

Literature, &c.

The British Magazines
FOR JUNE.From Douglas Jerrold's Magazine.
MRS EDEN'S SIXPENCE.

A SHORT STORY FOR SAMARITANS.

It was a little child that had come to the door to beg. But the knock—timid and hesitating as it was—disturbed the baby, that after much rocking and soothing, Mrs Eden had just succeeded in getting into its first sleep. And very displeased with the knock was Mrs Eden in consequence, and her mind was fully made up,—not only to dismiss the beggar—if beggar it were,—without alms, but to speak a sharp word or two, into the bargain. But this last resolution was dismissed before she reached the door,—for she encountered a cutting gust of wind in the passage, which made her remember how severe the weather was out in the bleak streets, and opportunely reminded her that Christian charity would not tolerate sharp words under the circumstances.

Severe enough, God knows, the weather had been for some days. People who had made their calculations, decided that for seven winters, the thermometer had not fallen so many degrees below the freezing point. Only that morning, within half a mile of Mrs. Eden's residence, a girl had been found stone dead—frozen, poor thing, on the doorstep of a rich man's house. But the rich man knew not, of course, that she was there,—for it is not in the human heart to suffer a fellow-creature to perish with cold and hunger on a doorstep. The rich man had dropped into a sound sleep—drawing up his limbs in his comfortable warm bed,—unconscious of the tragedy which, so near to him, was witnessed by the awful frost.

When Mrs. Eden had got the door open,—which was not easy of accomplishment—for the wind for some moments absolutely insisted on keeping it shut, she beheld a little, ragged starveling, of what sex she could not determine—small enough to be only six years old—but sufficiently aged in features to be twelve or thirteen—poverty having done the work of time, and laboured at it with good-will. Now Mrs. Eden, as we have seen, had determined to bestow no alms. The crying baby still admonished her of the interruption to its slumbers, and as it was a very wakeful baby indeed, she had to calculate upon a second course of rocking and soothing, before she could lay it on the pillow, and so find an opportunity to prepare her husband's supper. But woman's heart, and a mother's heart, especially, is nature's master-piece of sympathy. And Mrs. Eden, who had little time for reading books, was a great scholar in human faces. God's Gospel, she often said in her own quaint fashion, was written in children's features,—a speech for which she was, on one occasion, taken soundly to task, by a local preacher and distributor of tracts. I believe she was right notwithstanding. When she had looked only an instant upon the little ragged epicene, and heard the piteous wail which its thin blue lips uttered, and which resolved itself into some such words as these—

'Have you anything to give a poor child to-night, that's got no mother, please?'—She felt a twinge at the heart, that by some process of association, had reference to a certain sixpence which was deposited in a pill-box that stood upon the mantel-piece within, and which she had that morning picked up in an adjoining street. It seemed to Mrs. Eden that this wail could not be applied to better use than the relief of the little mendicant. Accordingly she bestowed the coin upon the child, whose faculty of speech was averted by the magnitude of the alms, and the donor was unthanked. She did not heed the circumstance, for she belonged not to that class of benefactors who are uneasy if the palate of their benevolence go unlicked by praise.

The child, grasping the coin in its little hand, made quick way to a baker's shop, before whose window, amongst other hungry and frost-pinched children she (for it was a girl that Mrs. Eden had relieved,) had stood but a brief while before, eyeing the loaves that were as hopeless of attainment as the very food of angels. There was one loaf with its crusty side turned to catch the eye of the passers, upon which she resolved to expend the sixpence. Now it chanced that the baker was not to be numbered amongst the kindest member of the human family. There was an acidity in his countenance which repelled liking. Some men favour at a glance. This baker was of a different class. He was sour with an emphasis, especially to children, and more particularly to poor children. To do him justice he was not servile to the rich. He was vinegar still,—a little diluted, perhaps—but never oil or butter, or any unctuous substance, though his wealthiest customer were counting gold or standard weight upon his desk.

The girl fearlessly entered the shop, and pointed to the loaf she desired to possess. The baker frowned,—to his customary vinegar, he added a copious dash of unripe lemon-juice. The child threw down the sixpence.

