

To give me back treble my loving  
In the hour I die?  
  
All anguish, all maddest adoring,  
Will be vain in that day.  
Though you knelt to me then with imploring,  
What word could I say?

Oh! love me, then, now, that it quicken  
My heart's failing breath.  
Why wait till to love is to sicken  
At the coldness of death?

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### THE STRAY ANGEL.

BY GRACE DENIO LITCHFIELD.

A LITTLE Angel once strayed from Heaven and lost his way. He stood all alone in the immensity of space, with great stars rushing past, and golden comets darting by in hissing splendor, and far-off suns burning and shining in unalterable, unapproachable glory. But none of them was Heaven. And the little Angel floated along on weary wing, and strained his gaze looking upward and downward and around in search of the home he had lost, till at last, too weary to wait or wander more, he dropped down upon the nearest world, which chanced to be our earth.

"I have lost my way from Heaven," said the Angel timidly to the first person he met, and who happened to be a clergyman. "Can you show me the way back?"

The man stopped and looked at him severely over his white cravat.

"Certainly," he said. "Do you acknowledge the apostolic succession and infant baptism?"

"Why, I don't know," replied the little Angel, dubiously. "I never heard of either

in Heaven."

"Dear me!" said the clergyman, raising his eyebrows to a fine high-church angle. "If you are so utterly ignorant as that, there's no use in my pointing out the way. You can't get there anyhow. But here's my brother. You may get on better with him."

"Do you believe in transubstantiation and papal infallibility, my son?" asked the brother mildly, with a soft, persuasive voice and milky smile.

The little Angel looked puzzled.

"They never taught me that in Heaven," he answered. "I really can't say."

"Well, just learn that first, my fine little fellow; and then come back to me. There's no other living body can teach you the way to Heaven; for we hold the keys, and none else can pass the door."

"But I want to go to Heaven now—today," said the little Angel, entreatingly. "Please! Oh! please show me the way there."

"No! no! Not yet, my sad little heretic!" replied the other, in a soothing, oily tone. "Purge your soul first of all apostate creeds. In the meantime perhaps my cousin here can help you."

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"Not now. I haven't time," said this one, a big, blustering looking man, with a scowl like a November day upon his face. "I'm to deliver a lecture to-night upon 'The Sole Way of Redemption Open to Sinners,' and the closing sentence has still all to be remodeled and elaborated. However, I see a neighbor there who may help you."

"There! There! Out of the way, my boy!" said the neighbor, smiling benevolently through his gold-rimmed spectacles, and pushing the little Angel roughly out of his way—very roughly, it would have seemed, but for that intensely benevolent smile. "What is it you want? The way to Heaven? Yes, yes, to be sure; very proper; but I can't tell you now. I'm on my way to a meeting of the Grand Panjandrum Society for the Relief of the Poor, and can't be stopped by beggars. Another time, my pretty lad, another time! You can easily find some one who ought to help you."

"Help you?" groaned a man going by, a man lean and lank, and haggard looking as an attenuated exclamation point. "Ah! poor wretch, what help is there for your unregenerate soul? Repent, repent, ere Hell open headlong beneath your feet! You are an outcast from grace! A child of the Devil! A son of perdition! Help you? Alas!" And he smote his breast. "How can I help you? Are we not all lost alike?"

"But where is Heaven?" cried the little Angel, despairingly. "I can get there alone if I only know the way. Is there no one can show me the way to Heaven?"

"To Heaven, my dear?" echoed a passer, pausing in surprise. "Well, I don't know just where that is; but it isn't necessary. I can show you the way to Brother Blinder's instead, and that's all any one needs to know. What he tells you is better than the Bible, and truer than truth. Come to him."

"Stay, stay!" called another, excitedly. "You'll never get to Heaven through those doors. Poor little innocent lamb! Come with me! I'll raise a subscription for you, so you shall be fed and clothed, and taught to look pious and sing hymns, and shall have beef and pudding once a week, and lots of holidays, and grow up to save other sinful little boys from the wicked and deluded ways of your own childhood. Come, come, my lamb!"

