual beings present of whom you are unaware, because for you this is a vision of the heavenly angels only. Now the great crowd of shining who remain stationed rank upon rank above us are they who wait upon the Son of Man to minister unto Him, and they are ten thousand times ten thousand, even thousands of thousands. Those many angels who are continually coming and going are the messenger angels. Some are bearing prayers to the Heavenly Father, some are bringing answers back again, and these as you may have noticed, far outstrip all other angels in their speed, while for them all other angels make way, lest they should in any wise be hindered. The ones who are more resplendent in beauty and light are some of them cherubim and seraphim, and the great angel who came and took the few stalks of grain from the hands of another angel is an archangel. But to all angels glory is added because of the measure of their labours and even of their suffering, and thus they go forward from glory unto glory. The myriad angels who approach from the far distance, having something concealed in one hand, which hand they ever hold closely to their breast, are some of the guardian angels, and that which they clasp is a few seeds of the Word of God. They are coming from the Father and have been entrusted with a larger or smaller portion of this seed, which they are conveying to the children of men over whom they have been appointed guardians. This is why you see them alighting upon the world and then remaining so long in one place, for, as you know, the pilgrimage of a mortal life is spent over a very small area of space. This work of service is very trying for a guardian angel, as he may not leave the soul committed to his care, and

so he is brought in contact with much that grieves and hurts his angelic nature. For that reason, as a compensation and as a source of strength, the Almighty Father gives to each the power of vision, and no matter how far away, or in what terrible and unheavenly surroundings they may be, they can always see the face of God, and you may therefore have observed how they constantly and for very long periods seem to be gazing into the distance. The angels with the sheaves will now be easy for you to understand, as they are the guardian angels bringing back the fruit of the Word of God, some thirty fold, some sixty, and some an hundred, and this they do only at that hour which mortals call death. The honour and respect paid to them, as they go on their way, is due to the fact that in each golden sheaf is enshrined the soul that they have guarded, and all the angels rejoice over a soul that has been redeemed, and so they shout together for joy when they behold the gathering in of the fruits of redeeming love. Now I will tell you of the angel who bore in his hand three or four blades of corn, and they stunted, poor, and bedraggled, and looking as though they had been grown under adverse circumstances, being hardly worthy of preservation. Yet this angel and his handful of grain was sufficient cause to bring forth from the near presence of God the great archangel whom you beheld, and the only one that you have been permitted to see amidst all the thousands of the angels. This is the story. There was a little maid, and she a cripple from her mother's womb, who lived in a dark house of poverty, vice, sickness, and ignorance, and to that house no ray of love or knowledge ever entered. Here in pain and distress she grew up like some very pitiful human weed deprived of light and nourishment, hated by those who owed her love, and friendless. All her love centred upon a baby child younger than herself, whose mother was often hideously cruel to it. Not once nor twice did the crippled girl protect the baby child by receiving in its stead the cruel blows of its mother. There came a day when the mother in a mad fit of drunkenness struck at the babe to kill it, and this cripple girl coming between was killed. So she died, not knowing God, having had no joy in life, but in her death she laid down her life for her friend. That explains the draggled ears of corn, the archangel sent from the presence to receive her soul, and had you been holier you could also have seen the rapture of a soul lost in the joy of the Beatific Vision. The other angels that drew your attention were the angels of the tares which they had been gathering in bundles to burn them. Going forth among souls who have wasted their lives and opportunities, who have counted the blood of the Covenant as an unholy thing, and done despite to the Spirit of Grace, you can well perceive why they look so stern, and why from their eyes

