

sufferings in London, 'which had attracted attention, were mainly furnished by the vivid imagination of certain writers, whose love for the sensational had overcome their strict regard for the truth.

We had laboured earnestly enough among the children of the labouring poor, but as yet knew nothing experimentally of the houseless and destitute, having only a generally vague impression that *homeless* little ones were for the most part orphans, and if very poor were taken care of by the Union.

Our readers will therefore easily understand the cause of the grave doubts which entered our mind as this poor boy stood before us, and repeated his almost incredible tale.

The schoolroom being now deserted by its recent occupants, we very closely scrutinized the little lad, and to this day remember his appearance. The small, stunted, spare frame, clad in miserable rags, loathsome from their dirt, and without either shirt, shoes, or stockings, the expression of shrewdness in his countenance, and the bright, restless twinkle of his eye, all served to excite our interest and pity. His face, too, was not that of a child, although he said his age was only ten; there was a careworn, old-mannish look about it, which, together with the sound of his thin, querulous voice replying quickly and glibly as we spoke, struck one, as it were, with a sharp and acute pain.

"Do you mean to say, my boy, that you have no home, and that you have no mother or father?"

"That's the truth on't, sir; I ain't tellin' you no lie about it."

"Well, but where did you sleep last night?"

"Down in Whitechapel, sir, along o' the 'aymarket, in one of them carts as is filled with 'ay; an' then I met a chap as I knowed this arternoon, and he telled me to come up 'ere to school, as per'aps you'd let me lie near the fire all night. I won't do no 'arm, sir, if you let me stop; *please* do!"

It was a very cold night, for although there

had been no snow or wet during the day, the sharp and biting wind seemed to penetrate every joint, no matter how one was wrapped up; and as we looked at the little lad whom the Lord had sent to us, and noticed how ill-prepared he was to resist the vicissitudes of the weather, our hearts sank as we silently reflected, "If all that this boy says is true, how much he must have suffered!" Then, too, for the first time, we asked ourselves the question, "Is it possible that in this great city there are others also homeless and destitute, who are as young as this boy, as helpless, and as ill-prepared to meet the trials of cold, hunger, and exposure of every kind? Is it possible," we thought "that at this moment there are *many such in this great London* of ours—this city of wealth, of open Bibles, of gospel preaching, and of ragged-schools?" Instinctively, too, we asked this question of the poor little fellow who stood beside us awaiting anxiously the result of our cogitation, and received the sad reply:

"Oh yes, sir, lots—'eaps on 'em! More'n I could count!"

"If I give you some hot coffee to-night, and a place to sleep in, will you bring me to where some of these poor boys are lying out in the streets, and show me their hiding-place?"

Hot coffee! We know not what visions of Elysium came before that poor boy's mind as we spoke of a warm meal, but a ravenous, almost wolfish expression appeared in his face, and nodding his head rapidly in token of assent, he obeyed with quickened step our directions to follow, and at once accompanied us to our rooms.

He had not much to say on the way, but kept up close behind, his little feet going patter, patter, patter, on the cold pavement, his few rags pulled tightly across his breast, and his wretched apology for a cap drawn over head and ears. Having arrived, he waited for awhile in the hall, and then, when coffee was ready, he was called in, and seated at the table opposite to ourselves.

(Continued in our next)