

MINNA, THE BROOM-GIRL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE YOUNG EMIGRANTS."

"And buy of the wandering Bavarian a broom,
Buy a broom, buy a broom!"

"ISABEL, you told me yesterday, that if I were diligent, and learned my French lessons well this week, you would take me to the Bazaar, that I might lay out my savings in buying some nice toy. Now I have resolved to buy a doll; not a common doll, like those we see in the baskets in Oxford-street, but an elegant lady-like doll, such a one as Lady Eltham brought Miss Caroline from Paris. I saw such a pretty one at the Soho Bazaar, better than Miss Caroline's French doll; such a darling, and—"

"Well, Adela?"

"Well, sister Isabel, I mean to buy that very doll; and, as I have been a *very* good girl, I suppose you will walk out with me, that I may lay out my money."

"Let me hear how good you have been," said Isabel.

"In the first place, then," replied Adela, with a satisfied air, "I have written a French exercise, translated two fables from La Fontaine, learned a tense of a verb, and practised my music for an hour.

Besides all these things, I have nearly hemmed three sides of this cambric handkerchief for Mamma."

"Well, Adela, all this was very well; and I will say you have been a diligent girl this morning;—to be a *good* girl something more is required, and to be very good, you ought to have done some good and kind action. There is a great difference between being good and being diligent. We are commanded to assist our fellow-creatures in all things, when they stand in need of our help; to be patient, meek, and humble, in our own eyes; to be dutiful to our parents, to be kind to those that hate as well as to those that love us: in short, my dear Adela, to do many things that you neglect to do,—before the term good can rightly be applied to us:—do you now think you deserve to be called a very good girl?"

After a short pause Adela said, she thought she saw a difference between her sort of goodness and that which her sister described, and so she supposed she was not really good.

"Your's is comparative, not positive goodness, Adela," observed Isabel; "that is, you are a good girl compared with one who has not performed her allotted tasks. Now put on your bonnet, and we will go to the Bazaar."

As the sisters were passing through Charles-street, in their way to Soho-square, the attention

of Isabel Summers was attracted to one of those German girls who come yearly from the neighbourhood of Frankfort-on-Maine, and from different parts of Bavaria, with those curious little brooms, which are formed of the sticks of a species of osier, shaved in a peculiar manner.

These Germans, generally speaking, are a simple-hearted, moral people: the parents remarkable for tenderness to their children, the children for duty and affection to their parents.

The national dress by which these foreigners are distinguished is a tight bodice, or little jacket, and petticoat of dark blue, grey, or russet cloth, set in full plaits round the waist, and made very short, according to the fashion of their country; a small quilted-mob cap, without any border, which scanty covering supplies the place of a hat or bonnet. Their light brown hair is either rolled quite back from the forehead, or parted in smooth bands across the brow. On the left arm they carry their brooms, which they offer with a winning smile and in a peculiarly pleasing tone of voice, for "only two pennies, or creat proom for saxpennies, ver cheap; or von large, creat proom for von Englis skilling (shilling)." Their countenances usually express candour and simplicity. In height, complexion, and colour of the eyes and hair, they are all so nearly alike, that a person unused to these

foreigners, would be tempted to imagine them all members of one family.

There was an unusual air of sadness in the meek blue eyes of the young German girl that accosted the sisters, which excited a considerable degree of interest in the mind of Isabel. The crowd hurried on, regardless of the gentle appeal of the young foreigner, "to puy proom of a poor German maid."

Disappointment and dejection sat on the brow of the wanderer at each rejection of her humble appeal; but hope again brightened in her eyes, as she caught the expression of kindly interest with which Isabel regarded her.

"Puy a proom, tear laty," she said, "of a poor stranger maid."

"I do not want one," replied Isabel; "neither could I carry it through the street, if I were to buy one of your brooms."

"Myself will carry it for you," returned the broom-girl quickly: "Minna has not earned von single penny to-day, and de moder pe sick, and vant food. Ah! laty," she continued, her blue eyes filling with tears as she turned them anxiously on the face of Isabel, "you know not de crief of seeing a tear moder sick, and without food, in a strange country, far from friends and de faderland (native land), or you would pity a poor proom-girl, and not turn away from her sorrowful cry."

Isabel was touched by this appeal to her filial feelings. "Well, Minna," she said, "you shall go home with me, and I will buy some of your brooms;" and Isabel turned to retrace her steps to Oxford-street, when Adela forcibly pulled her sleeve, and whispered, in a whining tone, "You have forgotten my doll, sister."

"Cannot you defer buying your doll till to-morrow?" asked Isabel.

"No, I do not like to wait another day; I want her this very afternoon: and you know you did promise," said little Adela.