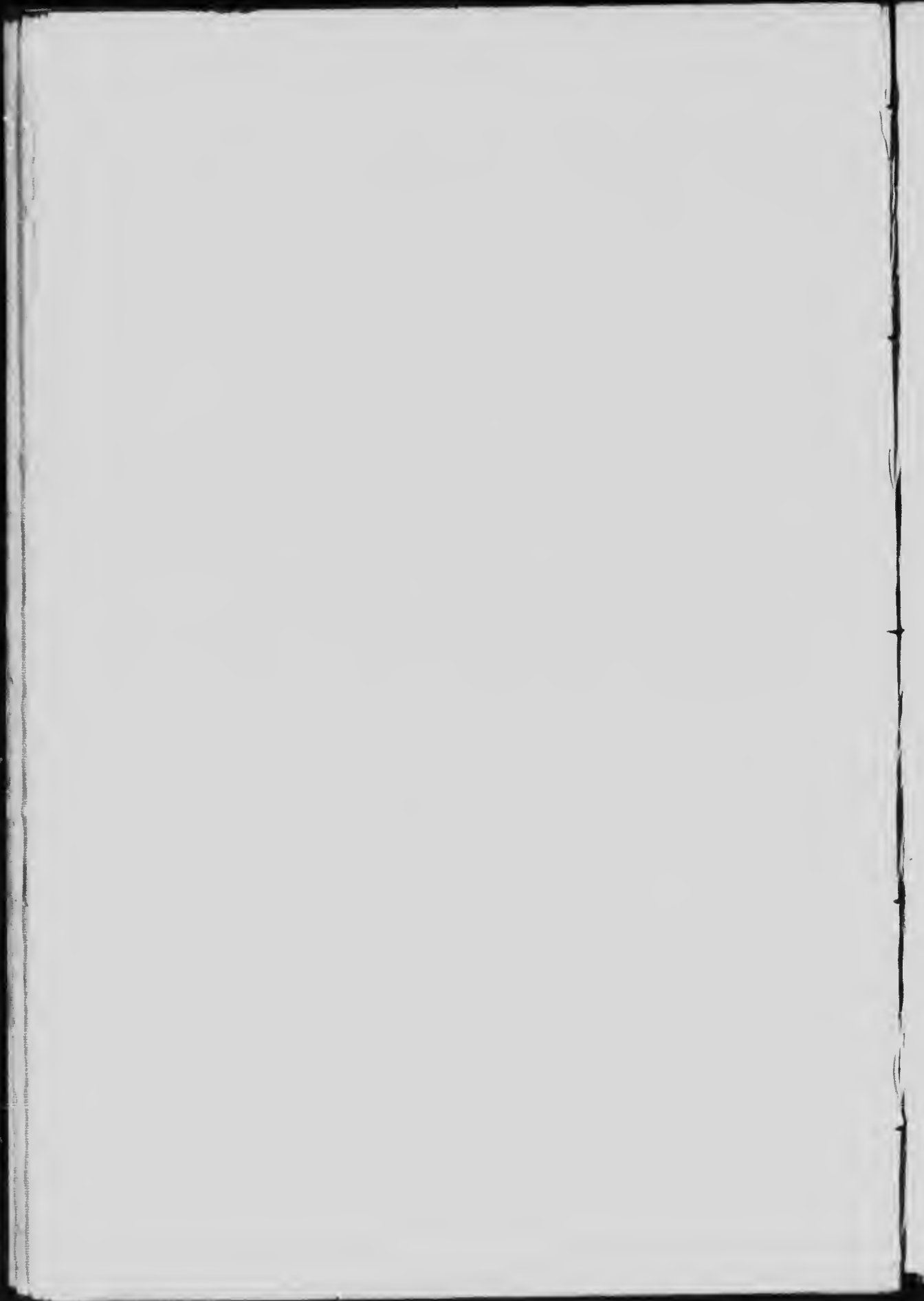
there flashes a consuming fire. Now I will shew to you more clearly a guardian angel and his handful of seed which is the Word of God." As he ceased to speak we seemed to be in a little home where was an ordinary child looking and living as most children do. Over him there was bending all the time the figure of his guardian angel, and ever and anon he would whisper to his child, or with a gentle touch seek to remove it this way, or that, and we noticed that at each such effort one of the little grains of seed vanished from out of the angel's hand. We passed from home to home and still we saw the same. Sometimes the child received the help with gladness, sometimes dully and slowly, and at times it would frown and shaking its head deliberately do that which it should not do. It was exceedingly sad at times to see an angel whose hand was still full of seed, having been unable to impart it to its child. In all such cases no words can describe the anguish or pain of the angelic face or the rapt longing of desire with which it gazed upwards in passionate prayer to the Almighty Father. I was greatly impressed when during the vision I observed the Master gazing with deep affection upon one of His followers who in these sad occasions added his own prayers to those of the angel, and I heard him say to him, "Love understands." But we thankfully saw how many more children there were who yielded to the guidance of their angels and grew in love and holiness. There were some instances too in which we were favoured with a sight very marvellous and comforting. In a richly beautiful house we saw a girl who was walking like an angel with her hand clasped to her breast as guarding some precious treasure, and we realized that she too had become a sower of the seed, and now not only received the Word, but was spreading it in other lives. The angels of such as these no longer had any seed in their hands, but were occupied in arranging one by one the heads of golden grain that slowly added themselves to the others in their arms and hands. They never seemed to weary of doing this, neither did they apparently find any constraint in standing for years with their arms enfolding the rich harvest. One wondered how the children got the seed for themselves until we beheld one child whose angel already held an armful of resplendent heads of grain kneeling at prayer and heard its words, "Lord grant me grace that I may help others to the knowledge and joy of life in Thee."

The Second Story

SO I will try to tell you of this wonderful garden. It was a bright day in summer, and having got up almost at sunrise I wandered away not heeding the direction in which my steps were taking me, for, as a matter of fact, I was in one of those moods when one is not absolutely certain of one's surroundings. While walking on solid ground and living in this world, I was in fancy unconscious of either the world or the ground, and so it did not seem the least bit strange when I found myself upon a high ridge of ground that appeared to stretch miles and miles away. There was no such ridge of hill anywhere in my neighbourhood, and I determined to reach the top in order to see where I was. It was with considerable eagerness that I hastened to look down upon the other side, and beheld a valley with another ridge of hill upon the opposite side, exactly like the one on which I stood. The valley itself looked like a garden, for it was bright with flowers of all colours, among which ran unending paths in every direction, and scattered through the valley and upon the lower slopes of the hills were a great number of children from little toddling ones to some who looked about fifteen years of age. I did not feel any surprise at this, but I was greatly interested to notice that there were quite as many grown up people as children, but whereas the children looked natural and real, the grown-up persons seemed somewhat faint and indistinct, and if one looked very earnestly at them they grew gradually fainter. This made me rub my eyes in order to clear my sight, but I found that the impression became even more confusing, for I actually grew to believe that I could see right through them. This made me determined to go down to the valley and find the reason for this strange impression. I had to walk along the top of the ridge for quite a long way before I could find an easy way of descending, and as I frequently stopped to look down I saw that the whole valley was divided into myriads of gardens, some two or three feet square, and some as many yards—some filled with flowers, and some with green plants. They were evidently planned by somebody and the quaintness of the idea increased my curiosity. Having at length reached a spot where descent was easy I observed some one standing a little way off looking downwards. As I drew nearer this person neither turned round nor moved, but said in the most natural voice, "You wish to go and see what causes the strange appearance of those persons in the valley—Come with me and I will enable you to understand—without me you would see nothing, for the nearer you approached the fainter each one would grow



L'Annunziazione



until you would see only space." I had by now arrived at that happy condition of restfulness that nothing surprised me, and I walked down the slope with my guide, who talked about the valley and its occupants. "Those figures are angels and they are the guardian angels of all those children that you see. There are other angels whom you cannot at present see, such as messengers, angels of the adoration, of the harvest, angels of the alms, and many more than I can describe, so that the whole place is full of them. From a distance you get an impression of the guardian angels, but unless you have a divine Helper you cannot see them close. This valley is a part of the Land of the Living, and the children that you see are all real living children, quite ordinary, but you behold here their spiritual life and the labours of their guardians. Each child in the valley has a garden—as you notice there are several thousands of them, some small, some large, of all kinds, for some have flowers, some herbs or shrubs, and some nothing but thorns and weeds. These gardens are the spiritual part of the children and are known as the Gardens of Souls. You have read and heard that Our Blessed Master when He was on earth said, 'The seed is the Word of God,' and each guardian angel gets some of this seed for the child under his care. The child plants it and tends it or neglects it just as it chooses, and is seldom conscious of what it all means. As we walk through the gardens presently you will notice the angels coaxing their children to the flower-beds, sometimes with happy success, but sometimes oppressed with the failure to restrain or guide their children's wilfulness, you will see them standing with tears in their eyes viewing the child and the garden alternately, or else with hands clasped supplicating the Divine aid. Very few of the children can see their guardian angels, and they are only conscious of something that urges or draws them towards their garden." Here I interrupted by asking which of the children were able to see their angels and why they were thus gifted. My guide replied, "They are the ones whom the Master needs for His other garden. This other garden is called the Garden of Paradise, where is the river of the water of life, and the Eternal Presence of the Lamb, and it is girdled round on all sides by the Everlasting hills of Divine Providence, and so nothing that may hurt or defile can ever approach His beloved ones." By this time we had come right down among the gardens, and there were children more than I could count of every age, character, and disposition. They were engaged in work, or play, while some were talking, and a few were quarrelling and fighting, but most of them seemed quite ordinary and happy. Then I enquired why it was that the children took no notice of us, and never moved to let us pass or to get out of our path, and I learned that we were invisible

