

O U R

DARLING MINNIE.

BY E. H. STOKES.

"This beautiful, mysterious thing;
This seeming visitant from heaven,
This bird with the immortal wing,
To me, to me, thy hand has given.

* * * * *

Room for my bird in Paradise.
And give her angel-plumage there."

NEW YORK:
CARLTON & LANAHAN.
SAN FRANCISCO: E. THOMAS.
CINCINNATI: HITCHCOCK & WALDEN.
TRACT DEPARTMENT.

OUR DARLING MINNIE.

BY E. H. STOKES.

"This beautiful, mysterious thing,
This seeming visitant from heaven,
This bird with the immortal wing,
To me, to me, thy hand has given.

* * * * *

Room for my bird in Paradise,
And give her angel-plumage there."



NEW YORK:
CARLTON & LANAHAN,
SAN FRANCISCO: E. THOMAS,
CINCINNATI: HITCHCOCK & WALDEN.
TRACT DEPARTMENT.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1870, by

CARLTON & LANAHAN,

in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for
the Southern District of New York.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THE incidents found in the following pages concerning "Our Darling Minnie," daughter of Rev. B. S. and R. A. SHARP, of the New Jersey Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, have all been taken from the mother's manuscript, and may therefore be relied on as entirely correct. They are thrown into their present form in the hope and belief that through them some parents may be led to an earlier and fuller consecration of their offspring to God, to a stronger confidence in the religion of childhood, and to holier consolations in the loss of loved ones. If these ends are reached the desire of parents and writer will be accomplished.

E. H. STOKES.

RED BANK, *February*, 1870.

CONTENTS.



CHAPTER	PAGE
I. BIRTH.....	5
II. CONSECRATION.....	6
III. SPIRITUALITY	11
IV. SYMPATHY	16
V. THOUGHTS OF HEAVEN	19
VI. SICKNESS AND DEATH	24
VII. FUNERAL	28
VIII. HOPES.....	31

OUR DARLING MINNIE.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH.

“Little lips, so gently pressing,
Little fingers, soft caressing;
O, the bosom of a mother
Knows more joy than any other.”

MANY things connected with human life are so beautifully joyous that we cling to them with undying love. If there was no sin every thing would be beautiful, and every life would be a perpetuation of unsullied bliss. In a fallen world we are very far removed from this coveted condition; but infancy and childhood are its nearest approach.

It was, therefore, a joyfully solemn hour when, on the 16th of November, 1865, in the modest, but comfortable little parsonage which stands beside the church in

the quiet old town of Sweedsborough,
N. J., it was announced that there was,

“Another little wave
Upon the sea of life;”

and father and mother fully realized,

“Another soul to save
Amid the toil and strife.”

So, clasping the new-born treasure to their
hearts with smiles and tears and thanks,
they called her “Our Darling Minnie.”
Then, for awhile there was

“Another heart to love,
Receiving love again.”

CHAPTER II.

C O N S E C R A T I O N .

“Jesus, kind, inviting Lord,
We with joy obey thy word,
And in earliest infancy,
Bring our little ones to thee.”

A FATHER'S love may be deep and tender,
but a mother's love goes deeper, and en-
dures when a father's may be exhausted.
A father's and a mother's love is deep
and tender, as they live near to God.

“Our Darling Minnie’s” father was a minister of the blessed Gospel, and her mother a humble Christian; but, many months before Minnie’s birth, they both felt the need of a deeper experience, and, under the influence of that conviction, made a complete dedication of their all to God. Their offering received the divine approval, and their minds were filled with peace. As Minnie was their first-born after this consecration they looked upon her as in a peculiar sense the child of covenant, and, therefore, gave her immediately to the Lord.

“Take this child and nurse it for Me, and I will give thee thy wages,” seemed to be applied with power to the mother’s heart, and she joyfully acceded to the Spirit’s proposal. From that hour, in many unexpected ways, her heavenly Father fulfilled the promise, and gave her, through the pleasant days of four short years, her blessed wages. Minnie was early taught that she was the Lord’s,

and from the first faint dawnings of reason her mind sweetly turned to him.

One evening, when only a year and a half old, sitting on her mother's lap, and seeing the other children kneel beside her to say their prayers, she slid down upon the floor, and putting up her tiny hands, said in childish accents, "Me p'ay too, mamma." From that time she was constant in her devotions, and was never known to omit them unless put to bed asleep. One night she had lain down upon the lounge in the parlor and fallen asleep. At the proper time her mother carried her up stairs, and prepared to lay her away in her little crib, supposing her too sleepy to say her usual evening prayer. As her mother was about leaving the room she suddenly started up, exclaiming,

"O, mamma, I fordot to say my prayers!"

