

The Little Weaver.

A JUNIOR LEAGUE POEM.

ONCE in an eastern palace wide
A little child sat weaving;
So patiently her task she plied,
The men and women at her side
Flocked round her, almost grieving.

"How is it, little one," they said,
"You work so well and cheerily?
You never seem to break your thread,
Or snarl, or tangle it, instead
Of working smooth and clearly.

"Our weaving gets so worn and soiled,
Our silk so frayed and broken,
For all we've fretted, wept, and toiled,
We know the lovely pattern's spoiled;"
They sighed as words were spoken.

The little child looked in their eyes,
So full of care and trouble;
And pity chased the sweet surprise
That filled her own, as sometimes flies
The rainbow in the bubble.

"I only go and tell the King,"
She said abashed and meekly;
"You know, he said in 'everything,'"
"Why so do we!" they cried; "we bring
Him all our troubles weekly!"

She turned her little head aside;
A moment let them wrangle;
"Ah, but," she softly then replied,
"I go and get the knot untied
At the first little tangle!"

Oh! little children—weavers all!
Our broidery we spangle
With many a tear that need not fall,
If on our King we would but call
At the first little tangle!

—Congregationalist.

In Prison and Out.

By the Author of "The Man Trap."

CHAPTER VIII.—THE PRISON-CROP ON A YOUNG HEAD.

IN three calendar months after David Fell was committed to jail for begging, he was released, and sent out again to the old life. He had been regularly supplied with food, kept from the cold of the wintry days and nights, and properly exercised with careful regard to his health. He had never had three months of so much physical comfort before; and he had grown a good deal both in size and strength. Moreover he had been diligently taught in school, and could read and write very much better, and with more ease, than when he had written his short letter to his mother. He had learned cobbling, and could mend a pair of boots quite creditably. The governor of the jail enumerated these advantages to him as he gave him a few words of parting counsel.

"Now, my lad," he continued, "don't let me see you here again, or hear of you being in trouble elsewhere. This is the second time you've been in jail!"

"Please, sir," interrupted David, with energy, "I never was in jail before. It was another boy, not me. I've done nothin' worse than beggin'."

"Don't go away with a lie on your tongue," said the governor sternly. "It's a sad thing to break the laws of your country; but it's worse to break God's laws. 'Thou shalt not steal! thou shalt not lie!' are his laws. 'Thou shalt not beg,' is your country's law. Keep them in mind, and you'll not get into trouble again."

David heard the prison-gate close behind him, leaving him free again in the open streets, with an odd feeling of strangeness and timidity mingled with his delight. The other prisoners released at the same time quickly vanished out of sight, as if they did not care to be seen under the jail-walls. But David lingered, half bewildered and half fascinated, gazing up at the strong, grim edifice, with its massive doors and small, closely barred windows. It had been his home for three months. He was no longer a stranger to it or its ways. If he should ever come there again, he could fall at once into its customs and rules, and would need very little, if any, instruction from its warders. Just now it seemed more familiar and less formidable to him than the narrow, dirty, squalid street where his former neighbours lived, and his mother, and little Bess.

He had some miles to go, and it was almost dusk when he reached his own neighbourhood. But, though he was stronger and better fitted for labour than when he left it three months

ago, he did not turn boldly into the street, whistling some gay tune as he marched along, and calling aloud to this neighbour and that, ready for all sorts of boyish pranks, and equally ready to render little acts of help and kindness to any one who needed them. He waited till night fell, and then went slinking down close to the walls, and keeping as much in the shadow as possible. Blackett's door was open, and he dare not face Blackett. He had always held up his head high above Blackett's sons, except Roger; and he knew both father and sons hated him for it. Did the neighbours know that he had been in prison? If they did not, his closely cropped head, with the dark hair growing like short fur all over it, would betray him at once.

He stood in a dark corner over against the house, watching its inmates pass to and fro. There was old Euclid going in with his empty basket: it was quite empty; so he must have had a good day. And presently he saw the glimmer of a candle in the garret-window. What would Victoria say when she saw him and his prison-crop for the first time? He was almost as much afraid of her and Euclid as he was of Blackett. Could he make them believe that he had only been in jail for begging? Surely they would not be too hard on him for that! Yet he felt the old glow of shame again at the thought of going out to beg.

His mother would believe it, and know it to be true. He was longing for the sight of her; but he dare not go past Blackett's open door. The tears smarted under his eyelids as he thought of how soon now he was going to see her. Then a dark dread crossed his mind. He had been away for three months; and suppose his mother should be dead! Oh! if that could be! Dead and buried, and he never to see her again!

