



THE HOME OF THE ASTOR HOUSE BEGGAR.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE ASTOR HOUSE BEGGAR.

VERY small of her age is Mary R. She would be thought a child of five rather than ten—so stunted has been her growth by over-much work and care not suited to her tender years. In vain we tried to induce the little beggar girl to attend school, and one day I took her aside and said, "Mary, why do you not love to come to our school?" "Because," was her quick reply, "I was told that you were all bad people, and that you kept a Protestant school, and that was not a good place." We at last succeeded in winning her, by telling her to come in and warm herself by the stove in the Mission-room. We took off her filthy garments and clothed her from head to foot in a new warm suit, and the little pock-marked face with the gleaming black eyes, looked very pleasantly upon us, as we told her that we loved her. The idea of being loved, wakened a new chord in the heart of this little girl, who looked upon us as her friends, and gradually stayed longer and longer in school.

Why do you wear such dirty clothes, Mary? I said to her one day. "Because my mother won't wash them. Come and see where I live, and you will not ask me why my clothes are dirty." She led the way to the last house in Cow Bay, through a dark, dark passage and stairway to the attic—the floor in some places so broken that I feared I might fall through. We met several men on the stairs, but Mary heralded our ascent by "Make room, my teacher is coming with me," and in each instance they fell back to give us room to pass. We reached the attic. On a heap of dirty rags in one corner lay her drunken mother—her father half intoxicated sat up on a chest, for there was no chair, and another drunken woman sat shivering, over a few embers. The man immediately recognized me, saying, "I remember you, Lady, ten years ago, when you called in City Hall place to see me, when I was sick. I was better off then, but now I am as bad off as I can be." Will you not let us provide a comfortable home for Mary? "Oh, no, ma'am, we cannot spare her, for she supports the family. My poor wife, as you see, can do nothing." "Why, you support the family, Mary, how can you do that?" "By begging, ma'am."

How fearfully Intemperance reverses all the relations of life! An entire family depending on this tiny

creature for their daily bread—the strong arm idle—the stalwart frame paralyzed, the old heads stupified with strong drink, while upon these young shoulders rested the heavy burden.

"But why will you not sign the pledge, and become sober, and thus become more comfortable? We would then have an oversight of you, and you would be more able to support yourself. Do you not know that your poor child is most fearfully exposed to all that is evil by her course of life?" "Oh yes, ma'am, but she only goes to the Astor House." "Yes, ma'am," responded little pock-marked Mary, "I am a great pet there; they always save me the best pieces of chicken and turkey, and sometimes they give me money. I have been up stairs too, and a lady gave me a silk frock, in one of the pretty rooms she lived in." As I went down stairs with the child, I said, "Mary, why do you not wear your silk frock on Sunday?" "Because I have no bonnet would look good with it," was the shrewd reply. "Come with me and I will give you a bonnet and a sack, and to-morrow come to Sunday school all dressed neatly." She came as we desired, behaved well, and from that time she has been an attendant on our day and Sabbath school.

One day, as I passed the Astor House, the steps of

which were crowded with gentlemen, the little beggar girl putting down her basket, rushed towards me with outstretched arms, and with a look of delighted recognition. I own to some degree of embarrassment at her childish caress, and merely saying, "Have you been to the Mission School to-day, Mary?" and hearing her answer, "No, ma'am, but I am going in a little while," I passed on, leaving Mary to answer the questions of the spectators of this ludicrous scene.

One day, a visitor at the school gave her two pennies. In a few moments she was missing, but she soon returned with a large apple, which she offered to me. I said, "Mary, I thank you for your kind offer, but I prefer not to eat the apple." She moved to the window of the school-room and wept. One of the children whispered to me, "Mary is crying because you did not take her apple." I called her to me and said, "Mary, do you want me to take your apple?" "Yes, ma'am, I bought it for you—it is clean, ma'am." I took the apple and told her it was so large, I could not eat it all, but as it was now mine, I had a favor to ask of her, and that was that she should share it with me. This was done to the satisfaction of both the giver and receiver of the little gift. Little pock-marked black-eyed Mary, left to herself, and obliged to care for herself, and for

those who should have cared for her, proved that she had an affectionate heart, and a generous nature. The two pennies were all she had, but she freely gave them to purchase a gift for one who had shown her kindness. Whenever or wherever she meets a teacher or frequent visitor of the Mission-School, she thinks she can claim acquaintanceship.

She is a smart little thing, learns rapidly, and she has a sweet voice in singing. She has recently received two premiums for being one of the best children in the school. Of late she has been a much more regular attendant in the day-school. On inquiring the cause she said, "*Kase I gind my father and mother no peace till they signed the pledge*, and now she washes my clothes, and I only go to the Astor House at three o'clock, after school is out." Early has Mary begun to play an important part in life, her parents looking to her for support, and she their adviser and counsellor. God speed thee, little Mary!