"Well, my darling," said her mother, "kneel down in your little crib, and lean against me and say your prayers."

Minnie looked up in her mother's face with a doubtful expression, asking, "Will that be just the same as dittin out on the floor to say my prayers?" On being assured that it would, she clasped her little hands together, murmured gently her little prayer, and was soon asleep.

"I have often thought," said Minnie's mother, "that we too frequently intrust our children to the care of careless and godless servants, who have little or no concern for their spiritual or eternal welfare. I do most solemnly believe," she continued, "that it is a duty binding on all mothers to give personal attention to their children as they retire for the night, unless circumstances render it entirely impracticable; to know that they go to rest in a happy state of mind; that there is a proper condition of body; and that their little devotions are carefully and cheerfully performed. I once saw," she further added, "three little children amusing themselves pleasantly in playing hide

and seek. It was quite early in the evening, but the servant desired to go out, and the mother, not wishing the care of taking them to bed, the girl must do it before she left. In vain the little ones objected, entreated, begged, just to have time to finish their play.

“‘You go to bed this moment or I’ll box your ears,’ cried the mother, sternly. So, crying and scolding, they went; but some difficulty occurring after reaching their room, blows were soon heard from the servant, and one of the children, sobbing as if her heart would break, came down for relief and sympathy. She was met at the door by her mother, who, in angry tones, said,

“‘It serves you just right; I wish she had given you five times more; go immediately back to bed, and let me hear no more from you.’

“So the little, almost broken-hearted, child went weeping to her room, feeling she had scarcely a friend on earth,

while darkness filled her soul, where there might have been sunshine and joy had that mother done her duty.

“‘Speak gently, ’tis a little thing;
Dropped in the heart’s deep well;
The good, the joy that it will bring,
Eternity will tell.’”

CHAPTER III.

SPIRITUALITY.

“Her angel face,
As the great eye of heaven, shone bright,
And made a sunshine in a shady place.”

SENSUOUSNESS is often stamped upon the outward form, and exhibited with the first unfoldings of the intellect. The opposite is true of others. Not that any are born sinless; but there is sometimes such delicateness and transparent grace and beauty in the physical organization, as to suggest the Apostle’s thought of a “spiritual body,” while every development of the mind only serves to impress the beholder with the tenderest convic-

tion that both body and soul are nearly allied to God.

Such was "Our Darling Minnie's" case. From her earliest consciousness, she seemed to have a living faith in Jesus as her divine Redeemer. This faith made her loving, gentle, and kind to all. Every look, and word, and act seemed to have a spiritual fragrance connected with it. Her little heart was a treasury of the holiest affections. In speaking of herself, she said, "I'se Jesus' little lamb." Her attachment to Jesus was supreme. When speaking of those she loved she always stated it thus: "I love Jesus, and papa, and mamma." "I love Jesus, and sisters, and little brother Frankie." Whoever she loved, Jesus was *first*. Her fondness for her parents was extreme; sometimes exhibiting itself in the most tender and heart touching expressions. When any little act of kindness was done for her she would always exclaim, "Thank you, dear mamma! what a dear, kind mamma

you are to me; many poor little children haven't a dear, kind mamma, like I have;" and she would often speak of these little acts of love for days and weeks after they were passed; yet whenever asked who she loved best, it was always Jesus first, and papa and mamma next. If reproof was administered, it was always received in the same loving spirit.

She had an ardent love for all that was beautiful and good. When the sun shone brightly, and the birds warbled their songs of gladness around, her voice, always clear and musical, joined in nature's chorus, and her happiness revealed itself in every act.

If storms gathered, and the outside world was cold and dreary, her little heart, still full of joy, and her sweet voice, as musical as ever, filled all the house with gladness, so that, by common consent, Minnie was often styled "Our Little Sunshine."

To her bereaved and often afflicted

mother she was an angel of love. No one could long be unhappy in her presence, for she would sing so cheerily, "Yes, Jesus loves me," "I want to be an angel," "I love to sing of Jesus," etc., till all hearts were melted by the blessedness of her songs and the spirituality of her presence.

Sometimes she and her little brother would play meeting together, and the correctness and fervency of her prayers often astonished those who listened. She greatly delighted in family worship. She joined in the songs, and repeated the Lord's Prayer, with an appropriateness rarely equaled by one of her age, and at the end of each petition her little "amen" could be distinctly heard.

She had a special fondness for Bible stories, and never wearied of hearing of Moses, Samuel, Daniel, David, and the Hebrew children; but her greatest delight was the narrative of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of the blessed Saviour.

