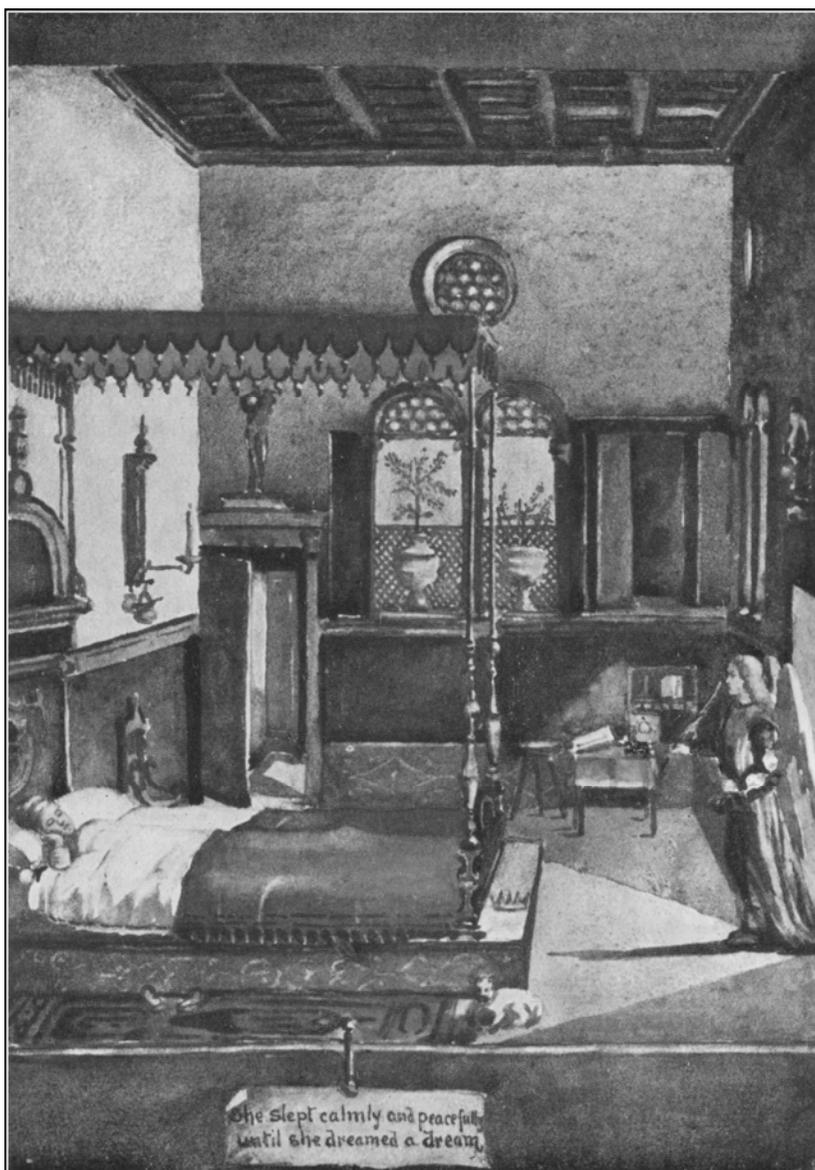


IN GOD'S GARDEN



IN GOD'S GARDEN

BY

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YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS

CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

There is a garden which God has planted for Himself, more beautiful than any earthly garden. The flowers that bloom there are the white souls of His saints, who have kept themselves pure and unspotted from the world.

In God's garden there is every kind of flower, each differing from the other in beauty. Some are tall and stately like the lilies, growing where all may see them in their dress of white and gold; some are half concealed like the violets, and known only by the fragrance of kind deeds and gentle words which have helped to sweeten the lives of others; while some, again, are hidden from all earthly eyes, and only God knows their loveliness and beholds the secret places where they grow. But known or unknown, all have risen above the dark earth, looking ever upward; and, although often bent and beaten down by many a cruel storm of temptation and sin, they have ever raised their heads again, turning their faces towards God; until at last they have been crowned with the perfect flower of holiness, and now blossom for ever in the Heavenly Garden.

In this book you will not find the stories of all God's saints. I have gathered a few together, just as one gathers a little posy from a garden full of roses. But the stories I have chosen to tell are those that I hope children will love best to hear.

Let us remember that God has given to all of us, little children as well as grown-up people, a place in His garden here on earth, and He would have us take these white flowers, the lives of His saints, as a pattern for our own. We may not be set where all can see us; our place in God's garden may be a very humble and sheltered spot; but, like the saints, we may keep our faces ever turned upward, and learn to grow, as they grew, like their Master, pure and straight and strong—fit flowers to blossom in the Garden of God.

“Saints are like roses when they flush rarest,
Saints are like lilies when they bloom fairest,
Saints are like violets, sweetest of their kind.”

