

blind was right up, and the rays of the full moon shining straight in. He felt wide awake, and not at all ill or sleepy. How strange! Then—there was something moving in the room, someone standing by his bedside—yes, a lady dressed in black, looking silently down upon him. And, strange to say, Eric did not feel in the least afraid or surprised—it seemed quite natural that the lady should be there, and when she said in a very sweet voice, 'Get up at once, Eric, and come with me,' he got up quite as a matter of course. Whilst putting on his things, he looked at the lady to find out who she was. Was she his Aunt Mary? No, she was too tall. Then it flashed across his mind that it was Mona, dressed up, and standing upon something; but that could not be, for her voice was not Mona's. Then he thought how like the figure was to dear mother; but his mother was dead, so that was impossible.

As soon as his clothes were on, the lady said: 'Now we will go out,' and before Eric had time to say, 'May I ask papa first?' she touched him on the shoulder, and in a moment they were walking along in the street outside. How they got there Eric could not at all understand. It seemed so very wonderful—one moment in his room, and the next moment in the street. He must be dreaming! But no, he pinched himself hard, and felt a hurt; he coughed and blew his nose—yes, he was awake, wide awake.

Turning to Eric, the lady said: 'Now, Eric (how did she know his name, he wondered), I am going to show you some London sights.'

'Oh, thank you, how kind!' he cried. 'But isn't it rather late? I have been to the Tower of London and the Zoo, but not to Madame Tussaud's and several other places. Won't they be shut, though?'

The lady laughed pleasantly.

'I do not mean sights of that kind. But wait, and you will know presently. And you may call me "Guide" unless you know my real name.'

Eric confessed that he did not know her name, but would like to do so very much.

'You shall before we part, but call me "Guide" for the present,' she told him.

As they walked along the guide talked to Eric about his father, and Mona, and Bobby (his little brother), and also about his bad behaviour. Eric began to feel rather cross, but his angry feelings soon went away, for the guide's voice was so soft and musical, and she talked to him so gently and kindly, that he was quite sorry when they reached a very wide street, where there was a great deal of commotion, bustle, and glare—such a number of people and carriages passing to and fro in two continual streams, and such a noise! Eric was used to London, but he had never been in such a busy, noisy street before.

The guide stopped before a large house with big glass doors and wide, tall windows, which blazed with light from the rows of glittering gas-jets which crossed them. Every now and then people went in and out of the large doors, which closed after them with a loud bang.

'Come along, and keep close to me,' said the guide, and he followed her in.

For a little while Eric was too dazed to notice anything, and, to tell the truth, he caught hold of the guide's hand, as he used to do when a little boy and out with his nurse. They sat down on a seat in one corner, but no one seemed to take any notice of them, so Eric watched what was going on. Behind the bar—for it was a noted publichouse—there was a grand array of mirrors, bright bottles containing different colored liquids, glasses looking like crystal, and many other bright objects. A stout, red-faced man, with shiny hair, white shirt-front, and gold chain across his waistcoat, was serving the customers as fast as he could from the various bottles and bright brass taps. Eric thought it must be very hard work, for the barman's coat was off and he looked very hot. Two showily-dressed young women with white teeth and a lot of black fuzzy hair were helping the man. They worked quite as hard as he did, cleaning and filling up the glasses, but their faces were quite pale. Eric wondered why, because they seemed in such good spirits, and laughed and talked a great deal to the people.

'Those young women are the barmaids,' remarked the guide. 'They are paid to dress smartly, and to laugh and joke as

well as work, because it attracts customers to the publichouse. This, of course, puts more money into the manager's pocket, because he sells a greater quantity of beer and spirits. Now, watch those two young men she added, pointing to two respectably dressed young workmen, who had just entered the place, each smoking a big cigar.

'A pint of beer for my mate, and a two of whiskey for me,' called out one in a loud voice. They seemed to be quite at home, and very good friends with the barmaid, who hastened to serve them, for she smiled pleasantly and said, 'Good evening.' Then they laughed and chatted with her for a few minutes whilst she was wiping some glasses, and after having two drinks each they swaggered out, saying, 'Good night, miss, see you again to-morrow.'

'Poor young fellows,' said the guide to Eric; 'they visit publichouses nearly every night, and all their spare money is spent in liquor and tobacco. They will get fonder and fonder of strong drink each year, and will most likely lose all interest in their work and perhaps fill drunkards' graves.'

Eric's attention was next directed to three women who stood at the farther end

of the bar; two of them were tall and stout, and the other one was a small wizen-faced woman; all of them were very shabbily dressed, three glasses of liquor stood before them on the bar. The two big women talked very fast and loud, they appeared to be quarrelling, for the little woman stepped between them and held up her hand. Then to Eric's horror they began to fight: they scratched, they tugged, they tore at each other's hair and faces, and seemed more like wild animals than English women. At last the big barman came forward, and, with the help of a policeman who had been attracted in by the noise, hustled them into the street.

Eric felt very frightened and sad during the scuffle, for it seemed to him so shocking for women to quarrel and fight like that: the other customers were quite pleased, for they laughed and jeered at the women. Eric could not help contrasting his aunt Mary and dear Mona with these poor drunken creatures.

