

**BRYANT
LORINDA
MUNSON**

THE CHILDREN'S BOOK
OF CELEBRATED
PICTURES

Lorinda Bryant

**The Children's Book
of Celebrated Pictures**

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Lorinda Munson Bryant

The Children's Book of Celebrated Pictures

Dear Children:

The stories I am telling about the pictures and their painters in this book are gathered from many countries. Some of them belong to very early times when history was told to grown up people by story-tellers at banquets and in the homes, on the street corners and public halls. Some of the stories are legends and traditions that grew up with the beginnings of the Christian era. All of them are taken from authentic sources and many of them illustrate some natural law.

The artists who painted these pictures knew history and the early myths, the fairy-tales, the legends and the traditions, the Bible and the Apocrypha. We love these pictures because they are beautiful and true, but really to understand them we must know what the artists had in mind when they painted them.

If you learn to know these pictures and love them, I will make you another book soon about statues and their stories.

*With love and best wishes, from your friend,
Lorinda Munson Bryant*

THE HOLY FAMILY

Bernardino Pintoricchio (1454-1513)

In looking at pictures of the old masters you will often see one called the "Holy Family." I want you to know who belonged to the Holy Family. The grown people are Joseph and Mary, the father and mother of Jesus; they had no last names at that time. The children are Jesus and his cousin, John the Baptist, six months older than Jesus. Sometimes the little John's mother, Elizabeth, is in the picture and sometimes his father, Zacharias, is there also.

In this picture painted by Pintoricchio, Jesus is about four years old and John four and a half. The Bible story gives very little about the growing up of these children. Of Jesus it says, "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him." And of John it says, "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and he was in the deserts till the day of showing unto Israel."

One story from a very old book, "The Infancy," tells about Jesus playing with the other boys. It says:

"And when Jesus was seven years of age, he was on a certain day with other boys, his companions about the same age. Who when they were at play, made clay into several shapes, namely, asses, oxen, birds, and other figures, each boasting of his work, endeavoring to exceed the rest.

"Then the Lord Jesus said to the boys, I will command these figures which I have made to walk. And immediately they moved, and when he commanded them to return they returned. He also made figures of birds and sparrows, which, when he commanded to fly, did fly, and when he commanded to stand still, did stand still; and if he gave them meat and drink, they did eat and drink."

THE VALLEY FARM

John Constable (1776-1837)

An old man, eighty-four years of age, lived in this house on "The Valley Farm," in England. He was born here and he used to say that he had never been away from this house but four days in all his life. He asked Constable to come and paint a picture of his home. And what a beautiful picture it is! The old house, snuggled down so close to the little stream, could paddle its feet – if it had any – in the cool water. And see how tenderly the tall trees keep guard over it. How we wish that we could be there too! If only we could be in the punt – I am sure it is a punt-boat even if one end of it is pointed – and be rowed up and down in the delightful shade. Those two in the boat have no doubt been for the cows and are driving them home to be milked.

John Constable liked to choose his subjects for his pictures from the familiar scenes near his home. He used to say to his friends:

"I have always succeeded best with my native scenes. They have always charmed me, and I hope they always will."

THE MADONNA AND CHILD WITH ST. JEROME

Antonio Allegri Da Correggio (1494? -1534)

Correggio loved to paint darling babies, lovely angels, beautiful women and splendid men. In this picture of "the Madonna and St. Jerome," I want you specially to see St. Jerome and his lion. St. Jerome, a very noted man who lived four centuries after Christ, was the first person to translate the New Testament into Latin. It was called "The Vulgate," because of its common use in the Latin Church.

When St. Jerome was thirty years old he went away from the city of Rome and became a hermit and lived in desert places in the East. One day, so the story goes, as he sat at the gate of the monastery a lion came up limping as though he had been hurt. The other hermits ran away but St. Jerome went to meet the lion. The lion lifted up his paw and St. Jerome found a thorn in his foot. He took out the thorn and bound up the poor paw, so the lion stayed with St. Jerome and kept guard over an ass that brought the wood from the forest.

One day when the lion was asleep a caravan of merchants came along and stole the ass. The poor ashamed lion hung his head before the saint, and Jerome thought he had killed and eaten the ass. To punish him St. Jerome had him do the work of the ass and bring the wood from the forest. One day some time afterward the lion saw the ass coming down the road leading a caravan of camels. The Arabs often have an ass lead the camels. The lion knew that it was the stolen ass, so he led the caravan into the convent grounds. The merchant found that he was caught. St. Jerome was very glad to find that his lion was honest and true. Whenever you see a picture of a saint with a lion you must remember that it is St. Jerome, the great Latin scholar.

THE WOOD GATHERERS

Jean Baptiste Camille Corot (1796-1875)

The picture of "The Wood Gatherers" is very precious to us. It is the last picture Corot signed after he was confined to the bed, a few days before he died.

