

A BABE ASTRAY IN A GREAT CITY.

"Malkey," the Little Tot of Shoemaker Jacob Hoff, Wanders Away on Easter.

A YOUNG MAN HAD SNATCHED HER FIRST READER.

The Sunshine Taken Out of the Life of a Hitherto Happy Young and Thrifty Russian Couple Who Live in a Dark and Dingy Basement in Orchard Street.

If any one have knowledge of a tiny wail who was lost near Ridley's, in Grand street, Sunday afternoon, let him communicate at once with Jacob Hoff, the humble shoemaker, at No. 34 Orchard street. At the best of times, the little shop in the basement where he plies his trade is dark enough, but now it is doubly so. For the baby girl—the

only girl that has been born to him—is gone—gone, no one knows where. And to him the loss is like shutting out the few gleams of sunshine that come creeping through the dingy panes of his window glass as the day wanes.

The little "Malkey," as her mother and father called her in the tender diminutive of the Hebrew tongue, was the light of the

dingy basement under the steps which lead up to the five stories of the tenement-house No. 34 Orchard street. She was only three and a half years old, but was pretty, bright and winsome always. She had not yet got over tripping out her words in the English tongue—those difficult English words which her parents had hardly learned in eight long years of working and delving in this country. She had often acted her miniature part of interpreter to her mother when her father, who had lain down his awl and his hammer for a moment, had gone out on an errand in a neighboring street. And how many kisses she had earned in her gentle offices her small, cherry lips could never tell. Everybody about the dingy basement will tell you what a sweet, lovable child she was.

But she is gone now. Jacob Hoff's awl is lying quiet on his bench and his hammer no longer makes the place echo with the dull, monotonous sound of iron upon leather. He has put both aside and is spending his time in looking for the absent baby. Until he finds her, he says, he can never pull a flaxen thread through a shoe or hammer a nail into a heel again. And until Sunday he used to get such pleasure out of every boot that he was given to repair. Why? Because each commission meant so many pennies to be spent upon his little ones or so many more to be laid aside for a rainy day.

"Malkey," like her father and the baby boy, was as fair as flax. She had a quantity of golden hair which curled as naturally as the silk of corn, and her mother, when she was too busy with the baby, would tie it up in a great knot at the top of her little head.

"Malkey" wore it that way when she disappeared. The child had a light skin, blue eyes and long lashes, which an inflammation had badly disfigured recently, and tiny lips like the leaves of roses, behind which two rows of pearly teeth used to gleam when she ran up the steps to greet her father. On Sunday she was dressed in a blue slip which was partially covered by a pinafore with blue and white checks, that had puffs just over her chubby arms at the shoulders. She wore a pair of black stockings and neat black shoes which might have fitted Hop-o-My-Thumb. "Malkey" was very proud of the tips which ornamented her shoes, they were so shiny. Her baby ears had already been pierced, and her mother had given her a pair of tiny earrings—little, round, golden drops. "Malkey" still carried the earrings when she was last seen. The only other mark of identification that her parents can give is the fact that on the lobe of one of the ears there was a slight protuberance. Maurice, the dark older brother, bears the same mark.

About 1 o'clock Sunday afternoon "Malkey," with a comrade from a floor above named Etta Rosen, was playing school upon the steps. Etta is six years old. Her father is an upholsterer, and the two families, the Rosens and the Hoff, are on the best of terms. "Malkey" and Etta had often played school together. Because she was the older, Etta was usually the teacher, while "Malkey," with any other chance pupil who joined the class, was a pupil.

"Malkey," on Sunday had her brother Maurice's First Reader in her hands, and she

had been reciting out the words of one syllable in its pages, while Etta heard the lesson. It had not been a very pleasant morning, but pretty soon the sun burst out in smiles and Etta and her companion, getting tired of playing school and seeing so many people walking through Grand street, went out.

Grand street! With its shops and throng of pleasure-seekers; its bustle and show windows, is Broadway to the east side children. Suppose Etta and "Malkey" followed the people and stroll on their own account. Neither child has a hat on. But that didn't matter. They would take a hop, skip and a jump down Orchard street. In a couple of minutes they were darting through Grand street, bare-headed, laughing, bound on an infantile lark.

