MESSENGER. NORTHERN

MAKING SHOES. In his little hut by the rocky shore, Where the waters ever with changing hues Creep in and out with a drowsy roar, Sits an old man fashioning babies' shoes; His face is wrinkled, his hair is white, His form is bent with his years of care, But always the old man's heart is light, And he sings to himself as he labors there "Pegging away All the long day Stitching ever till set of sun Tides ebb and flow, Hours come and go, Rest comes after the work is done."

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Through the window, glistening far away, He watches the white sails out at sea As they slowly fade from the shining bay Chased out by the west wind light and free And a far-off look in his faded eyes Reveals that his thoughts are drifting far With the gleaming sails where the sea gull flics And he sings with his heart o'er the harbor bar: "Pegging away, All the long day, White sails drifting across the sea ; Tides ebb and flow, Days come and go,

Voyage soon over for you and me :"

He turns to his work, and his rough old hands, As honest as human hands can be, Draw out the threads with their twisted strands And stitch the crooked scams faithfully, For babies feet must be shod with care, And old age carries the work along, And shoes are better by far to wear When pegged and stitched with a little song: "Pegging away All the long day, Infancy, childhood, youth and age Tides cbb and flow, Years come and go: Life is only a written page And thus he toils, while the days go by. Spring turns to summer along the shore, The summers fade and the roses die, And snow drifts whiten the headlands o'er

And, day by day, as the season's run, He sings and toils in a thoughtful use His threads near wasted, work almost done, An old man fashioning shoes : " Pegging away All the long day, Shine and shadow, spring and fall; Tides ebb and flow, Men come and go; God the Father is over all !' J. S. Cutler, in Youth's Companion.

THE ENGLISH SHOE-BLACK BRI-GADES.

BY THE REV. ANDREW LEES.

Although the application of the subject of this article will be found beyond the power of the multitude whose eyes scan the pages of the Sunday-School Times, the religious phase of it is so novel, and the genuineness of the type so youthful and rough, that fresh stimulus may be imparted to some open-hearted and hungry readers. We are so much accusiomed to look at Christianity as it appears in staid gatherings of worshippers, within handsome and commodious buildings, under refined manners, in mature life, and associated with fine clothing, that we are startled to find it thriving vigorously in healthy lads mak-ing a living on the streets of London. "Who are they?" the intelligent traveller "There are no outward indicamay ask. tions of such a type of religious life on the public thoroughfares of the modern Babylon." With unusual satisfaction we gladly answer it is a brilliant Christian fact that the uncouth fellows with boot-boxes and blacking-brushes before them on the sidewalk at every second or third corner are rough Christian diamonds being remodelled by the Holy Spirit and religious services. They are recognized in our civilization by the sable and sturdy title of The Shoeblack Brigade.

useful work. On November 27 of that year, a number of the teachers met, under the presidency of Lord Ashley, to consider means by which the boys who were suffi-ciently advanced might find employment. The Universal Exhibition to be held in and sometimes a boy takes \$2.50 in a day. Hyde Park the following year was looked April, May, and June are the most favor- manager, one a sea-captain, some sailors,

forward to with much hope in this direction ; and there was an impression existing in the minds of a few, that, among the hundreds of thousands of foreigners and others in London, work might be pro-cured for many of the boys. The meeting, however, broke up without coming to any agreement or practical result. When three of the teachers, young barristers, were returning home from it, and thinking over the problem, one of them asked the others, "Why not make some of our boys into shoe-blacks for the visitors to employ on the streets; as I have often seen in Paris?" The suggestion was promptly taken up, and each gave \$2.50 to begin with. They began teaching the boys the art of shoe-blacking, adding politeness, and working hard, they were successful. On January 19, 1851, a shoe-black was first seen by the London public pursuing his calling. A meeting of the friends of the new project was called in Field Lane School-room, Captain Trotter in the chair, and a former thief was selected and put upon the platform, dressed in his red Jersey jacket, to exhibit the method of doing his work on the street.

On February 24, rooms were hired near John Street, Strand for sixty-five cents a week; and the three lawyers acted as teachers, for the time being, of the boys in polishing boots and shoes. It is needless to say that to such whole-souled men it became a pleasant and merry school. The work soon exceeded their direct personal control; and while they were on their knees praying for God to send a suitable person to undertake the charge of the boys, a man knocked at the door. He was employed, and he worked most successfully nineteen years among the lads. The first regular Brigade boy was put to work at Leicester Square, and the first customer on the ground was a typical stout English-The boy touched his cap, went to work, brushed down his trousers, polished his boots, and touched his cap again when he got his penny. Another and another came, and on that day he took in a large number of pennics, and founded the im-portant branch of youthful employment.