"I know I did promise to go with you to the Bazaar; but, if I do, I cannot go home with this poor girl: but, perhaps," she added, "you will not mind carrying the brooms I intend buying of Minna yourself."

"You are joking with me, Isabel," said Adela, resentfully: "finely it would look, indeed, to see Miss Adela Summers carrying brooms on her shoulder, like a poor German broom-girl."

"Perhaps you would prefer seeing me carrying them through the streets," observed Isabel, drily.

"No, I should not like it at all; but you need not buy these ugly brooms. I am sure they will be of no use to you; for you never sweep the house," replied Adela, pettishly.

"Dey pe nice proom for sweeping dust from pic-

ture-frame or ped-hanging, and little proom pe coot ting for sprinkling linen, young laty," said Minna, who had lent an anxious ear to the dialogue between the sisters.

"Well, Adela, will you not give a trifle to this poor distressed foreigner?" said Isabel.

But Adela could not part with her savings, she said, till she knew exactly how much her doll would cost; and she pouted and regarded the poor sorrowful Minna with looks of evident displeasure from beneath her down-cast eyelids.

"Adela, shall I buy Minna's brooms, and enable her to carry home money to buy food for her sick mother; or shall I go with you to the Bazaar?" asked Isabel, looking steadfastly on the face of her little sister.

Adela did not answer: she felt ashamed to say, "Go with me to the Bazaar;" and she could not resolve to overcome her selfish inclination. She stood scraping her shoe along the edge of the pavement, looking very cross and sulky.

Isabel guessed what was passing in the mind of her little sister; and, thinking the present opportunity a fitting one for proving to her how really weak she was, and hoping to convince her of this great error in her character, by making her feel the pain of self-reproach, that painful, but wholesome, corrector of our faults, she put a trifle, un-

seen by Adela, into Minna's hand, and, having ascertained where she might be found, she continued her walk to the Bazaar.

Adela hung down her head during the rest of the way, for she was ashamed to look up; but, when she saw all the pretty toys and dolls at the Bazaar, her uneasiness vanished, and she quite forgot Minna and her brooms.

After a long time spent in walking through the rooms, and examining the separate merits of dolls with blue eyes, and dolls with black eyes; dolls with flaxen, auburn, or black ringlets; wax or composition; Dutch, English, or French dolls, with other points of equal importance to a doll-buyer, Adela at length purchased a very beautiful wax doll, very elegantly dressed in white muslin with pink trimming, for which she gave the sum of ten shillings, the whole of her half-year's savings. The purchase of this doll left Adela with an empty purse—she had not so much as one single sixpence remaining.

Adela was so charmed with her beautiful doll, that she resolved on carrying her through the streets in her arms. Isabel advised her to consign her to the care of the porter who attended at the Bazaar with his basket; but Adela persisted in declaring she should take more care of her treasure than the porter would.

“Please yourself, Adela,” replied her sister; “but remember of what frail materials this dear doll is composed.” Regardless of this remonstrance, the perverse little girl proceeded homewards, hugging her doll in her arms, and congratulating herself on having gained her own way. But her joy was of short duration; for a careless baker’s boy, with a basket of bread on either arm, pushed so rudely past Adela, that the corner of one of the baskets came in contact with the doll’s head, and gave it so rude a shock that the wax doll’s head, with all its adornments of blue eyes, rosy cheeks, and luxuriant flaxen ringlets, fell from its shoulders, and rolled along the pavement at her feet. Adela held in her arms only a headless trunk. Her distress was unspeakable—she wept floods of tears; and, with flashing eyes and crimsoned cheeks, she angrily reproached the author of the mischief: but the baker-boy, without appearing at all moved by her distress, trudged across the street, saying, “I’m sorry, little Miss, the baby’s head was so brittle it wouldn’t stand a knock: them kind of gimeracks arn’t very strong, a wooden one will outlast ten such.”

This speech added not a little to Adela’s mortification; and she continued to cry aloud during the rest of the walk. Isabel spoke not one word of consolation, but preserved an unbroken silence till

they reached home; and Adela, overwhelmed alike with chagrin and anger, retired to the nursery, to mourn over the disasters of the day, and to regret her own selfishness and wilful folly, which had terminated in so melancholy a catastrophe.

The following morning, after Adela's governess had dismissed her from the school-room, Isabel bade her put on her tippet and bonnet, as she intended taking a walk. In the course of conversation, Isabel said, "Adela, do you feel satisfied with your conduct yesterday?"

"Indeed, dear Isabel," replied the little girl, blushing, "I was very naughty: I wish I had not persisted in carrying home the doll, and then the accident would not have happened—I am very sorry I did not do as you bade me."

"Is that all you are sorry for, Adela?"

Adela's eyes sank abashed beneath the searching glance that Isabel fixed on her face; and, in a low voice, she said, "No, not all: I am sorry I persisted in going to the Bazaar when you wished me not; and—"

"And have you no other cause for regret?"