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SAINT URSULA

ONCE upon a time in the land of Brittany there lived a good king, whose name was Theonotus. He had married a princess who was as good as she was beautiful, and they had one little daughter, whom they called Ursula.

It was a very happy and prosperous country over which Theonotus ruled, for he was a Christian, and governed both wisely and well, and nowhere was happiness more certain to be found than in the royal palace where the king and queen and little Princess Ursula lived.

All went merrily until Ursula was fifteen years old, and then a great trouble came, for the queen, her mother, died. The poor king was heart-broken, and for a long time even Ursula could not comfort him. But with patient tenderness she tried to do for him all that her mother had done, and gradually he began to feel that he still had something to live for.

Her mother had taught Ursula with great care, and the little maid had loved her lessons, and so it came to pass that there was now no princess in all the world so learned as the Princess Ursula. It is said that she knew all that had happened since the begin-

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ning of the world, all about the stars and the winds, all the poetry that had ever been written, and every science that learned men had ever known.

But what was far better than all this learning was that the princess was humble and good. She never thought herself wiser than other people, and her chief pleasure was in doing kind things and helping others. Her father called her the light of his eyes, and his one fear was that she would some day marry and leave him alone.

And true it was that many princes wished to marry Ursula, for the fame of her beauty and of her learning had spread to far distant lands.

Now on the other side of the sea, not very far from Brittany, there was a great country called England. The people there were strong and powerful, but they had not yet learned to be Christians. The king of that land had an only son called Conon, who was as handsome as he was brave. And when his father heard of the fame of the Princess Ursula he made up his mind that she should be his son's wife. So he sent a great company of nobles and ambassadors to the court of Brittany to ask King Theonotus for the hand of the Princess Ursula.

That king received the messengers most courteously, but he was very much troubled and perplexed at the request. He did not want to part with Ursula, and he knew she did not wish to marry and leave him. And yet he scarcely dared offend the powerful King of England, who might be such a dangerous enemy.

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So to gain time he told the messengers he would give them their answer next day, and then he shut himself up in his room and sorrowfully leaned his head upon his hand as he tried to think what was best to be done. But as he sat there thinking the door opened and Ursula came in.

“Why art thou so sad, my father?” she asked, “and what is it that troubleth thee so greatly?”

“I have this day received an offer for thy hand,” answered her father sadly, “and the messengers are even now here, and because they come from the King of England I dare not refuse their request, and yet I know not what answer to give them when they return in the morning.”

“If that is all, do not trouble thyself, dear father,” answered Ursula; “I myself will answer the messengers and all will be well.”

Then the princess left her father and went to her own room that she might consider what answer might be wisest to send. But the more she thought the more troubled she became, until at last she grew so weary that she took off her crown and placed it as usual at the foot of her bed and prepared to go to rest. Her little dog lay guarding her, and she slept calmly and peacefully until she dreamed a dream which seemed almost like a vision. For she thought she saw a bright light shining through the door and through the light an angel coming towards her, who spoke to her and said:—

“Trouble not thyself, Ursula, for to-morrow thou shalt know what answer thou shalt give. God

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has need of thee to save many souls, and though this prince doth offer thee an earthly crown, God has an unfading crown of heavenly beauty laid up for thee, which thou shalt win through much suffering.”

So next morning when the messengers came into the great hall to receive their answer, they saw the Princess Ursula herself sitting on the throne next to her father. She was so beautiful, and greeted them so graciously that they longed more than ever that their prince might win her for his bride.

And as they listened for the king to speak, it was Ursula's voice that fell on their ears. She began by sending her greeting to the King of England and to Prince Conon, his son, and bade the messengers say that the honour offered her was more than she deserved, but since their choice had fallen upon her, she on her side was ready to accept the prince as her promised husband, if he would agree to three conditions. “And first,” went on Ursula, leaning forward and speaking very clearly and slowly, so that the foreign ambassadors might understand every word, “I would have the prince, your master, send to me ten of the noblest ladies of your land to be my companions and friends, and for each of these ladies and for myself a thousand maidens to wait upon us. Secondly, he must give me three years before the date of my marriage so that I and these noble ladies may have time to serve God by visiting the shrines of the saints in distant lands. And thirdly, I ask that the prince and all his court shall accept the true faith and be baptized Christians. For I cannot wed even so

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great and perfect a prince, if he be not as perfect a Christian.”

Then Ursula stopped speaking, and the ambassadors bowed low before her beauty and wisdom and went to take her answer to their king.

Now Ursula did not make these conditions without a purpose, for in her heart she thought that surely the prince would not agree to such demands, and she would still be free. But even if he did all that she had asked, it would surely fulfil the purpose of her dream, and she would save these eleven thousand maidens and teach them to serve and honour God.

