

The Temperance Star.

BY MRS. J. S. T.

The streets were rife with joyous life,
For the Christmas time was near;
But into our room came I home
To see not a sign of cheer.

As I sat alone in the darkness,
And looked through the coming year,
My heart was full of sorrow,
And my eyes were full of tears.

Then I thought of the shepherds that kept their flocks
On the plains of Galilee,
How their hearts sent up that longing cry
For the Christ that was to be.

And I thought how the glory of God came down,
Till the night shone like the day;
Of the wise men's journey by night, and the star
That guided them all the way.

And my heart sent up its longing cry
To the God who answered them;
"Lord, into the dark night of my life
Send a Star of Bethlehem!"

I heard a step far down the walk—
A firm and ringing tread;
It reminded me of John's glad step,
The day that we were wed.

The moon slipped in and spread her robe
Upon the poor bare floor,
Till I thought of the streets in the City of Light,
And—John stood at the door!

There was a new light in his eyes,
So tender and so proud;
And a ribbon shone on his ragged coat,
Like a star against a cloud!

A little, silken, bright-blue star,
That lighted all the gloom,
And changed to a palace, grand and fair,
The dingy little room.

We did not speak a single word,
But we knelt by the children's bed:—
"God help me to keep it always bright!"
Was all the prayer he said.

The moon crept through the narrow pane,
And fell like a blessing down;
It touched wee Mary's flaxen hair,
Till it shone like a silver crown.

It kissed the baby where he lay,
In his lowly cradle bed.
"Think God for the Star that rose to-night!"
Was all that my full heart said!

DICK'S CHRISTMAS.

BY ADELINE SERGEANT.

"Do you think father will go out to-night, Annie?"

"I s'pose he will, Dick."

"And to-morrow night?"

"Yes, Dick."

"But to-morrow's Christmas Eve."

"I know it is," said Anne, with a patient sigh.

"And next day Christmas. Oh!" said Dick, stretching out his little thin arm on his wretched bed. "I think that father might stay at home on Christmas. Don't you think so, Annie?"

"'Taint right for us to say what father ought to do," said Annie, softly.

"But it is right to say what we'd like him to do, ain't it?" asked little Dick, wisely. "And maybe I'll tell him so myself, some day."

"O, no, Dick, you mustn't do that!" said Annie, in a tone of some alarm; "he'd knock you about, and make you cry."

"Ah, but when I'm a big, big man," said Dick, "then I know what I would say to him—"

A fit of coughing interrupted the little fellow's speech. Annie brought him some water, and laid the thin coverlet tenderly over him. Then she stood beside the bed until the paroxysm was past.

"Keep quiet, Dick, dear," she said anxiously; "you know the doctor said you was to be very still."

"But I am *weerry* still," said Dick, looking up at her with his bright eyes, which were as eager and as cheery as those of any bird upon a bough. He was six years old, but so wasted and worn by illness that he was small and light—like a child of half his age. He had had whooping-cough in the autumn, and seemed never to have recovered from the complaint.

For the last few days he had scarcely left his bed, and Annie, the eleven-year-old sister, who had acted almost a mother's part toward him, had been growing very uneasy at the sight of his declining strength. Their mother was dead, and their father had long been addicted to intemperate habits. When sober, he could earn good wages; but his money had, more and more of late, been spent at the public house, so that the home, which might have been a happy one, was wretched and uncomfortable; and the children, whom he ought to have cared for, were in want of the commonest necessary of life.

John Morris lived with these two children in a couple of small rooms on an upper story of a large house in London. The surroundings of this home were not beautiful; but he might have made its interior much more bright and satisfactory to the eye. As it was, a good deal of the furniture had been pawned. There was seldom food enough in the cupboard, or coal enough for the fire; and now that Christmas Day was drawing on, it went to Annie Morris's heart to think that little Dick would have so little to mark that day as a joyous one—so little to make it different from other days. For herself she did not so much care; but she wanted everything that was good and beautiful for Dick.

She bent her thoughtful face over a sock she was trying to mend, and Dick lay on his bed and watched her. Presently he said again:

"I know what I would say to him."

"What would you say?" asked Annie.

