

Little Criss's Letter to Jesus.

A POSTMAN stood with puzzled brow,
And in his hand turned o'er and o'er
A letter with address so strange
As he had never seen before.
The writing cramped, the letter small,
And by a boy's rough hand engraven,
The words ran thus; "To Jesus Christ,"
And underneath inscribed, "In heaven."

The postman paused; full well he knew
No man on earth this note could take;
And yet 'twas writ in childish faith,
And posted for the dear Lord's sake.
With careful hands he broke the seal,
And reverently the letter read;
'Twas short and very simple too,
For this was all the writer said:

"My Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ,
I've lately lost my father dear;
Mother is very, very poor,
And life to her is sad and drear.
Yet thou hast promised in thy Word
That none can ever ask in vain
For what they need of earthly store,
If only asked in Jesus' name.

"So I am writing in his name,
To ask that thou wilt kindly send
Some money down; what thou canst spare
And what is right for us to spend.
I want so much to go to school,
While father lived I always went,
But he had little, Lord, to leave,
And what was left is almost spent.

"I do not know how long 'twill be.
Ere this can reach the golden gate;
But I will try and patient be,
And for the answer gladly wait."
The tidings reached the far-off land,
Although the letter did not go,
And straight the King an agent sent
To help the little boy below.

Off to his mother he would say,
"I knew the Lord would answer make
When he had read my letter through,
Which I had sent for Jesus' sake."
Ah, happy boy! could you but teach
My heart to trust my Father's love,
And to believe where aught's denied,
'Tis only done my faith to prove."

NO ROOM FOR OLD MOTHER.

"Going north, madam?"
"No, ma'am."
"Going south, then?"
"I don't know, ma'am."
"Why, there are only two ways to go."
"I didn't know. I was never on the cars. I'm waiting for the train to go to John."
"John? There is no town called John. Where is it?"
"Oh! John's my son. He's out in Kansas on a claim."
"I am going right to Kansas myself. You intend to visit?"
"No, ma'am."
She said it with a sigh so heart-burdened, the stranger was touched.
"John sick?"
"No."
The evasive tone, the look of pain in the furrowed face, were noticed by the stylish lady as the gray head bowed upon the toil-marked hand. She wanted to hear her story—to help her.
"Excuse me—John in trouble?"
"No, no—I'm in trouble. Trouble my old heart never thought to see."
"The train does not come for some time. Here, rest your head upon my cloak."
"You are kind. If my own were so I shouldn't be in trouble to-night."
"What is your trouble? Maybe, I can help you."

"It's hard to tell it to strangers, but my old heart is too full to keep it back. When I was left a widow with the three children, I thought it was more than I could bear; but it wasn't bad as this—"

The stranger waited till she recovered her voice to go on.

"I had only the cottage and my willing hands. I toiled early and late all the years until John could help me. Then we kept the girls at school, John and me. They were married not long ago. Married rich as the world goes. John sold the cottage, sent me to the city to live with them, and he went West to begin for himself. He said we had provided for the girls, and they would provide for me now—"

Her voice choked with emotion. The stranger waited in silence.

"I went to them in the city. I went to Mary's first. She lived in a great house with servants to wait on her; a house many times larger than the little cottage—but I soon found there wasn't room enough for me—"

The tears stood in the lines on her cheeks. The ticket agent came out softly, stirred the fire, and went back. After a pause she continued:

"I went to Martha's—went with a pain in my heart I never felt before. I was willing to do anything so as not to be a burden. But that wasn't it. I found they were ashamed of my bent old body and my withered face—ashamed of my rough, wrinkled hands—made so toiling for them—"

The tears came thick and fast now. The stranger's hand rested caressingly on the gray head.

"At last they told me I must live at a boarding-house, and they'd keep me there. I couldn't say anything back. My heart was too full of pain. I wrote to John what they were going to do. He wrote right back, a long, kind letter for me to come right to him. I always had a home while he had a roof, he said. To come right there and stay as long as I lived. That his mother should never go out to strangers. So I'm going to John. He's got only his rough hands and his great warm heart—but there's room for his old mother—God bless—him—"

The stranger brushed a tear from her fair cheek and awaited the conclusion.

