

Going to School.

BY MRS. SANGSTER.

There's an army that musters its legions,
And marches to roll-call each day;
And happy and blest are the regions
Which lie in that army's bright way.
They troop over hillock and hollow,
They spring across brooklet and pool,
And gaily and cheerily follow
The summons which bids them to school.

By thousands the army is numbered,
Its soldiers are fresh as the morn;
Not one is by sorrow encumbered,
Not one is by care overborne.
At decimals sometimes they stumble,
And sometimes by verbs are perplexed,
And the proudest goes saddened and humble
When a question is passed to the next.

But forgot at the briefest vacation
Are problems and puzzles and prose;
The grief of the stern conjugation,
That late was a fountain of woes:
And the army goes back to its duty
The hour that play time is done,
Resplendent in love and in beauty,
Unmatched 'neath the light of the sun.

They gather, this wonderful army,
In field, and in grove, and in street;
Their voices are music to charm me,
So ringing and eager and sweet.
Their cheeks are as red as a cherry,
Their eyes are as pure as the day;
And the sound of their marching is merry,
Wherever they pass on their way.

NELLY'S DARK DAYS.

By the Author of "Lost in London."

CHAPTER I.

A STREET CORNER.

It was nearly twelve o'clock at night on the first Sunday of the New Year. The churches and chapels had all been closed for some hours; and none of the better class of shops had been open during the day. Business had been set on one side, even by those workmen and labourers who lived from hand to mouth, and scarcely knew beforehand where the day's meals were to come from. There had been, as usual, a prevailing feeling that the day was not a day for work or traffic of any kind; and what had been done had been, more or less, away from the public scrutiny. But though midnight was close at hand, the streets in the lower parts of Liverpool were neither quiet nor dark. Up higher, farther away from the long line of docks, and the troubled stream of the mighty river, there was silence in the deserted streets where the wealthier classes had their comfortable homes; but where the poor dwelt, and wherever there was a corner of a street which afforded a good situation for traffic, or wherever it was supposed there was an immense drinking neighborhood, there stood a gin palace still open, with its bright gas-lights sparkling down each dark row of dingy houses with a show of cheery welcome not easy to resist.

At one spot where four roads met, each corner house was thus brilliantly lit up; and the doors, which swung to and fro readily and noiselessly, were constantly moving, and giving a passing glimpse, but no more, of what was going on within. The streets were so light here that a pin lying on the flagged pavement was plainly seen. So were the rags of a child who stood in the full glare of the most popular of the gin-palaces, leaning against a lamp-post, with her face turned towards the often opening door. It was a small, negre face, yet pretty, with a mingled and wistful expression of anxiety and happiness. The anxiety was visible whenever the door stood ajar; when it was closed, the happiness came uppermost. The secret of her brief, new-born happiness was very simple, but very deep to the child. She clasped tenderly, but carefully, in her thin, bare arms a gaily dressed doll, whose finery contrasted strongly with her own rags. When the door remained closed for a few minutes she passed the time in timid, half-fearful caresses of her shining doll; as soon as it opened she peered, with

heedful and searching eyes, to the farthest corner of the interior.

"Nelly!" said a clear, shrill voice, which startled the child from an anxious gaze, "you here at this time! How a poor mother to-night!"

"Very bad," said the child sadly.

"And father's in there, I reckon?"

"Yes," said Nelly, "and oh! I want him to come home so, because mother says she'd go to sleep maybe if father was home."

The girl who had spoken to her—a bright, brisk-looking girl—pushed open the door a little way, and glancing in turned back with a decisive shake of her head.

"No use, Nelly," she said; "he won't come as long as he can stay. Well, I'll nurse you a bit to keep you warm; it's very bitter to-night. I don't much wonder at father drinking to-night, I don't."

All day long the wind had been blowing keenly from the north east, bringing a fine, piercing sleet with it, and at nightfall the bitter cold had increased. The girl sat down on a door step, and drew the shivering child into her lap, covering her as well as she could with her own scanty clothing.

"Father didn't use to get drunk once, did he, Bessie?" asked the child plaintively.

"Oh dear, no!" answered Bessie, in a cheery voice.

"Tell me all about that time," said Nelly, nestling closer to Bessie. It was an old story, often told, but neither the girl nor the child ever grew weary of it.

"It's ever so many years ago, before you was born," said Bessie; "and he lived in a beautiful house, with a parlour in front, and a kitchen behind, and two rooms upstairs, all full of beautiful furniture. Everybody that I knew called him Mister Rodney then; but I was nothing but a poor, ragged little girl, raggeder than you, Nelly, selling matches in the streets. And this was how I came to know him. I was hanging about the basket-women, down by the stages, running errands for 'em, and one day, almost as cold as this, my foot slipped, and down I fell into the water. Oh! it was so cold; and I seemed to be sinking down, down, down."

"And father jumped in after you and fetched you out," interrupted Nelly, eagerly.

