

LAJLA AND THE OLD BEGGAR.

HOW LAJLA FOUND THE CHRIST CHILD.

Away in the far North-country, A great many years ago There came, we are told, To a valley old A wonderful fall of snow.

It was just at the Christmas season, When the earth is always the best, When the pillars and walls In the great high halls With evergreen fair were dressed

And the priests, in the cold gray churches, Shook their heads, as they peered outside, Saying: 'Few can come To the Christ-child's home For the worship of Christmas-tide.

Far up in the hills lived Lajla, A boy with golden hair, Who tended the deer When far and near The winter ruled in the air.

And when Lajla looked from his window, On the morn of the day He should come, Hosaid: 'I will seek

The Christ-child meek In his church, where He makes his home. 'The drifts have come, and my snowshoe

Will carry me swift through the cold;
And though I have not What the Wise Men brought, I will take my two pieces of gold.

And so, when the sun was setting, And his work was faithfully done. Down the frozen hill, Where the streams were still. Went little Lajla, alone.

Then the dark shut down, like a window, And a star gave a smile of light; But the brave boy said:

'I am not afraid-I shall find the Christ-child to-night.

And he thought of the beautiful churches Where the lights and the singers were fair, And cried, as he gazed

Where the still world praised: 'It is Christmas everywhere !

And lo! a half-buried cottage, Which the snowdrifts clasped around-And a voice, half-wild: 'For the love of the Child Bring the help which thyself hath found!"

And there came no rest to Lajla, Until to the humble door Through the blinding snow, With a heart aglow, He had made a path for the poor.

And he gave, ere again he was speeding Toward the place where he longed to be One piece of gold. As he timidly told Of the Lord whom he went to see,

'And the gold was for the Christ-child,' He said with a smile half bright; But I think He would know

That it best may go Where they have no Christmas to-night.

On, on through the darkening silence He passed, till he almost caught In the far-away, Where all things delay,

A glimpse of the church he sought.

But a beggar old by the wayside . Stretched out a trembling arm. And asked for aid, In the Name (he said) Of Him who could do no harm.

And Lajla looked upon him, And sadly shook his head. 'I wish that I know What He bids me do.' H e softly, tenderly said.

'Yet many will bring Him offerings, And none may come to thee. Thou shalt have it all ! And it may befall

That the Child may bless it for me. The good priest stood near the manger, In that church that was old and gray,

And his eyes grew dim. As the sacred hymn Seemed sounding far away.

Then suddenly came before him A how with hair of gold. Whose ice-bound fur Chilled each worshipper Withits tale of the bitter cold.

'Good priest,' he said, 'the Christ-child! Have I come at last too late? Is the manger bare? Has he gone from there To His place by the starry gate?

'I have tried so hard to find Him, But long was the journey through;

And some whom the snow Held fast, like a foc, Kept me longer than I knew.

'And I brought, good priest, an offering, But a beggar old, and they With the snowbound door,

Were very poor, And I gave the gold away.

As reverently he said:

'Will the Child receive me giftless?' The priest bent low his head. And turned his face, To the manger place,

'My son, the heavenly Christ-child May not be seen, but known,-Where loving deed Supplieth need, Or tender act is done.

'He is not here, but risen; He passed thee on thy way :-Nay, at hisside Thou wert his guide In coming here to-day,

'Beside thy youthful footsteps Are his, the road along: And in thy place Was seen his face, As in the heavenly throng.

'Where love hath left thine offering, He met and walked with thee; Where children do

His bidding true.

The Christ-child loves to be!" R. MACDONALD ALDEN.

VILLAGE IMPROVEMENT IN FLORIDA.

In Green Cove Springs, a beautiful watering place in Florida, the ladies have formed a village improvement association, with a brigade called the Star Branch, composed of about forty boys and girls, whose motto is: 'Cleanliness is next to godliness.' The pledge which they repeat at the opening of every meeting is as fol-

lows:
'I promise not to litter the streets with papers, fruit skins, or anything that will make the place untidy; neither will I mutilate or deface fences, kill birds, or rob their nests, and I will also use my influence to prevent others from doing so.

They have a regular organization, officered from their own members. The weekly meetings are conducted under parliamentary rules and enlivened by singing, recitations, readings and calisthenic exercises. The benefit of such training to the children cannot be over estimated, and the work they do and save by keeping their pledge is no small factor in the problem: 'How shall we keep our city clean and healthy?' At the weekly meeting each one of the children reports, orally, what he or she has picked up and deposited in the barrels.

A philanthropic gentleman, who has taken a deep interest in beautifying the town, has placed boxes, neatly painted, with covers, at the corners of the streets, with appropriate mottoes on them. Into these everything that would deface the village is promptly consigned. The association hires a man with a wheelbarrow to patrol the streets, and the ladies in turn see that he does his duty. Fortunately all the inhabitants are pleased with the experiment and do their uttermost to preserve the order and cleanliness of their streets. Captain E. C. Garner, of Jacksonville, writes: 'There are quite a number of asso ciations now in existence in this State, all growing out of the one at Green Cove. The work they have done is valuable, is practical, and it is the only incorporation that I know of that is entirely in charge of women. -E. C. Stanton, in Independent.

WHAT PRAYER DOES.

Prayer does not directly take away a Prayer does not directly take away a trial of its pain any more than a sense of duty directly takes away the danger of infection; but it preserves the strength of does not pass into temptation to sin. A sorrow comes upon you. Omit prayer, and you fall out of God's testing into the devil's temptation; you get angry, hard of heart, reckless. But meet the dreadful hour with prayer, cast your care on God, claim Him as your father, though He seems cruel-and the paralyzing, embittering effects of pain and sorrow pass away, a stream of sanctifying and softening thought pours into the soul, and that which might

have wrought your fall but works in you the peaceable fruits of righteousness. You pass from bitterness into the courage of endurance, and from endurance into battle, and from battle into victory, till at last the trial dignifies and blesses your life. The answer to prayer is cumulative. Not till life is over is the whole answer given, the whole strength it has brought understood. Stopford Brooke.

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