Ere long the ambassadors arrived safely in England, and went to report their mission to the king. They could not say enough about the perfections of this wonderful princess of Brittany. She was as fair and straight as a lily, her rippling hair was golden as the sunshine, and her eyes like shining stars. The pearls that decked her bodice were not as fair as the whiteness of her throat, and her walk and every gesture was so full of grace that it clearly showed she was born to be a queen. And if the outside was so fair, words failed them when they would describe her wisdom and learning, her good deeds and kind actions.

The king, as he listened to his nobles, felt that no conditions could be too hard that would secure such a princess for his son, and as for the prince himself his only desire was to have her wishes fulfilled as quickly as possible, so that he might set sail

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for Brittany and see with his own eyes this beautiful princess who had promised to be his bride.

So letters were sent north, south, east, and west, to France and Scotland and Cornwall, wherever there were vassals of England to be found, bidding all knights and nobles to send their daughters to court with their attendant maidens, the fairest and noblest of the land. All were to be arrayed in the finest and costliest raiment and most precious jewels, so that they might be deemed fit companions for the Princess Ursula, who was to wed Prince Conon, their liege lord.

Then the knights and nobles sent all their fairest maidens, and so eager were they to do as the king desired, that very soon ten of the noblest maidens, each with a thousand attendants, and another thousand for the Princess Ursula, were ready to start for the court of Brittany.

Never before was seen such a fair sight as when all these maidens went out to meet the Princess Ursula. But fairest of all was the princess herself as she stood to receive her guests. For the light of love shone in her eyes, and to each she gave a welcome as tender as if they had all been her own sisters. It seemed a glorious thing to think they were all to serve God together, and no longer to live the life of mere pleasure and vanity.

As may well be believed the fame of these fair maidens spread far and near, and all the nobles and barons crowded to the court to see the sight that all the world talked about. But Ursula and her maidens

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paid no heed to the gay courtiers, having other matters to think upon.

For when the soft spring weather was come, Ursula gathered all her companions together and led them to a green meadow outside the city, through which a clear stream flowed. The grass was starred with daisies and buttercups, and the sweet scent of the lime blossoms hung in the air, a fitting bower for those living flowers that gathered there that day.

In the midst of the meadow there was a throne, and there the princess sat, and with words of wonderful power she told her companions the story of God's love and of the coming of our Blessed Lord, and showed them what the beauty of a life lived for Him might be.

And the faces of the listening maidens shone with a glory that was more than earthly, as they with one accord promised to follow the Princess Ursula wherever she might lead, if only she would help them to live the blessed life so that they too might win the heavenly crown.

Then Ursula descended from her throne and talked with each of the maidens, and those who had not yet been baptized she led through the flowery meadow to the banks of the stream, and there a priest baptized them while the birds joined in the hymn of praise sung by the whole company.

But all this while the Prince Conon waited with no little impatience for news of Ursula. He had been baptized and joined the Christian faith, he had

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sent the companions she desired, and now he waited for her to fulfil her promise.

And ere long a letter reached him, written round and fair in the princess's own handwriting, telling him that as he had so well fulfilled her conditions, and was now her own true knight, she gave him permission to come to her father's court, that they might meet and learn to know each other.

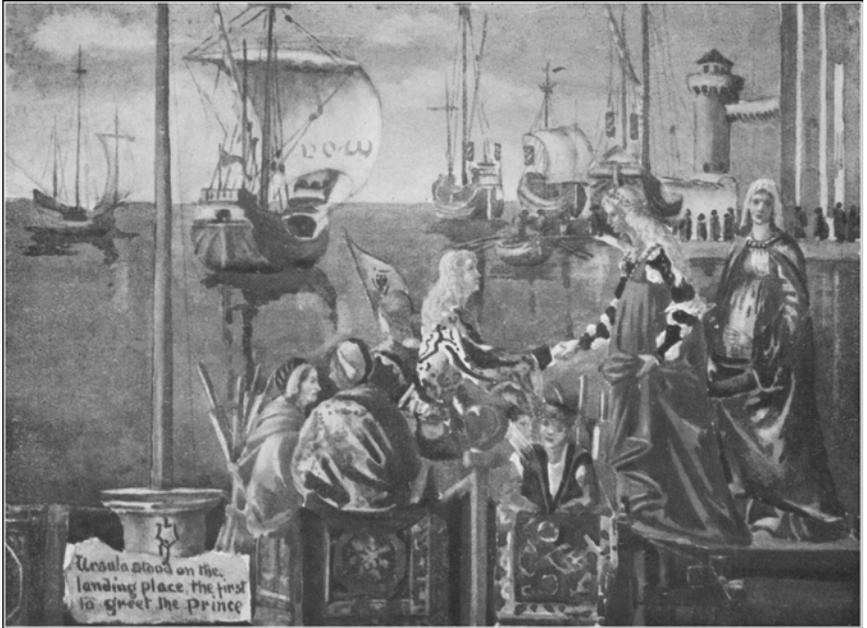
It was but little time that Prince Conon lost before he set sail for Brittany. The great warships made a prosperous voyage over the sea that parted the two countries, and came sailing majestically into the harbour of Brittany, where the people had gathered in crowds to see the young prince who had come to woo their fair princess.

