

A CINDERELLA.

By E. NESBIT.

THE shadows whisper in the ingle-nook,
 Strange shadows that my murmuring music brings;
 My touches linger on the dreaming strings,
 Till I am Cinderella from the book,
 Waiting the flutter of the fairy's wings.

Oh! wait awhile, my prince, within your hall;
 Your palace fills again with tripping feet;
 The gay gilt coaches crowd the noisy street.
 Fiddle and lute tune for the prince's ball—
 Ah! but to hear that music passing sweet!

Fiddle and lute and pipe and mandolin
 Strike up, and from the minstrel gallery
 All dancing sounds that on our earth may be,
 Mingle and whirl and maze their notes within,
 But fret your ears that listen yet for me!

Your lords, like any yellow crocus row,
 Flash in the torch-glare as they pace and turn,
 Like star and fire and ice, glitter and burn
 The world of jewels where your ladies go,
 From whom the tulip and the rose might learn.

No crowded pageantry, my prince, can hide
 A scarlet bird set in a lily plot—
 How could it be that I should see you not?
 I, in the shadow of a dark fire-side,
 Who weave our story in the embers hot?

You live and move until the fire be cold,
 Prince of the princes of a dream-long line!
 Was he not forefather, my lord, of thine,
 Who won that sweet white cat-princess of old,
 And fairy books his quest and prize enshrine?

Why do I wait, lonely and piteous,
 The hour when you shall teach me to forget
 This jealous dream that lies between us yet?
 Alas! my prince, what hath divided us
 And parted our two hands when once they met?

O bright-eyed mice, though wainscot keepeth you;
 A little while and then you shall be fain,
 Changed by a word, bells at your bridle rein,
 Trapped in my colours, prancing two and two,
 To draw my coach along the streets again.

Full wearily my feet tap on the floor,
 Chiding the crystal slipper's long delay;
 I shut my eyes, the strings speak as they may,
 The pumpkin chariot rattles to the door—
 I come, my prince, it is our meeting day!

A TEA-PARTY IN THE HEIGHT OF THE SEASON.



No one was available for my tea-party who was well in health, sound of limb, or well off, and who did not live within a mile of Charrington Hall, Mile End Road.

On asking for a list of the names I was surprised to find that my invitation must extend to three hundred and eleven individuals between the ages of four years and twenty, every one of whom was a cripple or paralysed,

and in several cases blind, and deaf and dumb as well.

The tea was to take place at half-past four, and soon after three a long line of carriages stopped the way, not such as are to be seen outside the Foreign Office and the Mansion House on the evenings of receptions, but perambulators of every shape and in every condition of decay, each with a suffering child within it, eager to be in time for "the party."

In addition to these "carriage folk" boys and girls who were only cripples, came hopping in on their crutches, and mothers and big sisters followed one after the other, ready to drop with fatigue from having walked long distances with heavy paralysed children in their arms.

Instead of a mounted police inspector to keep order and marshal the guests to the proper door, we had a paralysed young man with a pleasant face, who rode up and down the court on a self-acting go-cart with a kind word and clear direction to each, and the intelligent lad who took the tickets and prevented the entrance of uninvited folk had but one leg. Surely it was a remarkable tea-party!

It must not be thought that my guests were sad—it was only our eyes that were full of tears; and as at length they were all seated and ready for tea it was difficult to believe that the lives of all these children were those of deprivation and suffering, and that they scarcely knew an hour free of pain.

I allowed those whom I invited to give an opinion as to what they would like to eat and drink on the occasion of their visit to me, and they gave it unanimously for hot tea, new bread-and-butter and cake, which they had in abundance. I thought it better to give them

the choice, as a lady last summer invited many of these same children to tea in her garden, and, thinking to give them a rare treat, placed before each child a plate of fresh strawberries covered with cream. Imagine her disappointment when, without exception, they all refused to touch them, saying, "they did not like sour milk"!

I am anxious to introduce to you some of my guests as they sit at table or lie in their perambulators taking tea or being fed; most of them forgetful for a short time of their pain, their useless limbs, their blindness and their poverty.

Among them were thirty-nine with spinal disease, fifty-three paralysed, one hundred and twenty-six with hip disease, seven blind and paralysed, one blind and deformed, three deaf and dumb, nine with paralysis of the brain, and the rest cripples.