"Some day, when I am gone where I'll never trouble them again, Mary and Martha will think of it all. Some day, when the hands that toiled for them are folded and still; when the eyes that watched over them through many a weary night are closed forever; when the little old body, bent with the burdens it bore for them, is put away where it can never shame them—"

The agent drew his hand quickly before his eyes, and went out, as if to look for the train. The stranger's jewelled fingers stroked the gray locks, while the tears of sorrow and the tears of sympathy fell together. The weary heart was unburdened. Soothed by a touch of sympathy, the troubled soul yielded to the longing for rest, and she fell asleep. The agent went noiselessly about his duties, that he might not wake her. As the fair stranger watched she saw a smile on the care-worn face. The lips moved. She bent down to hear:

"I'm doing it for Mary and Martha. They'll take care of me, sometime."

She was dreaming of the days in the little cottage—of the fond hopes which inspired her, long before she learned, with a broken heart, that some day she would turn, homeless in the world, to go to John.

"I CAN'T" is a coward. "I'll try" is brave enough to conquer the world.

Better Things.

BETTER to smell the violet cool than sip the glowing wine;
Better to hark a hidden brook than watch a diamond shine.

Better the love of a gentle heart than beauty's favour proud;
Better the rose's living seed than roses in a crowd.

Better be fed by a mother's hand than eat alone at will;
Better to trust in God than say, "My goods my storehouse fill."

Better to be a little wise than in knowledge to abound;
Better to teach a child than toil to fill perfection's round.

Better to sit at a master's feet than thrill a listening State;
Better suspect that thou art proud than be sure that thou art great.

Better to walk the real unseen than watch the hour's event;
Better the "Well done!" at the last, than the air with shouting rent.

Better to have a quiet grief than a hurrying delight;
Better the twilight of the dawn than the noonday burning bright.

Better a death when work is done than earth's most favoured birth;
Better a child in God's great house than the king of all the earth.

NEW YORK STREET INCIDENT.

A REPORTER called to a little bootblack near the city hall to give him a shine. The little fellow came rather slowly for one of that lively guild, and planted his box down under the reporter's foot. Before he could get his brushes out another larger boy ran up, and, calmly pushing the little one aside, said, "Here, you go sit down, Jimmy."

The reporter at once became indignant at what he took to be a piece of outrageous bullying, and sharply told the newcomer to "clear out."

"Oh, that's all right, boss," was the reply; "I'm only goin' to do it fur him. You see, he's been sick in the hospital for more'n a month, and can't do much work yet; so us boys all turn in and give him a lift when we can—savy?"

"Is that so, Jimmy?" asked the reporter, turning to the smaller boy.

"Yes, sir," wearily replied the boy; and as he looked up the pallid, pinched face could be discerned even through the grime that covered it. "He does it fur me, if you'll let him."

"Certainly; go ahead." And as the bootblack plied the brush the reporter plied him with questions.

"You say all the boys help him in this way?"

"Yes, sir. When they ain't got no job themselves, and Jimmy gets one, they turns in and helps him, 'cause he ain't very strong yet, ye see."

"What percentage do you charge him on a job?"

"Hey?" queried the youngster. "I don't know what you mean."

"I mean, what part of the money do you give Jimmy, and how much do you keep out of it?"

"You bet yer life I don't keep none. I ain't no such sneak as that."

"So you give it all to him, do you?"

"Yes, I do. All the boys give up what they gets on his job. I'd like to catch any feller sneaking it on a sick boy, I would."

The shine being completed, the reporter handed the urchin a quarter, saying, "I guess you're a pretty good fellow, so you keep ten cents and give the rest to Jimmy there."

"Can't do it, sir; it's his customer. Here, Jim."

He threw him the coin and was off like a shot after a customer for himself, a veritable rough diamond. In this big city there are a good many such lads with warm and generous hearts under their ragged coats.