

RAG FAIR AND MAY FAIR



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# RAG FAIR AND MAY FAIR.

THE STORY

OF

“ME AND BENJE.”

BY

JULIA McNAIR WRIGHT,

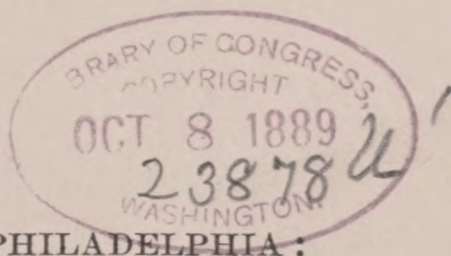
AUTHOR OF “ALMOST A NUN,” “AMONG THE ALASKANS,” “GRAHAM’S  
LADDIE,” “THE HEIR OF ATHOLE,” ETC.

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“I have compassion on the multitude.”

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## FORE-THOUGHT.

EAST LONDON.

'Twas August, and the fierce sun overhead  
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,  
And the pale weaver through his windows seen,  
In Spitalfields, looked thrice dispirited.

I met a preacher there I knew, and said :  
“ Ill and o'erworked, how fare you in this scene ?”  
“ Bravely,” he said, “ for I of late have been  
Much cheered with thoughts of Christ the Living Bread.”

O human soul ! as long as thou canst so  
Set up a mark of everlasting light  
Above the howling senses' ebb and flow  
To cheer thee and to right thee if thou roam,  
Not with lost toil thou laborest through the night :  
Thou makest the heaven thou hopest indeed thy home.

SELECTED.







# RAG FAIR AND MAY FAIR.

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## CHAPTER I.

### *THE QUEEN.*

“RICHARD, will it never be five o'clock?”

Richard, kneeling by the grate, turned from the flame that he was assiduously nursing. The red and yellow tongues of fire, gleaming on the boy's face, set it in high relief, like some strong work in bronze. One long shaft of light struck across the garret to that narrow bed and limned against the gloom Gran's weird and haggard head, less like humanity than like that ominous standard woven with incantations for the Danes of old by the sisters of Hubba and Hinguar.

“Richard, it's a whole day—twenty-four hours, I know.”

“Yes, Gran,” with a boy's indifference to time; “it's five.”

“Then why don't you get me a bottle of gin?” and, as Richard felt under her pillow for the old purse and fumbled for a sixpence or so, “Be quick, can't you? I feel so bad—so 'most awful bad.”



There was such real distress in her tones that the lad was moved to pity. He knew of but one panacea for this woman's woes; that he cordially proffered:

"Gran, sha'n't I get you two bottles of gin?"

"Two bottles'!" with thirsty eagerness; then, in high complaint, "You boy, why do you talk like that? I can't have two bottles. One a day—only one; I swore it on a bone of a dead man's finger, and a nail out of a coffin, and other things. I can't break it, Richard; I daren't." She had more reverence for her oath made over relics than had one Harold, a Saxon. "Boy, will you get me that gin?"

It was but a few minutes before Richard was back and had placed the bottle in the outstretched claw-like, shaking hands. Hands of lover held out to clasp the white hands of his bride, hands of mother reaching for the first touch of her first-born, were never more eager than those brown, shriveled, dishonorable hands to seize the cause of her woe. Haggard head and shining bottle disappeared under the bedclothes. There was the sound of gurgling, the bottle slid empty to the floor.

Richard had not tarried for this *dénouement*. He went back to his fire, and to the six-year-old lad who crouched before it. He put his arm over the little fellow's shoulders and asked in a strong, cheery voice,

"Tired, Benje? Cold, Benje? Hungry, Benje?"



“No,” said Benje, denying facts valiantly, for his small legs had trotted East-London streets all the raw November day. “We got a lot of wood and cinders, didn’t we, Richard? An’ we’ve got a good fire, ain’t we, Richard? That’s a nice crusty loaf, Richard;” for Richard had under his arm a long, round, well-browned loaf.

One loaf a day was the sole contribution from Gran’s purse to the maintenance of these two. Richard paid twopence ha’penny for the loaf, when he paid fourpence for the gin, and he was far too wise a twelve-year-old to get other than a stale loaf. “There’s twice the eating in a stale loaf, Benje,” he would remonstrate when Benje would whine, “Hot loaves smell so good, Richard!”

“Oh, I say, Richard!”

