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**PICTORIAL**  
REWARD BOOKS.



THE  
**CHILD FROM HEAVEN.**

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## THE CHILD FROM HEAVEN.



THE stars faded out of the morning sky, and the white light of day fell upon the great city of Earthen-land, and the sun turned its church-spires to gleaming gold, telling, far and

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wide, that the light of the world had risen, and the perfect day had begun.

Into the streets of Earthen-land a little child came wandering, one knew not whence he was, nor did he seem like a child of the city, for though his garments were as poor as the poorest of them all, yet, as he passed through the sunlight, he wore what sometimes seemed the likeness of a kingly crown and sometimes the likeness of a diadem of thorns.

The highest festival known in Earthen-land was presently to take place, and all the people with joyous hearts made ready for it. People made ready the churches with trailing wreathes of green boughs, and bright berries of the holly, and children began already to sing the bright carols that were shortly to rise from their holy aisles.

Now let us see how the child from



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heaven—who seemed to wear the semblance of a kingly crown and a thorn-garland—fared as he wandered through Earthen-land.

First of all, wherever he came, everything grew brighter, and happier, and gentler, for his coming. A woman with a basket of wares upon her arm—such as children like best—offered them for sale to a grim-looking man.

“Please the children!” answered the man, “I wish there were no children in the world. Please the children, forsooth, you have come to the wrong person, my good woman.”

A voice, sweeter than all music, said, “Hush! I also am a child.”

The man looked, and beside him stood the heavenly one, and lo! in the little tender hands were wounds that had bled at the man’s words, and the little naked feet were also

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bleeding. The man's face grew soft, and something like tears gleamed in his eyes. He turned to the woman: "I am a rough man, but I do not mean all that I say. I have some little men and women at home, that shall be pleased this once at all events." And then the man took silver from his purse and filled the

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woman's hand with it, and his own pocket with her wares.

The child from heaven passed on. A rich man bargained with a labourer,

"You must do my work for so much," said Dives.

"It is too little," replied the labourer. "It will not buy bread for my wife and children."

The heavenly child touched the rich man, "I am poor and hungry, and have my bread to earn."

Dives started. "Ah! to be sure, I had forgot,—it is Christmas time. Ask what you like, my good man, and I will pay you," and the face of the labourer grew bright with hope and gratitude.

The child from heaven passed on, and still, wherever he came, hard hearts melted, and tender ones grew yet tenderer, and gentle voices more

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loving ; and where there were crushed souls and sorrowing hearts to be comforted, most of all, he came to them, saying, " Be content, I suffer also."

But of all the hearts that were sore in Earthen-land, that day, there was none so sad as that of Bertrand, and this was his story :

Bertrand lived in a little cottage, out upon the moor. The cottage had been one of happiness. A loving wife and a little son had belonged to Bertrand, while the vine that overhung his dwelling had borne richly, and the wine pressed from its grapes was sought for far and wide. But God had taken wife and little son, and now Bertrand carried upon his heart a lock of hair always, and in his pocket a pair of little half-worn shoes, and these were all his earthly treasures. For this year the vine



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had refused to blossom, and sad and sorrowful, Bertrand had come into the city, and now sat by the roadside.



He had thought, "Because the festival is near I may find some

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work to do that will buy me a loaf of bread ; and yet," thought he, "the world is a weary place, now that my dear wife and little son have gone out of it."

And so he sat with head bowed upon his breast, that no man might see the tears that fell from his eyes as he thought of the sorrow that was his.

"Bertrand, I have somewhat to say to thee. Is the world too sad for thee when I am in it?"

Bertrand raised his head, and before him stood the heavenly child. One saw now that it was a crown of thorns he wore. Bertrand forgot his woe. It seemed to him that the little one wore the features of his own child, that God had taken.

"My feet are sore, and my hands bleed, but Earthen-land is better this year than it was a year ago," and a

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smile of love made the child-face so bright you could scarcely bear it.

Bertrand took the half-worn shoes from his pocket. "Wear these, little wanderer," he said.

The child shook his head, sweetly smiling, "Keep them for some other one, it shall be all the same. But I am tired. Carry me, Bertrand."

"Oh, gladly;" and Bertrand, rising, took the child in his arms and bore him on. As he lay against the man's heart all sorrow went out of it; it seemed as if there were angel-voices in the air, as if his loved ones were beside him once more. Doubt vanished. For the first time for many a day, Bertrand's heart grew light.

By-and-by they came to a palace. "I have a message to take here," said the child.

The man set him down. "Your

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hands and feet do not bleed now," said Bertrand.

"Your kindness has healed them," replied the loving voice.

"Shall I see thee no more?" asked Bertrand, sadly, for the child, now that he carried him in his arms, seemed dearer to him than life.

"Make ready, I will sup with thee to-night," answered the child, and passed from his sight into the palace.

Bertrand, never doubting the child's word, turned back again, found a piece of work waiting for him, and when he had earned enough for a loaf of bread and a bottle of the vintage that belonged to that part of the country, went home to his cottage to make ready for his guest, for he knew that, though the whole world were false, yet would the child's words come true.



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Sunset was passing into dusk, and Bertrand sat in his cottage waiting. As he listened, a voice fell upon the silence, "Bertrand, I stand at the door and knock."

Bertrand flung wide the door and beheld standing there one who wore upon his head a kingly crown, and a diadem of thorns within it; above him the silver stars shone, and about his head was the light of the setting sun. A robe of shining jewels was about him, and the air was full of fragrance, for the barren vine hung thick with blossoms and the promise of fruit.

Then Bertrand knew that the child he had carried in his arms was the Lord's Christ, and that he had come to sup with him in very deed and truth.

The child from heaven will be with us presently. Shall we not

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also become the gentler, tenderer, more loving to welcome him?

Surely we shall take him to our hearts; tenderly, yet with reverential awe, and bless him, not only with words, but in deeds of truest love, for it is the Lord's Christ that shall presently stand among us to receive our gifts and homage, in the loving likeness of an infant child.

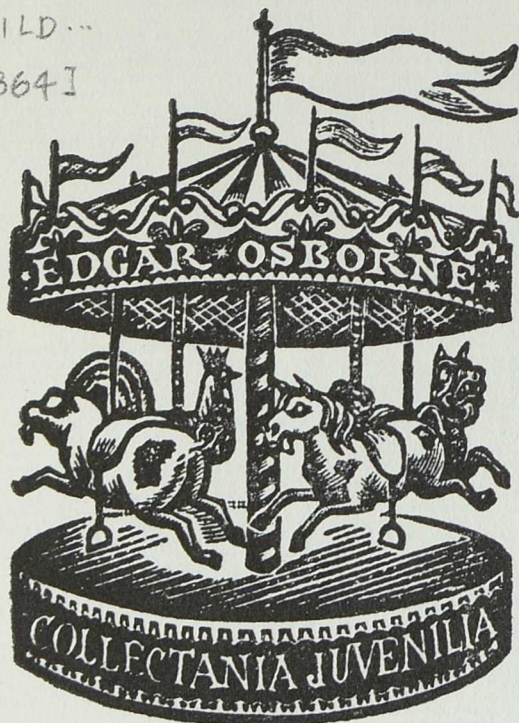


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