

THE FIRST EASTER

DAGMAR FRAHME

RACHEL leaned back against the big old olive tree and looked out across the hills. What a beautiful Sunday morning it was! The hills were all rosy-red in the early sunshine, and the little purple flowers that grew all around the big tree here seemed unusually perky and pretty. And there was a gentle breeze that seemed to be blowing all the sadness of the past two days away.

The past two days had certainly been sad, too, thought Rachel. She remembered how on Friday when she had been doing her work in the garden she had felt so unhappy. And even when her own special pet lamb that Father had given her as a present had come up and licked her ear she had just patted him sadly on his nose and given him a gentle shove because she didn't feel like playing with him, and then *he* had gone away with his tail and his ears drooping and sad. And she couldn't understand why she didn't want to play with that sweet little lamb.

And then later on the sky had seemed to grow so dark and she was almost afraid because she thought a big storm was coming. It had stayed dark and gloomy for a long time, too. And then finally her mother had come home and taken Rachel in her lap and told her the terrible news. They had killed Jesus — the same wonderful Jesus who a year ago had

made Rachel's leg well so that she could run and play.

Rachel couldn't believe the news, and *still* somehow couldn't believe it. Why should anyone want to kill Jesus, who had done nothing but good things for people. She thought again of that day when her father had carried her out into the field where Jesus was teaching. There was such a big crowd, and in those days Rachel hadn't liked crowds because she was so weak and sick that having a lot of people around her just tired her out.

But her father had set her down on a blanket very near to the place where Jesus was sitting, and the minute that Rachel had looked into His face she hadn't felt tired any more. And that awful ache in her leg had just vanished, too. His face seemed so kind that Rachel remembered having wanted to sit in his lap. He didn't smile too much, but His eyes were shining and there was such great love in them when He looked at the people. Sometimes He seemed to look at them sadly and wistfully, too, as if He wanted to do something for them or tell them something but for some reason couldn't. And there was a particularly special light that seemed to shine all around Him when He looked at Rachel and the other children. Oh, how she had loved Him then!

She didn't really understand too much of what He was saying — but she remembered a story He told that she had liked. It was a story about a boy who went away from his father's house, and spent all the money that his father had given him, and got into all kinds of trouble, and after a while got sick, and then, when he was just so miserable that he

couldn't stand it any more, he decided to go back home to his father and ask to be a servant in his father's house — because he was sure that, since he had been so bad, his father wouldn't want him as a son any more. But when his father had seen him coming he had been so happy and welcomed him home with a big hug and right away had a party for him. Rachel thought about how much that father loved his son, even to be able to forgive all the bad things that he had done and welcome him back home with a party. And she knew — even if she couldn't actually remember whether Jesus had said so or not — that this is just the way God loves all His children. No matter how naughty they are, when they once are sorry and want to come home, God is very happy.

Rachel would never forget how Jesus had looked at her sitting on her blanket after He had finished talking. People were crowding all around Him, wanting Him to talk to them some more. But He had gotten up and walked over to her with such a tender look on his face that Rachel wanted to reach out and hug Him. He had bent over and touched her very gently on her forehead and run His hand through her hair. He had said something — but she couldn't remember what because she had suddenly felt as though she were in another world full of Angels and light and beautiful music.

And then Rachel had suddenly realized that she could move her leg and even *stand* on it. That same leg that had hurt as long as she could remember and that was such a funny shape and didn't look like her other leg at all. But now, suddenly, it *did* look like

her other leg — and she could do anything she wanted to with it. First she stood up, and then actually walked without limping and without hurting the least bit. And then she suddenly began to jump up and down and laugh. She remembered calling her mother and father to come look, and suddenly everything was happening at once. Her mother — for some reason — was crying, the other children were all around her jumping and laughing with her, and when she looked for her father she couldn't find him for a minute. Then she saw him kneeling in front of Jesus — and he was crying too! — and Jesus was saying something to him and smiling at him.

Then Rachel wanted to go to Jesus too and thank Him for making her well, but there was such a crowd around her, and her mother was hugging her, and some of the children were pulling at her hands and arms wanting her to run and play with them, that she couldn't get through. And when she finally did get through, Jesus was already far away and again had many people standing around Him. But suddenly He looked at her, and she looked right into His shining eyes and said, "Thank you," and even though He was too far away to hear it, she knew He had known what she had said. And then as He looked at her again and smiled, such a wonderful warmth and light had come from Him and surrounded her, and she knew that it would stay with her always.

And now He was gone, and she would never see Him again. It simply didn't seem possible that people had killed Him. And if He was gone, why was she suddenly so happy this morning, and why

was the day so beautiful and the air so sweet?

Rachel began to feel almost ashamed of herself for feeling so happy and good. All day yesterday she had wanted to cry, and yet this morning she couldn't even *make* herself be sad. All that she could really make herself think about Jesus was that He wasn't really gone at all. He was right here nearby, just as He had been ever since she had known Him. She just *knew* this was true, no matter what her mother or father or any of the other people said. She didn't miss Jesus any more, she realized, because she didn't *have* to miss him. He was right here!

Rachel tried to argue with herself. How could He be here if they had killed Him? And why was she so positive that He wasn't gone? She knew that if she told her mother and father how she felt they would just smile lovingly at her and mother would probably get those tears in her eyes again, but they certainly wouldn't believe her.

