

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN,
AND YOUNG PERSONS;
ALSO
FOR FIRST COMMUNIONS, MISSIONS,
RETREATS, AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS

BOOK VII.

THE HOUSE OF DEATH.

BY THE
REV. J. FURNISS, C.Ss.R.

— REPRODUCTION —

PERMISSU SUPERIORUM.

Dublin:
JAMES DUFFY AND CO., LIMITED.,
15 WELLINGTON QUAY.
c. 1860

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THE HOUSE OF DEATH.

I. The House of the Dying.

Mary was living at Limerick, a large town in Ireland. She had been for a month at the sea, and had just come back home. It was only a few minutes after her return when a message came to the house. The message was from her aunt, to say that her cousin Jane, who had long been poorly, had become much worse, and Mary was desired to go over to her aunt's house to see her cousin. Mary put on her bonnet, and was soon at her aunt's house. She went up stairs into the room where her poor cousin was lying on a bed, from which she was never to rise again alive. The priest had already come and given to her the last sacraments. She found several persons standing round the sick-bed. They did not speak, but they looked, sometimes at Jane and sometimes at one another, as if they were afraid to say what they thought. Suddenly the door-bell rang, and a moment afterwards footsteps were heard on the stairs. The door opened, and the doctor came in. He had been sent for in haste by the parents of Jane, as soon as they saw the change in her. Those who are sick are glad to see the doctor, because they think he can cure them. But when the doctor came to the bed-side, Jane scarce took any notice of him. Her eyes were dim, and perhaps she could not see him. The doctor looked at her for a few minutes without speaking. Then he took out his watch, and counted the beatings of her pulse. He soon saw what the matter was. Jane was dying! Ps. xvii.—"The sorrows of death have compassed her." The hand of death was upon her. There could be no mistake. Job xiv.—"Thou shalt change his face and send him away." The face of Jane was becoming every moment paler and paler—her hands and feet were quite cold, her lips blue, her eyes glassy, her pulse scarcely beating. "She is dying," said the priest; "let us kneel down and say the prayers for the agonizing."—Eccus. xxxviii.—"Comfort him in the departing of his spirit." The scapular and blessed medal which Jane wore round her neck were arranged nicely; her rosary beads were put round her arm, and a little cross, blessed for a happy death, put into her hand. II. Near the bed was a small altar, on which were lighted candles, a large cross, and a picture of the Blessed Virgin. The altar was placed where it could easily be seen by Jane. She was sprinkled with holy water, and then the priest began to read the prayers of the agonizing over the dying child. "Go forth," said the priest; "go forth out of this world, O Christian soul, in the name of God, the Father Almighty, who created thee—in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who suffered for thee—in the name of the Holy Ghost, who sanctified thee—in the name of the

angels and archangels. O merciful God, look down on thy servant Jane, and hear her prayer, that all her sins may be forgiven. We recommend to thee, O Lord, the soul of thy servant Jane, for whom Jesus died. Remember, O Lord, that Jane is thy creature, not created by other gods, but by thee, the only true and living God. Although thy servant hath sinned, yet she hath not denied the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, but she believed in thee and adored thee. May the heavens be opened to her, may the angels rejoice with her. May the angels come forth to meet her, and lead her into the heavenly paradise—may all the saints of God pray for her." The priest then quietly and gently said in her hearing the Four Great Truths.—"1. There is one God. 2. In God there are three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. 3. God the Son, the second Person, was made man, and died to save us. 4. God rewards the good in heaven, and punishes the wicked in hell." Then he said an act of Contrition: "O my God, I am very sorry that I have sinned against thee, because thou art so good, and I will not sin again." Then he said an act of Resignation: "My God, thy will be done. I am willing to die, because I deserve to die for my sins—I am willing to die, because it is thy will." It is true the dying child *seemed* not to have sense to know what the priest was saying, but the priest knew well that these are most important prayers to be said in the hearing of a dying person, and he knew that often when the bystanders would think that a dying person has no sense, such prayers go deep down into the soul. The priest had finished these prayers, and there were a few moments of silence. Suddenly Mary started; something had frightened her. Her poor cousin's breathing had changed. Her breathing now became like the sound of running water when it meets with something that stops it. People call it the death-rattle. It is the way of breathing of those who are dying. The day-light which now, for the last time, fell on the pale face of the dying girl seemed not like other daylight, it seemed sad and mournful—it was the Shadow of Death! All at once a deep, deep paleness passed, quick as a flash of lightning, over the face of the dying child. This was death! Jane was dead—her soul was gone. Is. xxix.—"It shall be in an instant suddenly." "Let us kneel down," said the priest, "and pray for her soul." Thus the priest prayed: "Come forth, O ye saints and angels of God, receive her soul and offer it in the sight of the Most High. We recommend to thee, O Lord, the soul of thy servant Jane, that being dead to this world she may live to thee; and whatever sins she may have committed through human weakness, do thou in thy merciful goodness pardon, through Christ our Lord. Amen. Eternal rest give to her, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her—may she rest in peace. Amen."

Once more Mary looked at her cousin. There was her body lying dead; but her soul, where was it? It was gone into the house of her eternity, to give an account to Almighty God of all her thoughts, words, and actions. She had left

all behind her, father, mother, brother, sisters; sight, hearing, speech, money, playthings. Wisd. v.—"All these things have passed away like a shadow—as a ship which passes through the waves, of which, when it is gone by, the trace cannot be found." She had taken nothing with her except the good or evil works she had done. Mat. xvi.—"He will render to every man according to his works."

III. The Death-Chamber.

The next day Mary went again to her aunt's house. As she came near it she lifted up her eyes. There was something strange about that house, which made those who passed by the way look up at it. Few people went in or came out of it. No one was to be seen at the windows looking out. At each window a white blind hung down. One window only was a little open. No noise was heard in that house—everything about it seemed so still and silent. It was the house of death! Mary has gone into the house, let us walk with her up stairs, and go into the death-chamber, for perhaps we may there learn a lesson which it will be worth our while to remember. The room is rather dark, almost painful to the eyes of those who come out of the bright daylight; perhaps it is because they think a person would be too much shocked if he saw all at once what there is in that room. The people who are there move about gently and softly; if they speak it is only in a whisper, as if they were afraid they might waken that child which has slept its last sleep! Through the darkness you see something white. What is it! It is a bed covered with linen, white and glittering. On that bed lies the dead body of Jane. Close to the bed there is still the little altar before which she died, the lights shine down from it upon her pale face. Come near and look at the dead body. Fix your eyes upon it, it does not open its eyes to look back at you. How pale it looks, how quiet, how silent. You might almost think it was going to breathe again, but it will never breathe any more. What a change there has been in this house. Only a few days since there was music and rejoicing, feasting and talking, and merry laughing. Perhaps there has been some great preacher here. Perhaps by his sermon he has changed that house of joy into a house of mourning. Yes, a great preacher has been in that house, and that preacher is—Death! His sermon is not yet finished. Listen, for he is still preaching. "Look," he says, "look at these sunken eyes—look at these hollow temples, at these breathless lips—look at this hair still wet with the cold sweat of death—look at this body stiff and without motion, lifeless like a piece of clay." "Remember, O man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return!"

