

"Not much to rummage about, my lad; you have made a pretty clean sweep of it to-night. I was only looking about to see if by any chance I could light on an orange or two for my little girl who is very ill." He was a poor-looking man who spoke, but clean, and with a very severe face and voice.

"We bain't got one left, sir, and they wor sourish and green-looking the two that is gone, and not very well suited for a ill lill' gel; but I could get two for you werry quick, if you re'lly wants them—I knows where I can get 'em."

"Thank you; now don't disappoint me; see here is two-pence—you'll go quicker than I can; as I can't stay, will you bring 'em to me to my house; I can point out where I live—as far down the street as you can see, on the side opposite to you, then take the first turn down on the same side, 'twill bring you into a little passage opening into a small court: the second door on your left, a green one, with 3 painted in white on it, is where I live. Can you remember? for I should be sorry for my little girl not to get her oranges. I can trust you, can't I?" and he looked gravely into Rag's face.

"I'll 'member, sir, I won't 'spint your little gel no ways; off I goes, and soon I comes back," replied the child eagerly.

"Thank you—stay, keep one penny for yourself," and away the man walked before Rag could thank him.

"What ever made you say as you'd go and get the oranges, Rag; they'll be coming back soon, and if you're not here then, what am I to do?"

"I won't be a minit, Tag; the oranges are only a few stalls off behind us. I'll get 'em and be back afore you can count the clock strikin' six," and away ran Rag; but she was disappointed; no oranges were to be seen—they had all been sold, and she had to turn down one street and up another and half across a third before she could find any; but at last she did discover them, and having bought two, and wrapped them up in an old cabbage leaf, which the woman at the stall provided her with, she ran back as fast as she could. Hardly had she

got to the turning leading to her street when she saw the "dreadful ones" in front of her, both bending under the weight of a large bag they were carrying on their backs, filled with the "odds and ends" and "old rubbage" they had picked up that day, and which would be displayed for sale on the morrow.

For a moment she stood quite still; she dared not pass them; to be away from her post was a crime which nothing but the poor "soldgers" aching half the night could atone for. One glimmer of hope, and one alone, was still left to little Rag: if they would only stop, as she felt sure they generally did, at the ugly, dirty little shop at the corner, where gin and other

they only would! Never mind how cross it makes them, so that I may have time to get back to Tag—and I promised him I'd be ever so quick," thought Rag, when to her intense joy and relief the door of the shop with the large blue lamp hanging over it swung open—and in the two—no, only one—went.

Rag shaded her eyes with her cold hand to get a clearer view through the misty night air, and saw that one of them had slipped the heavy bag off his back, placed it against the wall, evidently in charge of the other, and had gone in. "Now or never!" she thought. "I must cross the street and creep along by the other side and then make

where are you going? It's against laws, you know as it is, to be away from your post; come here at once and show me what you've been priggling."

"I ain't a-been priggling," I was sent by a cust'mer for these two oranges. We've been and sold ev'rythin' a'most, and I had to go and fetch these for him, as he 'adn't time."

"Stop! No more palaver—hand 'em over to me, and off you goes home. See here," and he stooped down a little; "into my bag with them, and off you go home—run. I can tell you it's a lucky job for you it's me and not the 'dreadfulest' who caught you."

"Please, Mr. Dreadful"—and Rag went close up to him, emboldened by his less gruff manner than usual—"them two oranges is paid for; they're promised to a sick little gel, at number 3 down

"What do I care for sick little gels or sick little boys either," impatiently interrupted the man; "get back at once and have some supper ready, or you'll catch it—d'y'e hear me?—Go," and he lifted his huge hand. Rag needed no further bidding, but flew like an arrow from a bow, and was soon down in the cellar beside Tag, who immediately began to upbraid her for her long absence.

