

Prohibition Battle Song

Have heard Truth's silver clarion,
In the watches of the night;
Can see her purple summits
Flush with morning's golden light.
Have seen the bow of promise
Over human doubts and fears,
And I hear the trump of Progress
Sound the battle-march of years.

Of a nation's wakened conscience
I have caught the accents sweet,
Thrilling through the din of traffic
And the clamour of the street.
Have heard the clang of armour
Being burnished for the fight,
And have read the startling challenge
Of the champions of right.

I have heard the ringing anvil
Where the Master's will is wrought,
And the harvest-song of reapers
In the higher fields of thought
I can see dark storm-clouds gather
Over Error's devious path,
And have caught the low, deep warning
Of the thunder of God's wrath.

Let no man henceforth hold poison
To his brother's lips for gold,
Or a nation's shameless sanction
Of iniquity be sold.
Never more let want and famine
All the land with mourning fill,
While the blessings of the harvest
Turn to curses in the still.

Never woman's wall of anguish,
And childhood's cry of pain
Hush to silence in the tumult
Of the strife of greed for gain,
For the olden voice is crying
In the wilderness of wrong,
Make ye straight Jehovah's pathway,
Vengeance waits not over long.

—W. H. Mellen, in the Voice.

THE STORY OF JESSICA.

CHAPTER I.

THE COFFEE-STALL AND ITS KEEPER.

In a screened and secluded corner of one of the many railway bridges which span the streets of London there could be seen, a few years ago, from five o'clock every morning until half-past eight, a tidily set-out coffee-stall, consisting of a trestle and board, upon which stood two large tin cans, with a small fire of charcoal burning under each, so as to keep the coffee boiling during the early hours of the morning when the work-people were thronging into the city on their way to their daily toil. The coffee-stall was a favourite o. c. for besides being under shelter, which was of great consequence upon rainy mornings, it was also in so private a niche that the customers taking their out-of-door breakfast were not too much exposed to notice; and, moreover, the coffee-stall keeper was a quiet man, who cared only to serve the busy workmen, without hindering them by any gossip. He was a tall, spare, elderly man, with a singularly solemn face, and a manner which was grave and secret. Nobody knew either his name or dwelling-place; unless it might be the policeman who strode past the coffee-stall every half-hour, and nodded familiarly to the solemn man behind it. There were very few who cared to make any inquiries about him; but those who did could only discover that he kept the furniture of his stall at a neighbouring coffee-house, whither he wheeled his trestle and board and crockery every day, not later than half-past eight in the morning; after which he was wont to glide away with a soft footstep, and a mysterious and fugitive air, with many backward and sidelong glances, as if he dreaded observation, until he was lost among the crowds which thronged the streets. No one had ever had the persevering curiosity to track him all the way to his house, or to find out his other means of getting a livelihood; but in general his stall was surrounded by customers, whom he served with silent seriousness, and who did not grudge to pay him his charge for the refreshing coffee he supplied to them.

For several years the crowd of work-people had paused by the coffee-stall

under the railway arch, when one morning, in a partial lull of his business, the owner became suddenly aware of a pair of very bright dark eyes being fastened upon him and the slices of bread and butter on his board, with a gaze as hungry as that of a mouse which had been driven by famine into a trap. A thin and meagre face belonged to the eyes, which was half hidden by a mass of matted hair hanging over the forehead, and down the neck, the only covering which the neck or head had, for a tattered frock, scarcely fastened together with broken strings, was slipping down over the shivering shoulders of the little girl. Stooping down to a basket behind his stall, he caught sight of two bare little feet curling up from the damp pavement, as the child lifted up first one and then the other, and laid them one over another to gain a momentary feeling of warmth. Whoever the wretched child was, she did not speak; only at every steaming cupful which he poured out of his can, her dark eyes gleamed hungrily, and he could hear her smack her thin lips, as if in fancy she was tasting the warm and fragrant coffee.

"Oh, come now!" he said at last, when only one boy was left taking his breakfast leisurely, and he leaned over his stall to speak in a low and quiet tone; "why don't you go away, little girl? Come, come; you're staying too long, you know."

"I'm just going, sir," she answered, shrugging her small shoulders to draw her frock up higher about her neck; "only it's raining cats and dogs outside; and mother's been away all night, and she took the key with her; and it's so nice to smell the coffee; and the police has left off worrying me while I've been here. He thinks I'm a customer taking my breakfast." And the child laughed a shrill little laugh of mockery at herself and the policeman.