The police appointed the stations for the work in Piccadilly, Regent street, Holborn, at the Thames bridges, and in the parks. The honesty of the boys was tested, but they were found correct in their returns. On July 30, 1851, thirty-three shoe-blacks held a picnic at the Exhibition. During its progress they made \$2,500 at it. One of the few first boys who had been in the police office thirteen times turned out well, and five of the original brigade went to Canada and prospered. Love, from the commencement, was the motive-power applied to the boys, and it was found all-sufficient. New brigades were formed, and the movement spread. The original or Central Brigade, rganized at the above date, wears red color jackets; the East London, formed in 1851, wears blue jackets; the Notting Hill, organized in 1853, wears blue and white facings; the South London, founded in 1854, wears red; the North London, organized in 1857, wears brown and red; the North-West London, founded the same year, wears red and black facings; the West London, organized also in the same year, wears purple and scarlet; the Union Jack, founded in 1858, wears blue sailor ; and the Tower Hamlets, founded in 1873, are known by their red and blue facings. Each of these brigades is now self-support-

ing. In 1888 the total earnings amounted to \$55,416, and the sum in bank deposited by the boys to their credit was \$1,865.50. The lowest number of boys in a brigade is twenty, and the highest at present (or recently) is severity. The rules forbid them to be increased above a hundred. Each boy carries his number on his badge. The ragged schools having been com-menced, in 1810, by Thomas Cranfield, as sisted by George Medloy, a personal friend, for feeding, clothing and educating out-mostly by voluntary teachers until 1850, when it was folt by those most interested that some of the boys might be put to bottom of the lowest division, and his promotion depends upon his own honesty and diligence. The best paying stations are appointed to the first division class of boys, The average wages made is \$4.50 per week,

able months of the year, because the some soldiers, and many mechanics. Inshowers are more frequent. Prizes are awarded to encourage diligence, making just allowance for the lucrative stands. A tea-party is given them every winter, and an excursion to the country is provided for them every summer.

This brief sketch of the history and public life of the Shoe-black Brigade leads us, in a few sentences, to glance at their home. educational, and religious life. Each brigade has a building for itself, including sleeping-rooms, dining-rooms, school-room, gymnasium, bath-room, and other modern conveniences. There is a superintendent and matron, with the necessary help. One of the boys is appointed monitor of each sleeping-room, to keep order; the boy longest in the room generally fills the post. In the largest dormitory there are thirty-five good beds. Elevating pictures and practical texts of Scripture are hung up in every room of each establishment. A boy is required to pay four cents per night for his bed, but all the other uses and privileges of the building are included in the weekly society deduction. Boys who have mothers or friends able to accommodate them with beds can go to such homes at night ; but they must report first thing in the morning, and leave the brigade at night after all duties have been performed. The home makes itself responsible for preparing meals on Sunday. During week days, the lads may take their breakfast, for which they are required to pay before leaving for their work, or in a public restaurant. The money received by them is delivered to the superintendent every night. If a boy earns \$4.50 per week \$2.00 are paid to him as wages, \$1.25 is retained for the support of the brigade, and \$1.25 is put in the bank to his credit.

But the intellectual improvement of the boys is carefully provided for. Four even ings each week all are required to attend school on the premises, of an hour and a half's duration, conducted by certificated teachers. The usual course of study, of all grades, pursued in the public schools is pursued, and the scholars are examined in the month of May of each year by a board of school inspectors. No puuish ment is allowed nor force employed but that of love or kindness in the governing of the school by a few simple rules. The proportion of one in every seventy on the streets cannot read, but a member is able to do so when he leaves the Brigade. They have music taught them, and have amusements and physical exercise.

Moreover, the religious training of the boys is attended to with the utmost care. There is no work allowed on Sunday, and consequently no boy belonging to the Brigade is to be seen working on the sacred day of rest. In the morning, the boys either attend some Protestant place of worship in the neighborhood, marched in their Sunday uniform by their superintendent, or services are held for them in the Brigade hall, conducted by theological students, the superintendent, or some qualified person. In the evening, evangelistic services are held in each Brigade building, suitably adapted, at which each boy attends. These latter services are often conducted by such gentlemen as Lord Kinnaird, or ministers, missionaries, and well-prepared Christian workers. There are no Sunday-schools in connection with the brigades. On week-day mornings, the boys are all assembled for reading the Scriptures and prayer before going to their duty at the public street corners. At night, worship of half an hour's length, including singing, reading of the Scriptures, and prayer, is conducted, which every one attends. Occasionally, Christian men give them additional religious and moral ad-dresses. Thus the lads are under strong religious influences and Christian training.

modest, and rugged Christian. Many mothers' hearts have been gladdened by seeing their reformed boys living honest and industrious lives. In due time, many of them enter the better-to-do avenue of life. One becomes an American railway deed, generally speaking, shoe-blacks, al-though not children of Christian homes, are members of Christian brigades who conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the son of an honored Christian pastor. Young Christians will be glad at this accession to the multitude of those who follow the Saviour of sinners. Out of about eight thousand boys of from fourteen to seventeen years of age, a large number have been Christianized and taught how to make an honest and honorable living. The shoe-blacks on the streets of London, therefore, may be classified among the most religiously disposed persons to be found amid the surging throngs on the streets of the great metropolis of the world, -a fact in which every Sunday-school officer, teacher, and a host of scholars, will heartily rejoice. London, England.

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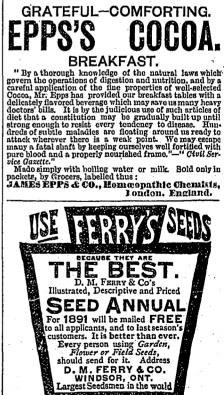
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