From every window gay carpets were hung, and the town was all in holiday, as Ursula stood on the landing-place, the first to greet the prince as he stepped ashore, and all that Conon had heard of her seemed as nothing compared to the reality, as she stood before him in her great beauty and welcomed him with gentle courtesy. And he grew to love her so truly that he was willing to do in all things as she wished, though he longed for the three years to be over that he might carry her off to England and make her his queen.

But Ursula told the prince of the vision that had come to her in her dream, when the angel had said she must first go through much suffering, and visit the shrines of saints in distant lands. And she told him she could not be happy unless he granted

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her these three years in which to serve God, and begged him meanwhile to stay with her father and comfort him while she was gone.



So Ursula set out with her eleven thousand maidens, and the city was left very desolate and forlorn. But the pilgrims were happy as they sailed away over the sea, for they were doing the angel's bidding, and they feared nothing, for they trusted that God would protect and help them.

At first the winds were contrary and they were driven far out of their course, so that instead of arriving at Rome, which was the place they had meant to go to, they were obliged to land at a city called Cologne, where the barbarous Germans lived.

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Here, while they were resting for a little, another dream was sent to Ursula, and the angel told her that in this very place, on their return, she and all her maidens would suffer death and win their heavenly crowns. This did not affright the princess and her companions, but rather made them rejoice, that they should be found worthy to die for their faith.

So they sailed on up the River Rhine till they could go no further, and they landed at the town of Basle, determined to do the rest of their pilgrimage on foot.

It was a long and tedious journey over the mountains to Italy, and the tender feet of these pilgrims might have found it impossible to climb the rough road had not God sent six angels to help them on their way, to smooth over the rough places, and to help them in all dangers so that no harm could befall them.

First they journeyed past the great lakes where the snow-capped mountains towered in their white glory, then up the mountain-road, ever higher and higher, where the glaciers threatened to sweep down upon them, and the path was crossed by fierce mountain-torrents. But before long they began to descend the further side; and the snow melted in patches and the green grass appeared. Then followed stretches of flowery meadow-land, where the soft southern air whispered to them of the land of sunshine, fruit, and flowers.

Lower down came the little sun-baked Italian villages, and the simple, kindly people who were

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eager to help the company of maidens in every way, and gazed upon them with reverence when they knew they were on a pilgrimage to Rome.

Thus the pilgrims went onward until at length they came to the River Tiber and entered the city of Rome, where were the shrines of Saint Peter and Saint Paul.

Now the Bishop of Rome, whom men call the Pope, was much troubled when it was told him that a company of eleven thousand fair women had entered his city. He could not understand what it might mean, and was inclined to fear it might be a temptation of the evil one. So he went out to meet them, taking with him all his clergy in a great procession, chanting their hymns as they went.

And soon the two processions met, and what was the amazement and joy of the Pope when a beautiful maiden came and knelt before him and asked for his blessing, telling him why she and her companions had come to Rome.

“Most willingly do I give thee my blessing,” answered the old man, “and bid thee and thy companions welcome to my city. My servants shall put up tents for you all in some quiet spot, and ye shall have the best that Rome can afford.”

So the maidens rested there in quiet happiness, thankful to have come to the end of their pilgrimage and to have reached the shrines of God’s great saints. But to Ursula an added joy was sent which made her happiness complete.

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For the prince, whom she had left behind, grew impatient of her long absence, and the longing for his princess grew so strong he felt that he could not stay quietly at home not knowing where she was nor what had befallen her. So he had set out, and, journeying by a different route, had arrived in Rome the same day as Ursula and her maidens were received by the good bishop.

It is easy to picture the delight of Conon and Ursula when they met together again, and knelt hand in hand to receive the Pope's blessing. And when Ursula told him all that had happened and of the angels whom God had sent to guide and protect them, the only desire the prince had was to share her pilgrimage and be near her when danger threatened. And his purpose only became stronger when she told him of the vision she had had in the city of Cologne.

"How can I leave thee, my princess," he asked, "when I have but now found thee? Life holds no pleasure when thou art absent. The days are grey and sunless without the sunshine of thy presence. Bid me come with thee and share thy dangers, and if it be, as thou sayest, that it is God's will that thou and all these maidens shall pass through suffering and death for His sake, then let me too win the heavenly crown that we may praise God together in that country where sorrow and separation can touch us no more."

And Ursula was glad to think that, through love of her, the prince should be led to love God,

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and so granted his request and bade her companions prepare to set out once more.

