

Teresa would, indeed, have mended up our clothes if we had paid her.

"Bastiano," she would sometimes say, "do give me a few pence, and I'll put your things and the little lad's into order."

But my father only replied, "For our business the dirtier and the more ragged we are the better."

I was now seven years old, and for at least twelve months I had gone about bare-footed. But when we entered into partnership with the Piazza band of beggars, a new life began for me. The poor creatures thought I was pretty :

"If he were less ragged, and well washed, he would bring us in more money. His eyes are enough to ruin his soul, and that of others. Foreigners will think him so beautiful, they will let him go close to them, and he'll turn a fine penny for us."

Accordingly, Teresa was charged to put me to rights, which she did at the joint expense of the whole band, and I was set to beg with a little girl of about my own age, who was so delicate, so pale, and so pretty, that she had been surnamed *Pallidina*. She had an aunt a cripple, whom they seated every morning at a church door, and this woman hired out *Pallidina* to Mother Teresa for a penny a day.

This little girl and I were neither ragged nor dirty; we were always together, gave ourselves out to be brother and sister, and spoke the truth at all events when we said, through our tears, that we were both motherless.

It did me good to be with this child, who was kind and gentle as an angel.

"Do not swear, Giacomo," she would say; "you make the good God angry; and, besides, the ladies won't give you anything."

*Pallidina* was the first who had spoken to me about God since I had been an orphan. I taught her the prayer my mother had taught me, and morning and evening we used to go into the Duomo, and, kneeling on the floor in the Virgin's Chapel, repeat that prayer. And very often the persons kneeling near would give us an alms without our having asked them.

"How pretty they are, those poor little ones—what loves of children!" they would cry.

"It is because we are good and pray to God that they think us pretty," *Pallidina* affirmed with sincerest conviction, and I thought she was right, and used inwardly to say—"My mother, too, was very pretty, because she prayed in the churches and at home."

The world no longer seemed such a

wicked place since I went about with *Pallidina*; and whether running across the Piazza hand in hand, or playing at hide-and-seek around the Batistero and the Leaning Tower, we contrived to get plenty of amusement.

One day when all were assembled as usual, waiting for strangers and sight-seers, Tonino, a young cripple of our party, came up, dragging himself on his crutches, and said—

"We shall have a bad day, Mother Teresa!"

"Why so, Tonino?"

"Why, because it rains; and rain, you see, always puts rich people out of sorts."

"Why don't they buy fine weather, then?" I asked.

"Ah, if there was any one clever enough to sell fine weather, his fortune would soon be made," replied Tonino.

"I say, Momo," broke in Mother Teresa, "don't you and *Pallidina* go far off; for if any young ladies should come, you must go up and beg of them smiling, and opening your eyes as wide as you can."

"Has not that fellow got us lots of penny-pieces with those eyes of his?" exclaimed Tonino. "Mind you, *Pallidina*, that you don't go and get any fatter; you would be good for nothing to us then."

"No fear of that," replied the little girl; "my aunt does not let me eat much; she takes great care of me."

"And quite right of her, too. Does she ever beat thee?"

"I should think not; she is very good to me, only she likes me to look thin and sickly, because we gain more that way."

"Now, then, for your little low voice: how does it go?" said Mother Teresa.

The child at once began to whine out in the most lamentable way her appeal for charity. The whole party burst out laughing.

"I say, listen, do, to old Giacomo coughing himself to death under the porch yonder; he must have thought that you were begging in earnest," observed Tonino.

"I have always told the old fool that by dint of pretending to be consumptive he would really break a blood-vessel one of these days," said Teresa.

And as for me, it suddenly broke in upon me that we were all of us liars. This was the first time I had ever had a thought of the kind.

"Look at *Pietrina* over there," called out Tonino; "is not she pretty, wrapped up in those red rags, with her baby in her arms? What a one she is to tell crams, always talking of her dying mother, and she never knew her mother at all—and calling her son her little brother."