One of my guests, a girl of twenty-five years of age, had never been outside the house till Mr. Boyer took her with others to Epping Forest. Fancy being out for the first time in your life at the age of twenty-five!

Another, a child who is deaf and dumb. Her affliction was not discovered until she was three years old—the poor little dear had had many a whipping because she would not obey the orders of her mother up to the time the doctors declared what the trouble was.

Another guest has a paralysed face, which is terribly distorted when he laughs or cries.

Many of those paralysed or crippled became so through accidents when they were babies.

The question asked by some friends who were helping me for the first time was, "Do these children come from a Home? and if not, how were you able to make their acquaintance and get them together here to day?"

Well, in the answer to this lies the gist of the whole matter.

Up to the year 1888, with all our philanthropy and the growing fashion for what is known as slumming, we knew none of these who sit round our table to-day. They were hidden away in garret and cellar by the parents who were ashamed of them, and there they were month after month, year after year, neglected and shunned and rarely, if ever, allowed to see the light or breathe the fresh air. What their condition was you could not imagine if you thought your hardest. Their homes, or rather caricatures of home, were wretched and filthy beyond description. Healthy children would become diseased or lose their reason under such conditions; what, then, was the result upon these suffering ones it is not difficult to imagine.

Well, bad as all this was, it might have remained so until this day but for God's goodness in sending a man here who was to penetrate into the vilest homes and saddest hearts in our metropolis. Do you ask what were his qualifications for such a task? Simply his love for children and a desire to make them happy in this world and the next.

He came over from America and settled in the humblest lodging in Mile End Road with a little money of his own. He made friends with any neglected ragged child he met in the back streets and courts on either side of the main road; but these little street Arabs are very cautious and were very slow to respond to his kindly greeting. They eyed him suspiciously and jerked out, "What der yer want wi' us?"

However, the first rung of the ladder he desired to mount was touched when one Saturday he took a dozen boys hatless, shoeless, and in rags to Victoria Park to teach them how to fly kites and play cricket, and gave them some biscuits and milk on the way.

A few weeks later, had you been there, you would have seen him with a hundred or more following at his heels, taking his hands, or holding on to his coat-tails on their way to the Park, and finding in him a capital playmate. When they were tired they would sit down and eat the biscuits that this good man had had the thought to bring with him, and then would come the time to speak a few words of the "Old, old Story," and to teach them a verse of a hymn and how to sing it; and before they began another game he would enquire their names, where they lived, what brothers and sisters they had, all of which he noted in a book, and thus he was gradually let into the secrets hidden away in the cellars and attics. And how he longed to let in light and air to these dark corners no one knew. It was no easy matter, however, to work through all the prejudices which barred his way, but by prayer and love the doors were at length opened to him.

In order to work out his problem he lived on sixpence a day, for one cannot pamper self and indulge in hobbies at the same time; and I am afraid he came near to starvation by the time the Ragged School Union were fortunate enough to secure him as one of their workers at a salary of £100 a year.

Having obtained entrance into the houses where the deformed and paralysed were hidden away, his first work was to get them washed and replace their rags with clean and decent clothing, and the next to buy one or two perambulators and mail-carts and give the children an hour's ride in the fresh air every

now and again. Your own hearts will tell you the joy this was to those who had scarcely ever been outside the filthy dens they called home.

If you want to know something of the honour in which he is held in the East End of London you should go with him as we did into the homes of these cripples and paralysed. The eyes grew bright with pleasure, and the pain almost forgotten, while in his kind way he said, "I guess little Janey is better to-day," or "Is Dick trying to be brave?" From the windows and doors in the courts and alleys as children caught sight of him they called out, "Allo, Mr. Boyer!" and came running towards him till we had a bodyguard such as we had never had before.

Now you see how it comes to pass that the maimed, the halt, and the blind were with us able to take part in our tea-party, and enjoy it. There was one drawback to their happiness, for their good friend Mr. Boyer was in the London Hospital awaiting an operation. He obtained leave, however, from the doctors to come for two hours, and during this short time their joy was full, and it was most pathetic as the two hours were drawing to a close to hear him wish the children he loved so well good-bye, and ask their prayers that he might soon be working among them again. It was as much as we could do to choke down our sobs.

