

## The Best Plea for the Maine Law.

BY MRS. H. L. BOSTWICK,

Lato one evening, as I laid me  
In the fire shade on the floor,  
Such a trick my fancy played me,  
As it never played before:  
For I thought me at Columbus,  
Standing by the House of State,  
Where a host in countless numbers  
Seemed for audience to wait.

Women—children—and no other!  
Not a father nor a son;  
Not a husband nor a brother,—  
Women—children—every one,—  
Gaunt and haggard with starvation,  
Thronged the State House's ample floor;  
And I deemed such deputation  
Never waited there before.

There were babies, in beauty tender—  
Maidens blighted in their bloom—  
Nursing mothers, wan and slender—  
Matrons, bending toward the tomb.  
Fast they entered—never speaking;  
And I smiled,—how could I know  
'Twas the Maine Law they were seeking,  
In their poverty and woe?

Then one spoke—"Oh, rulers! hearken!  
Nor in anger turn away,  
That your pleasant halls we darken  
With our wretchedness to-day!  
Once for us were hearth-fires burning—  
Where, when daily toil was done,  
To a plenteous board returning,  
Came fond husband, sire and son;

"But the tempter came, and lured them  
To the haunts of evil men—  
Pressed the wine cup and assured them  
"Only once"—and yet again—  
Till at last each cheerful dwelling  
Grew a bare and roofless shed;  
But the poison still was selling!"  
And our children cried for bread!"

"Oft we wept, implored, upbraided—  
Vainer than the idlest song!  
For the tempter still persuaded,  
And the appetite was strong.  
Now in friendless desolation  
Plead we for these fallen men,—  
Only bar the foul temptation,  
They may be restored again."

Then a child, with sunken features,  
And long fingers, slim and pale,  
Toward the wand'ring Legislators  
Turning, followed up the tale.

"We are vagrants—Oh, our rulers!  
All your little ones, we know,  
Sit in school rooms and in churches,  
But we have no clothes to go!"

"Only give us back our fathers,  
From the sinks wherein they lie,  
So, from workshop, field and forum,  
We may bless you till we die."  
Then I felt my heart was bleeding,  
And my eyes would overflow  
For the little children pleading,  
In their poverty and woe.

But I woke—and quick upstarting,  
Rubbed my eyelids with my hand—  
Saw the hickory lagged and arting,  
And each little severed brand.  
In an ashen shroud was lying,  
And the taper had burned low;  
Yet I heard these pleaders crying  
For the Maine Law in their woe.

—Ohio Star.

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