The Pope would fain have persuaded them to stop longer in Rome, but Ursula told him of her vision, and how it was time to return as the dream had warned her. Then the Pope and his clergy made up their minds to join the pilgrimage also, that they too might honour God by a martyr's death.

Now there were in Rome at that time two great Roman captains who were cruel heathens, and who looked upon this pilgrimage with alarm and anger. They commanded all the imperial troops in the northern country of Germany; and when they heard that Ursula and her maidens were bound for Cologne they were filled with dismay and wrath. For they said to each other:

“If so many good and beautiful women should reach that heathen land the men there will be captivated by their beauty and wish to marry them. Then, of course, they will all become Christians, and the whole nation will be won over to this new religion.”

“We cannot suffer this,” was the answer. “Come, let us think of some way to prevent so great a misfortune that would destroy all our power in Germany.”

So these two wicked heathen captains agreed to send a letter to the king of the Huns, a fierce savage, who was just then besieging Cologne. In it they told him that thousands of fair women in a great company were on their way to help the city, and if

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they were allowed to enter all chances of victory for his army would vanish. There was but one thing to be done and that was to kill the entire band of maidens the moment they arrived.

Meanwhile Ursula and her companions had set sail for Cologne, and with them were now Prince Conon and his knights and the Pope with many bishops and cardinals. And after many days of danger and adventure the pilgrims arrived at the city of Cologne.

The army of barbarians who were encamped before the city was amazed to see such a strange company landing from the ships. For first there came the eleven thousand maidens, then a company of young unarmed knights, then a procession of old men richly robed and bearing no weapons of any kind.

For a moment the savage soldiers stood still in amazement, but then, remembering the orders they had received in the letter from the Roman captains, they rushed upon the defenceless strangers and began to slay them without mercy. Prince Conon was the first to fall, pierced by an arrow, at the feet of his princess. Then the knights were slain and the Pope with all his clergy.

Again the savage soldiers paused, and then like a pack of wolves they fell upon the gentle maidens, and these spotless white lambs were slain by thousands.

And in their midst, brave and fearless, was the Princess Ursula, speaking cheerful words of comfort

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to the dying and bidding one and all rejoice and look forward to the happy meeting in the heavenly country. So great was her beauty and courage that even those wicked soldiers dared not touch her, and at last, when their savage work was done, they took her before their prince that he might decide her fate.

Never before had Ursula's beauty shone forth more wonderfully than it did that day when she stood among these savage men and gazed with steadfast eyes upon the prince, as one might look upon a wild beast.

The prince was amazed and enchanted, for he had never seen so lovely a maid in his life before, and he motioned to the soldiers to bring Ursula nearer to him.

"Do not weep, fair maiden," he said, trying to speak in his gentlest voice, "for though you have lost all your companions you will not be alone. I will be your husband, and you shall be the greatest queen in Germany."

Then most proudly did Ursula draw herself up, and her clear eyes shone with scorn as she answered:

"Does it indeed seem to thee as though I wept? And canst thou believe that I would live when all my dear ones have been slain by thee, thou cruel coward, slayer of defenceless women and unarmed men?"

And when the proud prince heard these scornful words he fell into a furious rage, and, bend-

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ing the bow that was in his hand, he shot three arrows through the heart of Princess Ursula and killed her instantly.

So the pure soul went to join the companions of her pilgrimage and to receive the crown of life which the angel of her dream had promised her, and for which she had laid down her earthly crown as gladly as when in her peaceful home she laid it aside before she went to rest.

SAINT BENEDICT

IT was in the year of our Lord 540 that Saint Benedict was born at Spoleto in Italy, and he was only a boy of sixteen on the night when our story begins.

Such a cold night it was. Piercing wind swept over the mountains, whistling through the pine-trees, and hurrying on to the great city of Rome that lay in the plains below. It was cold enough in the city where the people could take shelter in their houses, and sit warming their hands over their little pots of fire, but out on the bare hillside it was even worse. For the icy breath of the winter wind, which had come far over the snow, swept into every nook and corner as if determined to search out any summer warmth that might be lingering in a sheltered corner.

And there in a cave high up among the rocks, a boy sat listening to the wind, and thinking of many things, as he tried to wrap his worn old cloak closer round him.

He was a tall thin lad, with sad dreaming eyes, and a face already sharpened by want and suffering. The cave in which he sat had little in it, except a heap of dried leaves which served him for a bed, and it was difficult to imagine how any one could live in

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so dreary and comfortless a place, so far from any other human being.

But he was thinking of a very different home, as he sat shivering in the cold that night. Only a year ago he had lived in a beautiful palace, where everything was pleasant and warm and bright. His father was the lord of the country around, and he, the only son of the house, had everything that he could want. They were all proud of him, he was so clever and brilliant, and as soon as he was old enough he was sent to study in Rome, that he might become a great lawyer.

