

of this Hildegard slept and dreamed that God had made all right. And, in her dream, she knelt at the Holy Table, on the morning of Christmas, with her father beside her.

The doctor came; he ordered a week's quiet. At this the children rejoiced; they would have the little French girl with them and there would be no school!

When the brown-eyed hostess returned she and the little Dick were laden with packages—and more to come.

"A gift for everybody—and for you, little girl, brought by the Christmas angel," she said to Olga.

Energetically she cleared the room. The children must go out, while she and Jeff—Jeff was the hired boy—arranged the tree. It seemed the custom in the family to have the tree displayed on Christmas eve, the gifts being distributed the next morning. The tree was a great spectacle and a foretaste of the hidden treasures in brown paper parcels.

"My husband and our other guest, my father-in-law, who comes for the first time," the hostess said, with a slight flush, "will be here for tea."

Hildegard had been placed in a big arm-chair, with her foot on a stool, and she was prepared, as she said smiling, to give the benefit of a Parisian taste to the arrangement of the tree.

Jeff steadied the big fir in a tub in the centre of the room, and the hostess, mounted on a ladder, chatted as she tied on the branches, candles and all manner of glittering things.

"My father-in-law has never seen the children," she said, "for he was not pleased with our marriage, but lately he has changed; he has become a Catholic, which was his wife's faith, and he is coming to-night." "Well," she added, "the past is past; and God has made it right."

Hildegard listened to the simple words and her faith was confirmed. God would make it right.

With deft hands the hostess raised a cardboard star to the summit of the tree, and Jeff watched it with open eyes and mouth.

"It's awful cute," he said.

"On this star was written in blue forget-me-nots the word 'Hildegard.'"

"We put that on the tree every year for remembrance," said the hostess. "God bless that name. We don't know where she is; she is my husband's sister; she saved me for those babies of mine. Oh, I can't tell you what we owe her—you are in pain! Let me help you."

And the quick little woman dropped from the ladder as a sparrow from a twig.

"No; no I am not in pain, oh, no. I know now. The little girls are like Gilbert. I am Hildegard!"

"And your little girl is like—like you. I wondered and wondered. And you are like Gilbert."

The tree glowed and glittered and looked as if it had come from fairyland. Little Dick and the three sisters stood before it entranced, so they did not notice the entrance of Gilbert Sefton and his father. As for Olga, she stood with hands raised, and mouth open, almost adoring all this splendour and her mother's name at the top in blue forget-me-nots, and the little Hilda near her.

Martin Sefton had aged; Hildegard's heart was pained as she saw the witness of his hair and beard. But as his look fell upon her and the light leaped into his eyes, and without a word he went to her and kissed her first, just as if she had been always there, she knew that his heart was young again.

There was silence as the old man satel himself beside Hildegard's chair. Nobody could speak for tears. The children, led by Olga, began to sing in their shrill young voices, and to shout, and to dance. Martin Sefton rose and kissed his son and daughter-in-law.

"God is God," he said, reverently. And after a pause, "I will not disturb the little ones now, I can wait for their greeting. Ah, dear hearts," he added, "these words have been in my mind all day, thinking of the past and of the joy of the children:

"Ah, when at last we lie with tranced breath,  
Not vexing Thee in death,  
And Thou rememberest of what toys  
We made our joys,  
How weakly understood,  
Thy great commanding good,  
Then, fatherly not less  
Than I whom Thou hast moulded from the clay,  
Thou'lt leave thy wrath, and say,  
I will be sorry for their childishness."

## THE KING AND THE LOCUSTS.

A STORY WITHOUT AN END.

(By MARTIN PETER KENNY.)

THERE was a certain king, who, like many eastern kings, was very fond of hearing stories told. To this amusement he gave up all his time, and yet he was never satisfied. All the exertions of all his courtiers were in vain; the more he heard the more he wanted to hear. At last he made a proclamation that if any man would tell him a story that should last for ever he would make him his heir and give him the princess, his daughter, in marriage; but if any one should pretend that he had such a story and should fail—that is, if the story should come to an end—he was to have his head chopped off. For such a prize as a beautiful princess many candidates appeared, and dreadfully long stories some of them told. Some lasted a week, some a month, some six months; poor fellows, they all spun them out as long as they possibly could, you may be sure, but all in vain; sooner or later they all came to an end, and one after another of the unlucky story-tellers had their heads chopped off. At last came a man who said that he had a story

which would last for ever, if his Majesty would be pleased to give him a trial.