'That loaf—that 'un there—he in the corner,' said the child, eagerly. But the baker, who had taken up the coin, did not hasten to execute the order. He narrowly inspected the money, and dissatisfied with the scrutiny, notched it with a file. And then the full villainy of its being was revealed. The Samaritan gift—Good Spirits had looked down upon it and blessed it—was a sham. Adjoining the neighbourhood in which the baker resided, a gang of coiners had recently established themselves, and base money was frequently tendered at the

shops of the various tradesmen. Twice that day bad sixpences had been presented to the baker in exchange for bread. The call upon his time which the prosecution of the offenders would have demanded, had alone deterred from such a step, but he had inwardly resolved, that on the next occasion the party should be made an example of. Without more ado therefore, he walked to his door, and promised a penny roll to a ragged urchin for fetching a policeman. The lad darted off, shrieking 'police' as he went, and followed by a dozen boys and girls, ragged as himself, and vociferating as loudly.

An officer was soon found. He listened to the baker—examined the coin, and professed to recognise the child as an old hand at 'that sort of thing.'

'You'll have to attend to-morrow, Mr Bulrush,' he said to the baker. 'Ten will be the hour. It's uncertain when 'twill come off,—but we'll have consideration for you, on account of your business. Bread is dear enough—'an't it.'

'It will be very inconvenient for me to appear myself,' remarked the baker. 'I suppose if I send my wife it will do—won't it?'

The policeman thought otherwise, and grasped the little hand compressed within his own, tighter as he said so. The child uttered a piteous cry of pain, and bade the man release her, that she might take the loaf to her father. At this juncture the baker's wife entered the shop.

'You are hurting your little girl,' she said to the policeman.

'My little girl,' said the piqued officer, glancing disdainfully at the child; 'Thank you, Mrs Bulrush,—my little girl makes a better appearance than a beggar's child—my little girl has warm, respectable clothing, and never utters bad money.'

'Oh, it's another case of bad money—is it? Why, that makes the third to-day.'

'Bad money,' cried the child, beginning to cry as she now first understood her position. 'A woman gave it to me—Father sent me out to beg, and told me to buy bread with what I got. I won't go to gaol. Please let me go home.'

'It may be true what she says,' remarked the baker's spouse.

'Tis so young a child, I don't see what's the use of sending her to prison; except for charity's sake, for I suppose they'll feed her there. I would let her go—I would, Bulrush.'

'Why, you see, ma'am, it wouldn't do to let her go,' replied the policeman; 'if it's only on the principle of getting her fed. Why, as a Christian and a mother, Mrs Bulrush, you must say prison feeding is better than chance bread. Bless you, she won't know herself when she comes out; she'll be so plump and fat.'

A customer had entered the shop during the officer's speech.

'Why, Mr Eden,' said the baker's lady, 'you are a stranger. How's your respectable wife and the nice baby? Here's a case of a bad sixpence—a shame, an't it, to see so young a hand at it—the third case to-day—tradesmen need be careful.'

'Bad money—so young, too—not the first attempt, I suppose,' said Mr Eden.

'Oh, no—an old hand at it, sir. I've had my eye upon her this long time,' said the policeman.

'I want a half-quartern loaf, Mr Bulrush—a crusty one, if you have it—that in the window will just suit me,' and Mr Eden pointed to the loaf which the child had intended to purchase. When she saw the baker deliver it to his customer, she renewed her crying and wept more bitterly than ever.

'Well, good night, Bulrush—good night, Mrs B,' said Mr Eden, turning to depart. 'She's young—too young for oakum picking—cold night, isn't it?' and he left the shop.

The policeman also quitted it, dragging the child along—while Mr Bulrush put on his great coat—wiped the flour from his face, and prepared to follow him to make the charge at the station house.

The baby was asleep before the knocker responded to the application of Mr Eden's finger. The supper was in course of preparation—but not ready, and Mr Eden was a hasty man. But for the little mendicant, baby would have been disposed of half-an-hour before, and the sausages would be 'keeping warm' upon the hob. Rat-tat-tat

As it happened, Mr Eden was in the best possible humour. His employers—he was junior clerk to a merchant firm in the City—had that day taken him confidentially aside, and announced their determination to elevate him to a higher post, and increase his salary £70 annually. He could, therefore, bear to wait complacently for his supper. He would run to the nearest tavern for half a pint of the best Scotch whisky, in which to drink his employers' health. Mrs Eden had no objection to whisky—and the sausages would be ready by the time he was returned, and had got his house coat and slippers on. Meanwhile, the little hungry girl was dismally sobbing in her cell at the station-house.

'By the bye, my dear,' said Mr Eden to his wife after supper, 'when I stepped into Bulrush's for that loaf, he was just giving a miserable child into custody for attempting to pass a bad sixpence—plenty of base money about—the third bad sixpence offered at Bulrush's to-day. You must be careful of the change you get in silver at the shop.'

'Three bad sixpences in one day! What sort of a child was it?'

