



THE CASKET OF JEWELS

by Amena Pendleton

In ancient times there lived a Goldsmith named Coniah. All his life long he had loved two things: he loved to fashion beautiful and intricate ornaments of gold, and he loved to read the Word of God.

At the time of our story he was poor and old and had no gold with which to work, but he still had the Word of God. This he read daily, he called it his Casket of Jewels.

One night he was sitting in his little hut reading the Word by the light of a small wax candle. All about him was darkness, but the light shone on his white beard and happy face. For Coniah was happy; he was reading about the Messiah being born into the world to save men.

He forgot that he was poor and old and alone in a little dark hut. Nor was he really alone, Angels were about him, though he knew it not, for he did not hear the rustling of their robes. All was quiet.

Suddenly his happy thoughts were disturbed by a loud noise without. Some one was pounding on the door. It was burst open by three Robbers; they rushed in and seized Coniah. One pulled the cap from his head and another beat him with a stick, and shouted in his ear: "Where is thy Casket of Jewels, old man?"

Coniah looked at the little Book and said: "I pray you, Sir, do not take it from me."

And the Robber said, "What! *that!*" and cast the Word of God upon the ground.

Then loud thundering was heard, and the hut shook as with an earthquake. And lo, an Angel stood in the doorway.

His bright presence filled the room with light, and an odor as of a thousand flowers passed before their faces. His tunic was of cloth of gold, and it was girded about the waist with a scarlet girdle.

His eyes shone with the brightness of the stars, and his glance was very terrible.

He looked at the tormenters and his eyes flashed as a two-edged sword drawn from its sheath by a hero.

The Robbers could not bear his fiery glances; for when he looked at them they fell to the ground and swooned away with fear. Nor could they rise until he looked elsewhere.

The Angel saw the little Book lying on the ground, and quickly he stooped and picked it up. He said to Coniah, "Peace be with thee, Coniah."

Then the Robbers felt that terrible glance lifted from them, and they arose quickly and departed from the hut of Coniah into outer darkness.

And when Coniah saw them leave he said to the Angel (not knowing he was an Angel): "Sir, tell me thy name, that I may do thee honor."

But the Angel answered, "Why askest thou thus after my name seeing it is secret?"

Then the Angel turned and left Coniah and departed, and the bright light went with him, but the odor of flowers remained.

Then Coniah looked before him to the table where the Word of God lay, and behold, beside the Word he saw a Casket of gold curiously wrought. He took it up in his hands and opened it, and lo, it was filled with precious jewels—pearls, rubies, and bright diamonds. And they sparkled as the lamps of heaven.

Then Coniah knew that he had been visited by an Angel of Heaven, and he fell upon his face and worshipped God, and said: "Lord, let Thy servant live, for I have looked upon the face of an Angel of God."

And the Lord heard Coniah's prayer, for he lives now; and is himself an Angel of Heaven.

Author's Preface: "It is a wonderful thing for children to feel the beauty of the unseen, for them to see, however vaguely, that the spiritual world is more real and more interesting than the material world.... Very young children live in their imaginations. They are delighted to believe in a Heavenly Father who cares for all, and in Guardian Angels whom He sends to watch over his children.... [These] stories are offered to the children in the hope that they will strengthen this innocent faith...."

Author's Note on "The Casket of Jewels": "The beautiful idea that the Word of God is like a casket of jewels is expressed in *The True Christian Religion* [one of the books of the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church given through Emanuel Swedenborg], number 238. The incident of Coniah asking the angel's name is taken from Judges 13:18. The name Coniah means, strength of the Lord."

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