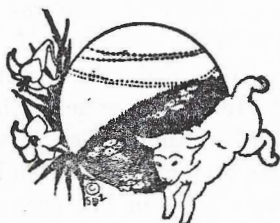
Oh gracious — how topsy-turvy things were. Rachel tried to make herself sad again, but it just didn't work. The Sun shone brighter than ever, the little purple flowers were nodding their head happily, and the gentle breeze was still blowing and now bringing a special sweet fragrance with it. She couldn't be sad!

Then suddenly Rachel again had the feeling that she was in another world full of Angels and light and beautiful music. It was just the way she felt on the day that Jesus had made her well. She looked up — and there *were* Angels in the sky, quite a few of them. Rachel was happy to see them, but not at all surprised. It was almost as though they were

supposed to be there, and she would have been surprised if she had *not* seen them.

One of the Angels glided down and stood beside Rachel, smiling at her. She seemed to be an especially pretty Angel — all rosy just like the morning sunshine. She had a rose-colored dress and a lovely rosy light shone all around her.

“Rachel, dear,” she said, “you are right to be happy today. Don’t try to make yourself sad any



more. This is the most wonderful day that has ever been on earth, and all people everywhere should be happier than they have ever been before.”

“It is a wonderful day,” agreed Rachel. “I can just *feel* it all over. But why is it so wonderful? And why don’t I feel sad about Jesus any more?”

The Angel smiled more sweetly than ever. “Because there is no reason to feel sad about Him. You were absolutely right to think that He is not gone. The people didn’t really kill Him at all. They couldn’t. You can’t see Him now because He doesn’t have to live in a physical body of skin and bones the way you

and other people do. But the body He does have is so glowing with light that He can make that light shine all around the world and even through the world, and that is what He is going to do for the world from now on. And His light is so good and has so much love and blessing in it that the people who live in it can't help but be warmed by it and do good and loving things. And Jesus is going to let His light shine on the earth until someday — many, many, many years from now — people will have been made so good by it that they will all have bodies of light."

"Even me?" asked Rachel, her eyes opening wide.

"Especially you," smiled the Angel, looking tenderly at Rachel.

Rachel took a deep breath. "My goodness," she said, thinking very hard about all that the Angel had told her. And there was so much to think about that Rachel could only say, "My *goodness*," again. Then she sighed and said "My goodness," for the third time.

The Angel laughed softly and tenderly. "Yes, Rachel, there is a lot to think about, isn't there? This is the most beautiful gift that God has ever given to the world. Christ Jesus, you know, is God's own son, and the Christ light which is going to shine around all men on earth from now on is so beautiful and so full of God's love that nobody can even imagine the good things that will be done with it someday."

Rachel sat looking at the Angel, her eyes still wide open. It was hard to understand all at once everything the Angel said, and she knew she would have to think about it over and over again. But she also

knew that she did understand the most important thing; the dear Jesus (Whom the Angel called Christ Jesus) was not gone at all, and she could go right on loving Him the way she had since that first day.

And now in a way it was even better than when He was walking around on earth, because if His light was shining on her all the time that meant He was with her all the time, and if He was with her all the time then she could talk to Him whenever she wanted, and not wait until He came near her village to teach. And surely He would hear her, wouldn't He?

She started to ask the Angel about this but the Angel already knew what she was going to say. "Of course He can hear you, dear," said the Angel. "He knows everything you do, every thought that you think, every trouble that you have, and everything that makes you happy. And He wants you to talk to Him. And the more you believe in Him, and let His light shine on you, and try to be as good and as kind as loving as He was when you saw Him on earth, the more He will be able to help you make your own body of shining light."

Suddenly Rachel jumped up. "I feel so good all over," she said, giving a little skip. "I can even feel the light shining on me now. Everything is so warm and glowy. I can't wait to tell mother and father about all this."

Then she stood still and looked at the Angel with a worried face. "Do you think they will believe me?"

The Angel looked a little wistful. "I'm sure that your parents will believe you now," she said. "But, I'm afraid that there are going to be many, many

people in the world who will have a hard time believing in the Christ light, and it will be up to you **and the people who *do* believe** to be as good and loving as you can so that the other people will see the light shining through you and know how wonderful it is."

"Oh, I *will* be good," said Rachel. "I love Jesus so much, and I want to be just like Him and make people well and happy the way He did."

"And you will, Rachel," said the Angel. "Just remember to ask Christ Jesus for His help, often. He loves you very much too, and wants to help you."

And with that the Angel smiled once more at Rachel and rose from the ground until she had again joined the other Angels waiting for her in the sky. Rachel watched them until they disappeared.

Then she turned and ran down the path toward home as fast as she could. When she was almost there, her little pet lamb came bounding out of the yard to meet her. This time she knelt down on the ground and gave him a big hug as he ran up. He licked her cheek with his rough pink tongue that tickled, and Rachel giggled as she held him tight.

Then she looked up at the sky. It was going to be easy to be good and loving, she thought. All she had to do was remember about the Christ light. As long as that was shining on her, and as long as she remembered about the wonderful things that Jesus had done, and as long as she loved Him as much as she did, and as long as she kept asking Him to help her, and as long as she did her very best every day, she knew that He would give her all the help and the strength that she would need.

THE ROBBER

A. N. B.

Out of the night

And into the day,

Into the sunshine

In the month of May,

There comes a humming

And buzzing sound;

I wonder what makes it

As I look around.

A brown-winged fairy

Is over there,

Sipping the nectar

From flowers rare.

Stealing the sweets that are stored away.

A woolly coat with bars of gold

Is flung around this robber bold.

As I come nearer, what do I see?

Why, it's only a great, big Bumble Bee!