The little girl did not speak; but her eyes filled with tears, and she sighed very deeply.

"Were you not grieved, Adela, that you refused to give a trifling sum to preserve a distressed fellow-creature from want and sorrow? Would not the

satisfaction arising from the performance of an act of kindness and benevolence have far outweighed the pleasure of playing with a new doll, even if you had brought her home in safety?"

"I wish I had not bought the doll," whispered little Adela. "If I had given all the money to Minna, I should not have been poorer than I am now: for I hate my doll now that she is without a head, and I cannot play with her, or show her to Miss Caroline."

"You would, at all events, have been much wiser and far happier, my dear sister; for you would have been doing your duty to your neighbour, and fulfilling the words of our Lord, who says, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

The sisters now approached a narrow alley, that led through a close, dark street, into a sort of court, which was composed of dirty, shabby houses; at one of which Isabel stopped, to the no small surprise of Adela. The door was opened by a woman of harsh and unpleasant aspect. She appeared astonished at the appearance of her visitors; and, curtsying very low, inquired what they wanted. Isabel said, she had been told some poor distressed foreigners lodged in her house, and she wished to speak with them. The woman replied, "There was a poor German buy-a-broom girl and her mother in the house; but they were very poverty

sort of folks, and not fit to be seen by ladies. But, I suppose, Miss," she added, "you will excuse their condition."

"The distressed need no excuse for their poverty," answered Isabel.

"Well, Miss," said the woman, "if you do not mind going among such shabby kind of folks, you may step down and see them."

"Isabel, I do not like going into such a dirty house," whispered Adela, drawing back.

"I should have enough to do, little Miss, I think, if I were to clean after my lodgers: going out and coming in, never stand for the dirt they make," muttered the woman of the house, as she proceeded to show Isabel the way down a flight of narrow steep stairs into an under-ground apartment of the most forlorn description.

This miserable apartment was almost destitute of furniture; containing only a wretched mattress, which occupied a distant corner, a stool, and an old deal box, which served the place of a table, and contained the only articles of apparel belonging to the unhappy inmates of the room.

By the dim rays of light which were partially admitted through the broken panes of a narrow casement, half crusted over with mud, and obscured by a variety of rags and paper, Isabel was enabled to discern the objects of her solicitude.

On the side of the wretched bed sat Minna Weber, supporting the drooping head of her mother on her bosom, while she tenderly strove to soothe the sorrowful moanings which pain and misery wrung from her lips. So intently was this poor girl engaged in watching the pale countenance of her suffering parent, that she did not, at first, perceive the entrance of the strangers, till her attention was directed towards them by the sharp tones of the landlady's voice: and in broken English she expressed her gratitude for "de goodness of young laty, who come to see poor German girl:" at the same time apologising, in the most intelligible manner she could, for not having two seats to offer for the accommodation of her visitors.

Isabel was moved to compassion on perceiving the miserable condition to which illness had reduced the mother of Minna, who was unable to raise herself in the bed, from complete exhaustion. "Your mother seems very ill," she said, turning to Minna.

"Minna's moder have pad cough ever since she come to dis country, laty," replied Minna.

"And how long have you been in England?"

"Petter den tre mont! tre long mont!" replied the young German, who evidently measured the length of time by the sorrow she had endured since her sojourn in England.

“From what part of Germany did you come?”

“From a village near Frankfort—Frankfort-on-Maine: dere pe many mile and moche sea from England.”

“And what induced you to come so far from your own land?”

With some vivacity Minna replied, “Dere pe moche money in England, put no proom: in Germany dere pe moche proom and little money. At Frankfort-on-Maine and in Pavarria men make de proom, and German girl and woman come over to dis country and sell dem.”

“And how do you reach England from Frankfort?” asked Isabel.

“We travel through Franche Compte to seaside, and den come over in de fire-skip.”*

Isabel was puzzled for a moment to know what Minna meant by a fire-skip; and she felt half inclined to laugh at this droll, but not unnatural, definition of a steam-vessel: but she checked her risibility, lest she should vex the poor foreigner, whose ignorance of the language had caused her mistake. “And can you sell your brooms in Franche Compte?”

“In Franche Compte I sell de proom, but not

* The reply of a poor German woman on my asking how she came over to England:—“Me come, coot laty, in de fire-skip;” meaning the steam-packet.

so well as in England. I sell de small proom for une sous, deux sous, tre sous," replied the young foreigner, counting on her fingers the numerals. "In Lonton I sell dem for quartre sous, six sous; and de creat proom of all for von skilling. Put England pe pad place for sick folk," she added, turning with tearful eyes towards her mother.