### Maggie Ryan.

A few weeks after the opening of the Mission, the Ladies visiting the School and Mission, became deeply interested in a little flaxen-haired girl of about ten years. One of the ladies had her taken to her own home and well clothed, and she appeared the next Sabbath in so neat a trim that several remarked her changed and happy appearance. She was unlike most of the children in that neighborhood, her manners being very gentle and I might almost say lady-like, though by nature very sprightly, yet exceedingly teachable and docile. One Sabbath morning she came up to me saying, "Will you please, ma'am, to come and see my father, who is very sick and poor?" Accompanied by my sister, Mrs. H., I followed the child home. She led us up Cross street, two doors above Orange. Passing through a filthy entry to the yard, she took us down a steep flight of steps to a back basement room or cellar, which was so dark that it was several moments before our eyes, become accustomed to its gloom, could perceive it was most scrupulously clean. The floor had been well scrubbed, and what little furniture there was, bore the mark of that of a

tidy housekeeper; a few chairs, a clean pine table, and the few articles of the cupboard, with a bedstead, completed the furniture of the room. We commended the woman for her neatness, but she modestly replied, "I ought to be more tidy, but I cannot, for when it rains, the water runs down into my room till it comes up so high, faith to half the depth of the bedstead, and my poor husband has the rheumatism, and we have not had anything to eat to-day." I approached the bed, (the man having drawn the covering over his face when he heard strange voices in the room,) and said in a kind tone, "Are you ill, sir? We have called as friends, at request of your little daughter, to aid you. What can we do for you?" The man seemed subdued by the tone of kindness, and raising himself, with some difficulty, and leaning upon his elbow he said, "The Ladies have been very kind in doing so much for my little girl. The Lord reward them! And she insisted on bringing you here?" "How can we aid you, sir?" "I want but little," replied he, "for I am such a poor creature—a poor miserable man!" "What has brought this destitution upon you?" asked my sister, (for it was evident they had seen better days.) "*Intemperance,*" replied the man, laying the strongest stress upon the word. "It has nearly ruined me, soul and body, and

my wife also. But ten years ago, I came to this city with two thousand dollars in my pocket, the avails of a farm I had sold, but I fell in company with the intemperate, till step by step I was hurled down the declivity of ruin. I have been robbed while in liquor of all my money, and my poor wife was obliged to seek a service-place, but she too had learned to love the intoxicating cup, and while at service, fell from a second story window, while washing it, into the area, and had to be taken to the Hospital to get well; and she has very dizzy turns now, *all, all*, because she drank, and I helped her to it. Oh, if my friends knew I was brought down to live in the 'Five Points,' they would be wretched!" We encouraged the man; and bade him hope that better days were in store for him. My sister took the child immediately home, relieved their wants for the day, and told her to come again to her house in the morning. The morning brought little Maggie, and we both became more and more interested in the child. We visited the family often, and urged both husband and wife to sign the temperance pledge. The man said his habits were so confirmed that he could not keep it if he did sign, but the woman soon complied with our request, and the earnest appeals of her sweet child Maggie.

The parents of this little girl were very fond of her, and

we hoped through her influence to effect the father's restoration to sobriety. The wife, too, besought him to take a step which she thought might introduce him to a more hopeful life. A watchful oversight was kept over them, encouragement given to the mother, and every exertion made through the daughter to induce him to sign the pledge. At last he was prevailed upon to abstain from drink one day. The temperance meeting was held on the evening of that day, and the room in which it was held, was filled with many who shrank from daylight exposure. The Missionary was at the altar, an appeal was made for the intemperate to break their fetters, when little Maggie came running up to me, saying, "Father is at the door, and he says he will sign." "Wont you come and coax him to come in?" I communicated the fact to the Missionary; a bustle at the door ensued. Mrs. Ryan was leading her husband, and urging her way through the crowd that thronged the passage, when the Missionary exclaimed, "Make way for Mr. Ryan. Come along, Mr. Ryan, and sign the pledge, and may God help you to keep it."—He did sign it, and from that time began to feel that he was a man again. The woman also showed the greatest signs of amendment. Maggie became a decided favorite with all by her very pleasing manner—and when the work-room was opened, Maggie was the

avored one who took the work back and forward in the room. She arranged the pieces which made up the garments they were sewing, and was loved by all.