IV. The Grave.

A few days later Mary paid another visit to her aunt's house. But she did not find just the same silence there as before. The moment she entered the house she heard a sound like that of knocking, in the room of death. The joiner had been sent for, and had measured the dead body. Then he went home and made a black box—a coffin for Jane—and when he had made it he brought the coffin to the house. The brothers and sisters of Jane were crying because they had been told to look once more, and for the last time, at their poor little dead sister, just before the coffin was shut up for ever. And now the joiner was nailing the lid down on the top of the coffin, and this was the knocking heard by Mary when she came into the house.

Any one who had passed the house that evening would have seen that it did not look as before. The white blinds were no more to be seen at the windows. Poor Jane had been carried to the church-yard, and she was deep below the earth in the grave, waiting for the worms, and waiting still after that for the archangel's trumpet, which, at the end of the world, will call her body out of the grave, to be for ever bright and beautiful if she was good, but frightful and shocking if she was bad.

V. In the midst of Life we are in Death.

What happened to Jane may happen to you next year, or even this year. Perhaps even this month, this week, this day, the shadow of death may come upon you. Death comes like a thief in the night, when we are not expecting it. Prov. xxvii.—"Boast not of to-morrow." In Liverpool there was a good boy, who came every day to a mission given to the children. He had received his communion ticket. On the Saturday night before the general communion the instruction had begun, but that boy had not come to the chapel. This was strange, because he had always been so regular and punctual in coming to the mission. The instruction was over, and still the boy was not come; but a messenger had come to ask for prayers for the poor boy. What was the matter? He had set off for the chapel, his ticket for communion was in his pocket. While on his way there was a noise behind him, as of wheels rattling on the stones. Most likely the boy did not hear the noise. A cart was coming quickly along the street. The cart was nearly up to the boy, and still he heard it not. The cart had passed the boy, and in passing it threw him down, and went over him. He was taken up from the ground—dead! So, in the midst of life we are in death! How swiftly death passes on. Now it comes and takes away the baby,

then it takes away the child, then it comes to the young, then it strikes down the strong man—then it takes away the old man whose hair is grey. Every day death takes out of the world 80,000 people, and every year 30,000,000 of people are laid in their graves. Job vii. 5.—"My days have passed more swiftly than the web is cut by the weaver."

VI. When will you die?

Heb. ix.—"It is appointed unto men once to die." God has fixed the year when you will die. What year will it be? You cannot tell exactly which the year will be. But you may know something about it. When you are dead they will write a letter to tell your friends of it. In the letter they will write the four figures of the year of your death. What will those four figures be? You know the two first, 18— but the two last you do not know. Neither can you tell whether you will die in the cold winter, when the snow whitens the ground, or in the green spring, when the leaves unfold themselves, and the flowers are so beautiful, or the warm summer, or in the autumn, when the fruits are ripe. Which day of the week will be the day of your death? You do not know whether it will be Sunday, or Monday, or Tuesday, or Wednesday, or Thursday, or Friday, or Saturday. You know not the hour when you will die. But that long finger which goes round the face of the clock, each hour of the day while it is going round points to the moment of your death. Matt. xxv.—"Watch, because you know not the day or the hour."

VII. What may come.

St. Ignatius says, that sometimes when a person is near death, and he makes strange and frightful faces, and moves his hands about, people think that he is out of his senses; but, in reality, it is the frightful temptations of the devil which frighten him. Job. vii.—"Thou shalt terrify me with visions." Blessed Leonard says, it is the common opinion, as many of the holy fathers say, and many histories tell us, that when people are dying, they see the devil with their eyes.

St Martin, in his last sickness, raised his head a little to look at the heavens. He kept his eyes fixed for a while on the blue sky. A few moments afterwards the people saw that there was fear and trouble on his face. He was no longer looking at heaven, he was looking at something else—something near him, something most frightful! What was it? It was his adversary the devil, "who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." —1 Pet. v. 8.

Then St. Martin spoke to the devil. "Why," he said, "O cruel beast, have you come here—you will not find here anything which belongs to you." Having said these words he died; and the angels came and carried his soul to heaven.

Blessed Eleazer fell into his agony, the last struggle betwixt the body and the soul before death. He was seen to be covered with a cold sweat, and trembling from head to foot. Suddenly he started up, and looking as if he was frightened out of his senses. With a terrible voice he said three times: "Oh, if men only know how cruelly the devils fight against the soul at death!"

VIII. On the last night of the life of Venerable Berchmans, he said: "I know that during this night I shall have to fight against a great temptation." He got ready for the temptation by prayer, and especially by praying to the Blessed Virgin Mary, who, by her power, crushes the old serpent that tempts us. It is not known what his temptation was; but the greatness of it might be known by his fright and trouble. For some moments he seemed to have fallen asleep. All at once they were surprised to see his face red as fire, and his eyes looking up to heaven! He cries out in a fearful voice: "No, I will not do it; my God, I will never offend you. Mary, my holy mother, do not let me offend your Son, Jesus Christ. I would rather die a thousand deaths." He said these words over and over again, and with such a loud voice that he was heard over the whole house. They came running into the room to see what was the matter. They kneel down and begin to pray for him. Then he took his Rosary, his Rule of Life, and his relics, and said: "These are my arms—with these I will fight against the devil." Soon after the temptation seemed to leave him; he looked happy, and died the death of the saints.

St. Alphonsus says, that when any one is at the point of death, the house is filled with devils, who come to ruin the dying person. Apoc. xii.—"The devil is come down, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time." It is said of St. Andrew Avellino, that at the time of his death, ten thousand devils came to tempt him. The struggle he had was so great, that all who saw it trembled with fear. His face swelled and became black, his head and all his limbs shook, and tears ran down from his eyes. In a little while the saint was seen to turn his face towards a picture of the Blessed Virgin. Then all his fright went away, and bowing down his head before Mary to thank her, he breathed out his soul in heavenly peace.