"You've had no breakfast, I suppose," said the coffee-stall keeper, in the same low and confidential voice, and leaning over his stall till his face nearly touched the thin, sharp features of the child.

"No," she replied coolly, "and I shall want my dinner dreadful bad before I get it, I know. You don't often feel dreadful hungry, do you, sir? I'm not gripped yet, you know; but afore I taste my dinner it'll be pretty bad, I tell you. Ah! very bad indeed!"

She turned away with a knowing nod, as much as to say she had one experience in life to which he was quite a stranger; but before she had gone half a dozen steps, she heard the quiet voice calling to her in rather louder tones, and in an instant she was back at the stall.

"Slip in here," said the owner, in a cautious whisper, "here's a little coffee left and a few crusts. There, you must never come again, you know. I never give to beggars; and if you'd begged, I'd have called the police. There; put your poor feet towards the fire. Now, aren't you comfortable?"

The child looked up with a face of intense satisfaction. She was seated upon an empty basket, with her feet near the pan of charcoal, and a cup of steaming coffee on her lap; but her mouth was too full for her to reply, except by a very deep nod, which expressed unbounded delight. The man was busy for a while packing up his crockery; but every now and then he stopped to look down upon her, and to shake his head gravely.

"What's your name?" he asked, at length, "but there, never mind! I don't care what it is. What's your name to do with me, I wonder?"

"It's Jessica," said the girl; "but mother and everybody calls me Jess. You'd be tired of being called Jess, if you was me. It's Jess here, and Jess there; and everybody wanting me to go errands. And they think nothing of giving me smacks, and kicks, and pinches. Look here!"

Whether her arms were black and blue from the cold, or from ill-usage, he could not tell; but he shook his head again seriously, and the child felt encouraged to go on.

"I wish I could stay here for ever and ever, just as I am!" she cried. "But you're going away, now; and I'm never to come again, or you'll set the police on me!"

"Yes," said the coffee-stall keeper, very softly, and looking round to see if there were any other ragged children within

sight; "if you'll promise not to come again for a whole week, and not to tell anybody else you may come once more I'll give you one other treat. But you must be off now."

"I'm off, sir," she said, sharply; "but if you've an errand I could go on, I'd do it all right, I would. Let me carry some of your things."

"No, no," cried the man; "you run away, like a good girl; and mind! I'm not to see you again for a whole week."

"All right," answered Jess, setting off down the rainy street at a quick run, as if to show her willing agreement to the bargain; while the coffee-stall keeper, with many a cautious glance around him, removed his stock-in-trade to the coffee-house near at hand, and was seen no more for the rest of the day in the neighbourhood of the railway-bridge.

CHAPTER II.

JESSICA'S TEMPTATION.

Jessica kept her part of the bargain faithfully; and though the solemn and silent man under the dark shadow of the bridge looked out for her every morning as he served his customers, he caught no glimpse of her wan face and thin little frame. But when the appointed time was finished, she presented herself at the stall, with her hungry eyes fastened again upon the piles of buns and bread and butter, which were fast disappearing before the demands of the buyers. The business was at its height, and the famished child stood quietly on one side watching for the throng to melt away. But as soon as the nearest church clock had chimed eight, she drew a little nearer to the stall, and at a signal from its owner she slipped between the trestles of his stand, and took up her former position on the empty basket. To his eyes she seemed even a little thinner, and certainly more ragged, than before; and he laid a whole bun, a stale one which was left from yesterday's stock, upon her lap, as she lifted the cup of coffee to her lips with both her benumbed hands.

"What's your name?" she asked, looking up to him with her keen eyes.

"Why," he answered, hesitatingly, as if he was reluctant to tell so much of himself; "my christened name is Daniel."

"And where do you live, Mr. Daniel?" she inquired.

"Oh, come now!" he exclaimed, "if you're going to be impudent, you'd better march off. What business is it of yours where I live? I don't want to know where you live, I can tell you."

"I didn't mean no offence," said Jess, humbly, "only I thought I'd like to know where a good man like you lived. You're a very good man, aren't you, Mr. Daniel?"

"I don't know," he answered, uneasily; "I'm afraid I'm not."

"Oh, but you are, you know," continued Jess. "You make good coffee; pum! And buns too! And I've been watching you hundreds of times afore you saw me, and the police leaves you alone, and never tells you to move on. Oh, yes! you must be a very good man."