There the boy's eyes saw a different scene—the great city of Rome, where all was gaiety and pleasure, where all pleased the eye, the ear, and the taste, but where, alas, so much wickedness dwelt as well. He had tried to shut his eyes to things he did not wish to see, but day by day the sights and sounds around him, the talk of his companions, and the things they thought so pleasant had become hateful to him. And one day he had stolen secretly away from Rome, leaving everything behind, determined to go away into a desert place and live alone. This it seemed to him was the only way of truly serving God, to learn to deny himself in everything and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

A tender smile came over the boy's face as the next picture rose before his eyes. True he had left all and gone into the wilderness, but love could not so easily be left behind, and his old nurse had found out a way of following him, and would not be denied the

SAINT BENEDICT

pleasure of serving him and caring for his wants; even begging food, from door to door, that she might prepare a dainty meal for him. It had been very pleasant, but its very pleasantness had warned him that he must deny himself still further. So he had once more stolen away, when his old nurse was asleep and had hidden himself in the cave among the rocks of Subiaco. Here he was indeed alone, and the only food he had was a little bread which a kind old hermit gave him daily, and his only drink the clear water of the mountain streams.

And here he seemed to live with God alone, seeing no one but the kind old hermit who brought him his daily bread. He was happy and peaceful, never ceasing to pray for those who in the busy world might forget to pray for themselves.

But this night the thoughts of past days were troubling him. And as he sat there listening to the wind he began to long for the things he had left behind. One beautiful face especially grew clearer than the rest, and smiling upon him beckoned him back to the pleasures and comforts and earthly joys he had put away from him.

With a cry he sprang to his feet and rushed out of the cave. For a moment he felt as if his feet must carry him down the steep mountain-side, over the plain and back to the beautiful city; and then he stood still, and with a prayer for help to overcome this temptation of the Evil One, he threw himself into a thicket of thorny briars that grew by the side of the cave. There he rolled over and over until he

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was torn and bleeding; then slowly returning to the cave he lay down upon his bed of leaves, peaceful and contented. The evil thoughts had fled, the face that tempted him had vanished, and Satan was conquered. So Benedict began his life of self-denial and solitary prayer. Years passed by and in spite of the loneliness of the place and the few people who ever passed by that way, it began to be known that one of God's saints lived in the mountain cave. The shepherds who fed their flocks on the lower hills would bring him little offerings of milk or cheese and ask his blessing, or perhaps a prayer for one who was sick. And gradually people began to call him their saint of the mountain, and to come to him for help in all their troubles. Thus the fame of his goodness spread wider and wider, until a company of monks who lived some way off sent and besought him to come and live with them and be their head.

Benedict was grieved to think of leaving his little cell which he had grown to love, and the simple mountain people, who so often came to him in their need. But he thought this was a call he ought to obey, so he sorrowfully set out and journeyed many miles till he came to the convent of the brothers.

It was all very strange to him after the stillness of his mountain cell, and he could not accustom himself to hearing voices all day long and to seeing so many faces. Still he strove to do his duty and soon made many changes in the convent life. He told the brothers plainly that there were many comforts they must put away, and above all that they must eat less and work more.

SAINT BENEDICT

Now the brothers did not like this at all, and they began to repent that they had asked so great a saint to come and rule over them, for he made their rule so hard and strict, that few of them cared to keep it.

Then one day a strange thing happened. The brothers were all dining together, and Benedict was silently eating his portion, his thoughts far away in the little mountain cell at Subiaco, when some one touched his arm and offered him a cup of wine. Benedict turned and looked searchingly into the brother's face, and then with upraised hand made the sign of the cross over the cup. Instantly it fell broken to the ground, and the wine was spilt upon the floor, for there had been poison in the cup, which the holy sign had destroyed.

Then Benedict looked round at the company of brothers, who sat with downcast eyes, ashamed and silent, and, without a word, he rose and left them. He returned, alone as he had come, back to his mountain home, where instead of human voices there was the song of the birds, where the wild flowers looked at him with pure, friendly faces, and even the wild animals did not count him their enemy and would do him no harm.

Here he hoped once more to live quite alone, but one by one men came and built huts close to his cave, that they might be near so great a saint, and before long there was a great company living around him.

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Benedict's fame had spread even to Rome, and two of the Roman nobles sent their sons to be taught by him. One was only five years old and the other twelve, and it seemed a hard life for such children. But Benedict cared for them and watched over them, and they loved him as if he had been their own father.

And after all life was very pleasant on the mountain-side, when the sun shone and lessons and prayers were over. They could play among the pine-trees and chase the goats over the rocks, and when the sun grew too hot creep back into the cave to rest. In spring there were the first flowers to hunt for, and they would come back with eager hands filled with violets and mountain anemones. And in autumn there were nuts and berries to be gathered, which they laid up like young squirrels for their winter store.