IX. The Ruling Passion strong in Death.

"As people live, so they die. The death of the wicked is very evil."—Psalm. It is the last night of the sinner's life Luc. xii. 20.—"This night they require thy soul of thee." The sun has gone down for the last time for him—he will never

see it rise again. His life is like the sand-glass, when the sand has almost run out. To-morrow he will be in the other world. Look at him, how troubled he seems. What is the matter? He sees something which frightens him. What is it? All the sins of his past life are rising up before his eyes—there they stand round him, they show themselves to him; they look frightful—he never knew till now how frightful they are. But amongst these frightful forms, there is one which looks a thousand times more frightful than the others. It is called "The Ruling Passion strong in Death." It is that one great sin which he committed so often, week after week, year after year. It was during his life a deadly serpent living in his heart. But listen! the sinner is speaking to those frightful things which are round him. "Who are you?" he says, "where do you come from? what do you want?" They answer him and say: "We are the works of your hands, O sinner—we are the sins you committed—we have come here for you—we wait here till you breathe out your last breath, and then we will go along with you." Then that monster, "the Ruling Passion strong in death," seizes hold of the sinner. He tries to get away from it, but he does not know how, for he never tried before. He cannot bear the frightful sight of his sins any longer. He turns to the other side, that he may see them no more, but there is something else for him on the other side. There is a sound like the breathing of some tormented creature. It is the voice of the enemy of God and man—the devil. Harken, the devil whispers something into the ear of the dying sinner: "Oh, sinner," he says, "as people live, so they die! I am the spirit of evil, the tempter—God will not have mercy on you; you obeyed me on earth, and you shall obey me in hell. I wait here at your bedside till you die, to take you to hell! Apoc. xii.—"The devil has come down, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time."

X. What is He Doing?

Why does not the sinner do something to save his soul? Look at him. No prayer comes from his lips, he does not lift up his eyes to heaven. But why does he do nothing? Why does he not examine his conscience? why does he not make an act of contrition? why does he not ask to go to confession? Does he not know that he should be doing these things? Surely he must know it very well; but still he does not do them. Why not? I will tell you. He did not do these things when he was well, and now when he is ill and dying, and when he has half lost his senses he finds it very difficult to do them. Perhaps you do not know how difficult it is for him who is dying to do anything for himself. In the valley of Josaphat, on the east side of Jerusalem, there is a grave. It is the monument of a young man who lived about three thousand years since. He

was strong and handsome, his hair was long and beautiful. His name was Absalom. He had been frightfully proud, and disobedient to his father. One day his face was very pale—he had been fighting against his own father. And now he was trying to get away; he was riding fast on a mule. There were three soldiers coming after him, with spears in their hands. They wanted to kill him. He rode fast to get away from them. On he went; his long beautiful hair was flying about in the wind. Now, he was passing under a great oak tree, and his long hair was caught by the branches, and there it fastened itself. See how people may be ruined by their vanities. While he hung betwixt the heavens and the earth, the mule passed on, and left him hanging there. He saw that a soldier was near him, with a spear pointed at his heart to kill him. But he had a sword by his own side; why did he not take it out and cut his hair, and get away from the soldiers? Why?

This question has often been asked—why did he not take hold of his sword—why did he not cut the hair which fastened him to the tree—why did he not save his life? Listen, you that lead a wicked life, and think you will repent when you die. This is the answer: "Being near death he was frightened; he forgot, he did not think about what would save him." So it is with the sinner when he is near death; he gets frightened, he forgets, he does not think of those things which might save his soul.

XI. Perhaps You are Deceived.

There is some good person whispering an act of Contrition into the ear of the dying sinner. The sinner's lips are moving, he says the words which he hears. That is good, perhaps God will have mercy on the poor sinner when he sees him making an act of Contrition. But perhaps you are deceived. It may be that the dying sinner is saying the words with his lips only. Does the act of contrition come from his heart? Because sometimes people pray only with their lips and not with their hearts. "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." Those who think that the dying sinner is praying from his heart, may be mistaken. Blessed Leonard mentions two children who were dying, one of them had been very good and the other a very bad child. The priest offered the crucifix to each of them. The good child spit at the crucifix, and turned away from it; the bad child took hold of it and pressed it with its hand. The two children got well again. The priest asked the good child why it had behaved so ill to the crucifix? The child answered, that being almost out of its senses, and not knowing what the crucifix was, it feared it might be a temptation of the devil. The other child answered that it

pressed the crucifix with its hand, because its hand was hot, and it wanted to cool it.

XII. The Pointing Finger.

In the Russian Empire there is a town called Odessa. From this town there came one who afterwards became a holy missionary, and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to the poor. In the same town there was living one whose wicked life was a scandal to the people. The missionary left the town for a while and went elsewhere. It happened that he afterwards came back again. On his return he inquired about the wicked man—was he still living? "No," the people answered, "he is dead." "How did he die?" said the missionary, for he well knew that "as people live, so they die." His death was frightful, they said. They then told him what happened at the wicked man's death. When he was dying some of his friends stood round him. He gave no sign that he hoped for the salvation of his soul. A short time before he breathed his last breath, he looked much troubled. Job. xxi.—"His eyes shall see his own destruction." He began to point with his finger. Sometimes he would point at the foot of the bed, sometimes he would point at a chair or a table, or at the trees which could be seen through the windows. The people who stood about him looked at the things he pointed at, but they could see nothing. They wondered what was the matter. At last some one whispered into the ear of the dying man, and asked him why he pointed so with his finger at the chairs, and tables, and trees. "I see there," he said, "things most frightful." Then he put his hands over his eyes and said: "I cannot bear to look at them, it is so terrible to see them." "And what do you think," they said, "those terrible things are which you see?" "I know," he said, "well enough what it is I see. They are devils waiting till I die to take my soul." And so he died, troubled by the evil spirits, as the wicked Saul also was troubled by them. 1 Kings xvi.

XIII. The Drunkard's Death.

It was midnight. In a miserable garret on the third storey in one of the courts of London, a poor woman was kneeling and praying for her husband. He needed her prayers, for he was a drunkard. He was a good workman, and he had once been a kind father and husband. But he became acquainted with bad companions, who led him to the public-house. From that time he was a changed man. He went no more to mass or the sacraments. If you sought him at night he was always to be found in the public-house. Those who employed

him often turned him off on account of his drunkenness. The furniture of his house had been sold to buy drink. His children were in rags, and they would have been hungered to death, if Willy, the eldest boy, had not managed to work for them. Many a time his wife on her knees had asked him to leave the public-house, but she got nothing but a bitter curse or a hard blow. One time when he was drunk he had stabbed his son Willy. Willy got better, but his work was very hard in an iron foundry, and within a year after his drunken father had stabbed him, he sickened and died. This man continued to be a drunkard, the ruin of himself and his family. The punishment of God on this drunkard was delayed; God often warned him by what his wife and children said to him. An evil life is punished by an evil death, and the evil death came at last.

