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HENRY, THE MATCH-SELLER.



LITTLE boy, whom we will call Henry, had been for some time a scholar in the ragged school. He had a sad, wretched home.

His parents were drunkards; almost all the money they could obtain was spent upon themselves in the gin-shop; and their poor children had scarcely even rags to cover them, and often were obliged to pass a whole day without food.

It is terrible to think how much those children must have suffered, and how cruelly they had been driven to sly pilfering, or daring thievery, by the wicked neglect of their besotted father and mother. When Henry was admitted into the school, one of his brothers had been transported as a thief, and another, younger than himself, was in prison for having stolen to keep himself from starvation.

It was a pleasure to see little Henry enter the school every day with a cheerful step, and clean face and hands. It was a good

trait of his character that he cared at all about cleanliness; for we may be sure he did not learn it of a mother who cared for little else besides her own wicked indulgence, and who was far more fond of the gin-shop than of her own room. Indeed, it was not without some trouble that Henry could keep himself clean; for he had neither soap, towel, nor bowl to use. But where there is a will, there is generally a way; and after rising from his bed of shavings, the boy used to take an old rag into the back yard of the house, and well wash himself with water, from a cask which stood in the corner. After all, however, poor Henry was a pitiable object. His clothes were deplorably old and ragged, and he had neither shoes nor stockings to his feet.

Henry's cheerfulness and perseverance gained the good-will of his teachers, who gave him, as a reward for his conduct, a pair of shoes and stockings—the first he ever remembered to have had. It was very cold weather; the snow lay thick on the ground; and the poor boy was overjoyed with the present. The next day, however, he came to school barefoot, as usual, carrying the shoes and stockings in his hand.