to them, because that in the Garden of Souls no mortal things were limited as in the material life, and that the angels kept themselves more or less invisible, because it was the Master's order, as He wished His children to act of their own free will and accord. Thus then we strolled along, and I could not but marvel at the variety of the different garden plots. Here was one all scarlet flowers, another was all white, and some had so many differences of colour that they baffled description. Just as various was the condition of each for some had no weeds, some a few, and some were quite overrun with them. At the sight of these last I was inclined to indignation, for I supposed that the angel had not done his best to influence or control the child committed to his care, and to my surprise, and I may add, my mortification, my guide must have read what was in my mind, for he said without turning round, "If you look earnestly at this neglected weed-full garden, you will see that which will make you ashamed of doubting the heavenly ones." As I unconsciously gazed with more fixed attention at the weed-garden, there gradually opened up from it, what I can only describe as a lane of light, which stretched away into the distance, and which at the end made as it were a frame for a picture. The picture showed me a very dirty and evil-looking child engaged in throwing stones and mud at a poor little lamb that was standing not very far off. By the side of the child was the most sad and pathetic figure that I ever chanced to see in my life. It was stooping over and whispering to the child, but always the child frowned or moved away, and when presently I saw the angel's hand stretched out to touch the child, the place where the hand was, was violently slapped by the child. The face of the figure was streaming with tears, which had been shed so plentifully as to leave lasting marks, and the eyes of the figure were fastened upon the lamb with a look in which agony, adoration, and fear struggled for the mastery, and once it moved as though it were about to place itself between the child and the lamb, but some unseen force seemed to stay it. I was so amazed and distressed at beholding this figure of silent suffering that I said to myself, "Who can these be, and what do they mean?" My guide replied, "This is the child-owner of the garden, which stirred your indignation, the sad figure is the angel of whose love and labour you were critical, and yonder is the Lamb of God, whom the child would injure, and its guardian angel is powerless to stay it, or even to stand between it and the lamb. The child, as you see, has wandered a long way from the Garden of Souls, and it may come back, or it may not—we do not yet know." As he finished speaking the lane of light gradually dimmed and faded away, and we were still standing as before by the edge of the neglected garden. Where-

upon the thought came to me that I might in atonement for my doubts and criticism do somewhat in the matter of repairing the little garden at my feet. So I stooped to pull the weeds, but as my hands got near there seemed to be nothing to touch, and I could feel no weeds, nor any soil, although they were both still clear to my eyes. This indeed made me feel strangely frightened, because of the unreality of what I saw, when my guide said, "It is not thus easy to make atonement for other's sins, for no man may deliver his brother, nor make agreement for him, for it cost more to redeem their souls, so he must leave that alone for ever." By this time I was getting to feel that I was among things of which I knew very little, and so more and more grew inclined to regard my guide with anxious humility, willing to be taught and guided. He smiled, and the smile was most gentle and encouraging. Suddenly he stopped, and laying his hand upon my arm, said, "You will not move till I return—I go to speak to one yonder." He seemed to move rather than walk down a long path near the end of which was a figure more clearly discernible than any of the angels, and at which, I now was conscious all the angels were gazing, even while they were looking after their children. This had a strange effect upon me, the seeing all these almost innumerable figures, which never heeded aught but their children, suddenly gazing so intently at one, who in the distance had apparently no form or comeliness that any should desire him, but was like an ordinary gardener, only with a natural dignity that was quite impressive. Thus I partly mused and partly wondered when my guide returned to me. "You are strangely fortunate," he said, "for yonder is the Master, who has come to visit His garden, and He permits that you follow near to Him, as He passes by." "Who," said I, "is this Master—I judged yonder person to be but the gardener." My guide replied, "He has been taken for the gardener before, when He was in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea, and it was Mary of Magdala who mistook Him." "What," said I, "do you mean that yonder man so meek and lowly is our own Blessed Lord and Master? Should I not better depart from Him, for I am sinful?" "It is His will that you stay, and your own unworthiness matters not." He command your presence—so approach, but in silence. Thereupon slightly trembling and much abashed I hurriedly followed my guide nearer to the gracious presence of Him, whom I had long desired to see in that far off day when I might by His grace be ready for the Beatific Vision. As we drew nearer to Him I was not conscious of any special feeling except that He knew I was there, and that He was very mindful of my presence—nay I felt somehow as if He were, in some particular manner, thinking of me alone, though He neither spoke to nor looked at me. We came along