But Mrs. H. never lost sight of her best interests for one moment, and we all felt that they were a family that should be removed away from that locality, where the moral atmosphere by which they were surrounded was not the best for them. Temptations stood before them in too formidable a phalanx to be steadfastly resisted. With the wish to aid them in their effort to retrieve their character and fortunes, a gentleman offered them a room in a tenement house of his. A carman was sent for their effects, and some more furniture was added to make their new apartment in Howard-street home-like. Mrs. H. having previously taken Maggie to her house to live, she remained there six months, attending the public school in Grand-street, where she made rapid improvement. She was a great favorite here, also. A little incident occurred that proved this. She was peeling peaches one day, and while putting the pits in her mouth she accidentally got one in her throat. The house was in instant alarm, and every effort used to extricate it for several minutes, but in vain. Messengers were despatched for the physician, with but little hope, for she was strangling. Presently she grew black, she stiffened.

The whole house wept. "Maggie is dying—dear Maggie is dying—she can't breathe!" Added to this, Mrs. H. was from home. Despair and anguish were felt by every heart, when a gentleman happened to come in; and in that moment, when seemingly past hope, he succeeded in extracting the stone, and thus saved her life. It was some time before she recovered, as he drew the blood with the stone, and lacerated her throat greatly by its removal. We felt she was spared for some good purpose.

Mrs. H. had previously adopted a little girl called "Wild Maggie Carson," and thought it best to secure a good home in some pious family in the country for Maggie Ryan, and at her request the Missionary was desired to obtain a home for her. He succeeded, and the little girl was well supplied with good clothing and taken to the Missionary's house to wait for the person to convey her to her new home. She was all spirit and life, and beguiled the hour in singing (for she has a pleasing voice), and she had learned many of our hymns and childish songs. "What do you like to sing best?" asked the Missionary. "I like to sing:"

"I think when I read that sweet story of old,  
When Jesus was here among men,  
How he called little children as lambs to his fold,  
I should like to have been with him then."

Which she did sing in a most touching manner, bringing the tear to the eye of Mrs. H. who took leave of her charge with much regret, for she had become greatly attached to her.

A sad misfortune happened to the poor mother, while hanging up some clothes from the second story of her house. The dizziness to which she was subject, caused her to lose her balance on the plank upon which she was standing, and she was precipitated into the yard. Nothing remained but the hospital for the poor woman, and she was sent to Bellevue, with the fear that her ankle was broken; but it proved only a severe contusion. Her husband being left thus alone, obtained through a relation, a situation at unloading vessels, and kept his pledge most fully. In a few weeks, Mrs. R. returned, somewhat recovered, yet still in broken health, but much improved in mind, with an easier conscience, and a lighter heart; for her afflictions had led her to learn of Christ, and to seek in him the aid her soul needed. Mr. H. felt there would be some risk in allowing her to do heavy work, and he agreed to pay two dollars a week to the *Missionary*, Mr. P., until she could be able to earn her living. The husband was now providing for himself, and was part of the time out of the city.—

But poor Maggie, in her country home, felt deeply anxious to see her parents. From her birth, she had never been placed where she could not see them when she liked; and leaving her place she was brought again to her mother. Did some pitying spirit whisper to the child to come? It was on Saturday when the mother and child were reunited for a brief season before the life-long parting. The next day, the husband and father came, and the three were gathered at the Mission. Divine service had been held in the Chapel, and on returning home most touchingly did Mrs. R. plead with her husband to attend church and to seek the salvation of his soul. The words of entreaty had scarcely passed her lips, when she fell back and instantly expired. She was doing her Master's work when the solemn summons came—poor heart-stricken Maggie saw her mother's last look of death, and heard her last words, which she surely never can forget.

But the friends of the family did not forget the now "*motherless child*." And shortly after one of our gentleman visitors, Mr. E., obtained a situation in his father's family for her, where she remained the greater part of the year. But her father maintaining his integrity, and having proved he could live a life of sobriety, went to housekeeping with his daughter. He has constant em-

ployment as a stevedore, and they are now living in more comfort than they have known for years before. He has become a strong advocate for the cause of temperance, and we are informed he has been the means of causing his brother to sign the pledge, and is doing all he can to promote the great cause among his class. Could the friends of the Mission see the apparent change wrought in this family, from the damp cellar in Cross street, where we found them, and their now comfortable apartment in James street, they would feel that of a truth, "The bread cast upon the waters shall be seen after many days." We regret one thing, however, that this same girl should now be exhibited as "Wild Maggie," of the "Five Points," while to us, who first found her, and to those who subsequently became acquainted with her, she has always been considered one of the most gentle and interesting children we have met at the Mission.

The character of Maggie Carson, adopted into Mrs. Howe's family, and the history of Margaret Ryan, just related, have been blended together, and told with great effect in the story of "Wild Maggie," in the *Tribune*. They were the only children connected with the Mission, at that time, who were known by the name of Maggie—and their *veritable* histories are given in these pages.