It was the night mentioned in the beginning of this history. Midnight had passed, and he came home—drunk. His head was bleeding and his face swollen; he had been fighting with his drunken companions. When he came into the room and saw that his wife had been waiting for him, he said roughly to her: "Why are you sitting up and wasting the candle? I daresay you want to tell the neighbours about me. If you do not go to bed directly I will murder you." "You are hurt," answered his wife, kindly. "I will get some vinegar and bathe your face with it." The man said once more, "I will murder you." The wife sank back on the chair in a fainting fit. The drunken man stood over her with a face as if it were the face of the devil. He howled like a wild beast, sprang upon her, dashed her on the floor, kicked her with his iron-shod shoes, and then stamped on her! The neighbours heard the noise, but were afraid to go in, for they knew what sort of a man he was. They heard him come down stairs, open the door, and go off. They then entered the room, where they found the poor woman lying on the floor senseless; the blood was running from her mouth and nose. The priest was sent for, and when he came, found her just dying. She had lived a good life, having gone every fortnight to the Sacraments. She had suffered patiently for the love of Jesus the ill-treatment of her husband, and now when she was dying of that ill-treatment, she made no complaint; she forgave her husband. She received the last sacraments, and died in peace.

XIV. The next night a good woman was sitting up watching the dead body, and praying for the departed soul. About eleven o'clock she heard the tramping of feet coming up stairs; she knew the sound—it was the footstep of the murderer. The footstep came on—it stopped a little way off the door. Then it came close to the door and stopped again. The handle of the door turned round, and the door opened a little—a frightful, a horrible face showed itself. It was the face of the murderer. The woman was too frightened to speak or scream. The eyes of the murderer rolled about and wandered over the room, as

if looking for something. At last they fixed themselves on the woman. The man then strode into the room, his heavy footsteps sounding on the wooden floor. He then stood still and said: "Woman, where is my wife?" The woman's fright had passed away. She rose up, and pointing to the dead body of his wife lying on the bed, she said: "There, drunkard, there is your murdered wife!" The drunkard dashed himself down at the bed-side, and fixing his eyes on the dead body, he said: "She is dead! she is dead! my God, what have I done?"

Then he screamed a long terrible scream, and those who heard it will never forget it till their dying day. He threw up his hands, he dashed them down again, his eyelids went up, his lips parted so that all his teeth could be seen. A deep paleness came over his face, and he fell on the floor senseless. The woman screamed for help. The neighbours came in, they lifted up the drunkard, who now began to rave like a madman. The priest was sent for. When he came, he found the drunkard laid on the bed, from which the dead body of his wife had been taken away and laid down in a corner of the room. Six strong men were holding him down, hanging with their whole weight on his limbs. From time to time he started up and shook these strong men off him as if they had been only infants. The great iron key which locked the door had been put betwixt his teeth, that he might not bite his tongue in pieces, but they could hear the sound of his teeth grinding it. The priest was obliged to leave; next day the priest came again to him. He was terribly changed; he had his senses, but his flesh was dried up and his skin blackened by a burning fever. His arms were fast in a strait waistcoat, as it was dangerous for him to be loose. There was a dark ring round each of his eyes. His lips were withered and covered with a brown crust, the white of his eyes had become nearly red. The sight of him made those tremble who saw it, for it was despair! The priest spoke kindly and gently to him; "My good man," he said, "you are dying; your life is coming to an end; you will soon go before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ; repent, then, of your sins while you have time. "Repent!" answered the drunkard; "is it to me you talk of repenting? No—repentance is not for me, I am damned—damned for ever. All last night I saw my murdered wife and boy, standing by this bed and threatening me; sometimes they pointed with their shadowy fingers to the corners of the room, and there I saw the spirits of hell mocking at me. Sometimes those damned spirits crowded round my bed, and bent their hateful faces over mine; but I was tied, and could not get away from them; then they would grin and laugh at me, and tell me how they would meet me to-night in hell. No, there is no mercy for me—it is too late!" The priest spoke to him again of the mercy of God, how the sweet Jesus had died to save him, how Mary is the refuge of sinners; but it was all of no use.

He made no confession. He said he could not, he would not repent. His blasphemies were too horrible to be told; it seemed as if the devil was

speaking by his tongue. Sometimes he would call on those about him, to hide him from his wife and boy, whose ghosts, he said, haunted him. Then he would sing a few words of a bad song, or talk as if he was in the midst of his bad companions. Then he would roar out in fearful agony, shouting aloud, as none but a sinner dying in despair can shout, that the devils were coming round his bed to take his soul to hell, and that he saw the blue flames of hell rising up before his eyes.

It was just midnight; the window was open; the heavy bell could be heard through the still air, striking the hour; then the drunkard gave a long terrible howl, and died!

XV. The Drunkard's Coffin.

In the year 1857, the coffin of a drunkard was opened at a coroner's inquest. The coffin was made of lead, and a hole was bored through the lead. Immediately a smell most sickening and abominable came out of the coffin through the hole. This smell made those who were present sick and vomit; the smell went over the whole house. It was long before any one could bear to be in the house, although all kinds of things were burnt to take the smell away. A week afterwards the smell was so frightful, that the floors of the house had to be scraped; some parts of them had to be taken away entirely. The walls had to be scraped and fresh papered, and the wood-work painted over again. The coffin was opened, and what a sight they saw! The dead body looked most frightful; one eye was open, the other shut. The cheeks were so dreadfully swollen out, that they touched each side of the coffin. The mouth was partly open, and seemed to grin at them! The legs also were dreadfully swollen, so that the coffin could scarcely hold them. Oh, that the drunkard could see what he will come to when he is put in the coffin. Oh, that he could see his body as it will be after the resurrection, far more frightful than in the coffin. Oh, that he could see his soul, which will be ten million times more frightful than his body. Poor children, if you have drunken parents, say the Hail Mary for them every day, lest they should take you to hell along with them.