'Oh, a little old-fashioned beggarly looking little thing with a careworn old-looking face. The policeman knew her well—an old hand at that sort of thing.'

'It was a girl then—what sort of a bonnet had she on?'

'Bonnet—I don't know whether it was a bonnet or hat—it was squabbed out of all shape. To me she looked more like a boy than a girl.'

'How old do you think, this girl was?' said Mrs E., following up the thread of her own reflections.

'Any age between six and fourteen. You seem concerned for her, my dear.'

'Concerned!—how absurd. Your pipe is on the sideboard. I'm going out a shopping—I've got a few little things to get in for to-morrow. If baby wakes'

'You an't going out to night, my love?' said Mr Eden.

'Yes. I must go—we shan't have a candle in the house when that is burnt out.'

'You may bring me in some tobacco. Stay—you may buy me two cigars, Mrs E.—old Cubas—they are three half-pence each, my love.'

'Two old Cubas—I won't forget.'

She had hastily equipped herself in shawl and bonnet while she was talking, and only lingered to bid her husband listen for baby's waking,—ere she set her nimble feet upon the pavement, and turned her face towards the baker's dwelling. Within doors she had only half-guessed how cold it was without. The freezing wind came hard against her like a substance. The few persons abroad were wrapped to the teeth,—except the very poor,—and God help them in all weathers! From the baker and his wife, she could extract nothing concerning the child, save that she had tendered a bad sixpence, for which Bulrush was determined to punish her.

Their description of her person strengthened Mrs Eden's conjectures, and she repaired to the station-house to see the child.

She had never been in a station-house before—nor had she ever set foot within a Police Court or Criminal Court. With humanity, as it appears under the awful guises there set forth, she was unacquainted. The battered, brutal visages she saw there, confronted with the myrmidons of law,—especially the befaced womanhood of those of her own sex who were under arrest filled her with dismay and terror. She could tell her errand to the inspector only with great difficulty. The man was gentle for his office, and willingly acceded to her request. Mrs Eden recognised her immediately, and the little girl knew her also.

'You gave me the sixpence—indeed—I didn't know it was a bad 'un. Let me go home to my father,' sobbed the child.

'I did indeed give her sixpence only a few minutes before she was given into custody,' said Mrs. Eden.

'If the tradesman chooses not to appear against her, she will be discharged to-morrow by the magistrate,' remarked the inspector. 'You had better talk to Bulrush, ma'am.'

'Can the child go with me to the shop?'

inquired Mrs. Eden.

'No—but if, after examining the sixpence, you are satisfied that it is the coin you gave her, and the baker consents to withdraw the charge, I will act upon my own responsibility, and let her go,' replied the man.

Mrs. Eden had already seen the coin, but could not swear that it was the gift she had bestowed upon the little beggar. She was a lover of truth. But the appealing face of the meagre child sorely tempted her. And, moreover, she felt almost confident that it was the sixpence she had picked up and deposited in the pill-box. Should she stretch a point and say she was quite confident about the identity of the coin? Certain moral scruples beset her mind, but another glance at the child's face quieted them. God's gospel of truth was written in those lineaments—as far as the sixpence was concerned,—as certainly as the bright sun was itself a true thing, created by the Author of Truth. She said she was confident, and would swear if they required her. So the inspector sent a policeman to fetch the baker.

The end of it was—that the sour baker, who, as Twelfth Night was drawing nigh, was deep in cakes, and had his time fully occupied, was glad of an excuse for escaping attendance at the police court on the morrow, and freely consented to take Mrs Eden's explanation of the matter. The child was therefore set at liberty, and went to her wretched home—carrying a quartern loaf, and some ready-cooked meat, and a few little 'grocery things'—Mrs Eden's gifts—for, as she said to the baker's wife, 'I can't help being kind to very little children, when they come to beg—'tis a weakness, but I can't help it.'

Mrs Eden slept soundly that night, and her repose—she told me this herself—had no reference whatever to Eden's elevation, and the annual addition of seventy pounds to his salary.

From Hogg's Weekly Instructor.

THE POSITION OF MAN IN THE
SCALE OF BEING.

WHAT a wide arena of magnificent display does this globe we inhabit present to the eye of each favoured observer! In the field, in the meadow, in the tortuous course of the rambling stream or on the bosom of the placid lake, the naturalist everywhere finds food for his intelligent mind, for the works of nature require only examination to be thoroughly appreciated. On one hand we have the chain of being, like one large family, linked by bonds of close connexion, and ascending step by step, by easy grades, and in mutual harmony, until we reach the highest link, where man proudly and pre-eminently takes his station; while on the other, we witness an Omnipotent Designing Power directed by his nod the mechanism

which governs the actions of that insect whose earthly sojourn is limited to the short-lived compass of an hour, and governing by his will those great fundamental laws which separate night and day, and keep in perpetual, unerring motion these vast planetary domains.