the main path and as we were almost up to Him, He turned into a narrow winding road and as a natural consequence we fell in behind Him, being separated from Him by a few feet of space. Sometimes He would stop and look at one of the little gardens, occasionally touch the child-owner with His hand, if the child happened to be near, and once He stooped over a very little infant and said something—I know not what. He stayed quite a while watching a little dark-haired girl who was kneeling at the side of her garden and apparently saying her morning prayers—and her garden was one to uplift even a child's heart in prayer, for it was full of the most beautiful Madonna lilies in full bloom gently swaying in the breeze as though they were singing Magnificat. The flowers were evidently most tenderly cared for, and at the head of the garden was a name, Maria Annunziata. As the Master moved on I could not refrain from whispering to my guide, "Is that the child's name—and why do so many of the gardens have such various flowers or plants?" "That," said he, "is the child's name, and each child may wish and ask for whatever it wants to grow in its garden, and then straightway receives it. After that the care or neglect rests with the child. That little girl really lives in Italy as you might guess by her name. She is a child given in answer to prayer, and is a devoted lover of the Mother of Our Blessed Lord, whose name she bears." As we talked or rather whispered the Master had moved further on, and was now standing still by the side of a little plot that was filled with small green bushes, that had the appearance of the herb called rosemary. The plants were of that peculiarly restful green colour that is the property of herbs, as if they had that colour given them to make up for their lack of glorious flowers and fruit. My guide told me later that there were many such in the valley—that the Master was very fond of a garden of herbs—and that they represented those happy restful lives that come and solace other lives as the dew rests upon the dry and thirsty herbage. The garden was well kept and gave one the impression of a methodical child with perhaps not very much imagination, but this was only my thought as there was no child anywhere in the neighbourhood of the garden. However, I soon perceived the lane of light which I mentioned before, leading from the garden to its owner, and a long way off on the hillside where the light ended was a bonnie little girl full of health and energy romping with some other children, as if she could not find enough action to absorb her vitality. Always close to her was her angel, but as soon as the angel found himself standing in the lane of light he drew near to the Master until he stood close in front of Him. Then I heard a very small voice say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Thereupon a brightness of celestial happiness flashed over the angel's face

such as no human words can picture, and I heard the angel say, "Master, why rosemary, when rosemary is merely for remembrance? Is my child's life to be written in the words, 'Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth,' or is it later on to be her dying words, 'Lord remember me'?" Then the Master said, "Nay, rather, 'This do in remembrance of Me.'" "Master," said the angel, "What will my child become?" He replied, "That thou shalt know hereafter, for to-day it is sufficient to rejoice that she being a little child has entered into the Kingdom of Heaven." Much of this I could not understand, but my guide told me later that the growing plants and flowers were typical of the child's soul and became the chief influence of the child's life, and that often the angels could not understand them, but always meditated upon them, and longed to find out the meaning so as to better help the children they guarded, and that it was only rarely that the Master hinted at or explained the meaning. "If," said he, "an angel experience a very terrible time with a soul committed to his care, and if he suffer greatly though the wilfulness and disobedience of his charge, he is compensated by being made an angel of the Passion, or of the Agony, which brings him very close indeed to the Master, and enables him to read and understand human secrets that other angels fear to gaze upon." By this time the angel of rosemary had vanished down the lane of light, and just before the light faded I saw the bonnie little girl lying on the hillside in the natural sleep of one tired with play—one arm was beneath her head, and a happy smile was upon her lips as though some pleasing thought had come to her through the silent doors of sleep. Much of what I now tell I learned, not at the time, but long after in frequent converse with my guide, but meanwhile in the garden we had followed the Master from place to place. Often He stopped—ever and always each garden aroused His thoughtful interest, but only of two others have I time to tell you, and that because they greatly caught my fancy, and because they were so different from the ordinary plots of ground.

We stopped quite a while at another garden, which also had not a single flower, but was filled with a rather dreary and dull-looking plant that had no comeliness or beauty, and which was evidently of the family of herbs. The garden was crowded full of it, so that one could not see a spot of soil, and it made a drab coloured patch that was the more outstanding, because next to it was a blazing garden of Oriental poppies, while close by there was also a very magnificent rose bush that made a huge pyramid of blushes, and was of the variety known as the Rose of Sharon. The owner of the garden was a boy of about ten years of age, who at that particular moment was walking

round and round his garden humming to himself in a cheerful mood. He had no apparent object in view, but was enjoying the mere motion and sound as children so often do, and which simple joys they so often lose as the years pass over them. "What plant is this, and what does it mean?" I asked. "That," said my guide, "is the herb called rue, and stands for sorrow." This answer left me still more amazed, and I was utterly unable to see any connection between the cheerful child and a plant with such a meaning and so fell to wondering what the Master thought of it. Listening most attentively I heard the angel say, "Master, why sorrow for my child?" The Master said, "Why not—sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning, and they that now go forth weeping shall doubtless come again with joy, bringing their sheaves with them." "Master, may I ask what my child will become?" "Only this may'st thou know—he shall bear in his bosom the reproach of many people, and shall sorrow for the sorrow of God." As I was about to speak to my guide I observed with great interest the face of the angel to whom this was said—it seemed to tell of those mysteries in life that we mortals find so difficult, for it told of tears that end in laughter, and sorrows that become the springs of thankfulness. "Do you understand all this," I said to my guide. "No, but it may possibly be that this is one who is dedicated to the priesthood, and the more so that you may have noticed how the Master laid both His scarred hands upon the child's head after the manner of one upon whom is conferred the grace of ordination." Thereafter we approached the last garden that I am now to describe. It was the strangest that I had yet seen, and it seemed to attract the attention of many others, for as the Master stopped in front of it, one realized a sort of quiver of expectation in the angelic forms that were grouped in the immediate neighbourhood, and then, too, I noticed with awe that there suddenly appeared a multitude of shining ones that thronged about the Master, and also hovering in great numbers rank upon rank high up over the little plot of ground. I cannot convey to you the strange feelings that almost overpowered me at this time. In the very centre of the garden was planted a vine and it had been trained to rest upon supports until it not only filled the garden, but was stretching over into several nearby plots that had evidently been neglected and left to the mercy of the weeds, which weeds it was slowly driving back by the force of its own vitality. Nowhere did it touch the ground and the supports were made of twigs stuck in the ground, each twig having a little piece of twig tied crossways near the top of the upright twig. I noticed that they were all copies of our Lord's cross and that there must have been nearly a hundred of them altogether. Indeed the child was just then

making one out of two twigs and a piece of string-like grass. You will be anxious to know what this child was like, and indeed I was so myself, but I do not find it easy to say. Actually the child was very ordinary, and I could not tell by its look or dress whether it was a boy or girl. It was neither beautiful nor ugly—neither attractive nor repellent—just the sort of child one would not specially notice unless one's attention were directed to it. But if the child were ordinary, its angel was beyond compare the most gloriously beautiful of all whom we had seen. Towering above all the others, with a face full of love and exaltation, there shone in its eyes a radiance that charmed and awed as though the Divine Light were gazing abroad upon the things that God had made, and behold they were very good. With what thrilling expectation we listened as the angel said, "Master what means the vine?" And the Master said, "I am the vine. This is the vine that I have planted, and when it had taken root it filled the land. From it shall be pressed the grapes into the chalice of God. This is a seedling of the true vine, the blood of whose grapes is given for the life of the world." Thereupon a silence of awe fell upon all of us, and soon after my guide and I found ourselves sitting upon the hillside like people slowly coming to themselves after their spirit nature has wandered into spiritual places full of mysteries and also of inexplicable happiness. "What does it mean?" I said. My guide replied, "I cannot tell, but some day we shall know—now for the present—farewell, and may God have you in His gracious keeping."