At length Blackett came out, and staggered up the street towards the enticing spirit-vaults at the corner. Now was the moment. He crept cautiously to the entrance, and then darted through the lighted passage almost at a bound. In an instant his hand was on the latch; and, flinging open his mother's door, he rushed in, panting, and closed it after him, as if fearful of being pursued. He could hardly see for a moment, though there was a candle in the room. But, when he looked round, there was his mother lying on the bare sacking of her miserable bed, her face pale as death, and her sunken eyes, with a famished, ravenous expression in them, fastened eagerly on him. They told a tale of terrible suffering. It seemed to David as if he had almost forgotten his mother's face while he had been in jail, and that now he saw it afresh, with all the story of her pain and anguish printed upon it. He stood motionless, staring at her; and she lifted herself up on the bed, and held out her arms to him.

"O Davy, my boy! Davy!" she cried, "come to me! come quickly!"

With a deep groan, such as is rarely wrung from the lips of a man, the boy flung himself into his mother's arms; and the mother bore the shock of agony it caused her without a cry.

This was her son, her first-born. He was the baby who had first lain in her bosom, now so tortured with ceaseless pain, and who had filled her whole heart with love and joy. She could recollect how his father had looked down upon them both with mingled pride and shyness. She almost forgot her pain in the rapture of fondling him once again. Her shrivelled, wasted hand, whose fingers were drawn up with long years of toil, stroked his poor head, with its prison-crop of hair, where the baby's flaxen curls had grown; and her lips were pressed again and again to his face. She could not let him go.

"I was doin' nothin' but beggin' for you, mother," he sobbed out at last.

"I know, Davy; I know," she said, sinking back exhausted, but still holding fast his hand, and devouring him with her eyes. "It couldn't be no sin, God in heaven knows. You'll make a good man yet, in spite of all, like your father, Davy. You're as like him as like can be!"

She lay looking at him with a smile on her face. So much care had been taken of him in the jail, that he looked more like a man, or at least gave more promise of growing into a strong, capable man like his father, than he had ever done whilst he starved on scanty fare at home. His face, too, had lost its boyish carelessness, and wore an air of thought, almost of gloom, such as sat on most men's faces.

"Maybe I ought to ha' gone into the house," she said, as her eyes caught sight of David's short, dark hair. "It's bad for folks to say you ever went a-beggin', and was took up for it. But I never knew nobody go into the house as I should like to be with, or have Bess be with. Most of the folks as have gone out of our street 'ud shame the bad place itself; and it 'ud be worse than dyin' to live among 'em all day, and all night too. I always said, and I promised father when he

was dyin', I swore a oath to him, as long as I could stand at a tub, I'd never mix myself up with such a lot, or let his boy and girl go among 'em. But maybe I ought to ha' given in, instead of lettin' you go a-beggin'," she added, with a profound sigh.

"No, no, mother; don't you fret about me," answered David. "Why! I've learnt a trade in—there," he said, avoiding the name "jail." "And I know how to work now, and I'll keep you and Bess. Sometimes I used to think, s'pose they'd only taught me outside, without goin' inside that place! I'd have learnt it with more heart, and never got the bad name as folks will give me now. I can mend boots and shoes prime now; and I can read and write almost like a scholar. But I shall never get over being in there!"

"Oh, you will, you will, my lad!" cried his mother faintly and sadly.

"No, I can't never forget it," he said, with a look of shame and sorrow on his face. "Father's name was always good, and mine never can be. Mother, if they'd only tried to find out if I spoke true! But they didn't take no time or trouble. I didn't know where I was afore the magistrate said, 'Three months!' And they bundled me away as if I weren't worth taking trouble about. I'm a jail-bird now."

"No, no!" sobbed his mother. "That's what the neighbours 'll call me," he went on. "And Blackett 'll crow over me. They'll never believe I was only beggin'. I feel as if I couldn't hold my head up to face them or Bess. Where's Bess, mother?"

But, as he spoke, Bess came in, and, with a cry of delight, ran to him, and flung her arms round his neck. He could not rid himself of those clinging arms; and he burst into a passion of weeping as Bess kissed him again and again.

"They were wicked, cruel people as sent you to jail, Davy," she repeated over and over again,—"cruel and wicked! cruel and wicked!"

It was some minutes before they could speak to one another in any other words, or before Bess remembered on what errand she had been absent when David came home.

"They can't let us have the ring this evening, mother," she said after a while. "Mr. Quirk's away till this time to-morrow; and Mrs. Quirk says as she daren't part with any o' the rings without him."

"What ring?" asked David. "Mother's ring," answered Bess. "We were forced to part with it, Davy," said his mother in a pleading tone, as if to justify herself to him. "I'd clemmed myself till I could bear it no longer, and everything else was gone. It was the last time I set foot out o' doors. I carried it myself to Mr. Quirk's, and swore as I'd redeem it. And Bess there has earned money to redeem it; and we thought we'd get it back to-night. But you're come back instead, my lad; and I can bear to go without the ring."