All these divine things seemed not only to have influenced her mind, but left such an indelible impress on her outward form as to gain for her, from friends and strangers, the beautiful title of "Angel Minnie."

When she was very small, an elderly Christian lady, visiting the house, was so impressed with her appearance that she said, "I do not wonder you love the dear little lamb so much, there really seems to be more of heaven than earth about her; but," she added solemnly, "Sister Sharp, don't set your affections too strongly on her; *her little wings are growing.*"

This angelic character left its heavenly impress even on her sleep. "One night," her mother says, "she went to bed extremely happy, and when I approached her to see that all was right for the night she was lost in the innocent sleep of childhood. She was resting on her left side, her little knees drawn partially up, and her little hands clasped before her, as if

in the attitude of prayer. Her cheeks wore a bright flush, and her hair, which I had curled late in the afternoon, lay in beautiful ringlets upon her neck and pillow. Lying in that position, with her long white night dress on, she was a picture for an artist. As I stood and looked at her I thought I had never seen an object so lovely, and stooping to kiss her soft warm cheek, and breathe a prayer for my darling child, I thought the angels might covet the privilege of keeping their vigils over a being so fair and beautiful."

CHAPTER IV.

SYMPATHY.

"O children young, I bless ye,
Ye keep such love alive;
And the home can ne'er be desolate
Where love has room to thrive.
O precious household treasures,
Life's sweetest, holiest charm,
The Saviour blessed you while on earth,
I bless you in his name."

THE little earthly treasure whose virtues these pages are designed to perpetuate

was too young to know the meaning of the word which stands at the head of this chapter, and yet, in almost every word and act of her precious little life, she exhibited such considerate tenderness, and was moved by such deep pity for the suffering, and genuine love for all, that every beholder felt she possessed a most sympathetic heart. From the tiniest insect that arrested her attention, to the beggar who asked help at the door, she had the liveliest solitudes, and her exclamations of interest for such were often very touching and tender. To carry food to the hungry, or relief in any form to the distressed, was her highest delight.

So deep and genuine were the outbursts of affectionate love from her little heart, and the help proffered by her little hands, that many a blessed benediction fell from the lips of poverty upon her little head.

Her appreciation of kindness toward

herself, and the want of it toward others, was sometimes most affecting.

Walking one afternoon with the young woman who resides with the family, she saw a mother cruelly whipping her own child. All the tender sympathies of her nature were at once excited, and with the deepest emotion she cried out, "O, Mattie, come on quick; I can't bear to see that wicked woman beat her little girl that way."

On reaching home she represented the scene with so much feeling that tears were drawn from her mother's eyes; then, immediately turning to her little brother and sisters, added, "Oughten't we to be glad we haven't got such a wicked mamma! Our dear mamma loves *her* children, don't she?" Then, after a few moments' reflection, as if meditating on the Giver of all our blessings, she continued, "Wasn't Jesus good to give us such a dear, kind mamma?" For months after witnessing this most unpleasant

scene she often referred to it in the most pitiful tones. She was unselfish to the last degree.

“Pure ones, your feelings all unfeigned,
 Your souls untouched by time,
 Ye keep first innocence unstained,
 First simple faith sublime.
 Such once the holy Saviour blessed,
 For such in heaven he knew ;
 And they are greatest, wisest, best,
 Who most resemble you.”

CHAPTER V.

THOUGHTS OF HEAVEN.

“O the city, bright with glory,
 How its splendors charm the eye.
 Though we view it from a distance,
 We shall reach it by and by.”

AMONG the most beautiful things on earth are a child's thoughts of heaven. “Our Darling Minnie's” mind was full of the bliss of that better land. She doubtless had many thoughts concerning it which were never uttered, and many uttered have been forgotten; a few are here given, to show that the constant aspirations of her soul were toward the home of the good.

One afternoon the children had all been singing,

“I want to be an angel,
And with the angels stand,
A crown upon my forehead,
A harp within my hand.”

After they had finished, she came running to her mother with her little heart full of that country where the angels live, and said with great earnestness, “O, mamma, tell me about heaven.” Her mother threw her arms around the little inquirer, and in plain and simple language, told her of “that country so bright and so fair.”

She listened attentively, and at the close of her mother’s description clasped her hands together and said enthusiastically, “O, I shall have a beautiful crown, and a shining white dress, and a pair of pretty silver wings, and a harp; and I’ll play—O, so pretty! and, mamma, can’t I fly down and see you and papa just when I want to?”

“But do you think,” inquired her

mother, "that you would want to come back to see us if you were in that beautiful place where Jesus is?"

