

this night, what must this poor little martyr have suffered ! His conscience and he were once more on friendly terms.

Watching the slowly-reviving child, for with warmth came brisker circulation, he presently questioned the boy, who, in a very few words, told his sad story. His mother had died two years before. Then his father—evidently a dissolute drunkard—had married a cruel woman, who treated her little stepson barbarously. His life was one long misery. A few weeks ago, his father died, and the ill-treatment became, if possible, worse than ever. To-day she had beaten him fiercely ; then turned him out of doors bidding him never to return.

"That is all," were the pathetic concluding words.

"All !" thought Robert, full of compunction, thinking of his own selfish, easy, comfortable life.

After a pause the little fellow spoke again. An eager light shone through the dark eyes.

"Are you taking me to Midnight Mass ? I know it is Christmas eve, and I have so prayed to the little Jesus to help me. It is He who sent you to me. Oh ! will you lay me down close by His crib—close to His little feet. Will you ? I shall be warm there and so happy—so happy !"

"Yes, yes," said poor bewildered Robert, as he wondered what was to be done in this new dilemma. A vague feeling of remorse and sadness began to oppress him, for the little lad's words had revived memories of Christmas eves in the years gone by, when he, too, knelt by a dear mother's side, assisting at the Holy Sacrifice, yes, even with fervor and love approaching the Holy Table !

How long ago it seemed since she died ! Just when the dark passions of youth were beginning to surge in his breast, whispering of freedom from restraint, and urging to independence of mind and body ; poor Robert, so full of generous impulses, but weak and inconstant ; and losing guidance when he most needed it, had gradually neglected his Christian duties ; one by one giving up practices of devotion, even his morning prayers and Sunday's Mass, though deep down in his heart the Faith was still alive ! And now as remorseful thoughts of his aimless, worthless life passed through his mind, faith and fervor seemed to take hold of him, a horror of his way of