

New Dominion Monthly.

DECEMBER, 1876.

BROWNIE—A CHRISTMAS STORY.

BY FESTINALENTE, AUTHOR OF "HIC JACET," "THE STORY OF RUTH,"
"THE HOLY GRAIL," ETC.

The world had always used the child so hardly. It gave to her the shady, wintry side of everything; started her in life with a drunken father and a feeble-minded, sickly mother; brought her up in abject poverty; scantily clothed and fed her. Brownie often knew what it was to be very cold and very hungry. After a time such incidents appeared to be mere trifles in her estimation. The world helped her to this happy frame of mind, by its persistent heaping of burdens upon her slight back. Heavily weighted though she was, she contrived at last to grow up, as if by great effort attaining to medium height. Upon the world she turned a face as bright as a sunbeam, an eager little face, which even at its brightest, never lost that expression to be seen only on the faces of those who have been hungering all their lives. Not only for food, ah! no! Brownie had an insatiable love of knowledge, and was never content with herself. She had many odd friends, some of them foreigners, who were gratified with the intense interest Brownie showed in trying to learn to speak to them in their own languages. Perhaps she owed much

of her high standard of perfection to the influence of a poor cripple who kept a secondhand bookstall, and who, living as he did in one of the most miserable of London streets, yet made for himself a pure and beautiful world amongst his books. He too knew well what it meant to be hungry and very cold. What of that? Are there not thousands who suffer from want,—are there not thousands to whom the thought of Christmas brings only a shuddering dread of bitter cold and of wintry winds? Glad tidings! Absurd in the extreme to connect Christmas with such words! To the poor it brings deeper suffering; and only the few can "learn to suffer and be strong."

Wintry skies, driving sleet and rain, this was the outside world. In her humble home Brownie had passed through the "Valley of the Shadow of Death" as far as mortal can go, and yet remain mortal. Her father died, and her mother, trembling with dread that for this journey she must prepare to bear her own burden, passed away one night to that unknown bourne, without a farewell word to Brownie. Brownie was left alone. The hard-working city missionary found