"O yes, mamma, indeed I would!" she replied, "and I would come very often too."

"But I don't want to go to heaven till mamma does, remarked her little brother Frankie.

Minnie was then silent for some minutes, but finally exclaimed with confidence, "But if I die and go to heaven dear mamma will soon come too, wont you, mamma?"

Her mother replied, "I do not know, dear Minnie; but mamma will come whenever it is the Lord's will she should."

"But you will," persisted Minnie, "for I will ask Him to let you come, and I know he will, for I am so little I cannot do without my dear mamma there."

Watching a funeral procession pass into St. James's Church one day, she asked concerning the deceased if she had gone

to heaven. Being answered hopefully, she said, "Well, I wish I could die and go to heaven, I want to see how it looks up there."

Only a few weeks before her last sickness she and her little brother, two years older than herself, were out in the yard one evening looking at the moon, which shone in all her silvery brightness over the steeple of St. James's Church.

"Isn't the steeple high," said Frankie.

"Yes," said Minnie, "but it aint as high as the clouds."

"No," said Frankie, "nor the clouds aint as high as the moon and the stars."

"No," replied Minnie, "but heaven is higher than them all; and Frankie," she continued, "when I die I shall go away up there."

"You can't go," replied her brother, "only your spirit; your body has to be buried in the ground."

"O, I know that!" said Minnie emphatically; "but my spirit will go up to

heaven, and I shall see little brother Charlie, and grandpapa, and dear Jesus, too;" and then, with great interest, she added, "O, Frankie, there's such beautiful flowers up there, and I'll gather the prettiest ones I can find, and when you come I'll give them to you."

"Why, Minnie," said her brother, "you don't know whether you'll die first or not."

"Yes I do, Frankie," said Minnie, "I know I'll die first; and when you come we'll gather more pretty flowers; wont that be nice!"

It may seem strange to the cold and careless, yet in a few short weeks after this beautiful conversation "Darling Minnie" was gathering unfading flowers in the Paradise of God.

For many months there seemed in all her conversations constant foretokens of her near approach to the spirit-world,

"Until she melted away into the light of heaven."

CHAPTER VI.

SICKNESS AND DEATH.

“Let us be patient; these severe afflictions
Not from the ground arise;
But, oftentimes, celestial benedictions
Assume this dark disguise.”

A SHADOW rested on the New Brunswick parsonage. “Darling Minnie” was not well. She grew worse—the physician came, did what he could, waited, looked grave, shook his head, and said at last, “There is no hope.” Many who will read these pages know something of the pang that pierced the heart when these words were spoken. It is a sad, sad hour when we are compelled to confess and feel that the household pet must die. Unobserved, her wings had been growing, and they were now almost ready to take their last “triumphant flight.” The parental struggle came, it was dark, and deep, and fearful; but divine grace enabled both, in holy calmness, to say at last, “Thy will be done.”

Before the disease had assumed its most terrible form, when reason was dethroned, she constantly desired, as when in health, that her blessed Bible stories might be told her. One evening her mother related a little incident which she had read in the children's paper. When she had finished Minnie's eyes were closed, and she did not make any remark, as she usually did when a story pleased her. Her mother, thinking she was sleepy, said nothing. In a few minutes, however, Minnie opened her deep blue eyes, and looking her mother earnestly in the face, said, "Now, mamma, please tell me about Jesus."

Her mother then went briefly over the oft-told story of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our blessed Lord, and closed with repeating that ever cherished hymn of childhood,

"I think when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,
How he took little children, as lambs, to his fold,
I should love to have been with him then."

At the close she said, "O that is so beautiful! thank you, dear, kind mamma. Now please take me up in your arms and rock me to sleep."

The last prayer she was ever heard to utter was at the commencement of her illness, when she was weak and weary; yet she knelt as usual, and faintly murmured,

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep!

for Jesus' sake. Amen." She was too sick to say the other two lines, and here her little prayers were finished, to be followed by endless praises in the

"Happy land, far, far away."

A few days after this she was suffering greatly. Her mother said, "Minnie, dear, would you like to get well?"

"Yes, mamma," she replied.

Her mother then summoned all the courage she could command, and asked again. "Which would you rather do, dear, get well again, or die, and go to Jesus?"

In a very firm, but tender tone of voice, she answered, "Die, and go to Jesus."

Seeing her mother weep, she closed her eyes, and folding her little hands upon her bosom, turned away in silence.

Just one week previous to her death, and the last evening she was conscious, she suffered greatly with her head; but in the midst of all she frequently exclaimed in her own gentle way, "O dear papa, I do love you so! O dear mamma, I do love you so!"