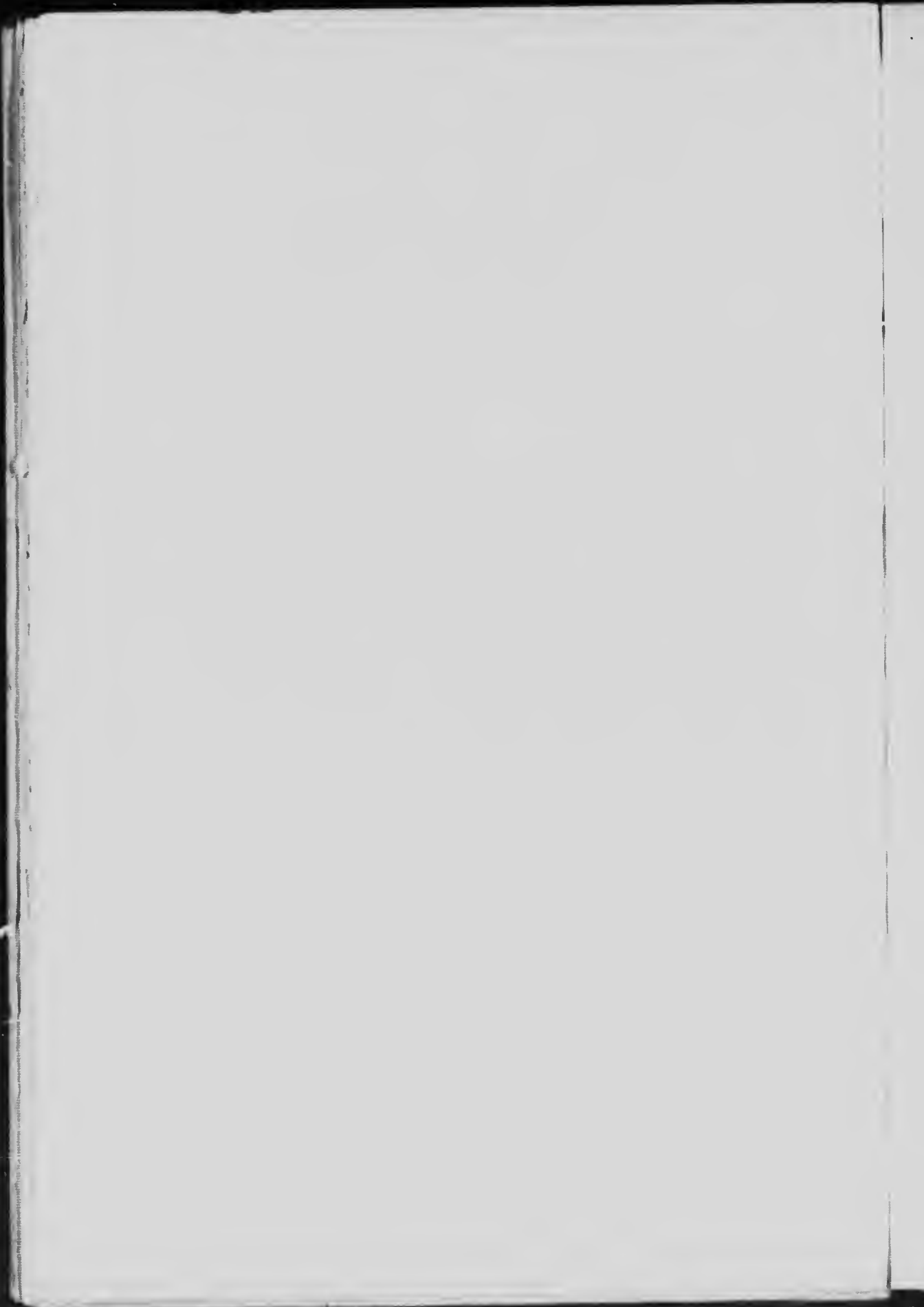
The Third Story

I AM now about to try and fulfil my promise that I would send you another portion of the story of the Garden of Souls, and I have decided to tell you some further details of the three gardens of Rosemary, Rue, and the Vine. I am now very old, and it is over fifty years since I walked with my guide in the Garden of Souls and heard the Master's words as He talked with the guardian angels of Rosemary, Rue, and the Vine. As a not unnatural consequence the children of Rue and the Vine grew up, and have since died, or, as their angels would say, have entered into life. The following account I have learned partly from vision, and partly from the words of my guide, whom I have seen very frequently since we first met on the hill in the Land of Life. Some ten years after I was in the garden I was talking to my guide of many things when he asked me if I remembered the garden of Rosemary and I replied that I not only remembered it, but had often tried to picture to myself what had become of the bonnie little girl whom we had left sleeping on the hillside. "To-day," said he, "you shall see her, for it is the day which shall mark the great crisis of her life. But you must not expect anything very strange or striking, for in most cases the great crises of life have no outward sign, but are known only to the soul and the Master." While he was speaking there opened up before us the lane of light that I had experience of in the garden. At the end of the light was a large and fair room of some person who was evidently very rich and well-born. It had those marks which are only possible in homes of culture, and luxury, and spoke to one of protected and gracious ease. In it was seated a woman of middle age, gentle, refined, and withal somewhat anxious and distraught. While I wondered who she might be, there entered another whom I at once recognized as the child of the garden of Rosemary. Save that she was now grown up she still remained as bonnie and cheerful, and was as evidently full of the joy and energy of life. As she moved through the room, touching things here and there into their proper position one was reminded of the methodical order of her Rosemary garden, and when she smilingly sat down near the older woman it was not hard to read that it was a meeting of mother and daughter. For a good while we heard them speak of the ordinary events of their daily life, their friends, their work, and their pleasures, and always the mother looked at the girl with wistfulness as though she were minded to say something, yet hesitated as one who finds it hard to make an opportunity. At last she