XVI. The Useless Search.

Listen again, you that neglect confession, while you are well and strong, and think that you will set all to rights by going to confession when you are dying. It is about two hundred years since there was a certain gentleman living in the north of England, in Yorkshire. He led a very bad life, and he knew that

those who lead a wicked life deserve to go to hell. He wanted to be bad during his life-time, and still not to go to hell when he died. So he began to think how he might lead a wicked life, and still save himself from hell after all. He thought that he had found out a way to save his soul after leading a bad life. When I am dying, he thought, I will repent and send for the priest, and make my confession, and then all will be right. But then he remembered that if he had to send for the priest when he was dying, perhaps the priest might not be at home, or perhaps his illness might be very short, and the priest could not come soon enough to hear his confession. He was frightened when he remembered that perhaps he might die before the priest could come. So he thought of another plan. He thought he would get a priest to come and live always in the house where he lived himself, so that at any time he could send for the priest in a moment. This thought pleased him very much, for he felt sure that if a priest was always living in his house he should be quite safe. But he forgot these words, "as people live, so they die." He forgot that he was offending God very much, and that after all, how we shall die depends entirely on God.

XVII. A year or two after this his last illness came, and it came upon him very suddenly, when he was not expecting it. He felt that he was dying, so he told his servants to go and fetch the priest to hear his confession. The priest was in the house, and the servants went directly to find him. They went first of all to the priest's own room, which was next to the room in which the gentleman was dying. For in order to be more sure that the priest would be near the gentleman when he was dying, the priest's room was next to the room of the gentleman. Well, the servants went first to the priest's own room, but they could not see him there. They went through the whole house, into every room in the house, from the highest to the lowest room, but they could not find him anywhere. They called out his name all over the house; but there was no answer to their call. So they went back to their master, and told him that the priest was nowhere to be found. Then that gentleman saw how he had been deceiving himself, despair came into his heart, and he died without hope of salvation.

A few moments after this gentleman had died, the servants happened to go again into the priest's room, and there they saw the priest! reading the prayers in his office-book. "How long," they said, "has your reverence been here?" "I have been here all the morning." "Did you not go out of the room any time?" "No," said the priest, "I have not been out for one moment." "Did you not, then, see us come into this room two or three times, or hear us calling out your name?" "No," said the priest, "I did not see any one come into this room, or hear any one call out my name."—"As people live, so they die."

XVIII. The Confession Not Made.

There was a girl in London, who had been brought up by the nuns in the convent-school. She afterwards left this school, and engaged herself in some employment. It seems likely that when she was at school, she had concealed some sin in confession, which she was frightened to tell. After leaving school she never went to confession any more. She did not live long, for she died a few years afterwards. A priest who lived in the neighbourhood happened to hear about her, how she was dying, and would not let the priest be sent for. He thought he would try if he could not do something to save her soul. So he went to the house where she was dying. He began by asking her about her health, and asked if she felt better. She answered that she felt worse, and was sure she was going to die soon. She thought all the time that the priest was only a doctor, so she went on talking about her illness. Then the priest began to talk to her about her soul. She listened to him, and seemed very glad to hear what he said. She then began to talk about her former life, and by degrees she told all the sins of her life, even the very sin she had been frightened to tell in confession. In reality she made a confession of all her sins, and said that she was sorry for them; but all the while she thought she was talking to a doctor, and not to a priest. You may think how glad the priest was—when he found that she was so ready to confess her sins. For really there was scarcely anything more for her to do, her confession was already made. All that was wanting now was to let her know that he was a priest, and for her to make an Act of Contrition for her sins. And this would not be difficult, for she had already said that she was sorry. So the priest now spoke these words to the dying girl: "My poor child, I am glad to tell you that I am not a doctor, as you thought, but I am a priest; you have already told me your sins. All that you have to do now is to accuse yourself of them, make an Act of Contrition, and then I will give you absolution; and your sins will be forgiven, and you will go to heaven." The priest was expecting how glad the girl would be when she found that the difficulty of confession was over. Then he said to her: "Now, my child, say the words after me." Then he began—he said a few words, and waited for the girl to say them after him. The girl was silent, and did not say the words; but she looked very hard at the priest for a few moments. Then she said: "Are you a priest?" "Yes," he answered. "Then go away!" said the girl. "But," said the priest, "it is so easy for you to save your soul; only say a word to God, to tell him that you are sorry for them." Her only answer was—"Go away!" "But, my poor child," said the priest, "the time is short—you are dying." Again she said—"Go away!" The priest felt that there was a hardness of heart in this girl, such as he had never seen before; he felt that God alone

could change that heart. So, instead of speaking again, he knelt down and prayed in silence. He prayed most fervently to Mary, the Mother of God, that she would speak to Jesus for that unfortunate child, that she would not forget how that soul had been created for God, and redeemed with the blood of Jesus. The priest hoped that his prayer had been heard, and he stood up again. Then he said: "My poor child, for the sake of Jesus Christ, and of his mother Mary, I beg of you to save your soul—make an Act of Contrition." Again the girl answered only—"Go away!" "Before I go away, let me ask you one thing more. If I come back again to-morrow morning, will you make your peace with God?" "To-morrow!" said the girl, "I will see." "But," said the priest, "perhaps when I come back to-morrow you will be dead!" "Never mind," said the girl—"go away!" The priest left the house.

Next morning, when he came to the house, he said: "How is the poor girl?" They answered: "She is dead!"

XIX. The Girl asked to go to the Mission.

In a certain town in Yorkshire there was a mission given to the children. One evening during the mission a girl, who was a stranger, came into the town. She was accustomed to go about the country hawking and begging. When she came into the town she looked about for a lodging-house, and, having found one, stayed there for the night. Soon after she had come into the house, the people told her about the mission which was going on, and advised her to go to it and make her confession. Her only answer was: "Confession is not for the like of me." Shortly after she went to bed.

What a pity it is, when people do not listen to good advice. That invitation to the mission, without doubt, came from God. No doubt, God had sent her a warning many times before, and this was the last warning he sent to her. Next morning the girl did not come down stairs; they waited and waited, and still she did not come. They wondered what was the matter. At last they went up stairs, and they found her dead!

The Little Boy Drowned.

During the mission to the children in Manchester, there was a boy about nine years of age, who would not go to the mission. His parents ordered him to go, but he would not go. Some of his companions who went to the mission, asked him several times to come, but he would not. All the children came except himself. One day somebody brought word that the boy was dead.

Inquiry was made, and it was found that the boy had fallen into the canal and been drowned.

XX. The Burial of the Wicked; or, the Vision of St. Teresa.

"One time," says St. Teresa, "there happened something which made me wonder very much. I was in a place where a certain person died who had lived badly for many years. For the last two years he had been sick, and seemed in some things to lead a better life. This man died without confession, but still I did not think that he would lose his soul. While, however, his friends were getting the dead body ready for burial, I saw some devils take the body and make sport with it. They were very cruel to it, tearing it with hooks, and tossing it from one to another. I considered how good God is in not letting people see what the devils were doing with it. The dead body was taken into the church. While the priest was reading the prayers, the devils went away from the body. Afterwards, when the dead body was carried out to the grave, I saw great numbers of devils down in the grave, waiting for the body. I thought how cruel the devils would be to the soul in hell, when they were so cruel to the body on earth. If those who commit mortal sin had seen what I saw, I do not think they would commit mortal sin any more. I am always frightened, even now, when I remember what I saw."