Her mother leaving the room for something, laid her upon her father's lap. After a little she looked up, and said sweetly, "Good-bye, dear papa, good-bye. Amen. Amen." Then turning to her sister, who stood near, she said, "Good-bye, Annie, good-bye. Amen. Amen."

After a little she was more composed. Toward morning she asked for drink. Her mother gave it to her, and as she turned to leave the bed Minnie exclaimed, "Now good-bye, dear mamma, good-

bye!" and that was the last time those almost angelic lips ever uttered the precious name of mother. The next day she was delirious, and continued so until January 28, 1870, when her life went out as softly

"As sets the morning star, which goes
Not down behind the darkened west, nor hides
Obscured among the tempests of the sky,
But melts away into the light of heaven."

CHAPTER VII.

FUNERAL.

"Over the river the boatman pale
Carried another—the household pet;
Her bright curls waved in the gentle gale—
Our Darling Minnie—we see her yet.
She crossed on her bosom her dimpled hands,
And fearlessly entered the phantom bark;
We watched it glide from the silver sands,
And all our sunshine grew strangely dark.
We knew she is safe on the further side,
Where all the ransomed, and angels be—
Over the river, over the river,
Darling Minnie is waiting for me."

WITH her little hands folded across her bosom, "Angel Minnie" lay in her last sweet rest. Her cold fingers clasped the sweet white flowers; and as we looked through the glass covering of her burial

casket she seemed too beautiful to be dead. But it was even so. We all knelt close by her side, and the minister offered a short, sweet prayer for sustaining grace. We then went to the church of which Minnie's father was pastor. It was a bright winter's day, but many hearts were sad.

Minnie's favorite hymn, "I want to be an angel," rung out mournfully from the choir, and many felt she was with the angels while we sung. The prayer was offered, the Scriptures read, and words of consolation followed. Then the choir, softly, sweetly, sang again,

"Minnie, thou wast mild and lovely;
Gentle as the evening breeze;
Pleasant as the air of evening
When it floats among the trees.

"Peaceful be thy silent slumber,
Peaceful in the grave so low;
Thou no more wilt join our number,
Thou no more our songs shalt know.

"Dearest Minnie, thou hast left us;
Here thy loss we deeply feel;
But 'tis God who hath bereft us;
He will all our sorrows heal.

“Yet again we hope to meet thee
When the day of life is fled;
Then in heaven with joy to greet thee,
Where no farewell tear is shed.”

Then the covering was removed from the beautiful face of the quiet sleeper, and the large congregation moved before the altar in silent procession, viewing the precious form for the last time, while the beautiful song flowed from the heart and lips of many friends,

“We are waiting by the river,
We are watching by the shore;
Only waiting for the angel:
Soon he'll come to bear us o'er.”

All hearts were bowed in sympathy, and few eyes were dry.

We bore her away to the Willow Grove Cemetery and laid her to rest, while the voice of God sounded in our ears, “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”

We left the city of the dead just as the sun was going down in the golden West, and thought how blessed it would be to

We shall meet them there. This is no
vain hope! The Gospel assures us of
" Watch, and beckon, and wait for us."

with God. There they
their purified and immortal spirits are
Our loved ones go down to the grave; but
Ah, yes! here is the blessed hope!

"None return from those quiet shores
Who cross with the boatman cold and pale;
We hear the dip of the golden oars,
And catch a gleam of the snowy sail.
And lo! they have passed from our yearning heart,
They cross the stream and are gone for aye;
We may not sunder the veil apart
That hides from our view the gates of day:
We only know that their barks no more
May sail with us on life's stormy sea;
Yet somewhere I know, on the unseen shore,
They watch, and beckon, and wait for me."

H O P E S !

CHAPTER VIII.

"The city so holy and clean,
No sorrow can dwell in the air:
No gloom of affliction or sin;
No shadow of evil is there."

and the people do not die.
reach that land where the sun never sets,

immortality, and the eternal comminglings of the good. Cheer thee, then, O stricken and bowed spirit! The time will not be long.

“We are nearer our home to-day
Than ever we've been before.”

Our loved ones are not lost! We shall hail them on the highlands of eternal felicity. “Our Darling Minnies” shall be clasped in an everlasting embrace of love. Be patient, then, sad hearts. “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” The eternal morning hastens. Already faith beholds the brightness which foretokens the approaching day. It will soon be the high noon of glory. Rest, troubled soul. Say to God,

“Behold, I wait,
Wearing the thorny crown through all life's hours;
Wait till thy hand shall ope the eternal gate,
And change the thorns to flowers.”

THE END.