The Immaculate Conception

From the Palazzo by Massimo



said, "Dear daughter there is much that I should like to say to you to-night, but even I, who am your mother, find it not easy, for we all shrink from speaking of what we call serious things." At this, with a little gurgle of laughter her daughter said, "But mother I should love to hear you speak of some of those serious things, for I know that life is serious and I should be glad of your help and experience." "That is well-said, daughter, and I want you to realize that henceforth your life will be chiefly of your own ordering, for you are no longer under governesses and authority as you were a few weeks ago. Next week you will be enjoying your coming-out dance, and after that we must leave in your own hands the many decisions as to conduct, ideals, and practice which often seem of such small importance, while yet they determine the very issues of life. With your name and position, and the great wealth that is coming to you it is certain that you will soon be a centre of attraction, and many men will seek your hand in marriage. You will be flattered, your opinions will be consulted, your tastes considered, and your pleasure made the aim of many people, who at the same time will bitterly criticize you, and who while leading you into unworthy things, would refuse to help you if you made a failure of your life. There is little that I can do for you, except offer you a heart which will always love and welcome you while it continues to beat, and I can pray for you. So you see, my child, why it is that I feel anxious for you." The Rosemary child had listened to all this without showing any particular feeling, for she neither looked surprised, nor did it seem to make her serious or even solemn. She went over and sat on the floor at her mother's feet and leaning back against her mother's knee she began to speak in the most natural tone of voice and said, "Mother I am glad you have said what you did, for I often wished that I might feel sure that I could at any time come to you and speak of what you call serious things. I know something of what my life will be like, and I am looking forward to all the joy and gaiety of it, but I have long felt, too, that I am only a very ordinary girl, who would not attract much attention were it not for all these other things which even at school other girls spoke of with awe and envy. You know I am not very clever, but long ago when I was quite a little child I remember asking my governess the name of a little plant in the garden which had always attracted me because it was so quiet and ordinary and seemed to be living such a nice gentle life. She told me it was called Rosemary and that Rosemary stood for remembrance. It is such a strange idea but Rosemary for remembrance has always been very near to my thoughts ever since and anything about remembrance has appeared to have a special meaning for me. You know, mother, those words about 'Remember now thy Creator'—

well all through my school days I used to say them to myself. One day when I was in trouble and didn't know what to do, I heard a voice whispering, 'Lord remember me,' and it brought such comfort that I cannot tell you in words. You know I am very easy-going and careless and get carried away with the thought of having a good time, but so far those words have just managed to keep me from dropping altogether into carelessness and neglect. Last night something happened that perhaps you will feel inclined to smile at, and yet I must tell it to you because it was so very real to me. I had got into bed and I was thinking about the days that are coming and I was more than a little frightened as I recognized how unfit I was for the life I have to live, and wishing so much that I had something to hold on to in all the coming days—when I heard a voice as clearly speaking to me as your own just now. There was a power and gentleness in it that made me feel frightened, and I sat up in bed with a sort of gasp, and yet it was nothing more than this, 'This do in remembrance of Me.' I lay down again and my thoughts were all jumbled together with Rosemary for remembrance, and the words I had heard, but gradually there came to me a clear thought that it was all part of a long story and that my Master had given me a help for all my life. Just to live humbly in recollection of Him, to do His Will, especially in those simple things that one cannot understand, but which seem so manifestly one's duty. May it not really be so, mother, that He has thought of me, and perhaps Himself told me this? You will not laugh at it, mother, will you, because it is so intensely real to me?" We had been watching the two faces and one could not but be struck with the illumination that spread over the mother's face as she replied, "My dearest, I am sure it is all true, and I feel no fear for you as long as you remain a Rosemary-child and hold on to your remembrance, and I am so glad you told me." As the light began to fade we heard the mother whisper to herself—unheard by her daughter—"Magnificat"—and that is all I know of the Rosemary garden.

The story of the garden of Rosemary made me think so much of the past, that the very same day I asked my guide if he could tell me of, or let me see the child-owner of the garden of Rue. "I can tell you," he said, "but I cannot let you see, for he is long since living in the Garden of Paradise, and that no mortal eye can view. You may remember that the child was a boy, and the persistent way he walked round and round his garden humming to himself. Both these things were characteristic of him for he grew up with a dogged will to do whatever it seemed right that he should do, and even to the end, in spite of many sorrows, he kept that happy faculty of happiness. When he grew up he made up his mind that the Master wished

him to become a Priest. His people, who were worldly wise, tried to prevent him, and his mother said that he would break her heart if he followed his own way. None knew the pain he suffered, or the sorrow that overshadowed his life, when he finally left father and mother, and kindred and home for the Master's sake. He but rarely saw his home again, and then always under conditions of sorrow, for the home life was full of recrimination, and misunderstanding, and he was plainly given to understand that he was not wanted. His priestly life was spent in a wealthy suburban parish that offered nothing of romance, and brought him no large measure of success. Here he fell in love with a wealthy girl who returned his affection, and for a time his life was radiant, but it was not long before her ideals of life clashed with his and owing to his refusal to give up his work for a life of leisure provided by her wealth she forsook him, and not long after married another. By this time he had not only given up home, but his promised wife for the Gospel, and as he sturdily pursued his daily round it was as a man of sorrows. So he lived and worked unnoticed, although his work was cordially appreciated by the few who were aware of it. When he was about forty he was offered a large and important sphere in the mission field, and once more he was heard humming as he used to do in the earlier days, but his doctor told him that he ought to refuse as he had the seeds of an incurable disease. His words were, "You might go out as Bishop and do two or three years of useful work, but after that you could neither undertake the long journeys required of you, and your life would be a constant battle against lassitude which at last would send you home to die." His consequent refusal was regarded as love of an easy life, and so he left his work for an obscure country place where he was, as it were, buried alive. I often saw him under these conditions, and the only noticeable feature of his life was an increased reticence that comes to one who lives much in the other world. The end of his story was quite commonplace. At the last his parents now grown old came to see him and his mother's constant complaint was that it would have been so different if he had only followed her advice, that it was all his own fault, and that she did not know what she had done to merit such unhappiness. In his father's quiet acceptance of his life he found some little comfort. Then he died with only his nurse in the room, for he passed quite suddenly, and I heard her telling his father that the last words he uttered were, "Sorrow may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning." The happiness he now knows has no regrets and he lives very close to the desire of his heart in the land that is very far off. The story of the child-owner of the garden of the Vine was told to me by my guide for the same reason as the story of the child of

