

When on her deathbed she told them all her tale—

"Then clear, low and calm,
 'Praise God for me, my sisters,' and the psalm
 Rang up to Heaven, far and clear and wide.
 Again and yet again, then sank and died;
 While her white face had such a smile of peace,
 They saw she never heard the music cease.
 And weeping sisters laid her in her tomb,
 Crowned with a wreath of perfumed hawthorn bloom."

And thus the legend ends,— the sweet epilogue
 rounding it—

*"Our place is kept, and it will wait,
 Ready for us to fill it, soon or late:
 No star is ever lost we once have seen,—
 We always may be what we might have been."*

Such poetry as this is always sure of a welcome.
 The simplest can read its lesson, the most cultivated can feel its charm.

In 1853, Fanny Kemble in her 'Recollections' mentions that she was on the eve of escorting Miss Procter to Italy, where the latter was going on a visit to her aunt, Madame de Viry. Between the two travelers there would seem to have been little or no sympathy, for, as Fanny Kemble naively says, "I do not think that she will like me any better when she knows me better."

They were a strangely dissimilar pair truly, but the affection of the actress for Mr and Mrs Procter, and Adelaide's own sweetness of character, made a pleasant journey possible for both.

This year in Italy must have been full of enchantment for the gentle poet, and her letters home are full of vivid word-pictures, while many of her poems were doubtless written at this time.

Every womanly woman is at heart a philanthropist, and Adelaide Anne Procter was no exception to the rule. She was too innately good and unselfish to be regardless of the manifold sufferings of humanity. The Association for the Promotion of Social Science had been but recently established when she was elected a member of its Committee, with a view to providing employment for the women of the metropolis. Into this scheme she threw herself with all the ready sympathy of her warm heart, and, with her co-workers, she did her utmost to stem the tide of unemployed women that was flooding the London streets with misery and sin.

The Committee was composed of an equal number of ladies and gentlemen who were chosen on account of their practical knowledge of, and interest in, the scheme:—

The Earl of Shaftesbury.
Hon. Arthur Kinnaird.
Mr Edward Ackroyd.
Mr G. W. Hastings.
Mr Horace Mann.
Mr Strickland Cookson.

Mrs Jameson.
Miss A. A. Procter.
Miss Boucherett.
Miss Isa Craig,
Miss Bessie Parkes.
Miss Emily Faithfull.

Under their auspices the "Victoria Press" was opened in 1860— printing having been chosen as an employment singularly suitable for women,— and in the following year it was suggested that a special volume should be published as a specimen of the choice work which they were able to execute. This suggestion resulted in the production in 1861 of 'Victoria Regia,' which was dedicated by "special permission" to the Queen, who from the first had taken much interest in the undertaking. It was published by Emily Faithfull & Co., and to Miss Procter was deputed the task of its editing. To this volume no less than fifty-five other distinguished writers in prose and verse contributed; but one of the most beautiful poems therein contained is her own 'Links with Heaven,' which we here insert.

I.

"Our God in Heaven, from that holy place
To each of us an Angel-guide has given;
But Mothers of dead children have more grace—
For they give Angels to their God and Heaven.

II.

How can a Mother's heart feel cold or weary,
Knowing her dearer self safe, happy, warm?
How can she feel her road too dark or dreary
Who knows her treasure sheltered from the storm?

III.

How can she sin? Our hearts may be unheeding—
Our God forgot— our holy Saints defied---
But can a Mother hear her dead child pleading
And thrust those little angel hands aside?

IV.

Those little hands stretched down to draw her ever
Nearer to God by mother love: we all
Are blind and weak,— yet surely She can never,
With such a stake in Heaven, fail or fall,

V.

She knows that when the mighty Angels raise
Chorus in Heaven, one little silver tone
Is hers for ever— that one little praise,
One little happy voice is all her own.

VI.

We may not see her sacred crown of honour,
But all the angels flitting to and fro
Pause smiling as they pass— they look upon her
As Mother of an angel whom they know,

VII.

One whom they left nestled at Mary's feet—
The children's place in Heaven— who softly sings
A little chant to please them, slow and sweet,
And smiling strokes their little folded wings.

VIII.

Or gives them her white lilies or her beads
To play with:— yet in spite of flower or song
They often lift a wistful look that pleads,
And asks her why their Mother stays so long.

IX.

Then our dear Queen makes answer— they may call
Her very soon: meanwhile they are beguiled
To wait and listen while She tells them all
A story of her Jesus as a child.

X..

Ah! Saints in Heaven may pray with earnest will
And pity for their weak and erring brothers!
Yet there is prayer in Heaven more mighty still—
The little Children pleading for their Mothers."

With the feverish energy that so often characterises consumptive patients, she spared herself no fatigue in prosecuting her charitable schemes. The expostulations of friends were all in vain. As if knowing that the time was short, she heeded no warnings, but worked on at her self-imposed duties until nature took its last revenge, and she was laid aside for ever.

For fifteen months she never left her room, though she only took to her bed a few days before the end. Her great delight was to be talked to. Conversation would often have been far too tiring, but for hours she could listen unweariedly, and partially forget her pain. Like her mother and grandmother, she was scrupulously dainty in all her personal habits; and, with her pretty fluffy hair tastefully arranged under a little cap, and a pale blue bed-jacket, the sick-chamber was bereft of half its terrors, while her cheerfulness was a source of wondering admiration to those who witnessed it.

Such a pathetically short life! Only a few years in which to reap the fame that was universally accorded to her, and then the daily increasing weariness of consumption, the hacking cough, the long months of patient suffering, and the triumphant yet peaceful passing into the Silent Land.

It was on Candlemas Day, Feb. 2, 1864, that the struggle for life ended, and the laboured

breathing ceased. Just before the end, she looked up at her mother and said, "Mamma, has it come?" "Yes, my dear," was the heart-broken reply, as the loving arms clasped the poor fragile body in a last embrace, and the gentle spirit of Adelaide Anne Procter passed away into "joy so pure, so mighty, so eternal," as human understanding cannot even imagine.

The Love of which she had sung so sweetly was with her to the end; and, amid masses of snowdrops, she lay as if lulled to sleep by the "beautiful Angel Death," until the snowy morning when her sorrowing friends followed her to the quiet grave in Kensal Green Cemetery. There the ivy planted by her mother's hands still grows thickly, and in "the far-off skies" father, mother, sisters, brother, have met once more.

MARIANNE NORTH

Born at Hastings, 1830.

Died at Alderley, Gloucestershire, 1890.