### The Tidy Beggar.

"Please give me something for my sick mother?" The words were spoken without the professional whine which so often grates upon the ear, and the little girl who uttered them was neatly dressed, with an intelligent pleasing countenance. Mr. H——, attracted by her appearance, called his wife to walk home with her and learn, if possible, why her parents sent her out to beg. The little girl listened with eager interest to his words, and then burst out into an uncontrollable fit of sobbing. Mrs. H. tried to soothe her by telling her that she only wished to see if she could not assist her sick mother, and after awhile the child was pacified, and led the way to her wretched home in the attic of a poor tenement.

There was an air of cleanliness and order about the room; the well patched dresses of the children were arrayed against the roof with a look of precision that suggested the thought that these people had known better days. Here dwelt the mother, an interesting German woman, and three children. Her history was a sad one. No fearful history of crime, with its consequent punishment,—but the one imprudent step.



and the gradual loss of ease, and comfort, and respectability.

She had married without the consent of her friends, and unwilling to live where her husband was not liked, she thought that in this country she could find a happier home for her little family. They came, but the land where he had hoped to secure a happy home, only afforded him a grave. Alone, unaided, she began the struggle of life, with three helpless children dependent on her exertions. Early and late she toiled, supporting her family by washing,—but sickness that has palsied many an active frame, put an end to her labors, and her life was threatened by a hemorrhage of the lungs.

Mrs. H. was greatly interested, and after a very gratifying interview left, placing a piece of money in the hand of the poor woman, to meet the pressing wants of her family. A physician was sent immediately; and she then called on a grocer, a friend of the Mission, who supplied her with a considerable quantity of groceries, which however were the unfortunate means of subsequent misfortunes. Hitherto she had been able to do something for herself, and was not altogether dependent on charity. The aid she had received from visitors from the Mission, provoked the jealousy and hostility

of a neighbor in the adjoining room, to so great an extent, that to have peace at all, she was forced to remove from the house. Moving in wet and unpleasant weather, brought on fresh cold, and she was now entirely prostrated. The great difficulty had been that scarce a word she said could be understood; but one of the secretaries of the Mission school speaking German, I brought him to speak with her. As well as her feebleness would allow, she gave us her history, and the account of her misfortunes, which we have given. She seemed sadly depressed by the thought of the unprotected state of her children, but we promised that if she did not recover, the children should be provided for; and one of them was accordingly taken home by one of the ladies, and kept a fortnight.

This gentleman visited her very often, provided her with money, and with the delicacies so grateful to the taste of the invalid, and he did not forget while ministering to the wants of the body, the demands of the immortal spirit within the decaying tabernacle. He tried to enlighten her mind with the truths of the gospel, and read to her, from a German bible, the words of Jesus. She expressed her pleasure and gratitude at his visits and prayers; and once, when she thought herself near death, she sent for one of the ladies, who had

first found her, and asked her to take charge of the few effects she had, and to provide for her children. Two of the children were then taken, and placed in the Home for the Friendless; but the quiet of her room, where the hum of children's voices and the pattering of little feet were no longer heard, and the assiduous care of those who visited her from the Mission, were the means of gradually restoring her to health.

One day, while conversing with the kind friend whose perfect knowledge of German enabled her readily to communicate all her thoughts, she mentioned the fact that her husband's father had died in Germany, leaving a handsome property, and that her children were among the heirs to the estate. The gentleman who took so lively an interest in her welfare, had affidavits made of the facts,—the necessary papers prepared, a statement made to the consul,—and thus was obtained, from Germany, for this family a little independence, which placed them above want. The children were restored to her from the Home of the Friendless, and with them, no longer needing the care of the Mission, she removed to a comfortable home. Late tidings of her tell of her improved health, and that the tidy beggar is now a studious and happy little school girl.

## CHAPTER XIII.

SKETCHES FROM THE MISSIONARY'S NOTE-BOOK.

*The Dead Child.*

ON Monday, July the 29th, a woman of fine appearance, with one of those deep expressive faces that throw out a flood of feelings with every word the lips utter, came into the office and said that she was not in the habit of begging, but that she had been driven to it by her necessities. I asked her what she wanted. Her eyes, already swollen with weeping, overflowed again with tears, while she told me that her child had died on Sunday, and up to that time she had not obtained money enough to bury it.

She handed me a paper, which on examination, I found to be a permit from the sexton of St Patrick's Cathedral, to bury the child in Calvary Cemetery. I asked her if she were a Catholic. She said she was. I then told her to go to the priest, and tell him her story, and ask his assistance. She went, but came back ere long in deeper distress than ever, having only received