Rue. The following is his story. "I think it will be enough to give you an account of the last hours of the child of the Vine. Try to picture to yourself a scene in the heart of tropical Africa on a blazing day when the heat was heavy with moisture. It was one of those days that no white person is able to endure, and even the coloured natives feel the depression of Nature. Beneath a small group of palms was hung a grass hammock in which one was reclining who was evidently ill. You could see the occupant moving restlessly and now and then an arm would be thrust over the side of the hammock to hang down limp and listless with the fingers plucking at the air, and constantly the sick person would moan or sigh heavily. There were no buildings or persons anywhere, except that close beside the hammock a native was squatting on his heels chewing betel nut, and labouriously waving a fan made of a large palm leaf. Now and then he would rise and peer into the face of the sick person, or offer a drink of water out of a calabash, and then sink back on his heels. Once or twice he spoke to the occupant of the hammock, but the only word that was intelligible was one that sounded like "Missionary." The long hours passed by night—day turned into tropical night, and the native lighted a fire and often looked round nervously as he listened to the strange sounds of the tropical night. But through it all he kept up his watch, and except when he dozed off to sleep he kept the fan going and peered anxiously every now and then into the hammock. When the second night was approaching the sick person began to talk in a sort of delirium. "Lord how long! Would God it were morning and that the shadows might flee away! Yes, mother, it is delightfully cool out in the garden, and one feels it is a joy to merely live on a day like this. Ah, Lord, why this solitude—it seems as if no man cared for my soul. My people where are they—who remembers me? I have borne the burden and heat of the day and love has left me solitary and alone." There was a time when by the side of the hammock appeared a figure that was but dimly seen—and by now the native had succumbed to his tiredness and was sound asleep, with his head dropped upon his chest. For a while this figure stood watching the sick person who was still moaning and tossing—and then he laid his hand upon the head of the sick one, who became strangely quiet and still and breathed steadily and evenly. Then the voice of the figure said, "See, my child, you are not solitary or forgotten," and round the hammock stood many shining ones all gazing upon its occupant. Some were evidently praying, while others merely appeared to be looking with awe and admiration. But splendid beyond all others was the guardian angel who had the appearance of one awaiting some great and triumphant joy. One could realize

that this was bringing solace and peace to the sick person, and as though this vision were not enough there was shown before the memory of the sick one a little room far away in the homeland. It was the evening hour and the room was the room of a child. Beside the child's bed knelt a very tiny girl who was saying her evening prayers and presently she came to the petition, "Dear Lord remember all missionaries, and bless them." As the words passed from her lips a look of unspeakable happiness rested upon the sick person's face. Neither the haggard pain, nor the sweat of death remained, but only peace and the murmured words, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, for I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Two days later the grove of palms was filled with natives, many of whom had come from long distances, and all were strangely quiet and moved as the hammock with its frail burden was committed to the earth, where not many weeks later a native vine planted itself and grew in tropic luxuriance.

The Fourth Story

THIS is the last of my angel stories for two reasons. One is that I know that I am not much longer for this life on earth, because all the heavenly things have been growing so clear to me that earth and earth's charms are rapidly falling away from me. The other reason is the word of my ahgelic guide who long ago took me round the garden of the enildren, for he has been with me and told me of things that are only told to those who are nearing the land of angels and souls. But on his last visit I begged, if it might be, to let me have some little thing more to tell to those whom I shall soon leave behind on earth, something that should be to them a comfort and an inspiration. So of his kindness he said to me, "I will show you some of the duties and labours of the angels." Therefore, in the first place he took me to a lone and desolate place, where was nothing but sand and rocks that spread away to the horizon as far as one could see, and only in the foreground there was a man. How can one in words describe him! At first sight he seemed so ordinary, that one would have passed him by in a crowd without notice. He was evidently poor for he wore such clothes as in the east mark those of the lower class. That he was an Easterner I knew partly by his dress, partly by the natural surroundings, but chiefly by the heat that smote one back from the sand, just as when one opens the door of a furnace. For some time I gazed at him because my angel guide did the same, and did not make any appearance of going further. The longer I looked the deeper grew the attraction, and I began to realize the hectic flush upon his face, the drawn lines of pain round his mouth and forehead, and above all the passic of patient endurance that looked forth from his eyes. It was, I think, the plainest face that I have ever seen, and yet the appealing power of it, and the soul that was so thinly veiled behind it have haunted me ever since. He sat there unmoved and motionless, the while the figure conveyed to one the idea of a persistent and restless identity, as of one to whom life was a passionate storm of labour and emotion, but yet controlled by a powerful will and intellect. Then as we watched there grew out of the atmosphere the outlines of one standing beside him—one who was evidently an angel. No words passed between them, but the angel seemed to impart a tranquillity and a peace by his mere presence. Long time we watched and the man's face grew both stronger and calmer as the lines of distress and mental energy were smoothed away—and the scene faded and was gone. I looked at my angel guide, but hardly knew what to say, or what to ask.



The First Easter Morn

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At last he turned to me of his own accord and said, "You want to ask, and you know not what to ask, for there seems nothing to question, save as to the name and history of him whom you saw seated in the desert. That little, ordinary, and plain looking man was the great Apostle Paul. He was in the wilderness of Arabia shortly after his conversion and for days he had been praying. You may remember how the Lord said of him, 'Behold he prayeth.' Wonderful indeed must have been the prayer of him who could call forth such words from God. You saw in him the power of converted prayer, how it uplifts and how in the uplifting it strains the human mind and body as in the case of the mystics. Beside him as you guessed, was an angel not his guardian angel, but the angel of prayer, the angel sent to those who pray as our Lord prayed. Very few have felt his presence, for few have been able so to pray as to bring him to their side, but you saw the calm that he gave and the new man that arose as a result of his presence. If only mortal men would thus wrestle in prayer how many of life's doubts would be solved for them, and how glorious would be the power of their life in Christ. But let us see one other that perhaps you may understand more easily." Soon we were gazing into a room in which were two people, a young man and a young woman. Both were good to look upon and the woman one that would appeal to the mind, the heart, and senses of any man who knew her. The angel guide whispered to me, "They are engaged, they are both wealthy, but she is somewhat worldly, while in his heart there is a longing for things spiritual, and a desire to do more than live the ordinary life of society. He has been telling her of his wish to work among God's poor in the large city where they live, and she has done her best to combat his wishes. At first she tried to laugh him out of it, then she grew cross, and threatened to break off their engagement. Now she has been pleading her love, and with her arms around him, and her kisses upon his face, she has all but broken down his will to do her will. Yet he knows that to yield means for both a life robbed of its best endeavour and truest happiness and she feels that if she does not win him now he will escape her altogether. She really loves him, but more than that she loves her own way and is bending all her power and charm to make him obedient to her desires. In the bitter struggle he is suffering more than she is, for he is of a finer temperament and he realizes more than she can what the struggle means and what it will cost him to let her go." Just at this moment she drew near to him where he was standing by the fire with one arm leaning upon the mantel shelf and looking moodily into the embers of the dying fire. As she threw her arm over his shoulders and drew his face towards her she whispered, "You will not be silly any longer, will