His mother's wedding-ring had been all his life to him a sacred thing,—the only sacred thing he knew of. It was blended with all his earliest childish thoughts of his dead father, whom he had never known, but of whom his mother talked so often of an evening when work was done, and she wore the ring, and when the glimmer of it in the dim firelight made it visible, though almost all else was in darkness. All the inherent superstition and reverence for sacred symbols common to our nature centred for David in his mother's wedding-ring. He knew what straits of gnawing hunger Bess and his mother must have undergone before they would part with it; and his bitterness and heaviness of heart—for he had left jail in bitterness and heaviness of heart—were increased tenfold by this loss of her ring.

"We'll have it to-morrow," he said in a stern and passionate voice.

Yet they were on the whole happy that evening; it was so much to be together again. Bess had plenty to tell of her daily tramps through the streets, and David talked of his plans for the future; whilst their mother listened to them, thankful beyond all words to have her boy in her sight once more. Even during the night, when she heard him turning uneasily to and fro on the scanty heap of straw they had managed to get for him to lie on—so hard to him after his comfortable hammock and warm rug in the jail—her heart felt lighter than it had done for many months. Her poverty continued, her sore pain was not less agonizing; but David was at home again, and life was once more dear to her.

(To be continued.)

A MAN WHO CANNOT BE FOOLED.

A TEXAS farmer entered the office of a Dallas merchant, and asked him if he would like to buy some fresh butter which he had brought to town in his waggon. "I really don't know whether my wife needs any butter just now, but I'll find out," re-

plied the merchant; and, stepping to the telephone, he called up his wife, and had some conversation on the subject. Then he turned to the countryman, who had watched the proceedings, and whose face was a study for an artist. "No," said the merchant, "my wife tells me that she has butter enough on hand to last her some time." "That's all right, Cap. You don't need to buy any butter if you don't want to. All you have got to do is to say so; but you needn't play me for a fool by trying to make me believe you've got your wife locked up in that little box. I reckon I have some sense left, if I am from the country. You can't fool me."

CHURCH SICKNESS; A TRUE STORY.

WHEN Minnie and Annie were younger, perhaps eight years old, they began to weary of church-going. The sermon was so long, and they used to get so tired.

They were cousins; Annie was visiting at Minnie's home. And they loved each other dearly.

One Saturday, Minnie determined to get out of church. So, in the middle of the sermon, Sunday, she found that she had a headache, and telling her aunt that she was sick, she went home. There she lay around and enjoyed herself till dinner time.

During the week, Annie and Minnie agreed that both of them would spend the next Sunday morning at home. So during the Bible reading at church, Minnie said she was sick, and went home. And soon after the text was announced, Annie said she was sick, and she, too, went home. And when the family returned after service, there were the two children, both in bed.

There was a favourite dessert for dinner that day—fruit cake; and after the others had taken off their cloaks, these two girls listened for the dinner bell. A long time they waited and listened. Then they heard the clatter of plates, as if the table was being cleared. Up they jumped, and started down to the dining-room.

But on the staircase there was auntie with a plate of cold bread and two glasses of milk. "Oh, auntie, we don't want that; we want dinner and some of the fruit cake."

"Dinner! fruit cake! for girls who were so sick they couldn't stay through church? Oh, no. You're far too sick to eat such things. You couldn't venture to eat anything but bread and milk."

"Oh, auntie, please," cried both at once.

"No, dears, it wouldn't be well to feed sick children with fruit cake; nothing but bread and milk till you get well again."

Back to their room they went, and tried to eat bread and milk. But it did not taste good, for they were thinking all the time of the fruit cake.

The next Sunday they did not get sick in church.—*Christian Observer.*

"DO THAT IF YOU DARE."

THEY tell the story of a competition between two sailors, a Frenchman and an Irishman. The Irishman was a sailor on an English vessel, and right alongside was moored the French vessel, and there was some feeling among the men as to who should perform the most daring feat. Finally one day a French sailor went high up aloft and then out on a cross spar, and there, high up in the air, stood on his head, and then came down and looked across at the Irishman with an expression as much as to say, "Do that if you can." But Pat was not to be outdone. He was no such athlete as the Frenchman was, but he was going to try anything that any other man could do. He mounted aloft, went out upon the cross-piece, and stood upon his head, but immediately losing his balance fell from that terrific height towards the deck. But in his descent his hands accidentally came in contact with a rope. He held on, and being near the deck dropped gracefully, and turned with an air of triumph to the Frenchman and said, "Ye frog-aiting Frenchman, do that if you dare." We organized one Sunday-school in a place where we could not get even chairs for the children, and we got a lot of empty beer kegs for the children to sit on. Now, we say to you, "Do that if you dare."