

if you spend a few moments of every day praying for God's blessing upon them. Then the reflex action of your prayer is full of blessing to yourself in the preparation of your heart for the reception of the message. It creates in you a natural hunger, which is satisfied as you drink in the gracious message of God, which comes to you on Sunday. If the preacher has not been supplying your needs do no reject or despise him, but begin to pray for him that he may be made a blessing to you. You will at once begin to take a greater interest in him and his work, and you will feel more sympathy for him in his efforts to feed your faith, and guide your Christian life. Streetsville, Ont.

#### CHRONICLES OF SKITTLE ALLEY.

BY LENA L. WOODILL.

It was a red-letter day for Skittle Alley, for men and women of note picked their way through the narrow lane, amid refuse of all kinds, to the "Bethel," where the opening exercises of the free kindergarten were to take place. Skittle Alley had long been neglected. Its evil repute and the extreme rudeness of its inhabitants had turned aside all philanthropic efforts in its behalf, and consequently sin and wretchedness thrived in soil well adapted to their healthy growth.

The narrow court was filled with little bundles of humanity playing in the dirt and quarrelling over mud pies, while from the windows came loud voices and frequent oaths as the neighbors gossiped from house to house.

In this hot-bed of vice children grow to be men and women, and from thence went out into the world to spread abroad the pestilence which permeated their very nature, and to overcrowd the reformatories, hospitals and prisons.

A great change was about to take place. The Epworth Leaguers had banded themselves together, and from this union had arisen the "Free Kindergarten Association and Children's Aid Society," having for its object the establishment and maintenance of a free kindergarten in Skittle Alley and the neglected portions of the city, for the education and moral training of children between the ages of three and seven years, and the material assistance of those for whom their parents were unable to make adequate provision.

A large number of ladies and gentlemen had become members by the payment of an annual fee of one dollar, thus providing the necessary funds for equipment. Large donations had been successfully solicited, and now all was in readiness for the formal opening.

A spacious room, once a saloon, had been rented, under the supervision of the committee, and had undergone a rapid transformation. The small broken panes of glass had been replaced by a large window, which freely admitted the few rays of sunlight which found their way into the narrow court. Inside all was bright and cheery. A roaring fire tempered the damp, cool atmosphere, blooming flowers shed their fragrance, while singing birds contributed their quota to this charming little paradise. We had anticipated events by spending the week previous in

visiting Skittle Alley mothers, endeavoring to enlist their co-operation and to awaken a spirit of curiosity in the children. Many responded to our invitation, and long before the hour on the opening day our small doorway was thronged with dirty, unkempt children seeking admission. Had the thermometer ranged higher we would have admitted them in "Indian file," but necessity compelled us to throw open the doors, when, with one accord, the little rabble burst upon us like an avalanche. Fearing to frighten them away by exhibiting too much red tape, I submitted meekly, at the same time framing the resolution that to-morrow would witness proceedings more in keeping with the nature of our work. In a few minutes order was restored, chairs put back in their places, the children quietly seated

it is true, but we cared little for these at present. The hour had been one of toil and struggle, for Skittle Alley children do not take kindly to soap and water, and therefore were somewhat rebellious at the innovation. One little chap fought fiercely against having his ears cleansed, urging as a strong plea that "mother never washed 'em, 'cos it gave him an ear-ache,"—a true statement, certainly, if they were allowed to become so thickly coated before an attempt was made to remove the dirt covering. I almost feared to have the child go home in the cold without it lest he should succumb to the prevailing gripe.

The morning passed without further adventure save an occasional outburst of admiration from the more forward children, such as: "Oh, look at that dog!" "What a big piangy! I saw one in the 'sloon once when I went in to warn."

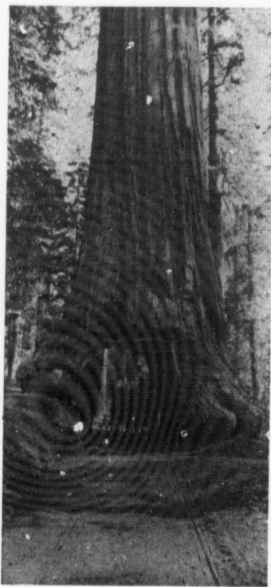
Here was my opportunity, so I eagerly endeavored to sow good seed in the little heart by asking Tom to promise me that he would never enter this abode of evil while a kindergarten boy. He was willing to pledge his word, but with one reservation: "If dad licked him, he'd hev to go and get a mug of beer for him."

We sought by every means to make the morning hours pass pleasantly for these waifs, and succeeded in so doing. I have seldom seen a more attentive audience. Their attempts to be polite were touching, and their compliments were a little out of the ordinary. When I had finished my story one said: "Wasn't that bully!" Another child, who evidently had received some Christian training, asked: "Did Jesus go to kindergarten?" When I responded in the negative, she replied sadly, "Poor, poor Jesus."

Our second day was a vast improvement on the first. The minute directions given as to the mode of entrance had borne fruit in orderly behaviour, while the object lesson in cleanliness had in many cases brought the desired result. All had made some attempt at morning ablutions, and only a few finishing touches were required from us. I had talked much of our bright room, with its dainty and artistic appointments, and had firmly stated that we could allow no dirty hands to disfigure what was now so pretty and attractive. Consequently many pairs of hands were raised for our inspection and many were the inquiries, "Can I have some pretty things, teacher!" or, "Can I look at that picture, Miss Dean?"

Jimmie Sloane was missing to-day, so after hours I started out to ascertain the cause of his absence. After much searching I found his home, and toiled up the rickety stairs to a dirty attic room where lived Jimmy's family, eight in number and two boarders. Sobs greeted me as the door swung back on its rusty hinges. There was the truant, curled up in the dusty window seat, his eyes swollen with weeping, and his face resembling that of an Indian's in his war paint, the black foundation of dirt, the white streaks produced by the tears in their course, while the strip of red paper given him the day previous, and now clutched tightly in his hand, added a touch of colour to the otherwise sombre countenance.

"Why, Jimmie," I exclaimed, "What



BIG TREE ON THE WAY TO YOSEMITE VALLEY.

and Miss Laura and I were free to view the situation. Can I ever accurately describe the panorama before us? Thirty filthy, unclothed, ragged boys and girls, ranging in age from three to eight. Here and there one could single out a face at which an attempt at cleanliness had been made, discernable by the "high-water mark" which outlined the countenance; but, in the majority of cases, the bright eyes shone out from faces begrimed with dust, soot and mud, and nothing remained but to pursue a wholesale scrubbing process. Leaving Miss Laura in charge, I donned my apron and ushered my pupils one by one into our little dressing-room, where soap and hot water were in demand for fully an hour. Ah, how pleasant was the change when I issued forth and saw before me the shining faces of the little ones! The ragged clothes still remained,