XXI. The Death of the Good.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."—Ps. "Perhaps," says blessed Leonard, "You do not know what sort of a grace it is to die a happy death. It is such a grace, that the greatest saints never thought it was their due for anything they had done for God. Even if God had denied a happy death to his own mother, he would have done her no wrong, for it is a grace so great that no one can merit it."

Good Works.

There are some things we do not know the price of till we come to die. To have fought the good fight against the devil—to have said *no* to those who tempted us to sin—to have been patient when we were poor, or sorrowful, or in pain—to have been kind and merciful to many a poor creature; we scarce know the value of these things when death is far off. But when the last hour of

life is come, these things look very different, and make the heart feel very joyful.

XXII. The Gates of Heaven.

Think of a traveller who has been on a long journey, travelling many days and months, in frost, and cold, and snow, and rain, and darkness, tired and hungry. How glad he is when he comes in sight of his house, and thinks how he will rest himself. But you do not know how a good man feels when, after years of pains, and temptations, and sorrows, his feet are standing at the gates of heaven, and he is just going to enter into the joys of Paradise. The joys of Paradise are so great, that the eye hath not seen, the ear hath not heard, and the heart of man cannot understand them.

The Visit of Jesus and his Angels at Death.

Those who have read the lives of the saints, will often have read how, when the good were dying, the angels and saints, and the Mother of God, and Jesus himself, came to comfort them when the spirit was going out of this world, in the midst of the sorrows of death. So the angels came to Lazarus when he was dying. Listen also to what St. Gregory says: St. Peter, the husband of St. Galla, died within one year after they were married. Galla was young, and very rich, and her friends wanted her to be married again. But she wished rather to serve God only. For she remembered that the service of God begins with sorrow, but ends with joy, while marriage begins with joy, but ends with sorrow. She went therefore into a convent near St. Peter's Church in Rome. She lived there for many years, serving God with a simple heart, and with prayer, and doing a great deal of good for the poor. When the time drew near which God had fixed to reward her for good works, a painful cancer began to torment her body. During the night she had always two lamps burning in her room, for she loved not only the light which gives light to the soul, but even the light which gives light to the eyes of the body. One night while she lay awake, suffering great pain from the cancer, she saw the blessed apostle, St. Peter, standing betwixt the two lights. She was not at all afraid. She spoke to the apostle, and said: "Are my sins forgiven?" The apostle, smiling most graciously, answered: "They are forgiven—come." Now, amongst the other nuns in that convent, there was one called Benedicta, whom Galla loved very much. So she said to St. Peter: "I pray that my sister Benedicta may come along with me." "No," replied St. Peter, "not Benedicta, but another," (whose name he mentioned,) "will come along with you. Benedicta will come after thirty days." After this

she no longer saw the apostle. She then sent for the mother superioress of the convent, and told her what she had seen, and what she had heard. On the third day she and the other sister, named by the apostle, died, and on the thirtieth day Benedicta followed them. This history, says St. Gregory, is still told in the convent.

XXIII. The Poor Cripple and the Music of the Angels.

St. Gregory gives an account of another servant of God, called Servulus. He was a poor cripple, living in Rome. He gave all he could to the poor, although he was so poor himself. He could not read himself, but he often asked others to read good books to him. In all his pains he thanked God, and day and night he sung hymns. When he was dying, he said to those about him: "Be silent, do you not hear the hymns of praise and thanksgiving which the saints are singing in heaven?" Soon after this he died.

St. Gregory mentions another person called Romula, who was also a cripple, and could not move her feet. In all her pains, which lasted for many years, she was very patient and good. When she died, some persons were sitting up at her bedside. About midnight they saw a heavenly light shining in the room, and they heard a sound as of many persons coming into the room, so that there was a noise at the door, as if many persons were trying to come through it. Although they saw the light, they could not see any person. There was also a most sweet fragrance in the room, sweeter by far than the fragrance of the sweetest flowers on the earth. On the third day after these things happened, Romula desired to receive the Holy Communion. When she had received it, they heard the most beautiful music—as the music of the angels—at the door of the room, and immediately afterwards the soul of Romula left her body.

No wonder that the angels of heaven, and Jesus himself, come to console the good when they are dying. Has not Jesus himself said it? Did he not say: "I will come again and take you to myself, that where I am you also may be?" John xiv. 3.

XXIV. The Happy Child.

There was a poor, friendless, orphan child. An old Catholic woman, out of charity, had let the child live in her house. The poor child, however, had few of the blessings of this world. Its clothes were miserable rags; in its hunger, often it had nothing to eat. Little kindness did it meet with from anybody—

even the old woman was able to do very little for the orphan, for she was very poor. But there was One above who had been very kind to it. It had lost its father on earth, but it had found a Father in heaven. God had given his grace to the child; he had filled its soul with many blessed graces. He had made it a good child; and to be good is better than to be rich. Morning and night that child lifted up his hands to heaven, and said: "Our Father, who art in heaven." And He who is the God of orphans heard the orphan's prayer. The poor child got its scanty living by trying to sell a few matches. Often as it went on its weary way, it looked up at the blue sky, and thought how it had a blessed mother in heaven. Many were the Hail Marys this child said during the day; and when it said—"Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death"—a thought came into its heart, how sweet it would be to die, and go and be with Mary in heaven. God does not forget the poor creatures whom nobody cares about. It is true he waits till the next life to give them their reward. "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." But still he sometimes sends some little blessing of this world to strengthen the fainting heart. So he made the dogs come and lick the sores of the poor Lazarus. And so he sometimes put into somebody's heart the thought to have pity on this poor child in its hunger, and give it some bread to eat. The orphan never forgot that Almighty God is the giver of all good gifts, and so whenever it got anything to eat, it always made the sign of the cross before and after eating. It never lay its weary head down to sleep at night till it had said its night prayers, and examined its conscience; and the last thing it did at night was to fold its arms in a cross, and say, "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul." The child went to confession once every month, and perhaps the priest who heard its confessions was the only person in the wide world who knew how much that little child pleased God. It was never absent from mass on Sundays, and even on week days it went to mass as often as it could. Whenever it was in the chapel, and could get an opportunity, it loved to go and kneel at the rails of the altar of the Blessed Sacrament. Somehow it had learned without being taught, how to say little prayers to Jesus in the blessed sacrament. It would say: "My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the blessed sacrament. I adore you, O my Jesus—I thank you, O my sweet Jesus—I love you with all my heart." How it had learnt these prayers nobody could tell, for it had never been sent to school; but it prayed with a great heart, for greatly did it love Jesus, and it said these prayers over and over again.

