

"THE BATTLEFIELD."

(From the Children's Friend.)

CHAPTER II.—Continued.

"Oh, there you are! Nigh at hand for once! Here, take this jug and money, and fetch me three-pen'orth of gin. If yer don't hurry, you'll catch it, mind!" and she gave him a smart slap on the shoulder to hasten his movements. But the pavement was slippery, and Greg, never very firm on his legs, went suddenly down, smashing the jug to atoms.

"Yer young varmint!" said the woman, almost beside herself with anger, dealing out blows on the shrinking form. "I'll teach yer to break my jugs, I will."

"What's the matter, Moll?" shouted a voice from the next door; "has the brat broken yer jug?"

"Yes, all to bits," said the angry woman, pausing a moment to detail her grievances, while Greg shrank away as fast as he could.

"Was yer going to have a drink? Never mind, come and get it there," said her neighbor, pointing with her thumb to the public-house at the corner. And the two slatternly women crossed the road to the place, where they grew more quarrelsome, more dirty, and more unwomanly.

Meanwhile Greg, sobbing with pain and trouble, dragged himself to his accustomed corner, where he was in some measure out of the rain, and sat down to bear his sorrows as best he might. Poor little lonely soul, only the same age when children in happier circumstances are cared for and loved and looked after in every possible way, he was left to bear heavy trials and sufferings all alone. By-and-by he saw May stepping across the court wrapped in an old shawl of her mother's, and carefully avoiding all the pools left in the broken pavement. She did not see him, and he felt too miserable to call her, and only watched her with wistful eyes. But the sigh of May awoke other thoughts, and his heart grew warmer as he remembered that Jesus loved him, and one day would take him to the happy land, to be with Jesus and mother; that would be nice, he thought, and he wished he might go just then out of that wretched court to join them. But when he looked up there were no stars! And he cried to think that even that land might be spoilt.

Presently May passed again, and hearing sobs, she came up to the child, asking kindly—"What's the matter, Greg?"

"The happy land's gone!" said the child, with tear-stained face.

"Oh no," she said cheerfully—"it never goes."

"But it has, see!" and he pointed upward.

May, with a child's quick instinct, caught his meaning as she looked up and saw the cloudy skies.

"It's all right, Greg, the happy land ain't gone; the rain never comes near it, mother says."

"But we can't see it," said Greg, only half comforted.

"No, but it's there all the same," returned May, confidently. "There, don't cry no more, it will be all right."

Greg was only half convinced,

ones; but he says they ain't no use. He can't move hisself a bit."

"He'll walk in the happy land."

"Yes, he said so; and he wants you to go and talk about it, will yer?"

"Well," said May, demurely. "I'll ask mother, 'cause, ye see, she's particular where I goes. But there, I mustn't stop, I've to fetch a ha'porth of milk. Don't cry any more, Greg."

The boy was getting stiff from sitting so long, so he got up and followed May out into the street. It was still raining fast, but he

had an old umbrella over her stall to keep her fruit dry, and she drew her large shawl round her as if she felt the cold; but her face was cheery and pleasant, and she had a lively word and bright smile for each of her customers. Presently, to his great surprise, Greg found that the apple-woman was beckoning to him.

CHAPTER III.

A KIND HEART.

"Come here, honey—how wet you be, to be sure! And what'll your name be?"

"Greg," said the child, gravely. "And that'll be a nice short name to remember. Well, Greg, my boy, creep under my shawl and have a bit o' my supper, and maybe ye'll get warmer."

Biddy, as the apple-woman was usually called, had kept a stall at that corner for years; she was now an elderly woman, and although very ignorant, was always kind and good-natured. She had never married, for, as she said in her quaint way, she had enough to do to look after herself, without looking after a husband too; for Biddy did not seem to understand that it is a husband's place to look after his wife; perhaps she had seen too many cases to the contrary. Anyway, she had a very warm spot in her heart for children; she dearly loved them, and the more loveless and forlorn they looked, the more her heart seemed to go out to them, so that she warmed to Greg at once. Though Biddy had kept her stall so long at the corner, she and Greg had never spoken before; for though he had seen and admired her stall from a distance, it was not often he ventured so far.

"Ahone! but how wet ye be, my darlint! an' what'll the tears be in your eyes for?" and she softly stroked Greg's head.

"You're very good," said Greg, gratefully; "are you going to the happy land too?"

"An' what land'll that be, I wonder? It'll be far enough away from here, no doubt."

But before Greg could say more, he heard his granny's voice close by and shrank closer under the friendly shelter of the ample shawl. Biddy seemed to understand why it was; and when the old woman stopped at the corner of the road and asked her sharply, "Ha' ye seen a lame brat about here?" she answered quickly, "An' never a brat have I seen, at all, at all."

"Yer uses yer eyes precious little, then," returned Granny, scoffingly.

"An' a good thing, too, in a world like this," returned Biddy



"I'LL TEACH YER TO BREAK MY JUGS, I WILL."

but after a moment's silence he said—"I've been to see an old man what can't walk, and he says I must go again, and you an' all."

"Me!" said May—"what for?"

"'Cause he's going to the happy land, and he wants to see you afore he goes."

"Where does he live?" asked May, wondering.

"Round the corner, there," said Greg, pointing with a dirty hand in the direction of the upper part of the court.

"Hasn't he got no legs?" asked May, remembering that he could not walk.

"Oh yes, he has legs—long

was nearly wet through, and a little more rain would not make him much worse. He saw May go into the milkshop, and got a bright smile and nod from her as he passed the door. Down to the corner he walked, where the old apple-woman kept her stall, summer and winter. Greg had never had any money to buy any of her bright fruit, but he had often looked at her stall from a distance, and wished he could have a halfpenny of his own to spend. To-day she had got a few small oranges as well as apples, and Greg placed himself on a doorstep not far off to watch her. She

trickly
eyes to
"Bac
cious
nowa
ing bac
I'll hav
back
when l
seen m
ly, who
of sigh
"An
Little
'brats'
"Greg
he dr
heart.
"Do
you, h
in a ki
keepin
'ter l
"Ye
sorrow
ragged
"Oh
you a
claime
as sh
mark
"An'
to ha
You c
when
I'll tal
"Gr
and a
him.
"H
'twill
held
It
had b
Isaac
but l
forted
child
May
ing, s
defen
wom
day
Bidd
He
her t
her t
then
to the
It
Greg
again
and l
happ
like
Isaac
her.
the c
time
at th
tied
look
gues
strik
He l
stun
angr
he g
May
rcw
one
ing,
war