Richard turned about with reluctance. The stairway went down from the room without grace of door or partition, and now over the flooring appeared a lean face under a shock of tangled hair. It was not the first time this disordered red pow had appeared as by enchantment through the floor just after Richard brought home his loaf. He knew it meant less supper for him.

“Come along, Betty,” he said.

“I’m something of a gentleman ’bout girls,” Richard was wont to remark. “I don’t b’lieve in hitting of them, nor crowding them into the mud, nor snatching away their supper. I can get on with-



out supper better than Betty ;” so he made room for Betty before the cupful of fire in the grate.

But Richard was just as well as generous: he could not trench on Benje’s allowance. He cut the loaf in half, and, dividing one half into two parts, gave Benje one part for supper and laid the other on the shelf for Benje’s breakfast. The other half of the loaf was cut in three equal shares, and of these Betty got one.

“Nothin’ to-day, Betty?”

“Got a biscuit for cleanin’ a step this mornin’.”

“Thought your father got work? Where is he?”

“’Orspital,” said Betty, with her mouth full.

“Leg broke?”

“Both legs. ’E’s *all* broke; ’e’s goin’ to die. You see, ’e’s been h’out’n work for eight months, an’ ’e’s ’ad mos’ nothin’ to eat, an’ ’e got so weak that when ’e got work an’ went up on the scaffold bricklayin’ ’is head turned, an’ ’e fell down. ’E’d go about all day nigh clemmed ’cause we none of us ’ad only bread-soup an’ ’e didn’t want to take that from mother an’ the kids. Mother can’t make but tenpence a day with button-’oles, an’ there’s the five kids, countin’ Aggie, an’ she’s the same as a kid, bein’ humpbacked an’ weakly. Father says to me, ‘All we can do for they, Betty, is not to eat their grub;’ an’ I don’t eat it. I tell ’em I’ve had—Oh, chops an’ puddin’, but mostly I am so hungry! What a nice fire, Richard!”



“Me an’ Benje begins early in the day, an’ we picks up cinders an’ splinters all day, an’ so we has a fire every night. We keep right at work all day.”

“You might burn that box, you know,” said Betty.

“I’m keepin’ that lest Benje should be sick some night an’ we’d need a fire.”

Betty contemplated with wonder the spectacle of a boy who with steady will worked all day for his fire, and even had resolution to provide against future need. Then,

“What a nice bed you’ve got, Richard!”

“Yes, I’m rather of a gentleman about my bed,” said Richard. “Jacob owns the sack, an’ he has it washed twice a year reg’lar. Me an’ Benje fills it. We takes a bag, and we picks up every bit of paper an’ every bit of straw or every straw bottle-cover, and we puts it all in our bed. When it mashes down, we takes an evening to pick it up fine; an’ when it is all wore out, we has one last good of it, as we burns it for a big blaze.—Don’t we, Benje?”

“My!” said the admiring Betty.

Such pertinacity and providence as this boy exhibited were not common traits in Miracle Alley. The citizens of this part of London would sleep on bare boards the year round before thinking of providing a bed by ceaseless, if small, labor.

“When I don’t have what I wants, I gets it,” said Richard, in his resolute tones.



“You’d oughter see father’s bed in the ’orspital, all white an’ warm an’ soft! An’ he has soup an’ meat three times a day, if he could eat ’em; which he can’t. I wisht I could go to the ’orspital,” said Betty, ardently.

“It’s time you went home; me an’ Benje is going to bed,” said Richard, not “too much of a gentleman” to dismiss his guest when he saw reason.

Betty disappeared through the floor, and Richard pulled the narrow tick before the grate.

“You shall sleep on the fire side, Benje, and be as warm as warm!” said Richard, quite as if Benje did not always have this post of preference; then, with austerity, “Benje, you’ve forgot to wash your face an’ hands.”

“I washed ’em when you was after the gin,” said Benje.

“All right, then,” said Richard. He made no remark about Benje’s not having said his prayers; that was a ceremony outside of his experience, but the practice of washing before sleeping had come down to him from forgotten ages before he and Benje lived in a garret with Gran, and he was zealous in its observance.

“I’m rather of a gentleman about havin’ a clean face,” Richard would remark to the docile Benje. He gave a last poke to the fire, to make it blaze, that they might fall asleep warm even if they woke cold.

Why this pair had not been burned to death in



their paper-filled bed only that Providence which watches the helpless could have told. Certainly no assurance society would have taken a risk on their bed or their lives at any premium.