He was warned of his danger; they told him how many others had tried and lost their heads; but he said he was not afraid, and so he was brought before the king. He was a man of a very composed and deliberate manner of speaking, and, after making all requisite stipulations for time for eating, drinking and sleeping, he began his story:—

"O king, there was once a king who was a great tyrant, and, desiring to increase his riches, he seized upon all the corn and grain in his kingdom, and put it into an immense granary, which he built on purpose as high as a mountain. This he did for several years, till the granary was quite full up the top. He then stopped up doors and windows, and closed it up fast on all sides. But the bricklayers had, by accident, left a very small hole near the top of the granary, and there came a flight of locusts, who tried to get at the corn; but the hole was so small that only one locust could pass through at a time; some one locust went in and carried off one grain of corn, and then another locust went in and carried off another grain of corn; and then another locust went in and carried off another grain of corn; and then another locust went in and carried off another grain of corn; and then another locust went in and carried off another grain of corn; and then another locust went in and carried off another grain of corn." He had gone on thus from morning to night (except while he was asleep or engaged at his meals) for about a month, when the king, though a very patient king, began to be rather tired of the locusts, and interrupted his story with "Well, well, we have had enough of the locusts; we will suppose that they have helped themselves to all the corn they wanted; tell us what happened afterwards." To which the story-teller answered very deliberately—"If it please your majesty, it is impossible to tell you what happened afterwards, before I tell you what happened first." So he went on again: "And then another locust went in and carried off another grain of corn." The king listened with unconquerable patience six months more when he again interrupted him with—"O friend, I am weary of your locusts. How soon do you think they will have done?" To which the story-teller made answer, "O king, who can tell! At the time to which my story has come the locusts have cleared away a small space, it may be a cubit each way round the inside of the hole, and the air is still dark with locusts on all sides; but let the king have patience, and no doubt we shall come to the end of them in time." Thus encouraged, the king listened on for another full year, the story-teller still going on as before—"And then another locust went in and carried off another grain of corn;" till at last the poor king could bear it no longer, and cried out, "O man, that is enough! Take my daughter—take my kingdom—take anything—everything: only let me hear no more of your abominable locusts."

And so the story-teller was married to the king's daughter, and declared heir to the throne, and nobody ever expressed a wish to hear the rest of his story, for he said it was impossible to come to the other part of it till he had done with the locusts. The unreasonable caprice of the foolish king was thus over-matched by the ingenious device of the wise man.

## Diocese of Christchurch.

On Monday evening, September 21, the quarterly meeting of St. Patrick's Branch, No. 82, of the H.A.C.B.S. was held. The president, Bro. P. Burke, occupied the chair. There was a large number of members present and all the officers were in their places, except Bro. Hayward, V.P., who was absent in Auckland. The sick visitors reported that there was only one member on the sick list. The members undertook to assist the Sisters of Our Lady of Missions with their concert, which will take place in the Oddfellows' Hall, Lichfield street, on Friday evening, October 16, in aid of the convent school prize fund, and to make the entertainment a success. One brother was initiated during the evening and a large amount of business was done. A committee was appointed to wait upon the very rev. chaplain of the branch and upon the Rev. Father Marnane re the formation of juvenile branches. The chairman then closed the meeting in the usual form.

DARFIELD.

(From an occasional correspondent.)

Last Sunday his Lordship the Most Rev. Dr. Grimes said the Mass of First Communion and preached to the happy children who were afterwards entertained in a tent which had been erected in the spacious grounds belonging to the church of Darfield. At eleven o'clock the visitation was made according to the rites prescribed by the Roman Pontifical. Having explained the nature and object of the episcopal visitation, the whole congregation preceded the Bishop to the cemetery adjoining the church, where the usual prayers for the dead were recited by the Bishop and the attending clergy. After the Mass the Bishop examined the candidates (twenty-four in all) for Confirmation and spoke to them on the greatness of the sacrament they were about to receive. After the administration of the sacrament, the Bishop again spoke to them on some of the chief means of perseverance, and made them repeat after him a solemn renunciation of their baptismal vows. It was truly a red-letter day for the Catholics of Darfield.

In the course of his visitation address the Bishop touched on the important subject of education, and expressed his own and the deep regret of many in the parish that no Catholic school yet existed in the district. On the evening of the same day a deputation waited on his Lordship in the presbytery and earnestly besought him to do all in his power to secure for them a good school of their own under the direction of some of our devoted Sisters.

Needless to say that the Bishop was delighted at the request and assured the deputation that nothing would give him more consolation

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