you ? You know you are breaking my heart, and I have only you in all the world. You have won my love so that now there is no other man in all the world for me. And if you persist I shall die of a broken heart, for I cannot live the life you wish. You have always known that I never could, and yet you won me. Oh, cruel thus to torture me. You will yield me this thing will you not and I will dedicate all my life to repay you for your tenderness." He said but little and then left her. When he was gone she raged backwards and forwards like an animal in pain, and he wandered away into the darkness to fight out his battle in silence and alone. We watched him pacing through the gloom, now hurrying and then loitering, but always we saw beside him an angelic form that towered above him and sometimes stooped to whisper, and sometimes bore him in its hands as he hurried through the dark, lest he should dash his foot against a stone. "Who is that ?" I asked. "That," said my guide, "is the angel of the temptation. He cannot do much while the temptation lasts, but when the hour of trial is past he can comfort and bring solace to the soul that is seared with conflict. Even the Son of Man after His temptation deigned to accept the ministering aid of His creatures, and so He has in His sympathizing love provided help for those that are tempted even as He was. We may leave him now for the presence of the angel shews that the worst of the fight is over, and soon the tried and proven soul will taste the joy and peace of victory." Again we saw another picture. This time it was dark, and dark shadows from a multitude of dwarf trees fell upon the ground, for there was the gorgeous light of an Eastern Paschal noon. What strange memories seemed to awake as I looked around and yet saw nothing to arouse them, for there were trees, the hard ground, and solitude. For quite a while I was puzzled as to what it might possibly mean. But presently I was aware of dim shadowy forms that took clearer shapes and soon the place was filled with angels. Among them standing somewhat separated was an angel whose description it is impossible to figure in human words. Of a marvellous stature, but of a subdued radiance he seemed as one made for solitude, and there was about his posture and bearing a feeling of restraint, of confidence, and of the sort of lassitude that is manifested in those who have undergone some grievous strain or suffering out of which they have emerged triumphant, but still bearing the signs of conflict. His face was thoughtful, compassionate, and strong with the strength of suffering. No human beings were present and I felt that I was beholding something that I ought to understand, and yet something of which I had lost the clue. My angel guide said to me, "You are puzzled, and yet you feel something familiar about the scene. You are gazing upon the scene of the Agony

in the Garden of Gethsemane and the angel of strength whom you see is the Angel of the Agony accompanied by legions of other ministering angelic beings. No human foot had trod upon this particular spot where Our Lord prayed for self sacrifice. If any wander here they are unknown to themselves turned aside so that none may stand upon this holy ground on which the Redeemer knelt. To the angels this spot is almost more wonderful than Calvary for it was here that the great decision was made for salvation. Here too was Our Lord's last moment of consolation from the presence and service of ministering angels, for as you remember He after this refrained from all solace and assuagement of the Passion and Death. As He said, 'Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels,' but He had willed here in the garden to tread the winepress of the Wrath of God alone, and to drink the cup of suffering to the dregs. Upon the Passion the angels gazed from a distance until they accompanied our Lord to Paradise, and again appeared to mankind at the Resurrection."

Again and for the last time another vision came to me. We were in a room in a very poor and much neglected home. There was a bed covered with ragged clothes, that were as clean as such rags could be, and above them lay the face of a child, a girl of thirteen or fourteen years of age. At one side of the bed knelt a woman, emaciated, crippled and plain from long years of work, insufficient food and suffering borne contentedly, and she was evidently the child's mother. She knelt in stunned silence, broken now and then by a short dry sob, for she was long past the blessed relief of shedding tears. A little way off stood her husband, as I judged him to be, looking on with the immobility of features that come to those who have tasted every emotion of sorrow, so that but for the dumb pain in his eyes, one would have thought him to be indifferent. On the other side of the bed sat a doctor, holding in his fingers the child's wrist, while he alternately gazed at his watch held in his other hand, or at the face of the child. It was a complete and consummate picture of humanity in distress, all but abandoned of human hope and human sympathy. As one watched one felt the unbidden thought arise "Does no one care? Is it nothing to all the world that distress can be, and is not alleviated? Can it be that even God has forgotten to be gracious, and has ceased as a Father to pity His own children?" Soon one's thoughts were scattered by the contemplation of the changing scene. The bed disappeared with its rags and poverty and instead beneath the child were the tender arms of everlasting love. Already smiles were passing over the face of the dying, and as naturally as a child would do it seemed to settle itself

more comfortably in its throne of rest. The room was filled with angels, one of whom held pillowed upon his breast the weary head of the sorrowing mother, whispering one knows not what words of comfort. On each side of the father stood two with their arms beneath his, bearing him up in their hands. But most wonderful of all was the change in him who sat beside the bed. With sympathetic smile he laid his hands upon the child, smoothing away all pain, and across the bed he said to the mother's soul, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and I will give them rest." So the vision rested for a while, until the room began to fill with a wondrous soft light and the angels drew apart to make way for one who approached with a dignity, solemnity, and gentleness that were beyond words. He stooped over the bed for a moment waiting, then the radiance faded, the vision passed, and there was only the dead and the sorrowing. My angel guide whispered to me, "It was the angel of death in the presence of the Lord of life." So ended my visions, and I now await the time when vision shall pass into sight.

