

BOYS AND GIRLS

The Children's Holiday.

(Marianne Farningham, in the 'Christian World'.)

They could not sleep for joy;
And the early daybreak came
To the sultry city homes
As if to call the name
Of each little one, who, singing,
Saw a glad new life beginning.

'We are going to watch the bees
And toss the new-mown hay,
Sleep underneath the trees
And see the lambs at play.'
So sang they in their gladness,
Who oft had known much sadness.

And swiftly borne away
To a fair new land of green
Were the little ones that day.
And the skies had never seen
More pale and wistful faces
Look upwards from their places.

If those who bore the cost
Had seen the children then!
Wonder, delight and awe
Transformed their faces when
God's world, so green and golden,
Was by their eyes beholden!

The multitudes of flowers
Were ready to their hands;
'And is this garden ours?'
'Twas hard to understand
That none would come to bid them stay
Their harvesting through that glad day!

Their joy was like a prayer,
Asking of God to bless
The givers, all unknown,
Of so much happiness!
And none can say how much of praise
Comes from the children's holidays.

'Meg.'

In the 'Examiner' was once told a story of the influence of a well-known hymn upon a hardened woman whom it took back to the days of her better youth, and also upon a child who never until her dying day had heard of Christ. The story begins with the child.

She could neither read nor write, and answered only to the name of 'Meg.' She was slight and small because she had been sometimes abused, and always poorly fed. Her face was very freckled, for a hat was not numbered among her possessions. Her hair was very red and very tousled; it was not at all pretty, for no one had ever cared for it, least of all its owner herself. Sometimes, perhaps, when she was very hungry, she would take an apple from the stall of the poor blind woman on the corner and would not pay for it. She could not have paid for it if she wished to, for she never had any money.

But there was one thing Meg could do, and that right well. She could sing; not the colorless repetition of some vocalists, but, when she forgot the words, she could warble like the birds, with her head saucily turned, and her great gray eyes laughing with joy at the sound. To hear a song once was enough for her; she never forgot the melody. The words might sometimes escape her memory, but she rapidly improvised others, and sang on gayly.

When Meg was about twelve years old a mission station was opened near the row where she stayed most of the time; and one day, as

she was passing, she heard floating through the open doorway the words:

'There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins:
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.'

What it meant Meg did not know. But the old, peaceful air somehow pleased her fancy, and she sang it over and over again, as she went her way, in tones clear and pure and sweet. Passers-by turned and looked at her, for Meg was so very ragged and dirty that it seemed impossible such melody could issue from her lips; but unconscious of the incongruity, she carolled blithely on as she trudged along—whither she knew not.

Her wandering attention was soon attracted by a street fight between two women, and, pausing, she watched them, while the song rang out above their discordant cries. Having edged her way to the centre of the crowd, still singing as she went, the conflict suddenly ceased, and one of the women, whose face was coarse and bleared from the effects of a constant use of liquor, came toward her, and with tense eyes listened wistfully. At the end of the lines, only part of which Meg could remember, the woman said, pleadingly:

'Go on, sissy. My poor old mother, back in New England, used ter sing me that. Go on, sissy.'

And Meg, thoughtless of anything but to please, obligingly warbled the message. The woman's hard face softened, as memories of a pure home were revived by the song; and then, covering her face, she sank on the ground and wept sobbingly. Again and again Meg sang the old, old story, and then the woman asked tremulously:

'Where did you hear it, sis? If I'm not too bad, I'll go. For if ever there was a sinner, I'm that one. God have pity on me!'

'This way. I'll show you. Come along,' returned Meg, and taking her hand, led her toward the room where the door was always open for the rest and help of the sin-sick souls of the people who entered.

With great wondering eyes, Meg watched the delicate-faced, white-haired woman who approached them, and in low tones spoke to them. What was said to the still sobbing woman was lost on Meg, except the one phrase:

'You know the dear Lord Jesus gave his life for you, and this little girl here.'

Meg pondered on what she had heard, and vaguely wondered who 'Jesus' was, and how he had died. She was very sure she had never seen him, and also that no one would ever die for her. She knew what death, in all its appalling dreadfulness was, and could not understand why anybody would willingly seek such an end.

Soon she silently slipped away, still thinking on what she had heard, and utterly unconscious of herself and surroundings. Crossing the street in front of the room, toward the Row, with lowered eyes, and humming to herself her song, she heeded not the passing teams, and before she was half-way across she was knocked down and run over by a heavy drag. A man who was passing, seeing the accident, hurried toward her and tenderly lifted and carried her back to the cool, pleasant room. There willing hands waited on her, for they saw she was wounded to the death.

Opening her eyes in a few moments, Meg said, softly:

'She said, "Jesus" died for me.' Then in a pitifully weak voice, she tried to sing:

'There is a fountain filled with blood,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.'

But the sweet, low voice hardly carried to the opposite side of the room. Pausing a moment to rest, she added: 'She said she was a "sinner." What's that?'

The childish brain was very clear and utterly unconscious of the pain, as is sometimes the case in a fatal injury, when the nerves are paralyzed.

With a new, happy look, the woman, standing patiently near, kneeled beside the crushed form as it lay stretched on a bench, and whispered softly:

'Yes, little one. I was a sinner, but this Jesus took all my sins away. He can take yours, too, if you just say: "Jesus, I want you to come and stay in my heart."'

'And the "fountain"—will I be—"plunged"—in—it?' feebly and slowly questioned the little child.

'Yes, dear. Jesus will cleanse you, and make you to live with him.'

'Me?' incredulously.

'Yes, and he will love and care for you always.'

'For me?'

'Yes.'

'And I won't never be tired nor hungry nor lonely any more?'

'No.'

'Then I'll say it,' and the voice was very low and faint. 'Jesus, I want—what's—the—rest?'

'Say what you most want, dear.'

'Jesus, I most want to be—clean inside—and happy—like this lady looks. She says you ken do it. Here I am. And—Jesus—I—want—you—to—come—for—Meg. Meg—is—so—tired—now—you—know—Jesus—'

A little quiver of the slight form, a happy smile settling over the young lips, and the watchers knew she was at peace, and that Jesus had indeed 'come for Meg.'

And what of the woman? She still lives, born anew by the power of the Holy Spirit, and is devoting her life to work for the children of the slums in our great city, and to them she often tells the short story of Meg, who brought a soul to the blessed Christ, and then herself learned of and received him so beautifully. Meg's life on earth is ended, but the record of her simple and responsive faith still lives, and proves that 'of such is the kingdom of heaven.'

The Engineer's Story.

We were sitting in the yard's master's office at Waldron, waiting for the fast freight to come in. Our conversation had drifted around to the subject of wrecks that we had been in, and our engineer, Harry Belden, said, 'Boy, let me tell you of the wreck I had on the old T. P. and N.':

I was running freight on the mountain division, and I was called one stormy morning in December to take a train of empties out. Somehow, I felt down-hearted that morning, and I asked the caller to get another man for the trip, but he said that I was the only available man, so I had to go. When I went down to the round house, I found that my regular fireman had reported sick and an extra, named Murphy, was to go over the mountain with us.