

## The Ship Of Stars - Thomas Quiller-couch, Arthur



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Until his ninth year the boy about whom this story is written lived in a house which looked upon the square of a county town. The house had once formed part of a large religious building, and the boy's bedroom had a high groined roof, and on the capstone an angel carved, with outspread wings. Every night the boy wound up his prayers with this verse which his grandmother had taught him: "Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Bless the bed that I lie on. Four corners to my bed, Four angels round my head; One to watch, one to pray, Two to bear my soul away." Then he would look up to the angel and say: "Only Luke is with me." His head was full of queer texts and beliefs. He supposed the three other angels to be always waiting in the next room, ready to bear away the soul of his grandmother (who was bed-ridden), and that he had Luke for an angel because he was called Theophilus, after the friend for whom St. Luke had written his Gospel and the Acts of the Holy Apostles. His name in full was Theophilus John Raymond, but people called him Taffy. Of his parents' circumstances he knew very little, except that they were poor, and that his father was a clergyman attached to the parish church. As a matter of fact, the Reverend Samuel Raymond was senior curate there, with a stipend of ninety-five pounds a year. Born at

Tewkesbury, the son of a miller, he had won his way to a servitorship at Christ Church, Oxford; and somehow, in the course of one Long Vacation, had found money for travelling expenses to join a reading party under the Junior Censor. The party spent six summer weeks at a farmhouse near Honiton, in Devon. The farm belonged to an invalid widow named Venning, who let it be managed by her daughter Humility and two paid labourers, while she herself sat by the window in her kitchen parlour, busied incessantly with lace-work of that beautiful kind for which Honiton is famous. He was an unassuming youth; and although in those days servitors were no longer called upon to black the boots of richer undergraduates, the widow and her daughter soon divined that he was lowlier than the others, and his position an awkward one, and were kind to him in small ways, and grew to like him. Next year, at their invitation, he travelled down to Honiton alone, with a box of books; and, at twenty-two, having taken his degree, he paid them a third visit, and asked Humility to be his wife. At twenty-four, soon after his admission to deacon's orders, they were married. The widow sold the small farm, with its stock, and followed to live with them in the friary gate-house; this having been part of Humility's bargain with her lover, if the word can be used of a pact between two hearts so fond. About ten years had gone since these things happened, and their child Taffy was now past his eighth birthday. Author: Quiller-Couch, Arthur, Thomas Publisher: EbooksLib Illustration: N Language: ENG Title: The Ship of Stars Pages: 00000 (Encrypted PDF) On Sale: 2005-06-25 SKU-13/ISBN: 9781412148276 Category: Fiction : Classics

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