Richard was just sinking into his usual dreamless sleep, when high, querulous, came the voice of Gran :

“Richard ! Call Jacob !”

Richard’s head lay near the opening in the floor—so near that more than once his folded trowsers, which served him for a pillow, had slipped from under his head and tumbled down into the cobbler’s shop. He had only to roll over, stretch his neck beyond the flooring and bawl “Jacob !”

A slow, measured step sounded below and ascended the stairs ; a snow-white head and a reverend beard, then broad bent shoulders, then a tall figure in a long rusty black garment like a Jewish gaberdine, rose above the floor-level, and Jacob, with a dim little lamp in his hand, crossed the garret and sat on a backless chair beside Gran’s bed. The pale circle of the lamplight illuminated a grave and aged Jewish face.

“Richard,” gasped Gran, “count my money.”

Richard took out the purse and told the slender sum ; he had never before known how much was in that purse.

“Do you want some more gin, Gran ?”

“I’ve—had—my last gin,” said the old woman,



between her gasps and groans.—“Jacob, my rent’s paid till Saturday.”

“Yes,” said Jacob.

“The money’s lasted me through ; he said it would. Saturday you can carry me out ; it’s Thursday night. There’s what will buy me a coffin an’ pay the hearse ; bury me decent, Jacob.”

“Oh, Gran, Gran,” cried the startled Richard, “you won’t die ! Don’t ! I’ll—I’ll run for another bottle of gin.”

“Hush, boy,” said the Jew. “Her hour is come, and such noise is unseemly in the ears of Azrael.”

The amazed Richard looked down upon her whom he had called his grandmother. Her face was drawn and pallid ; her eyes, deep-sunken, seemed already looking at him across a very great space. Richard had been with Benje to the seashore, and this was as when he had stood upon the strand and marked something each moment carried farther and farther out by the retreating sea. Fascinated, he watched this miserable human wreckage drifting out and out upon an ebb-tide that should never come to flow.

Farther and farther away each instant. Now Gran was here, near him ; now she was swept a great way off. She was widening between them each second some eternal distance. The shriveled body was there on the pallet, but that which had really been Gran was slipping longitudes remote on some infinite ocean,



and was now nearly out of sight. There was only a mere speck of vitality gleaming through her eyes, appearing and disappearing on each wave of laboring breath, that spark of life becoming constantly feeble and more indistinct and drifting against an all-unknown horizon.

“Go to your bed, boy; I will watch by her,” said Jacob.

Richard shivered back to his bed. He did not mean to sleep. He rested his elbow on his folded trowsers, his head on his hand, and watched the progress of the mystery. A low, broken rattling sound now filled the attic; the quilt over Gran's heart rose and fell with the fluctuations of that slowly-retreating tide.

But Richard was only twelve years old, and weary. He had spent the day racing up and down the streets in the November cold. His arm supporting his head grew unsteady. The lids kept falling over the great eagerly-gazing black eyes. There seemed to him longer and longer intervals when Gran went entirely out of sight upon those waves on which she was tossing. Finally he had sunk quite down in his paper-filled bed, and slept as soundly as Benje.

He woke up with a start. It seemed only a moment, but things had changed in the attic. It was a woman's voice that mingled with returning consciousness:

“Well, well, Mis' Brewer! To think she should



have kept this long nightgown and this clean sheet all these years to lay her out in !”

“ Yes, and everything else gone bare as bare ! Make yourself comfortable in the chair if you can, Mis’ Lane. I’ll sit on this trunk ; it’s empty enough now, and ready to drop to bits, but I’m not heavy.”

Richard lifted himself up on his elbow again. On the narrow bed lay something very straight and still, covered with a white sheet. The lamp seemed to have reached happier fortunes in a clean chimney and a fresh supply of oil, and burned briskly on the window-sill. Two neighbor-women sat, one at the head, the other at the foot, of what had been Gran. But between Richard and Gran widened a gulf that is named “ Forever.” The tide had run quite out and carried Gran away.

Here was a mystery. Richard had known of death. He had seen men, and women too, carried lifeless out of street-brawls ; he had seen the baby-heirs of poverty fade and fall as the leaves of the starveling trees in the city church-yards ; grim pine boxes had often been taken out of the houses in Miracle Alley ; but what did it all mean ? What was this death, and what came after it ? There was no need to interrogate the women ; they were garrulous. As Richard, unnoticed on his elbow, looked and listened, Mrs. Brewer rose, turned down the sheet and gazed at whatever lay beneath.

