

**THE LITTLE FLOWERS OF SAINT
FRANCIS OF ASSISI. WITH
EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS BY PAUL
WOODROFFE. [LONDON-1905]**

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Francesco, d. 1226

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OF SAINT FRANCIS** ❁
OF ASSISI ❁ **WITH EIGHT
ILLUSTRATIONS BY PAUL
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Prefatory Note

THIS edition of the *Fioretti* is based by permission upon the translation issued by the Franciscan Fathers at Upton, which has been for some time out of print. It has been carefully revised by Mr. Thomas Okey, and when necessary has been brought into closer accordance with the Italian, care having been taken to preserve as much as possible the simplicity of the original. The present publishers are enabled to avail themselves of so scholarly a rendering by the courtesy of the Catholic Truth Society, under whose auspices it first appeared. The compiler of the *Fioretti* is unknown, but the work is supposed to date from the middle of the fourteenth century.

THE LITTLE FLOWERS OF ST FRANCIS

IN the name of our Lord Jesus Christ crucified, and of His Virgin Mother Mary. In this book are contained certain little Flowers, namely, miracles and devout examples of the glorious poor little one of Christ, St Francis, and of some of his holy companions, to the praise of Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the first place, let us consider how the glorious St Francis, in all the acts of his life, was conformed to the life of that blessed Christ; that, as Christ in the beginning of His preaching elected twelve apostles, that they should despise every worldly thing and follow Him in poverty and in all virtues, so St Francis, for the founding of his order, elected in the beginning twelve companions, who were to be possessors of nothing but an entire poverty. And as one of the twelve apostles of Christ, rejected by God for his infidelity, finally strangled himself, so also one of the twelve companions of St Francis, who was called Brother John della Capella, apostatized, and finally hanged himself in like manner. And this is to the elect a great warning, and a matter of humility and of fear, to

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cause them to remember that no one is certain to persevere to the end in the grace of God. As the blessed apostles were wholly marvellous for sanctity and humility and full of the Holy Ghost, so the blessed companions of St Francis were men of such great sanctity that since the time of the apostles, the world had not seen the like; since one of them, like St Paul, was taken up into the third heaven, and this was Brother Giles; another of them, namely Brother Filippo Longo, was touched on the lips by an angel, like the Prophet Isaias, with a coal of fire; another of them, and this was Brother Silvester, spoke with God, as one friend with another, after the manner of Moses; another, by the purity of his soul, flew up to the light of the Divine Wisdom, like the eagle, St John the Evangelist, and this was the most humble Brother Bernard, who explained most profoundly Holy Writ; and another was sanctified by God and canonized in heaven whilst still living on earth, and this was Brother Ruffino, who was a gentleman of Assisi. And so were they all privileged with remarkable signs of holiness, as will be declared in the sequel.



**I—Of Brother Bernard, First Companion of
St Francis**

THE first companion of St Francis was Brother Bernard of Assisi, who was converted in the following manner. While St Francis

was still in the secular habit, although he had already turned his back on the world going about wholly despised of men, mortified by penance insomuch that he was looked upon as a fool by many and, as he passed by, was driven away with stones and foul abuse both by his relatives and by others, all of which ill-usage and contumely he bore patiently as though he were deaf and dumb; Bernard of Assisi, who was one of the richest, and most noble, and most learned in all the town, began wisely to consider within himself the great patience of St Francis under ill-treatment, and his so exceeding contempt of the world, insomuch that, detested and despised as he was by everybody now for the space of two years, he only appeared the more firm. Then he began thus to think and to say within himself: "It cannot be otherwise, but that this brother must have great grace from God;" and he invited him one evening to sup with him, and to pass the night. St Francis accepted the invitation, and took supper with him, and stayed the night also; and then Bernard resolved to make trial of his sanctity. Wherefore he got a bed prepared for him in his own room, in which a lamp was always burning all night. St Francis, in order to conceal his sanctity, immediately on entering the room threw himself on the bed, and feigned to sleep; and Bernard likewise resolved to lie down, and began to snore loudly, as if in a very deep slumber.

Thereupon St Francis, believing that Bernard was really asleep, immediately rose from the bed and betook himself to prayer; and raising his eyes and his hands to heaven with the greatest devotion and fervour, he said, "My God, my God!" So saying, and shedding many tears, he remained until morning, continually repeating "My God, my God!" and nothing more. And this he said, contemplating and admiring the excellency of the Divine Majesty, which deigned to stoop down to the world that was perishing, and to provide a remedy for the salvation of his soul, and through him—His poor little Francis—for the salvation of the souls of others. Then, illumined by the Holy Ghost with the spirit of prophecy to foresee the great things that God designed to do through him and through his order, and considering his own insufficiency and how little virtue was in himself, he called upon God, and besought Him that through His goodness and omnipotence He would supply help and perfect that which human frailty could not do of itself.

Bernard, seeing by the light of the lamp these most devout acts of St Francis, and devoutly within himself considering also the words which he heard him say, was touched and inspired by the Holy Ghost to change his life. In the morning therefore he called St Francis, and spoke to him thus: "Brother Francis, I have completely disposed my heart to give up the world, and to follow thee