

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 Christ-
mas 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.