“ She be a fearsome sight, Mis’ Lane,” she said.



“She ’ave a very wicked look, an’ to think h’of ’er comin’ h’up h’out o’ ’er grave lookin’ that a-way to stand before God for judgment! It’s main fear-some.”

“You make cold chills run down my back, Mis’ Brewer,” responded Mrs. Lane, in an awed tone, “you talkin’ so familiar like o’ judgment. What’s the truth about it, ma’am, if you know?”

“Well, I know,” said Mrs. Brewer, “for last Monday as ever was our Lady ’as ’olds h’our mothers’ meetings, she ’ad it all up giving us chapter and verse about the last day, and I sat as if growed and rooted to my chair to ’ear the like of it. The first thing is, Mis’ Lane, that He above ’as appointed a day to judge the world. He knows the time, and he alone, and, whether soon or late, it will be sure to come. Alive and dead, young and old, rich and poor, are to come and stand before Him.”

“But how is it to be, Mis’ Brewer? Did you hear that?”

“I ’eard. There is to sound a great trumpet, loud as ten thousand thunders, and the earth shall be rent and all the graves shall be opened, and the living shall come as drawn by a power they can’t refuse, Mis’ Lane. And there will be the Lord on his throne, and millions of angels about him as sun, moon and stars are not so bright as to be named along with them for shining. We’ll be there also Mis’ Lane, ma’am, for good or evil.”



“If one wasn’t afraid, it would be a grand sight,” said Mrs. Lane.

“You’ll mark my words, Mis’ Lane. Them as has loved the Lord Jesus Christ, to lay their sins on him, of them on that day he will not be ashamed, but they shall be caught up to meet him in the air and be for ever with the Lord, at the meeting we has been told a many is the time. There is to be a dividin’, mark you—not a dividin’ of rich and poor, or of East End and West End, but of those as loves the Lord and those as loves him not. For them who loves him it is said their sins are all blotted out, and not one of them is mentioned to them, but ’tis a loving Father calls his children ’ome, as says a ’im we sings frequent at the meeting. But there is books kep’, Mis’ Lane, as careful as at the greatest shop in all this city, and out of them the wicked is to be judged; and so much as every evil word and every wicked thought and every cruel deed is all writ in them books.”

“It will be a woeful time for them wicked, Mis’ Brewer.”

“It will be a woeful time for us, Mis’ Lane, if we ’av’n’t seen to it to make peace with God through the Lord Christ. In that day the wicked will be cryin’ to the rocks to fall on ’em an’ hide ’em from the face of ’Im upon the throne.”

“I wisht I been at that meetin’,” sighed Mrs. Lane.

“Why don’t you go, then?” asked her neighbor.



“They’re quit askin’ of me. Once they askt and askt, but my man he said if I went a step e’d kill me sure. ’E didn’t want no pious ones ’round ’im, ’e ’eld.”

“There’s where he was main foolish, Mis’ Lane ; for if there is one thing as gives me courage to put hup with ’ard work an’ poor livin’, to give a civil word to Brewer when things goes wrong, an’ to struggle on to keep the children from bein’ like brute beasts, it is what I learns h’out of the Bible at mothers’ meetin’. *There’s* a book, Mis’ Lane, as raises my courage an’ gives me a bit of ’ope. It mentions a Friend that do stick closer than a brother, and we need such a one.”

“Now that Lane’s dead, I s’pose I might go,” said Mrs. Lane.

“Well you might. What did infidelity do for Lane? You’d better bring your children up to lay hold to something better.”

But here the talk of these women ceased to enter Richard’s drowsy ear.

It was on Saturday that they buried Gran, as she had asked. Jacob was a Jew shoemaker who shut his shop and scrupulously observed his Sabbath. Therefore, on Saturday, he had nothing to do but bury his tenant. He gave Richard and Benje plenty of soap and hot water, and free use of his clothes-brush and blacking-brush, to make themselves as decent as possible. Mrs. Lane had washed a shirt for each of them, and Mrs. Brewer gave them each



a threepenny handkerchief with a black border. Richard had never felt "so like a kind of gentleman" in his life as he did when he and Benje walked, one on each side Jacob, to the burial-field and he reflected that he had a share in the respectable-looking long black conveyance drawn by two horses at which all the children in Miracle Alley had gazed.