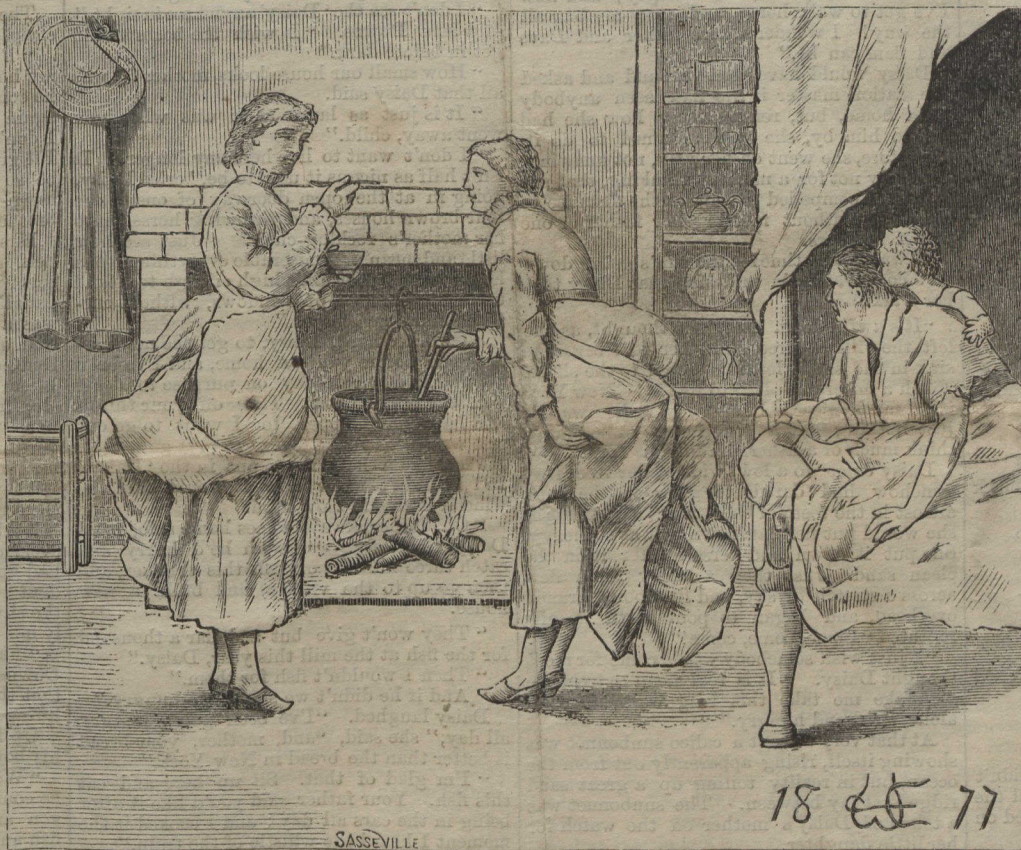
"You've spilte all, Rag, and we shall catch it, we shall, for they'll be here, 'rectly, now. I am 'spinted," and the tears stood in his

eyes. Although it was too dark for Rag to see, she felt by the tremble in his voice how much the boy was disappointed, and putting her little hand in his, she pressed it fondly. "It worn't my fault, Tag; 'deed it worn't," and then she told him of her difficulty in finding the oranges, and of her meeting the "dreadful one."

(To be Continued.)

FAIRY LORE IN THE KITCHEN.

Our readers are directed to the Family Circle on the seventh page of the MESSENGER for the explanation of the engravings on this and preceding page.



THE FAIRIES.

spirits were sold, there would then be a chance for her to run home and escape their quick eyes.

How Rag's heart beat as she leant against the wall watching them; scarcely a soul was passing just then but herself and the two she so much feared, so that if they did look around there was no possibility of her hiding herself behind any one, and detection would be inevitable.

On they went bending beneath their loads; and the sound of their gruff voices was borne indistinctly to her eager ears on the cold frosty evening air—tramp, tramp she heard them going down the street, and every tramp as it got further off struck coldly on the poor child's heart. "If they would but go in to the little shop at the corner—oh, if

a rush for it; if only it's the 'dreadfulest' one as has gon'd in the betterer for me." More stealthily than any cat did the child creep along, and had nearly passed the corner where the man stood waiting for his companion moving impatiently on the chilly pavement, when all of a sudden the door swung open again, letting a full stream of light from within fall upon the opposite side of the dusky street, lighting up the figure of poor little Rag as she crept softly by.

In one moment those lynx eyes which nothing escaped fell upon her. "No use, Rag," he called out, in a hoarse voice. "You can't pass by me in that fashion without my making enquiries. Where 'ave you been? What 'ave yer been doing? And