The tea being over, the children were removed to the large hall, where garments, books, toys, and sweets were distributed. I am sure you would like to know how we were able to supply every child with these, because it was no small matter to give to over three hundred. In the first place Marshall and Snelgrove, with their usual kindness, gave me several yards of print and serge, which, together with a large mass of remnants I bought, we made up into garments and underlinen. Messrs Grevel and Kind, the foreign publishers, allowed us to purchase at a minimum price a hundred of those beautiful movable toy-books, and I think they would have had their reward could they have seen the delight of the children as they perceived that the pictures moved at their bidding: it was something quite new to them. The sweets I had ordered of Messrs. Barratt, the famous wholesale confectioners, and on asking the amount to pay I was told to accept them as their present to the children.

The toys and dolls were given by my friends, who also assisted me in making up the garments, and, to crown all, Mr. Charrington was so kind as to allow us the free use of both his halls. The pretty shawls and quilts for the perambulators were made with wool given to me by Mr. Faudell Phillips. Twenty-five of my friends, ladies and gentlemen, were present to assist me in preparing the tea and waiting upon the children and distributing the presents to them, among whom was our kind Editor, who was not the least gentle and attentive to these suffering children.

Of course to an interested observer there were many pathetic incidents in the course of the evening. The following is one:—

As the children passed to say good-night and receive each a bag of sweets, two crippled girls paused in front of me, and I offered each a full paper bag, all the pretty pink and white muslin ones having already been given. The one girl took hers but the other did not, and I thought it was because they were in paper, so I said, "My dear, I am sorry I have none of

the pretty bags left, but the sweets are quite the same." "Yes, mum, please; where are they? I's blind." I stooped down and placed them in her hand, and she went off quite happy.

Perhaps you would like to know if anything else is done for these sufferers besides giving them teas and fresh air; and I am happy to say Mr. Boyer and his helpers have taught many of them to read and write and cipher and to be clever at trades such as can be learned as they lie in bed or in perambulators, and we hope that many of them by this means will, in time, be self-supporting. Mr. Boyer has a very efficient helper, in Miss Jessie, a blind woman, who has great influence over the children and their parents, who do not object to her visits as she cannot see the poverty nor the dirt of their homes.

I, who have known these children for four years, am quite astonished at the progress they have made in intelligence, in neatness, and in cleanliness; in good manners and self-respect: there was not one thing to complain of in their behaviour either at tea or at the distribution of presents.

They sang for us several times, and were pleased at the idea of entertaining us instead of our entertaining them as previously had been the case. Many an eye was full of tears as two of the children were held in the arms of a gentleman while they sang a hymn as a solo, the whole of the others joining in chorus.

These afflicted friends of Mr. Boyer are capable of very heroic deeds. On one occasion when he took a large number of them to Epping Forest two of those invited came late to the meeting place and were left behind. One, a girl, was in a perambulator, and had water on the brain, besides being partly paralysed, and the other was a boy with one leg. The girl began to cry and the crowd round them to lament. They thought there was nothing else to do, when the boy said to the girl, "Don't ye cry, I'll push you there;" and this he certainly did on a very hot day, starting from Mile End Road about ten and getting to the forest just as the children were being collected to return in the evening. On arriving the plucky boy fainted, and the girl cried "Oh, Misser Boyer, I's all shookit up!"

Do you wonder why I tell you all this? It is because there is no more loving Christ-like work going on in London than this of Mr. Boyer among the cripple drift children, and he wants help to carry it out. He wants your prayers, your money; he wants clothes, he wants perambulators and mail carts. He has sent in his resignation to the Ragged School Union—one reason being that it wanted to send him to the South of London and sever him from those he had loved and cared for in the East, and it was a matter of life and death to him, he could not do it. Of one thing we may be assured, that not a penny nor an article entrusted to him for the good of these suffering ones but will be expended on them. No earthly parent loves his children more than this man loves these maimed and helpless ones whom he has gathered out of deepest poverty and wretchedness into the light of love and tenderness. His enthusiasm and earnestness have attracted towards him many steady workers, and it is not difficult to see that his example will result in making them as self-sacrificing as himself. His address and centre of work is 29, Cottage Grove, Bow, E.; and his honorary treasurer is D. Henry Fry (son of Elizabeth Fry), 73, Harold Road, Upton Park, E.

