

Mike's Prayer.

The author of this pathetic poem is Mrs. Hubert Bland, of London, England, better known as E. Nesbit, poet and novelist. Her first volume of poems, entitled *Lays and Legends*, appeared in 1886, and contained the poem here transcribed.—*Montreal Star*.

'Twas Christmas eve in the city, the shops were all bright and gay,

With many a wreath of holly, and many a mistletoe spray;
And clustered round each window stood groups of children bright,

Gazing at tops and sweetmeats, with wonder and delight.
Two little lads were passing, hungry, and wet, and lame,
Born in a slum so wretched, living 'midst sin and shame;
Slowly they walk through the city, on down the busy street,

Then up a narrow alley, tramping with weary feet.
No one to soothe or pity, no one to care or love;
Father a drunkard—and mother, safe in yon heaven above.
Now they are reaching the attic, desolate, bare and chill,
Poor little friendless sufferers, poor little Mike and Bill.
Mike, he was only seven; Bill has just turned four,
Singing in streets for a living, begging from door to door.
Christmas had come with its presents, greetings for young and old;

Thousands next morn would be singing of angels and harps of gold.

Many a pampered favourite, with presents enough to spare,
But none who knew of the garret and the two little urchins there.

"Mike," whispered Bill, with a shiver, "who is that cove Santa Claus

That comes and brings presents at Christmas? I guess he's a rich chap, because

He never comes down to our alley, but brings 'em to folks up in town;

They say as he's got long, white whiskers and a big red crimson gown.

If I only knew how to find him, I'd tell him 'bout you and me,

And then, if he wasn't too stingy, he'd send us some bread and some tea."

"I don't think he lives down here, Bill," said the tiny boy of seven,

"I fancies Santa Claus is God, who lives up above in heaven."

"But that can't be true," says Billy, "for teacher says, yer see,

That God loves all of His children, and that means, of course, you and me,

And if He were Santa Claus, Mike, He'd know as we lived up here,

For mother 'ud sure remind Him. she wouldn't forget, don't fear.

But if you're quite sure about it, let's ask Him, Mike, and try;

They say He's allers listenin', though far above the sky."

Then two little eyes looked heavenward, and two little hearts in prayer

Ascend to the children's Saviour from out that garret bare.

As Mike, in a lisping treble, his story simply told,
Kneeling by Bill in the attic, hungry, and wet, and cold.
"Dear Jesus, King of Glory, look down from heaven and see,

Two little boys in this garret, Billy and Mike—that's me;
Father, he kicks and beats us—mother's with you up there.
We've begged all day in the city, nobody seems to care.
Please don't forget the number, but send Santa Claus this way

With presents for me and Billy, tomorrow—that's Christmas Day,

We don't want no sweets or playthings, but only some bread to eat;

And some shoes and a pair of socks for poor little Billy's feet."

Then two little tired laddies sank down on the floor so bare

While angels from heaven descended to answer the simple prayer.

Soon dawned the Christmas morning, the churches were bright and gay;

With thousands of joyous children, gathered to praise and pray;

The sun shone into the garret and into the shavings bare;
It lit up the poor pinched faces of two little urchins there;
But their bodies were cold and lifeless, for two little souls had fled

To a heaven of warmth and comfort, to a feast of living bread,

And safe in the arms of Jesus, two little spirits rest,
Free from all care and sorrow, happy and safe and blest.
And on that bright Christmas morning two little angels fair

Are thanking the children's Jesus, who answered Mike's little prayer.

New Year's Resolution.

Do it better!

Letting well enough alone never raised a salary or secured a better position.

And what was well enough yesterday is poor enough today—do it better.

Rescue that daily task from the maw of dull routine—do it better.

Seek out that automatic act of habit—do it better.
Put another hour on the task well done—and do it better.

Strive not to equal yesterday's work—strive to surpass it.

Do it better!—*Timely Topics*.

"All men must die," reads every way and makes good sense.