A curious story is told of Corot's painting this picture. He had an old study of another artist's of a landscape with St. Jerome at prayer: you remember I told you the story of St. Jerome and his lion. Corot took the study and made a number of sketches of it. Somehow his landscape would not fit St. Jerome, so he painted a man on horseback and a dog going off into the woods. Then in the place of St. Jerome praying he put a woman gathering bits of wood and another woman with a bundle of fagots under her arm. Now the picture must have another name and he called it "The Wood Gatherers." When you go to Washington, you must not fail to see this picture in the Corcoran Art Gallery.

AURORA

Guido Reni (1575-1642)

Hyperion had three wonderful children, Apollo, the god of the sun, Selene, the goddess of the moon, and Aurora, the goddess of the dawn. When Aurora appears her sister, Selene (the moon), fades and night rolls back like a curtain. Now let us look at this masterpiece by Guido Reni carefully that we may know how wonderful is the coming of day.

Aurora, in a filmy white robe, is dropping flowers in the path of Apollo (the sun) as he drives his dun-colored horses above the sleeping Earth. The Horæ (the hours), a gliding, dancing group of lovely beings, accompany the brilliant god. Each hour is clothed in garments of a special tint of the great light of day, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, and violet. The golden-hued Apollo sits supreme in his chariot of the sun.

The fresco – fresco means painted on fresh plaster – is on the ceiling of the Rospigliosi Palace, Rome. The painting is as brilliant in color to-day as it was when painted three hundred and fifty years ago.

Aurora, like most of the gods and goddesses, fell in love with a mortal. She asked Zeus to make her husband immortal but she forgot to ask that he should never grow old. And, fickle woman that she was! when he became gray and infirm, she deserted him and, to put a stop to his groans, she turned him into a grasshopper.

Her son, Memnon, was made king of the Ethiopians, and in the war of Troy he was overcome by Achilles. When Aurora, who was watching him from the sky, saw him fall she sent his brothers, the Winds, to take his body to the banks of a river in Asia Minor. In the evening the mother and the Hours and the Pleiades came to weep over her dead son. Poor Aurora! even to-day her tears are seen in the dewdrops on the grass at early dawn.

THE SINGING BOYS

Frans Hals (1584? -1666)

These jolly singers are Dutch boys. They are singing on the street or in some back yard just as singers do to-day, though they lived nearly three hundred years ago.

Hals was such a rapid painter that he could make a picture while you wait. The story is told that one time young Van Dyck, the Flemish painter who painted "Baby Stuart," went to see Hals in Amsterdam when Hals was an old man. Van Dyck did not tell the old artist that he was Van Dyck but simply asked him to paint his portrait, knowing what a rapid painter Hals was. In an hour the picture was done. Van Dyck remarked, as he looked at the portrait:

"That seems easy; I believe I could do it."

Hals thought he would have some fun, so he told the young stranger that he would sit for him just one hour.

Van Dyck set his easel where Hals could not see him work and began to paint. At the end of an hour he said:

"Your picture is finished, sir."

Hals, ready to laugh at the daub, looked at the portrait and the laugh went out of his face. He then looked at Van Dyck, and cried out:

"You must be either Van Dyck or a wizard!"

You see, Hals had heard of Van Dyck and his rapid work, and knew that only a master painter could make the splendid portrait in an hour.

ST. BARBARA

Jacopo Palma Il Vecchio (1480? -1528)

St. Barbara, born a. d. 303, was a very beautiful girl. Her father, an eastern nobleman, loved her so much and was so afraid something might happen to her that he built a very wonderful tower for her home and shut her up in it. And in that tower she studied the stars. Night after night she looked at the heavenly bodies until she knew more about the sun and the moon and the stars than any of the learned men. But as she studied the shining bodies she decided that worshiping idols, made of wood and stone, as her father did, was wrong. Finally she learned about the Savior, and to show her faith in Christianity she had some workmen who were making repairs on her tower put in three windows. When her father came as usual to visit her, he asked in surprise what the three windows were for. She replied:

"Know, my father, that through three windows doth the soul receive light, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: and the three are one."

Her father was very angry when he found she had learned about the Savior and had become a Christian. He condemned her to death and at last took her out on a hill and killed her, but he, too, was struck dead. St. Barbara is always represented with a tower that has three windows in it.

Palma Vecchio painted this picture for some Venetian soldiers nearly four hundred years ago. When the Germans bombarded Venice (1918) the Venetians took the picture from the church to a place of safety. Scarcely a week had passed before a bomb broke through the roof of the church tearing everything before it at the exact spot where the picture had hung. But "St. Barbara," one of the great pictures of the world, was safe.

CHARLES I AND HIS HORSE

Sir Anthony Van Dyck (1599-1641)

The horse in this picture of Charles I is probably the one Rubens gave to Van Dyck. It is said that Rubens gave it as a present after Van Dyck had painted a portrait of Helena Fourment, the master's second wife, and presented it to him. Van Dyck was twenty-two years younger than Rubens. You will remember that he was the master painter's favorite pupil. Having Rubens as a teacher did not make the pupil a great painter. Van Dyck was never more than a prince; just an heir to the throne. Rubens was a king and sat on the throne.