'That was a sad sight which you must not forget,' Eric said the guide; 'those

women are mothers, their husbands have gone away to sea, to earn a hard living, and send home nearly all their wages each month; this is where most of the money is spent. One woman, before she goes to the publichouse, looks her two small children up in the room where she lives, and there the poor little mites are, often for hours. The other woman makes her eldest girl take care of the little ones each evening when she goes to the publichouse, although the girl has been working hard all day at a factory. And now, Eric, we will move on,' she added, getting up, 'but notice that small child who has just come in.'

A little girl about eight years old was lifting a large yellow jug on to the counter. 'A quart of porter, please, Miss, and here's the browns,' she said in a piping treble voice. The barmaid filled the jug, and placed the coppers in the till. The child could only just reach the jug from the counter, and as she lifted it from the edge some of the porter was spilled on the sandaled floor.

'Oh, please, Miss, fill it up again,' she whined, 'cos fayer'll beat me if it ain't full.'



MOTHER'S CHRISTMAS BOX.

But the barmaid only said crossly, 'Go along, and don't bother, you young brat!' so the child walked out with her jug.

Eric and his guide followed, and oh, how glad he was to get away from those disagreeable sights and strong smells. Just before the little girl turned down a side street Eric was astonished to see her raise the jug to her mouth and take a drink of the porter.

'There, Eric, that is perhaps one of the saddest sights in all London—a child of eight already fond of strong drink. Poor little mite! it is not her fault. Perhaps when she was a baby her mother gave her small doses of liquor to keep her quiet, and she has lived among drinking people all her short life; but it is sad, very sad.'

Eric said he thought so too.

Then they walked down the busy street for a short distance and turned into another street, where there was less noise and traffic. Eric glanced up at a clock which they passed—it was eleven o'clock. What would papa say? And how tired he would be the next day. Still, he felt quite

safe with his guide, and willing to go where she led him.

Now they saw coming towards them in the middle of the street a most pitiable sight. A tall, pinched, sickly woman, dressed almost in rags, was moving very slowly along, holding by the hand a little boy and girl, one on each side of her; the children looked as miserable and ragged as their mother. The boy's dirty little brown legs and feet were bare; he limped badly, and one foot was bound round by a piece of his mother's ragged dress; he wore a man's tattered frock coat, which reached to the ground, and looked, Eric thought, many years old. It was fastened about his waist by a piece of cord. His little sister had an old grey blanket thrown over her shoulders, which she tried to keep the cold wind from blowing about. On her small legs she wore a pair of large worsted socks, full of holes, and her tiny feet were encased in a big pair of old boots, which seemed as if they would tumble off at each step. The mother was singing in a high-pitched, quavering voice, 'Hark the herald angels sing.' Every now and then she looked down at her children, saying angrily, 'Sing up, can't you, and let the people hear.' Then the poor little things would chime in quite out of tune with their weak voices.

As the little girl passed Eric, she said, seeing that he was well dressed, 'Please give us a penny, we are so cold and so hungry.' If she had been washed clean, and nicely dressed, the little thing would have looked quite a pretty child, but her cheeks were sunken, hair matted, and her face and neck dirty. Eric felt so sorry, for he had spent his last penny the day before, but he at once thought of two cakes of chocolate which the Martins had given to him. He pulled these from his pocket and handed them to the child, whose eyes sparkled as she said, 'Oh, thank you, sir.' Then Eric noticed that she handed them to her mother, who gave one to each of the children.

Why, she spoke almost as nicely as Mona speaks, and not like other beggar children. 'Who are they?' asked Eric of the guide. 'Ah, their story is a sorrowful one,' she replied; 'the father was once a rich young merchant, clever and wealthy, but he became fond of strong drink, and the family sank lower and lower. Now he is in a prison hospital, almost dying, and they are forced to beg for their living.'

Then the guide took Eric down a very narrow street, and they entered a tall, gloomy house, six stories high. After ascending two flights of stone steps, they passed down a long, narrow passage, dimly lighted by one small oil lamp; no carpet was on the floor, and the painted walls were very dirty. Several doors, which were mostly ajar, led out from the passage, and although the hour was so late, the noise of babies crying, children calling out and other sounds issued from the rooms into which they led. The guide stopped before the end door, which was open; near to this door there was a small window; Eric crept close up to it and peeped in.

(To be Continued.)

A LANGUAGE IN TWO MONTHS.

The late Sir Richard Burton was master of twenty-nine languages. In his life, recently written by his widow, we are told of the method he used in making these acquisitions, one of his own invention. 'I got a simple grammar and vocabulary, marked out the forms and words which I knew were absolutely necessary, and learned them by heart, by carrying them in my pocket and looking over them at spare moments during the day. I never worked more than a quarter of an hour at a time, for after that the brain lost its freshness. After learning some three hundred words, easily done in a week, I stumbled through some easy bookwork, (one of the Gospels is the most come-at-able,) and underlined every word that I wished to recollect, in order to read over my pencillings at least once a day. Having finished my volume, I then carefully worked up the grammar minutiae. . . . The neck of the language was now broken, and progress was rapid. In this way, this remarkable scholar was able without help to learn a new language in two months. The experience is interesting, and may be of service to some of our young readers.'