And among the daily duties there was nothing they liked so well as to go down to the lake to fetch water, when the mountain springs had run dry. One day it was the little one's turn to do this, and as he was leaning over, his foot slipped, and he fell into the lake, and before he could utter a cry the water closed over his head.

At that very moment Benedict, who was kneeling in prayer on the hill above, saw a vision of the boy's danger, and hastily sent the elder lad down to the lake to help the child.

He never stayed to question why he was sent, but sped down the mountain-side, and without a

SAINT BENEDICT

moment's delay threw himself into the lake, hoping to be able to reach the little dark head that had risen above the water for the last time. And lo! he found that the water grew firm beneath his feet, and he walked as if he was on dry land, and lifting the child, carried him safely ashore.

When Benedict saw that so many other hermits had taken up their abode on the mountain, he determined to form them into a company of brothers, and give them a rule to live by, and by and by they built a little chapel where they could meet for daily service.

Now, strangely enough, every evening at the hour of prayer, one young monk became restless and uneasy, and would steal silently out of the chapel and disappear down the hillside. None of the brothers could think what made him do this; but night after night the same thing happened just when prayers were about to begin. All were troubled and disturbed, till at last they went to Benedict, and asked him what it could mean. Then the saint promised to watch, and that very evening he saw what no other eyes had seen.

Into the chapel came a little demon black as coal, and he seized the robe of the poor young monk, and dragged him out of the door. And though the demon was so tiny he was stronger than the monk, and easily led him swiftly away out of sound of the chapel bell.

Then Benedict followed, and touching the monk with his rod, bade the demon begone and

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trouble him no longer. And after that the young monk stayed in the chapel with the rest, and the demon was seen no more.



It seemed as if Benedict must always suffer from the malice of evil brothers, who disliked his strict rule; and even in his own mountain home the danger followed him. This time the poison was put into a loaf of bread; but Benedict knew that it was there, and while the wicked monk who offered it to him watched with evil eye, hoping to see him eat it, he turned to a wood near by, where a young raven sat. "Come hither," said Benedict, holding out the loaf towards the raven, "come hither, and take this

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bread and carry it where the poison that is hidden within can do no harm.”

And the story tells us that the raven instantly obeyed, and carried off the loaf. And ere long Death, more powerful than the raven, carried off that wicked monk, so that the poison which lurked in his evil heart could no longer do harm to any one.

It troubled Benedict greatly about this time to hear that not very far off on Monte Cassino there was a heathen temple where the people worshipped false gods, and were living in darkness and sin.

It seemed terrible that such a thing should be suffered in a Christian land, so Benedict made up his mind to go himself and force the people to listen to him.

It was a strange contrast to see him in his coarse, poor robe and thin wan face standing preaching among the crowd of gay pleasure-seekers, who cared for nothing but eating and drinking and making merry. They could not understand why any one should choose to be poor, and suffer pain and hunger for the sake of any god.

But as Benedict taught them day by day, the majesty of his face and the solemn notes in his voice forced them to listen half unwillingly. Then, as they began to learn about the true God, they saw that the gods they had worshipped were false, and they pulled down their temple, and built two chapels on the place where it had stood.

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Here, too, Benedict built the first great monastery which was called after him; and after this the brothers began to be known by his name, and were called Benedictines.

But the Evil One saw with great rage that Benedict was taking away his servants and destroying his temples, and he tried in every way to hinder the work. Once when the workmen were trying to raise a stone they found it impossible to move it, though they worked hard all day. At last, in despair, they besought Benedict to come to help them.

As soon as he came he saw at once what was the matter, for on the stone sat a little black demon laughing at the efforts of the workmen, knowing they could never move the stone while he chose to sit there.

“Get you gone, messenger of Satan,” cried Benedict.

And with a howl of rage the imp fled, and the stone was lifted easily into its place.

Upon a certain day, not long after the monastery was built, as Benedict was praying in the chapel of the convent, one of the brothers came to tell him that a great company of soldiers were coming up the hill, and at their head was Totila, king of the Goths, who had sent a messenger to ask the saint to receive him.

Benedict, who cared little for earthly kings, was yet too courteous to refuse any such request, so

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he went out to where the company was gathered on the mountain-side.

The rough soldiers stood with heads uncovered, and from their midst came one who wore a crown and sandals of gold and a kingly robe. He knelt before the saint, and said in a loud, clear voice:

“I, Totila, king of the Goths, have come to crave thy blessing, father, for thy fame hath spread even to the wild north country where I reign.”

The brothers, crowding behind Benedict, eager to see these curious strangers, were surprised to hear no answering words of welcome fall from the lips of the saint. And still more surprised were they when Benedict pointed an accusing finger at the glittering crown that shone on the king’s head, and said:

“Why dost thou bear upon thy head the sign of royalty which belongs not to thy station? And why have thy lips framed this deceit? Go to thy master, and bid him come to me in truth, and think not that I could mistake a servant for a king.”