XXV. The poor orphan was now about nine years of age. These years had been full of sorrows and pains for the poor child. But these pains did not come to the child by accident. God had arranged them all beforehand—before the child was born—from all eternity. These sorrows were the road, fixed by God, by which the child was to go to Heaven. God wished to see would the child be

good and faithful to Him in all these pains, and if the child was faithful to Him, God intended to give to it a great, a very great reward in Heaven. The nine years fixed by God for the child to live were now finished, and this child had been good and had served its Creator. It was a cold winter evening, the snow and the rain had been falling on the poor child all the day as it went about trying to sell its matches. It came late to the cottage of the poor old woman. It did not feel hungry, although it had scarcely eaten anything during the whole day; but it felt sick and poorly. Next day it was worse, and it got worse and worse every day. At last some neighbour had the kindness to go and seek a doctor. The doctor came, and almost as soon as he had seen the child, he said that it was dying. At the moment when the doctor said that the poor child was going to die, the child's Angel Guardian left it and went away. This was wonderful; for the Angel Guardian had never before left it for a moment in all its life. He had gone with it in all its ways; he had watched over it, and taken care of it; he had consoled it when it was hungry and sorrowful. Why then did the Angel leave it just then, when it was dying? Listen and you shall hear. The Angel Guardian went to the Chapel, where Jesus was in the Blessed Sacrament, and kneeling down before Jesus, he spoke thus to him:—"My dear Jesus, the good little child which you told me to take care of is dying. Be pleased, O Jesus, to come to the poor child before it dies, and give it your blessing for a happy death."

Now, Jesus had not seen the little child in the Chapel for many days, and he knew why the child was not there; He knew very well that the little child was dying, because it was His will that it should die. When the Angel Guardian said this prayer, Jesus turned to the angels—for there are always millions of angels adoring before the Blessed Sacrament—and he said:—

"My dear angels, the good little child which you have seen so often in the Chapel is going to die, for I want to have it in Heaven; but before it dies I will go and give it my blessing for a happy death."

XXVI. Then the priest came to take the Blessed Sacrament to the dying child, as he always takes it to those who are very ill and dying. Now, just at the moment when the Blessed Sacrament was taken into the room where the child was, a most wonderful thing happened. Jesus spoke—He spoke to the heart of the child, and nobody heard him speak except the child itself. He said these words—"My dear child, I am Jesus whom you love. I want you to die and come to Heaven; and now I have come here to give you my blessing before you die." That child knew how to answer—to speak to Jesus—for many and many a time it had knelt before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and prayed to Him. So that child said these words to Jesus—"O Jesus, God the Son made man, I believe that you are present in the Blessed Sacrament. Sweet Jesus, I love you; and now, Jesus, you know that I am dying, and I want to die for the

love of you. Come, then, my dearest Jesus—give yourself to me, and give strength to my poor dying heart. Then the priest gave the Holy Communion to the little child. After that he anointed the eyes, and ears, and other senses of the child, praying to God that in His mercy He would forgive whatever sins the child might have committed by those senses. After each prayer said along with the anointing, the child answered, Amen. In the end, the priest gave the last blessing of the Church which is given to the dying, that they may not have to be punished in purgatory for their sins. It is called Plenary Indulgence.

The last moments of the little child's life were passing away—Death was not far off. What is called the last agony came on. It is the struggle between the body and the soul, when the soul begins to leave the body. It is a terrible sight to see those who are in their last agony. The child's face became as pale as ashes, big drops of sweat rolled slowly down it, the eyes moved about as if the child saw something that frightened it. These were moments of fear, both for those that stood round the dying child, as well as for the Angels above. During those moments all the Angels of Heaven were on their knees before the throne of God; they were praying for the dying child; they said, "O God, have pity on the poor dying child; do not let the devil come and tempt it; give it your blessing, O God, to die a happy death; it believed in you, and hoped in you, and loved you." All was over; the little child was dead. And what do you think happened at the last moment of its life? just when it was going to die, with the very last breath that it ever breathed in this world, it said—"*Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul*"—and the little child was in heaven at the feet of Jesus, and Jesus was putting a beautiful crown on its head, and that blessed prayer was still as it were on the lips of the dead body! And because the soul of the child was in Heaven the Angels came down and sang hymns round the lifeless body of the child, for they knew that it would rise again at the last day, bright and shining as the sun.

XXVII. Some Children who died after the Missions.

The Infant consecrated to Mary.

At the town of Derry, in Ireland, amongst the children who came to the Mission, there was one child, six years old. Every day this child came to the Mission; it did not stop away once. When the children went to confession, this little child tried to get to confession, but there were so many children older than itself, that it was never able to go to confession. On a certain day all the children were consecrated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. This was the last time that child came to the Mission. The next day the poor child was very ill, and it

was not able to go any more to the Mission. It lived only two or three days, and during this time it never spoke. A few moments before it died, its mother, who was close to the bed-side, saw that its lips were moving. She could not hear what it said. She stooped down and listened more attentively. She heard the dying child say these words, "I am consecrated to Mary, I am the child of Mary—Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul." The mother heard no more, she turned her head to look at the little child, and she saw that it was dead!

The Death Song.

At Blackburn, in Lancashire, there was another little child scarce seven years old. During a Mission given to the children, it came morning and night. About half a year after the Mission it became ill. It grew worse and worse, and at last it died. The Priest had been sent for. When he came into the room where the child was, he found it singing! It was singing one of the hymns it had sung during the Mission. The Priest heard it singing these words:

Infant Jesus, meek and mild,
Look on me, a little child,
Pity mine and pity me,
And suffer me to come to thee.

The moment the child had finished the last words—"Suffer me to come to thee"—it fell back and died!

XXVIII. The Child Burnt to Death.

During a Mission given to the children at Somerstown, in London, a little girl about nine years old made its first communion. About a week after the Mission was over, this child one afternoon happened to be near the fire. By some accident the clothes of the child caught fire. All its clothes were soon in a flame, and the poor child was sadly, shockingly burnt. It was burnt so dreadfully that it lived only for two days. During these two days the poor burnt child was quiet and patient; it made no complaint; whatever pain it suffered, it never got impatient. During the two days this child did nothing but sing the prayers which the children had sung during the Mission. It died on Sunday morning. About an hour before the child died, it was just the time for the children's Mass in the chapel. The little child said to its mother, "Please, mother, might I be carried to the chapel to sing the holy prayers along with the other children." The mother told the child that she was too ill to be carried to

the chapel. The poor child remained silent for a short time, then it lifted up its hands, and said: "O Heavenly Father, take me," and immediately it died.

