

## MISS BROWN'S LITTLE GIRLS.

**T**HE world looked pretty dark that morning to one small woman as she passed down the street dressed in brown, and worn in mind and body. The brown dress of cheap material, the brown hat rather heavy for summer wear, and the brown ribbon so evidently "done over," were all in keeping. The face was faded with care and worn with toil; nothing could any longer keep the roses in the pinched cheeks.

Only a plain little woman in brown, such as one meets any day on the streets of our crowded cities with scarcely a passing glance, and yet what human face cannot boast some attraction to a kindly human heart, if only it be not degraded by crime or self-imposed ignorance: and Miss Brown was not of these, for if you had paused to speak to her she would have looked up with clear, bright eyes, and a smile that was sweet and winning, though it vanished into lines of patience, and left behind an impression of hopeless submission to inevitable drudgery.

"Life does seem hardly worth living," she was saying to herself that summer day, "when its sole aim is to keep soul and body together. Food to eat and clothes to wear, and for that I must toil and strive and plan. What was I born for, I wonder, and why need I live any longer?"

"Miss Brown, mamma wants to see you," chirped a sweet child voice, its owner running down to the gate to stop her. "She says, 'Won't you come in a moment?'"

It was one of the houses where Miss Brown sewed for a living, spring and fall. So she went in as requested, and made an engagement for the next day. This relieved her anxiety for the bread and meat of several weeks to come, though it meant hard work and tired evenings, with sometimes aching back and head.

Once Miss Brown had had a home with father, mother, and sisters. Even when they were all gone she was still mistress of the little farm, and though alone, had managed very well with the old trusted servants, born and raised on the place; but somehow, being only a woman, it had all slipped through her fingers into the hands of the lawyers and a distant relative. Then she had come to the city to try to make a living, and the hard struggle of mere existence had left small leisure for anything besides. Her religion went with all the rest. Not once had she entered a city church. If her conscience had aught to say about it, she answered its upbraidings with the well-worn excuse of "nothing to wear," and easily persuaded herself that this and her dread of going into a strange church fully justified her.

"I wish you would go with me just this once," said Mrs. Sedden, when Wednesday night came.

The same invitation had often been given before, for Mrs. Sedden was not too proud and selfish to show sympathy and Christian interest in those in her employ. She was so unusually urgent this time that Miss Brown could not very well refuse; so she went.

"Man proposes, God disposes," Mrs. Sedden was filled with uneasy regret when she found a stranger in the pulpit, still more when it proved to be a missionary talk.

She had so hoped for a simple earnest appeal to lead this poor soul to Christ. She did not know it was God's own message for the lonely, loveless heart.

"Why go? why send your money to heathen lands? do you ask? Ah, I carry in my pocket a little piece of paper which answers the question so well that whenever I look at it I wish I were a thousand men, every one ready to go."

He held up in sight of all a diagram giving the proportion of heathen and nominal Christians in the world.

"So many millions in the blackness of paganism, and only one tiny white spot—one million as yet rescued from its gloom.

His face was full of the earnestness of absolute sincerity and thorough consecration. Some who listened may have found nothing extraordinary in him or in what he said, but Miss Brown, who had gone without any expectation of being interested, was not only lifted out of her indifference, but carried along by his enthusiasm, and a little seed was dropped into her heart. At first it was only a question: "Is there anything I can do to help to increase that little white square of human souls?" The seedling was near being blown away immediately by a counter-question of doubt and unbelief: "Why think of it when I can scarcely manage to keep soul and body together?"

Nevertheless it had sunk too deep already to be lightly disposed of, and all the way home it was stirring within her like some living thing taking root. As she moved about her empty silent room queer little Chinese, Hindu and African faces peered at her from the blank walls, pleading to be loved and helped.

Forgetful of the day's work and weariness, Miss Brown sat out a long thoughtful hour before her meagre fire. An unwonted brightness shown out through her face at last, and diffused itself through every movement as she roused herself to prepare for bed, murmuring, "It will be something to live for, anyhow;" and then for the first time for a long while she was not too tired to say her prayers, just one simple petition sent up with childlike faith:—

"Father, I am no better than a heathen