"I would say, Father, you have two little children—or two children, for you are not very little, are you, Annie?—and God meant you to take care of them. You ought to stay at home and make them happy, instead of going to the public-house."

"You wouldn't say that really, though, would you, Dick?" said Annie, with some anxiety, for it would do no good—and I s'pose it wouldn't be quite right."

"I won't say it, then," said Dick, in a docile tone. After a pause, however, he added: "I do wish, though, that he would stay at home with us on Christmas Day."

Annie did not wish it, perhaps, so much as Dick. She was more afraid of her father than Dick was; she had experienced the effects of his madness, when "the drink was in him," more painfully than little Dick had ever done. John Morris was often very affectionate with Dick, when he had not been drinking, and Dick was fond of him.

The kettle was boiling, and the tea was made, when Morris came in from his work. He was in a sullen mood, and scarcely spoke in answer to Dick's greeting. For Dick's bed was made up in the room that served as sitting-room and kitchen all in one. He could be kept warmer in that way, and Annie could attend more easily to his wants. So, while his father ate his evening meal in silence, Dick lay and watched him out of his bright blue eyes.

When the meal was finished, Annie went into the next room, and Morris sat moodily by the fire. He was aroused from his meditations by the sound of a childish voice.

"Father," said Dick, "are you a-goin' out to-night?"

"What's that to you?" growled Morris.

"Oh, nothing," replied Dick, cheerfully; "only I wanted to know."

"Well, then, yes, I am; if it's any pleasure to you."

"And to-morrow night, father, which is Christmas Eve?"

"How can I tell! Yes, most likely. There ain't much comfort to be got in a hole like this."

"And Christmas Day too, father?"

"What do you want to know for?" asked his father.

"Oh, I thought I'd just ask," said Dick, meekly. "I didn't know. I was wonderin' what sort o' Christmas *we* was to have, that was all."

"I s'pose," said Morris, in a savage tone, "that you expect me to go and spend my money in buyin' plum-puddings and oranges, and things o' that sort. Well, I ain't a-going to do it. I've got no money to waste. So you'll have to do without."

"Yes, father," said Dick. Then, with the baby simplicity which sometimes took his father by surprise, he added, meditatively, "No money to waste! Poor father! You'll have to do without your beer, then?"

Morris turned in his chair, glared at his little son for a minute or two, and then, with a muttered ejaculation of rage, walked straight out of the room. If Dick had looked less small, less white, less frail, than he did at that moment, his father would have struck him in his anger. But the child looked quite unconscious of having said anything amiss, and was so tiny, and delicate withal, that Morris restrained himself. But Dick's words contained in reality, a terrible satire upon Morris's mode of life, and, as such, the man resented it.

He could deny his children the Christmas fare—the roast beef and plum-pudding, which English boys and girls anticipate as a sort of national feast to which they have an undoubted right—but he could not deny himself the drink that had been his ruin! For once he saw the matter in its right light. Little Dick had revealed the truth to him in its native hideousness.

Morris felt ashamed of himself. He went along the street with his hands in his pockets, his hat pressed down over his forehead, his eyes bent upon the ground. He was half resolved to give up the public-house once and for all, to sign the pledge, and spend his money in comforts for his children; but he was only *half* resolved. While in this state of indecision, he was accosted by a comrade and old acquaintance.

"Why, Jack," said his friend, "I haven't seen you for an age, old man! Come in, and have a drink."

Morris looked up. They had met near the door of a low public-house, which he already knew rather too well. "Thankee, mate," he said, "but I can't come in to-night."

"Can't come in! Why not? Come, you're not going to desert us yet, are you? Just for five minutes. I won't keep you longer, if you are in such a hurry."

"Well, just for five minutes," said Morris. And he followed his friend into the public-house.

The usual results came about. Morris was not content with one glass—with two glasses—with three. Before the night was over, he and his friend were both disgracefully drunk and noisy; and, by midnight, Morris found himself locked-up in the station-house until morning.

In the morning he was brought before a magistrate, severely reprimanded, and fined twenty shillings—in default of the fine, to be imprisoned for twenty-four hours. Morris could not pay the fine, he had spent all his money, and he had no option