

SORROWS OF THE POOR.

HUNGRY CHILDREN IN PRESTON SLUMS.

A MISSION OF MERCY.

(BY OUR COMMISSIONER.)

As he was stooping to sit down the chimes rang.

"Amen!" said Trotty, pulling off his hat and looking up to the tower.

"Amen to the Bells, father?" cried Meg.

"They broke in like a grace, my dear," said Trotty, taking his seat. "They'd say a good one, I am sure, if they could. Many's the kind thing they say to me."

"The Bells do, father!" laughed Meg as she set the basin and a knife and fork before him. "Well!"

"Seem to, my pet," said Trotty, falling to with great vigour. "And where's the difference? If I hear 'em what does it matter whether they speak it or not. Why bless you, my dear," said Toby, pointing at the tower with his fork, and growing more animated under the influence of his dinner, "how often have I heard the bells say—

"Toby Veck, Toby Veck, keep a good heart Toby! Toby Veck, Toby Veck, keep a good heart Toby!"

"Million times? More!"

"Well, I never," said Meg.

"When things is very bad," said Trotty; "very bad indeed, I mean; almost at their worst; then it says—

"Toby Veck Toby Veck, job coming soon, Toby! Toby Veck, Toby Veck, job coming soon, Toby!"

"And it comes—at last father," said Meg, with a touch of sadness in her pleasant voice.

"Always," answered Toby. "Never fails!"

—Charles Dickens.

The chimes were ringing out as I left the main street, via the narrow church passage, leaving the site of Lord Derby's old cockpit on my right, and entered the deepening shadows of the Preston slums. The chill blasts of the east gale whistled wildly through the open lattices of the old church tower and carried the vibrating chords swiftly, to melt in the hills and valleys miles away from here. I pondered and I wondered. I poked my chin into my woollen comforter, dived my hands deep into my coat pockets, and, remembering poor old Trotty in the chimes, I listened to the message of the bells. Methought they rang out "Shepherd-street! Shepherd-street! Help coming soon! Shepherd-street! Shepherd-street! Help coming soon! Shepherd-street! Help coming soon!"

BROKEN-HEARTED AND FRIENDLESS.

Talk about suppering at Delmonico's! Come along with me! Let the elfins of the bells wing their ministering counsels into human hearts. We are going to see something and do something. We are going to supper. Tramps, footsore, are making to the lodging-houses. Wretched women, homeless and

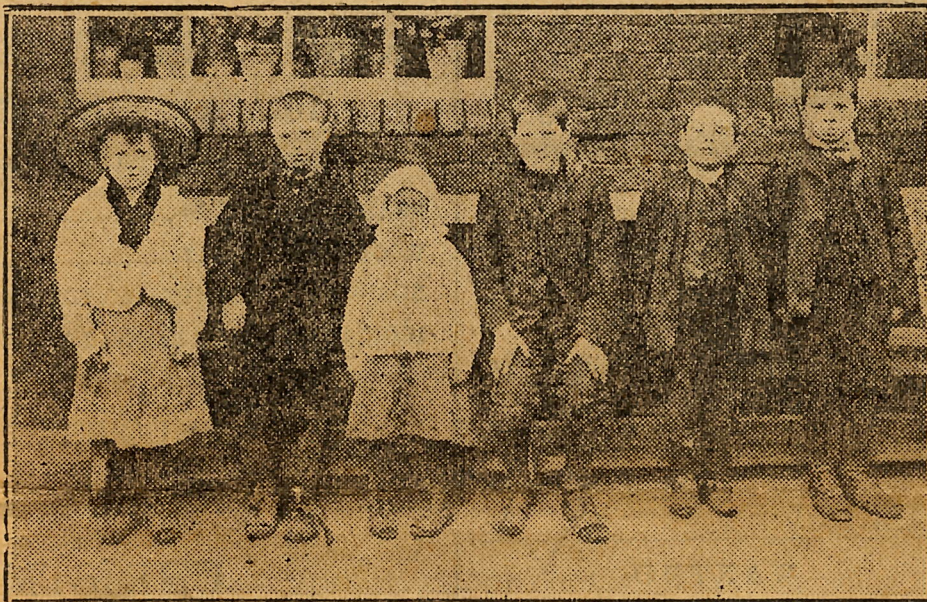
children, many with the pangs of hunger, are admitted and quickly seated. How they go at it! What a satisfying scene to any man with a truly human heart!

One little nervous girl came to me holding by the hand a little tattered podge of a shy lad. She said, "Please, sir, can we have clogs and stockings?" I saw how badly they were needed. Imagine walking through the snow broth we can expect soon with cracked, bare feet, and the bitter wind almost sweeping through thin, ill-clad frames!

I said, "Yes, you can," and she clapped her little hands and looking at me intently with those unearthly eyes of hers, said, "Thank you, sir." If you lads and lasses with good homes, kind fathers and mothers, and comfortable beds, want to learn manners, come with me among the poor children. And if you want to feel truly and brightly happy this Christmas, send me something on to this office for ragged lads and lasses, who have often to be contented with a few chips or a bit of dry, hard bread for dinner, and who would go to bed without tea or supper but for the blessings of this warm supper room of Shepherd-street.

I received a letter last year from a miner who had four children ill in bed. He sat down before the bedroom fire and read them the story I wrote on the sorrows of the slums. At length one said, "Daddy, reach my save-all," and the others said "Mine too, daddy." They took out some of their savings and sent me about four shillings! The collier cried, he told me in his letter, for real joy that his children had the practical gift of human sympathy. And, said he, "they seemed so delighted. Their eyes fair glistened. And, as they closed their eyes one by one I prayed, 'Thank God these children hav a father as won't let 'em be hungry.'"

That's the sort of help I like. As I went down the long lines of children at the Shepherd-street Mission tables I saw what to me, alas! is now a familiar sight—privation, but through the blessings of the free dinners this winter I did not see what wrung my soul many a time last year—signs of positive emaciation in little children, splashed with slum filth, and rags and tatters about their puny bodies. A comely young woman, once very respectably connected, had married an artisan twenty years older than herself, and she had five little children. Leaving two and her husband in their cheap slum cottage, she came to the room with three children. They looked famished. The mother told me they had simply had a few crusts in the morning. They were bountifully fed with soup and bread, and Mr.



CANDIDATES FOR CLOGS.

friendless and ragged, are shuffling on to the greasy malodours of the common rooms. Four children, a pallid, dirty, shivering little party, two brothers and two sisters, are wending their nimble steps towards Shepherd-street. Imagine! Shepherd-street! Not long ago a deadly spot, the fetid den of the Magdalenes. The dim courts and the alleys hide the tragedies of life.

Williamson took good care that the out-of-work husband and the two older children left at home did not go to bed supperless either that day or for days to come.

SOME SAD CASES.

I was surprised to find the number of children