Daniel sighed, and sidged about his crockery with a grave and occupied air, as if he were pondering over the child's notion of goodness. He made good coffee, and the police left him alone! It was quite true, yet still, as he counted up the store of pence which had accumulated in his strong canvas bag, he sighed again still more heavily. He purposely let one of his pennies fall upon the muddy pavement, and went on counting the rest busily, while he furtively watched the little girl sitting at his feet. Without a shade of change upon her small face, she covered the penny with her foot, and drew it in carefully towards her, while she continued to chatter sweetly to him. For a moment a feeling of pain shot a pang through Daniel's heart; and then he congratulated himself on having entrapped the young thief. It was time to be leaving now; but before he went he would make her move her bare foot, and disclose the penny concealed beneath it, and then he would warn her never to venture near his stall again. This was her gratitude, he thought; he had given her two breakfasts and more kindness than he had shown to any fellow-creature for many a long year; and, at the first chance, the young jade turned upon him, and robbed him! He was brooding over it painfully

in his mind when Jessica's uplifted face charged suddenly, and a dark flush crept over her pale cheeks and the tears started to her eyes. She stooped down and picking up the coin from amongst the mud she rubbed it bright and clean upon her rag and laid it upon the stall close to his hand, but without speaking a word. Daniel looked down upon her solemnly and searchingly.

"What's this?" he asked.

"Please, Mr. Daniel," she answered, "it dropped, and you didn't hear it."

"Jess," he said, sternly, "tell me all about it."

"Oh, please," she sobbed, "I never had a penny of my very own but once, and it rolled close to my foot, and you didn't see it; and I hid it up sharp, and then I thought how kind you'd been, and how good the coffee and buns are, and how you let me warm myself at your fire; and please, I couldn't keep the penny any longer. You'll never let me come again, I guess."

Daniel turned away for a minute, busying himself with putting his cups and saucers into the basket, while Jessica stood by trembling, with the large tears rolling slowly down her cheeks. The snug, dark corner, with its warm fire of charcoal and its fragrant smell of coffee, had been a paradise to her for these two brief spans of time; but she had been guilty of the sin which would drive her from it. All beyond the railway-arch the streets stretched away, cold and dreary, with no friendly faces to meet hers, and no warm cups of coffee to refresh her; yet she was only lingering sorrowfully to hear the words spoken which should forbid her to return to this pleasant spot. Mr. Daniel turned round at last, and met her tearful gaze with a look of strange emotion upon his own solemn face.

"Jess," he said, "I could never have done it myself. But you may come here every Wednesday morning, as this is a Wednesday, and there'll always be a cup of coffee for you."

She thought he meant that he could not have hidden the penny under his foot, and she went away a little saddened and subdued, notwithstanding her great delight in the expectation of such a treat every week; while Daniel, pondering over the struggle that must have passed through her childish mind, went on his way, from time to time shaking his head, and muttering to himself, "I couldn't have done it myself; I never could have done it myself."

(To be continued.)

FOR WANT OF A LATCH.

An old stepladder lesson, setting forth the sad import of little neglects, is worth a hundred repetitions:

"For want of a nail the shoe was lost;
For want of a shoe the horse was lost;
For want of a horse the rider was lost,
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail."

This is said to be originally taken from actual history—of a certain aide-de-camp whose horse fell lame on a retreat and delayed him until the enemy overtook and killed him.

Here is another case said to have actually happened. Once on a farm there was a gate enclosing the cattle and poultry, which was constantly swinging open for the want of a proper latch. The expenditure of a penny or two and a few minutes' time would have made all right. The gate was on the swing every time a person went out, and, not being in a condition to shut readily, many of the poultry were from time to time lost.

One day a fine young porker made his escape, and the whole family, with the gardener, cook, and milkmaid, turned out in quest of the fugitive. The gardener, who was first to discover the pig, in leaping a ditch to cut off his escape, sprained his ankle, which laid him up for a fortnight, the cook, on returning to the house, found the linen burned, that she had hung up before the fire to dry, and the milkmaid, having forgotten to tie up the cattle in the cow house found that one of the cows had kicked and broken the leg of a colt. The linen burned and the gardener's work lost, were worth fully twenty dollars, and the colt was worth nearly double that money, so that there was a loss in a few minutes of a large sum solely for want of a small latch.—S. S. Messenger.