"And go from the House of the Good Shepherd direct to the House of Correction; that's always the end!" grumbled another voice. "Better put him in prison at once, and save time. What's the little vagabond doing here?"

"I only want to learn the way to Heaven," sobbed the little Angel. "And

no one knows."

"Why, we all know," said a merry voice, coming up behind. "Of course we do. All of us. It's up among the stars somewhere. We'll find it straight enough when the end comes."

"But where, where?" asked the little Angel, breathlessly. "Can't you show me, too?"

The man looked blank.

"You don't need to find the way yet, my infant. Time enough for that when you are old. I really haven't found the exact road myself yet; but I will try by and by, tra-la-la, by and by. Time enough, you'll see!" And he went on humming a light gay tune, and tossed a penny to a beggar, to be rid of the low whine by his side.

"Oh! where is Heaven?" moaned the little Angel. "Where, where is Heaven?"

"Fool!" hissed a scoffer, drawing near. "There is no Heaven."

"Oh! but there is; there is, indeed!" cried the little Angel, in despair. "I know there is! I came from Heaven such a little while ago!"

"Ha, ha! Aren't those old woman fancies exploded yet?" laughed another. "Came from Heaven, indeed! Ask Darwin about that."

"But I did!" persisted the little Angel. "Can no one show me the way back?"

"Prove that you came from there!" laughed a chorus of mocking voices.

"Prove that you belong there!" sneered a second chorus.

"Prove that there is a There!" muttered a third set.

The little Angel drew back. "I can prove nothing," he said. "In Heaven I learned only to feel and to know, not to argue. But I came from Heaven here, and surely, oh! surely, therefore, there must be a road heavenward that I have missed."

"You can only find it in the thirty-nine articles," said the clergyman whom he had first accosted, reappearing in the crowd, with his Brother following closely at his heels, and looking more sternly than ever at the forlorn little Angel over the immaculateness of his solemn white choker. "Only in the thirty-nine articles."

"Only, only through the doors of Rome can you reach it, my child!" added the Brother, patting the little Angel insinuatingly on the head. "Only through the doors of Rome."

And no one could give any nearer clew; and the little Angel's heart was heavy for that beautiful home he had lost.

"Can it be Heaven is really so far from earth?" he asked piteously. "Does none of you ever go there, that none now can tell the way?"

"Oh! yes," said a group of well-dressed, portly-looking gentlemen, calmly lighting

their cigars. "We have sent a great many there in our time." (They were doctors). "But we don't many of us expect to go ourselves."

"Ah! follow us," murmured a couple, going softly by, arm in arm. "None ever were nearer Heaven than we!"

"Fools!" laughed the crowd. "None ever were farther. They are to be married to-morrow!"

The little Angel grew quite faint and dizzy.

"I wonder if I can have been dreaming, and if there really is no Heaven anywhere!" he thought wildly. And he turned, forgetting his wings, and ran and ran as if in a vain hope of getting away from that earth to which his every footstep held him. "No road leads to Heaven because there is no Heaven!" he thought bitterly, and wept as he ran.

And just then some one caught his hand; and there by his side was a little child, looking at him with grave, earnest eyes, as if imploring aid. And the Angel paused, and saw where a poor woman lay dying by the roadside.

"I am going to Heaven," she murmured, stretching out her wan arms and drawing

the child to her heart. "My little, little child, good by!"

"Oh! take me with you, dear Mother!" cried the child. "Oh! take me too! I do not know where Heaven is. How can I find the way without you?"

"Heaven is where God is," whispered the dying woman, with a sudden sweet light flashing to her eyes. "And God is everywhere."

"But the way! Oh! the way!" sobbed the child. "How can I reach him alone?"

"The way to God is through prayer and love and pain," said the woman. "And we each must go alone. Alone through suffering; alone through death; and alone, all alone, to God!" And she folded the child close, close to her bosom, and turned her face upward and smiled; and the little Angel, looking into her eyes, saw where Heaven was.

And when morning came, people found a poor woman lying still and white upon the stones, with a marvelous smile upon her face, and a child clinging sobbing to her breast. But the little Angel was not there. He had flown back, with the freed soul, to Heaven.

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