But there are so many mites of humanity dodging between the legs of pedestrians and hopping, skipping, jumping along the pavements in that crowded thoroughfare that no one noticed Etta and the three-year-old baby with her. Perhaps the child remembered the thousand beautiful things in Ridley's shop windows and were going to "choose" what they would have. But no one exactly knows what led the tots on their escapade, for the one is lost; the other is a shy, reserved little specimen of girlhood and could not be induced to give the details of the expedition yesterday.

About 1.20 on Sunday Sara Mosick, a mature little girl of eleven years, who also lives at No. 34 Orchard street, met Etta running up the stairway of the tenement alone.

"Malkey has got lost!" the Rosen child

exclaimed, almost out of breath. "She ran down the street after a man and I can't find her."

The "man," it seemed, after a coherent account could be made out of the girl's breathless recital, was a lad apparently about twelve or thirteen years of age, who had wrested away "Malkey's" First Reader, which she still carried in her hand, and had attempted to make off with it. "Malkey," incensed in her tiny soul, had run after him down the street, with childish tears glistening in her eyes. Etta lost sight of her whilom pupil and then started straight for home.

At first the Hoff, when they heard of the infant's disappearance, thought that "Malkey" would come back home again very soon, for, baby though she was, she was accustomed to find her way alone to the house of her grandfather, who lives at No. 14 Ludlow street. But when 5 o'clock came and she had not returned, toddling as was her wont down the basement steps, Jacob Hoff and his wife, Annie, began to grow alarmed. Jacob set out for his father's house to see if "Malkey" was there. She was not. Then the mother and father began to realize the awful fact that their darling was lost in the great city.

Next the shoemaker went about, making a tour of the neighborhood, inquiring of everybody whom he knew, if "Malkey" had been seen. He went to the various police stations on the east side below the numbered streets. He got no satisfaction from his quest. He spent the whole evening searching, asking, hoping. No news of the missing child could he obtain anywhere.

Shortly after midnight a general alarm was sent out from headquarters warning every police station in the city that a child three and a half years old, Mary Hoff by name, was lost. Jacob Hoff had become discouraged when a new day had begun and no news had come to him of his baby girl. So he had appealed to the police force to assist him.

But even the lynx-eyed police have not yet been able to say what has become of the fair-haired, bright-eyed child who went running down Grand street Sunday afternoon, chasing the rude fellow who had stolen her first reader. In the mean time the unhappy mother sits in the dingy basement rocking her baby of nine months and moaning to herself in the only tongue she speaks—the Russian tongue of her birth.

The father can speak a little English and he is still on the hunt, while his wife waits for him hour after hour, hoping each minute that he will come bounding down the narrow steps with "Malkey" in his arms. Even the baby seems to understand that something unusual has happened and sucks his little thumb in wonder while his mother weeps.

She was so bright, so sweet, so alert, was "Malkey." The little front shop was filled yesterday afternoon with sympathizing neighbors, who were fondly reconstructing all her pretty tricks and ways. They told how she would run into one of the three rear back rooms of the basement to find her father and tell him there was a customer waiting to have his shoes repaired. They instance the time when a friend of the family had called one afternoon to see his

swellheart who was visiting at the Hoff's and "Malkey" had run to greet him laughing. "Your bride is here." And the mother sat weeping silently the while.

The shoemaker and his wife are each twenty-five years old. They were married in Russia nine years ago. Eight years ago they came to this country. Jacob worked hard at his trade, saved a little money each week and finally was able to open a shoe shop of his own—the shop in Orchard street. He has to pay \$25 a month rent for the shop and the three rear rooms in the rear in which the family live. But he makes enough for all that. He is a member of the Mendelssohn Lodge of Odd Fellows, and is an honest, hard-working, deserving man.

The only sunlight that has ever shone into his hard life of work, day and night, is the happiness which his Annie, who has followed him across the seas from Russia, and his three little ones have given him. The brightest beam of all was that he saw reflected in the blue eyes of "Malkey." And she is lost to him now. Some one must have found her, for the earth could not have opened and swallowed her tiny form. Whoever has done so, let him make haste to restore her to the humble basement where she belongs. She knew her name, even if she could not tell the number of the Orchard street tenement.

It will be worth almost a king's ransom to see the joy with which Jacob Hoff, the shoemaker, and his wife Annie will receive the wanderer. The sight of that joy will repay anybody two-fold who may lead the baby back.