And to the amazement of all, the real king, who had disguised his armour-bearer to test the power of the saint, came quickly forward, and with no royal robe or golden crown, knelt low before the saint, confessing all, and praying to be forgiven. He was sure now that this was indeed a servant of God, and he listened humbly while Benedict reproved him for his many sins, and warned him of the fate that awaited him.

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And so the years passed on, bringing much honour and earthly renown to him who had once lived a lonely boy upon the wild mountain-side.

Things had changed since those early days. He could no longer live quite alone as he had once loved to do, for the world had followed him even into the wilderness. But his heart was as pure and his purpose as strong as when he was a lonely boy seeking only to serve God.

Perhaps the one great pleasure of his earthly life was the yearly visit he paid to his sister Scholastica, who had for many years come to live near him. She had formed a little company of nuns, who strove to live as the brothers were living, working and praying and denying themselves all earthly pleasures.

And as it was a great delight to Benedict to visit his sister, so to Scholastica the day of his coming was the happiest day of all the year. The only thing that grieved her was that the golden hours of that bright day seemed to fly faster than any other, while she listened to his words of counsel and advice, and told him all her troubles.

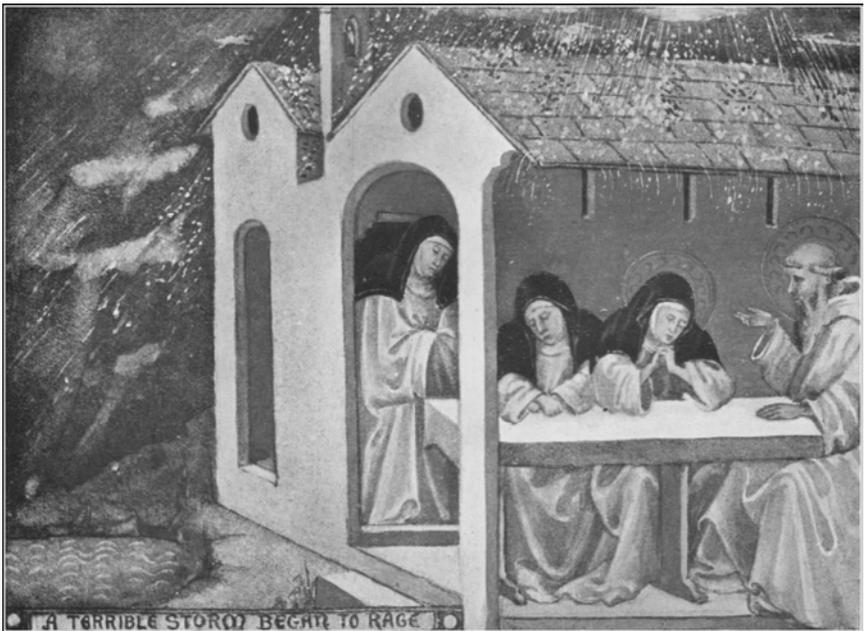
As it drew near the time for one of these yearly visits, Scholastica began to long for her brother as she had never longed before. Something told her that these bright summer days were to be the last she should spend on earth; and the longing to see and talk to her brother grew almost more than she could bear.

And when he came the hours slipped past even faster than was their wont, and before she

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could realise it the time had come for him to go. There was so much still to say, and she needed his help so sorely, that she prayed him to wait a few hours longer. But Benedict was persuaded that it was his duty to set off, and duty to him ever came before all else. He gently told her it could not be; that he must return to the brothers that night.

But while he spoke, Scholastica was not listening to his words, nor heeding what he said. With her whole heart she was praying God that He would grant her this one request, and prevent her brother from leaving her so soon.



And as she prayed the light suddenly died out of the sky, great clouds arose and, before Benedict

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could set out, a terrible storm began to rage. The thunder pealed overhead, the hail came down in a blinding shower, and it was impossible for any one to leave the shelter of the house.

Thus God answered the prayer of Scholastica, filling her heart with thankfulness. And afterwards the heart of Benedict was also filled with gratitude, for not many days later he saw in a vision the soul of his sister flying like a white dove up to heaven's gate, and he knew he should see her on earth no more.

Benedict had lived a long, hard life, eating but little, suffering cold, and denying himself in all things. But though his spirit only grew stronger and brighter as time went on, his body was worn out, and at last he prepared to lay it aside, as men lay aside the worn-out robe which has grown thread-bare. And as he had longed to live alone, so, when death came, he prayed to be carried to the little chapel, and there to be left before the altar alone with God. Thus Benedict the Blessed went home at last, leaving his tired body in God's house, while his spirit returned to God who gave it.