

THE VISION OF THE HOLY CHILD

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The vision of the holy Child by Edith S. Jacob

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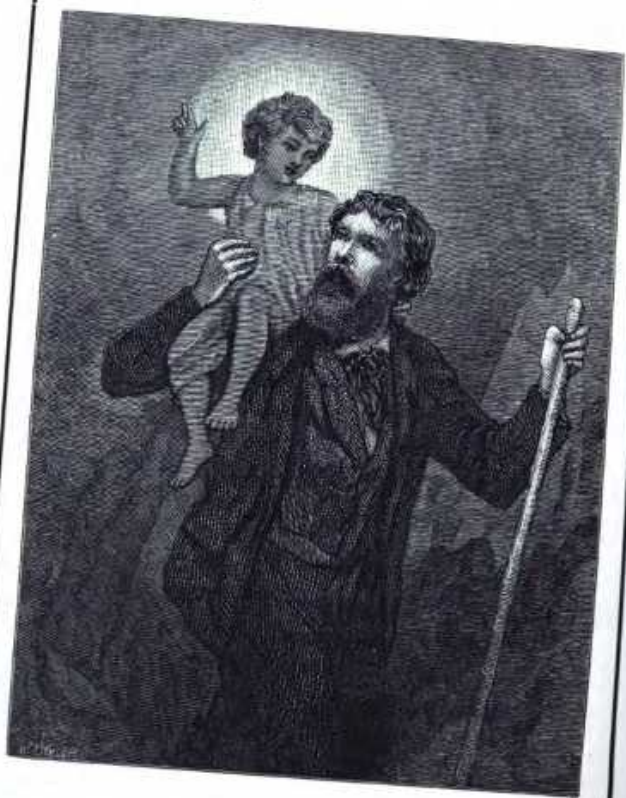
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EDITH S. JACOB

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By EDITH S. JACOB

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The Vision of the Holy Child.

FORTY years ago this very year, when I was Inspector of the Trelogan Mines, it so happened that a few days before Christmas Day I was in the eastern workings. Two miners, myself, and a friend, to whom I had been showing the works, were standing near the main shaft, when, as we were preparing to leave, a sudden crash startled us, and in another instant we saw that the side of the shaft was giving way. We had just time to reach a recess in the rock close by, when it fell with an awful crash. We escaped, but only with our bare lives; for we were as completely shut in as though we had been bricked up in a vault; there was little air, no water, and no food; and the men's picks were buried in the fallen mass; but we had room to

move, to stand upright and to lie down, and for the present we could breathe.

At first we talked and tried to keep each other's courage up, but after what seemed some hours of darkness we became silent, and some slept. We knew that hours must elapse before any one could clear the shaft; the question was whether it could be done at all in time to rescue us alive. More than once there was a murmur of 'If only we had water we should do.' But water there was none, and at length we made a resolution never to mention the word.

'Let us die game, and not murmur against the Lord,' said one of the miners, an old Wesleyan; and the rest said 'Amen.'

We soon lost all count of time. A day or two may have passed when I was aroused from a kind of stupor by a strange sight. The air became of a clear indigo such as one sees on a frosty night. I saw no moon or stars, but instead of these a rainbow, as it were, of Child Angels, just such as Raphael painted in the Sistine Madonna. At first they were of a strange moonlight paleness, but as they came nearer they

seemed to me human children, only far more beautiful than any child I had ever seen. As I watched them they drew near enough for me to distinguish their faces, and then three came forward hand in hand and stood before me, bowing and smiling, but neither spoke. Never had I seen such eyes, such glorious beauty. I held out my arms, and the centre child loosed his hands from his companions and came to me, while they, still silent but bowing and smiling, fell backward and rejoined the rainbow of child-angels that became gradually paler until it disappeared from sight.

But I was left rejoicing in the possession of this wonderful being, yet almost afraid to speak or move lest I should scare him from me. I held him tenderly, as though he were some strange wild bird or my own little suffering Lina, our crippled child, and at length I took courage to speak.

'Who are you, you Beautiful One,' I said, 'and what can I do for you?' Yet, no sooner had I spoken the words than I almost repented of my rashness. What business had I to ask who he was? But he showed no sign of dis-