She then informed Isabel, that, being very poor, her mother and herself had been induced to join some of their country people, and come over to England to earn some money by the sale of their brooms: and, for this purpose, they laid out all their savings in buying a stock of brooms from the proprietors of the osier-grounds, near Frankfort; and, with many others from their village, they travelled through Franche Compte to the sea-side, where they embarked for England. That every thing went well with them, and they were very comfortable, till they came to London, when her mother fell sick with a bad cough and rheumatic fever, which entirely deprived her of the use of her limbs, and finally reduced them to their present state of distress. The trifling sum for which Minna sold her brooms was insufficient to supply their wants; and they had often been without food from one day to another.

One circumstance Minna seemed particularly to regret, which was the loss of her Bible, which had

been given her by the Protestant pastor of the village, and which Minna had been obliged to sell to buy food for her mother. This book had been the constant companion of her travels, and her solace under all her trials. "Minna could not see her moder starve," she said, sobbing; "and Oh, tear laty!" she continued, weeping, "Minna thought God had forsaken her quite. When she saw you yesterday, she had no food, no money to puy pread; and de woman of de house told Minna, if she did not get one skilling to pay de week lodg-ing, she and her poor sick moder must go into de street. Vat vould have pecome of us Minna do not know; put coot young laty have pity on poor Minna, and den she pay rent and get pread."

"Do you not see, my poor girl, that God does not forget us, though we too often forget him? He is ever ready to help those that put their trust in him. Fear not, Minna: God will in no wise forsake you, though, for some wise end, he suffers you to be brought very low, and to endure affliction for a season." Saying this, Isabel put into the broom-girl's hand a piece of silver, bade her be comforted, and, promising to see her again shortly, proceeded homeward.

Adela had been very silent during the visit to the poor foreigners; but now she said, with a tone of much regret, "How I wish I had some money

to give poor Minna! Sister Isabel," she added, "will you give me some money to give Minna when we go to see her again?"

"No, my dear Adela: it will not then be your gift, but mine; you must earn the pleasure of doing a good action yourself."

"I wish I were rich, and had plenty of money of my own," sighed Adela.

"It is better not to be rich, than, having riches, to make a bad use of them," observed her sister. "You were rich yesterday: ten shillings for a little girl of your age was a great sum, and yet you would not spare one single sixpence to relieve the distress of the poor broom-girl. See, Adela, how difficult a matter it is to do good, when our own selfish inclinations stand in the way, and lead us into temptation."

Adela was very sorrowful, and she said, "I wish I had not bought the doll: if I had not been so selfish, I should have had money to give to Minna for her poor sick mother."

"You would have been laying up for yourself treasure in heaven, my sister, of which no casual accident could have deprived you."

Now Adela's Papa had promised to take her to see the Diorama; and she had reckoned for some time on the pleasure she expected to derive from the sight of that interesting exhibition: and her

eyes brightened with joy when Mr. Summers proposed taking her with him the following day. But suddenly she became thoughtful, and, approaching her sister, whispered some words in her ear. "I do not doubt it, Adela," was her sister's reply; then, turning to her father, she preferred Adela's petition, that the money which would have been appropriated to the purchase of the ticket for admission to the Diorama, might be given her to bestow on Minna Weber.

"Do you not wish to go to the Diorama?" asked her father.

"Yes, dear Papa," answered Adela, colouring with some little emotion; "but Isabel has convinced me, it is better to do good to the poor than to gratify one's own wishes. God does not love those that are selfish, and do not endeavour to help their fellow-creatures."

Adela's request was immediately complied with by her father; and the following day Mr. Summers gave directions for Minna and her mother to be removed to healthier and better lodgings; and, learning from Minna that she could sew neatly, he desired his daughter to supply her with needlework, that she might be enabled to support her mother during her sickness.

The heart of the grateful Minna overflowed with joy at this unlooked for change in her condition:

and she acknowledged the superintending care of that merciful Being, who suffereth not even a sparrow to fall to the ground unheeded, and watcheth over us, even as a tender father over his children.

Not many days after their removal, when Isabel came to visit Minna, she found her seated beside her mother's bed, reading to her from the German Bible, the loss of which she had so greatly lamented. Surprised at this sight, Isabel asked by what means she had regained the book; and Minna, with tears of gratitude, informed her Miss Adela had sent it to her some days since by the hands of Evans, her nurse.

It was for this purpose Adela had given up the pleasure of visiting the Diorama; and, having learned from Minna the name of the person to whom she had sold the book, she took the earliest opportunity that occurred, to go with Evans to obtain it from Mr. Saunders, who gladly parted with a book which he had regarded as an unsaleable article.

Minna's joy, at the restoration of her treasure, was only equalled by that experienced by little Adela when folded in the arms of her affectionate sister, and assured that with such sacrifices God is well pleased.