"Ay! he did, though he knew nothing of me, and I was nothing to him, only a little dirty match-girl. And then he carried me all the way to his own house in his arms."

"He never, never carried me in his arms," cried the child, "they aren't strong enough now."

"No; but he was as strong as strong then," continued Bessie, "and he clipped me so fast I wasn't a bit afraid. That's how I'm never afraid of him now, Nelly. He's a good man, and kind, and clever, when he's himself; and I love him, and you love him; don't we?"

"Yes," said Nelly, drawing a long breath, "mother says she's going to heaven soon, where the other children are, and there'll be nobody left but me to take care of father. I don't much mind, though I'd rather go with mother. Will he go on drinking always and always?"

"If he could only see the gentleman I saw," exclaimed Bessie. "It's six years ago, and I was a big, grown girl, ready to push in anywhere, and I see a lot of boys and girls crowding into a great hall, and I pushed in with them, nobody stopping me. And then they sang a lot of songs, oh! beautiful songs, and some gentlemen spoke to 'em about drink, and how they'd grow up good, decent men and women if they'd keep from it. And I was one of the very last to come away, the place was so nice, and a gentleman came up to me, and he said, 'My girl, what is your name?' And I said, 'Bessie Dingle, sir.' And he said, 'Can you read?' And I said, 'No, sir.' And he said, 'That's a pity. Do you ever drink what will make you drunk?' And I was ashamed to say yes, so I answered him nothing. And he said, looking me full in the face with eyes as kind as kind could be, 'I wish you'd promise me never to taste it till you see me again.' And I said, 'Yes, I will promise, sir.'"

"And when did you see him again?" asked Nelly.

"Never!" she answered. "He wrote down on a bit of paper where he lived, and said any of the piece would show me where it was; and that

very night I fell sick with fever, and they took me to the workhouse, and the slip of paper got lost. Anyhow, I never could find it or the place, and I've never seen him again. He's sure to think I broke my promise, and did not care for him, he's almost sure to think that, but I never did. She raised her head and looked down the long street, where the gloom seemed to press darkly against the glare of the gas-lights; it was very cheerless beyond the light, and the girl's face grew darker for a minute or two.

"It's no wonder they drink as long as the place is open," she said; "I'd like to be inside there, where it's light and warm. I wonder why the shops are all shut, and those places open. That gentleman, he said to me, 'My girl, you've got sharp eyes of your own; you just look around and see what makes the most mischief among the people about you, and tell me when I see you again.' I know what I'd say if he stood here this minute."

"Did you ever tell father about him?" asked Nelly.

"Scores and scores of times," she answered, emphatically; "and sometimes he cries and wishes he knew him, and could make him a promise like me; and sometimes he curses and calls me an idiot. If he could only see him, Nelly!"

They sat silent for a minute or two, Bessie nursing the child as tenderly as she nursed her doll. At last the girl touched the doll with the tip of her finger, and said cheerfully,

"Why, wherever did you get this grand plaything from?"

"It's a lady doll, and it's my very own," answered Nelly, opening her rags to display it fully; "there was a Christmas tree at our school, and this was the very best thing there, and teacher gave it me because she said I was the best child. Isn't it a beauty, Bessie?"

"It's wonderful!" said Bessie, in a voice of admiration.

"I take such care of it," continued Nelly, eagerly, "only I'm afraid of nursing it when there are children about, for fear they should snatch it from me, you know."

As the child spoke, the clocks in the town struck twelve, and a trail of lingerers crept reluctantly out of each brilliant gin palace. Bessie kept Nelly back from springing forward to meet her father, and then seeing him take his way homewards, she followed at a little distance, clasping the child's hand warmly in her own.

(To be continued.)

TINY TED.

TEDDY, a boy about eight years old, was taken to the Children's Hospital, Toronto, in an advanced stage of consumption, and his naked state showed how neglected the boy had been. The doctors fought against hope, and every care was bestowed upon the little sufferer. He was an intelligent but restless child and often sat up in bed to ease his sufferings. The melancholy expression of his large, lustrous black eyes touched the hearts of the nurses, and he became a great favourite. Some times the night nurse would take him in her arms, and sitting by the fireside would converse with the dying child. On one of these occasions he said to her, "I ken I'll no' get better, but I'm no' feerd tae dee." It was not permitted that he should die amongst his kind friends. His mother, a dissolute creature, appeared in a drunken state at the hospital, provided with a piece of old blanket and a bit of carpet and demanded her child. She was told that if taken out he would die in a few days, and her demand was refused. In a few days she returned, with the same rags, but now accompanied by her husband. The nurse dressed Teddy in some old clothes and they took him away. One redeeming point in the character of this dissolute couple was their affection for their child, and he was pleased to "gang home" with them. The nurse sought it out—a little room without an article of furniture, and on the floor, in a corner, covered by a few filthy rags, on a bed of straw and shavings, lay the poor dying Teddy. In six days after his removal from the hospital he ceased from troubling and was at rest.