The animal kingdom bears ascendancy over the vegetable by the possession of two inherent principles bestowed liberally throughout the scale of being, and termed instinct and intelligence. A line of demarcation unquestionably exists between these powers, and their relative influence exercises the most material diversities in the habits and propensities of the various tribes of animals. Instinct pervades the whole animal creation: intelligence is confined to a part of it. The physical conformation of an animal and its instinctive propensities bear no comparison, since insects possess the power in its most perfect form. Intelligence uniformly exists in an equal ratio with the size and development of the brain of the animal. Instinct never aims at rising above mere physical wants, but contents itself with providing for its possessor a home and a livelihood, and other means of facilitating an existence which we have every reason to believe they enjoy; while intelligence soars aloft and expends its powers in the highest subjects of knowledge, is wide in its provisions and diversified in its aims; like a beam of divine light it reflects its blessings over the whole human race; the wide universe is its field of action; and the enslaved elements themselves are the mighty instruments.

The large class of insects, occupying every portion of the earth, exemplify a general law in nature, that wherever life can be sustained, there we invariably find life produced. The resources of the microscope disclose a still wider field exhibiting the great fertility of this division of the animal kingdom, as vast myriads of animalcula are to be seen in almost every fluid. Instinct, in its most undiscerning and uncontrollable state, rules all the actions of the group, and shows to what pure perfection it does attain by the mathematical ingenuity displayed in the construction of the cell of the bee, as well as the forethought which the same insect exhibits by the act of providing a magazine of food on which it may subsist during the rigours of a severe winter—an innate power rivalling, if not in many instances surpassing, similar foresight in the intelligent being. Fishes, although they form a large and peculiarly developed race, stand very low in the scale of being, and the diminutive size of the brain indicates their possession of a very small amount of intelligence. The sub-kingdom of birds is particularly interesting, not only on account of their graceful mechanism, but chiefly for their instinctive propensities, modified as these are by a certain amount of intelligence. Each species of bird is guided by an instinct peculiarly its own, which may be readily observed by the diversities exhibited in the construction of the nest. Under the guidance of the same power, the swallow migrates for a season to a foreign shore, and spends its winter beneath the genial covering of a southern sky. With what an anxious care our common domestic hen watches over her chickens, how she shields them from the storm and the intruder, and gathers them under her wings; or witness the same fowl when she has the misfortune to rear a brood of young ducklings, observing the first entre of her charge into the water, see the heart of the poor mother how it throbs with fear and anguish; view her whole frame convulsed with fatal apprehension as she runs and flies around the margin of the pond, while the little imps, reckless of all danger, seem to laugh a mother's fears to scorn as they flounder with delight in their beloved element. This trait of instinct appears very closely allied to the mental emotion of the rational being.

The class mammalia, to which man belongs is distinguished for the complex organisation of its members, and their superior amount of intelligence, which enables them to perform a vast variety of physical motions, accompanying these with the most delicate sensations. Mammalia are longer dependant upon the parent than any other tribe of animals, and it seems a law in nature's economy, that the higher degree of development a creature is to assume, in a greater measure does it require to be assisted during the morning of its existence. In man this period is very much prolonged, and, in consequence, benefits materially the social condition of the race. In light, sound, sense of smell, muscular power, and acuteness of sensibility, some species can boast a superiority over man. The sagacity of the dog, the elephant, and the monkey, is quite proverbial; nor is this sagacity confined to any solitary instance in their habits, but under the most circumstances do these animals display an adaption to certain ends of which they are conscious. When we review the corporeal frame of man, the first mark which engages the attention is the erect posture which it assumes. Tracing the skeleton from head to foot, we find every part of it giving strength and stability to those immediately beneath. The foot presents the form of an arch, with the bone of the heel forming one side of support while the ball of the great toe forms the other. This design allows the whole weight of the body to rest with impunity upon the foot, and likewise enables man to stand upon one leg, a position that no other mammiferous animal is capable of assuming.

The situation of the face, and aspect of the countenance, are very indicative of man's supremacy. Each emotion of the mind reflects itself upon the face as upon the mirror, and the passions are there so faithfully portrayed that even a brute will crouch at them. The hand may be styled the most valued com-