XXIX. What the Prayers of the Children did.

There was a Mission given to the children in another place. One day the parish priest came home, and said that he had brought some sorrowful news. A young man, twenty-five years old, who had made his first communion in the chapel where the Mission was going on, and had been taught at the very school where the children who came to the Mission were going to, was very ill. He was dying of consumption, and was not expected to live more than two or three days. The priest had been to him, and told him that he was dying, and asked him to make his confession. The young man had answered the priest, and said no—that he would not make any confession—that he would die without confession. Next morning, during the holy Mass, the missionary told the children all about it—how the young man was dying—how he had been taught in their school, and made his first communion in that very chapel. "Pray to God for him," said the missionary, "that God may have mercy on his soul." The children said three Hail Marys for the poor young man. Immediately after holy Mass the priest went again to the house where the young man was. The priest found an immense change in the young man. He who the night before would not listen to the priest, and would not make a confession, was now most eager to go to confession. He was completely changed, he was in the best disposition to die. The priest gave him all the last sacraments. The next day the young man died in the most edifying manner.

XXX. The Little Match-seller.

In one of the poorest parts of London, there was a cellar, with scarce any furniture in it. There was nothing but a broken table, a little stool, a bed with a few handfuls of straw, and a few rags upon it. A poor woman, whose husband died in Ireland, lived in this cellar, with her little daughter Mary. The woman had become very poor, and her health was so bad that she could work no more. She had nothing to live on but what the little Mary got by selling a few matches. But when she became poor, she did not neglect her duties to God. She was at mass every Sunday, and went to confession, and received holy communion every month.

Above all, she took care of her daughter Mary, that she should not go into bad company, that she should say her prayers, and go to mass and catechism, and be good. One day in the winter the poor woman had been very ill, worse than usual. She had scarcely had anything to eat all the day—there was no fire

in the grate—the last farthing candle was burning away. Mary sat by her mother's bed-side crying, for it grieved her much that her poor mother should be so ill, and have nothing to eat. All at once Mary left her mother, and went over to the other side of the cellar, and began to seek for something. She had just remembered that there were a few match-boxes still remaining, and she thought if she could sell them she might buy something for her poor mother. After searching here and there, she found three or four boxes. She went back again to the bed-side of her mother with the match-boxes in her hand, and told her mother what she was going to do, and asked her blessing. "God bless you, my child," said her mother, in a weak voice; "I hope I shall see you again." But the mother never saw her child again.

XXXI. Mary had a practice of saying the Hail Mary whenever she went out of the house; and in each street she said either "My Jesus, I do all for you," or the Hail Mary, or some little prayer. She prayed fervently that night, for she knew that if she were to lose her mother, there was nobody on earth to take care of her. When she got into the street, she began to cry out: "Matches—very good matches for a penny." But the snow was falling fast, and the wind blew sharply, and the darkness was coming on quickly. There were few people about to buy her matches; and of those she met, few heard the weak voice of the child, and fewer still paid any attention to it. Mary cried out her matches, till weak, and hungry, and sorrowful, she could cry out no longer. So she sat down on a stone, and began to cry. Then Mary thought of her mother in Heaven, and again she said the Hail Mary. She had scarcely finished it when a woman who was passing by, stopped and asked her why she sat there so late on that cold stone, and crying. "My poor mother," answered Mary—"my poor mother is very ill, and has nothing to eat." "Poor child," said the stranger; "take this sixpence, and get something for your mother." Mary was going to thank the stranger, but she was gone. Mary bought some bread in a shop, and then went home as quick as she could. She went carefully down the steps into the cellar, and there she saw her mother lying dead, and a priest kneeling beside her! The priest had given her the last sacraments before she died. But how did the priest come there? The poor woman was dying in cold, and in want, and in darkness. She was alone—there was nobody with her to go and ask the priest to bring to her the greatest of all blessings which can come to a soul which is going out of this world, before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. But God is good, and He is very good to the poor when they have been good to Him. God remembered this poor woman; He remembered how she had always done her best to go to the sacraments, and how she had taken care to bring up her little child in the fear of God. God knew that she was dying, and God said that she should not die without the blessing of the sacraments. But how was this done, for there was no one to fetch the priest? Whatever God

wishes to be done is sure to be done. At the same hour when the poor woman was dying, it happened that the priest was called to see some one else who was very ill. The priest set off. On his way he passed the cellar where the poor woman was dying. The door, which opened on the steps leading down to the cellar, happened to be open. The night was dark, and it happened that the priest, not seeing the opening, fell down the steps. He found himself in the cellar, and heard a groan in one corner of the cellar, and going over there, he found the poor woman nearly at the point of death. He had with him everything that was necessary. He heard her confession, gave her the holy viaticum, anointed her, and gave her the last blessing, and a few moments after she died! So God is good to those who are faithful to him. This poor woman had not forgotten God during her life, and God did not forget her at her death. She was dying. She wanted a priest to hear her confession. A priest came to hear her confession. But why did he come? Was it because some one fetched him? No. Was it because he came of himself? No, for he knew nothing about the poor woman. Did he come by accident? No. Then why did he come? He came because God brought him there. God said, the priest has set off to a sick person, but he shall not go to that person. He shall go to the poor woman who has served me faithfully.

CONCLUSION.

Never forget that you must die; that death will come sooner than you expect. Eccclus. vii.—"In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." God has written the letters of death upon your hands. In the inside of your hands you will see the letters M. M. It means "Memento Mori"—remember that you must die!

PRAYER OF ST. VINCENT FERRERS FOR A HAPPY DEATH.

Lord Jesus Christ, thou dost desire that no one should perish. It is thy will that whoever prays to thee may hope for mercy, for thou hast said: "All whatsoever you shall ask in my name shall be given to you." I ask, then, through thy Holy Name, that when I am dying, I may be able to think and speak—that I may have a very great sorrow for my sins—a true faith, a sincere hope, and perfect charity. May I be able to say with a pure heart: "Into thy hands I commend my spirit—thou hast redeemed me, O God of truth, who art blessed for ever. Amen."

"What must be done in order that we may die a happy death," will be found in the next of the "BOOKS FOR CHILDREN"

THE END