The story is told that once Rubens was away from his private studio when the students bribed the servant to open the door for them. They stole into the master's studio to see "The Descent from the Cross," which he was then painting. By some mishap the culprits rubbed against the wet paint and spoiled that part of the picture. Of course they were terrified at the damage done. They finally decided that Van Dyck was the one to repair the spot. The work was so well done that they hoped Rubens would not see the repairs. But the first thing that caught the eye of the master was that particular spot. He at once sent for the students and asked who had worked on his picture. Van Dyck stepped out from the others and frankly confessed that he was the culprit. Rubens was so pleased with his frankness and also at the skill of the work that he forgave them all.

King Charles I invited Van Dyck to come to England, and then he knighted him and gave him a pension for life. The hundreds of pictures of the royal family and court people of England left by Van Dyck show us how rapidly he could paint, for the artist died when he was only forty-two years old.

THE GALE

Winslow Homer (1836-1910)

Winslow Homer lived in Maine, where he heard the roar of mighty waters beating the rocks all day and all night. Some days the ocean grew so angry because the winds whirled its waters about in such a cruel manner that it would fling itself upon the sands and rocks as though to tear everything to pieces. The waves would raise up like furious horses champing their bits and foaming at the mouth. Somehow these angry waves could never go beyond a certain point, and the mother carrying her baby along the coast knows just the point at which the waves must stop. Let us clap our hands and shout with joy that old ocean cannot hurt that mother and her baby. Fill your lungs full of that glorious breeze whipping their hair and clothes. Open your eyes wide like the baby and let the salt air polish them until they sparkle like diamonds as the baby's do.

Winslow Homer loved old ocean, and so do we! Let us love his pictures of old ocean for he has taught us that that mighty power is under a greater Power.

MADONNA DEL GRAN' DUCA

Raphael Sanzio (1483-1520)

I want you to learn everything you can about Raphael. He was so kind and gentle and beautiful that everybody loved him. People said that when he walked on the streets of Rome scores of young men went with him until one would think him a prince. The pope gave him a large order to decorate the Vatican, the pope's home. Every artist was willing to help him because he was always ready to do anything he could to help his brother artists.

Raphael only lived to be thirty-seven. When he died all Italy mourned his death, and his funeral was one of the largest of any artist of his time.

When Raphael was only twenty-one he painted the "Madonna del Gran' Duca." He had gone to Florence for the first time. We do not know where the picture was for a hundred years after it was painted; then the painter Carlo Dolci owned it. Again another hundred years went by, and we find it in possession of a poor widow. She sold it to a picture-dealer for about twenty dollars. It then went into the hands of the grand duke of Tuscany, Ferdinand III, for the big sum of eight hundred dollars. No amount of money could buy the picture to-day.

Ferdinand loved the picture so much that he always took it with him on all his travels and the grand duchess, his wife, felt that her baby boys were purer if she had the picture near her. It got its name "Madonna of the Grand Duke" from the title of the family.

JOAN OF ARC

Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848-1884)

No young girl in history has had such a wonderful story as Joan of Arc. She began to hear voices and see visions when she was a little child. She was born in the tiny village of Domremy, France. Just like the other little peasant girls around her she helped her mother about the house and at the spinning. Also she went into the fields with her brothers.

One day when she was in the garden the Archangel St. Michael came to her in a glory of light. He said she was a good little girl and that she must go to church and that some day she was to do a great act; she was to crown the dauphin as king of France at Rheims. Joan was afraid and cried at what the angel told her, but St. Michael said, "God will help you."

These messages kept coming to her until, when she was sixteen, the voices insisted, "You must help the king, and save France."

France was in a terrible state at this time, 1428. The English held most of France. The French king, Charles VI, became insane and died. The son, Dauphin Charles, was weak and lazy and discouraged; he had no money, no army, no energy, and like most cowards, ran from his duty and wasted his time in wickedness.

Joan was still urged by voices to save France. At last a peasant uncle went with her to a man in power to ask for troops. The man was angry, and said sharply:

"The girl is crazy! Box her ears and take her back to her father." But Joan did not give up. She insisted that some one must take her to Dauphin Charles, that God willed it. She said:

"I will go if I have to wear my legs down to my knees." She went, and she saved France by crowning the dauphin as Charles VII at Rheims. But the French and the English people condemned Joan of Arc as a witch and burned her at the stake. Too late they cried:

"We are lost! We have burned a saint!"

THE FATES

Michael Angelo Buonarroti (1474-1564)

When a new baby comes to a home, legend says, three beautiful young girls come to take care of the baby all through its life, but no one ever sees these young girls. Each one has a strange work to do. One, called Clotho, carries a spindle on which is wound flax. The second, named Lachesis, twists a thread from the spindle, called the thread of life. And Atropos, the third, has a pair of shears ready to cut the thread of life.

A funny story is told about Michael Angelo when he designed this picture of "The Fates." An old woman annoyed the artist very much by coming every day to see him. She insisted that he should appoint her son a special place in the fighting line in the seige of Florence (1529). Michael Angelo took revenge on the old woman by using her as a model for all of the women in his "Fates." And that is why Michael Angelo's fates are old women instead of young girls, as legend says they are.

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