When they came home, it was noonday. Jacob established the two boys before his fire and gave them each a large sandwich. Then he went out for some time. Returning, he went up to the attic of his late tenant. There were sounds there which Richard interpreted as Mistress Brewer, the char-woman, giving the place its half-yearly cleaning.

"What's to become of them boys, Jacob?" asked Mrs. Brewer.

"I've been to see the relieving-officer, and I'm to take them to the almshouse."

"Poor little chaps!" said Mrs. Brewer, with an English hatred of "the house." "That's cruel hard on 'em. They do be dreadful to boys there, I'm told."

"It is not half as hard as freezing and starving in the street, stealing and getting arrested and locked up with a lot of thieves to get schooled in all the wickedness there is in the world. Besides, Richard won't stop there long. They'll keep Benje and bind Richard out."

"It would just kill Richard to leave Benje. Why,



since he warn't much over six, he's been carrying Benje round, and raising him like a father and a mother both. An' now to part 'em !"

"It's hard. But did you ever see anything in this world wasn't hard?" retorted Jacob.

"No, I never did. It's as bad as they make 'em," said Mrs. Brewer, conscious of a drunken husband, frequent black eyes, seven days charing in a week and a family of six to maintain on a hebdomadal seven shillings and sixpence.\*

"Benje," whispered Richard to his drowsy little brother, "are you *very* tired?"

"No, I ain't tired," said Benje, bristling up.

"Don't you want to come to the fountain for a drink?"

"Oh yes!" said Benje, who hated mortally to leave the fire, but made a principle of always wanting to do what Richard suggested.

"Come on, then," said Richard; and, taking his brother's hand, the two went out into the street with unusual quietness.

"Why, Richard," said Benje, after about five minutes' walking, "you ain't going to the fountain."

"We'll find one this way, Benje," said Richard, valiantly. "I'm giving you a treat. I'm taking you to see a—a—a picture, Benje. You see, we're all dressed up like, and we've had a funeral to-day,

\* Reckon two cents to a penny, twenty-four cents to a shilling.



and so I'm giving you a treat, Benje. Come on! Don't you think it's an elegant day, Benje?"

No; Benje did not think it was an elegant day; he thought it was what it was—a raw, windy, dull November day. But then Richard, whose right it was to formulate Benje's opinions, had said it was "elegant," and so Benje roused up and said, "Oh, it's bu-tee-ful," but his teeth chattered like castanets.

On, on went the remorseless Richard toward a part of the town where they had seldom or never been before. There were now to be seen large shops—tailor-shops with very brilliant-complexioned and glassy-eyed men and boys posing unmeaningly in the windows. Benje confided to Richard his surprise that these elegant beings never winked, and Richard said autocratically,

"Oh, they're not made of the same kind of stuff we are, Benje. They're wax."

Then they saw great stores full of flowers—orchids, roses, lilies, geraniums, hyacinths, violets. Through the chinks in the glass and through the doorways their rich perfumes stole out, and refreshed the noses of Richard & Co. as the glorious colors refreshed their eyes.

Then Benje could not help saying he was dreadfully cold, and Richard said,

"Put your hand in my pocket, Benje, and put your other hand under your jacket;" and Richard put his arm around Benje's shoulders.



“Why don’t we go back?” whined Benje. “It’s ’most to-night, and Jacob’s fire was so good, and I want to go to bed.”

“Benje,” said Richard, solemnly, “we’re never going back there no more. We’ve run away. Jacob was going to take us and put us in a HOUSE.”

“What’s a house?” said Benje’s querulous voice.

“A house,” quoth the enlightened Richard, “is a dreadful place where—where they never let you go out of doors, and where they’d part you and me, Benje, and never let us see each other again.”

Here Benje burst into tears and implored Richard to run; he wasn’t a bit tired—not he.

Richard ran two or three squares to please and warm the child, but then assured him there was no danger; Jacob would not trouble to look for them, and could not find them if he did look.

After this, very luckily, they came to a fruit-stand where some apples had been over-set and were rolling about the walk. They helped the vender pick the apples up, and were given each a big one. This cheered Benje for a time. But now it was very cold and the lamps were lighted.

“Where’s the picture, Richard?” said the little complaining voice.

“Why, here it is,” said Richard, boldly, “across the street. Just you look at the frame, Benje—solid gold and worth a cart-load of money.”

They crossed the street. The principal picture in



the dealer's window was that of a rather young lady. She wore a pale blue brocade dress, her neck and arms very bare; a crimson velvet cloak, ermine-lined and trimmed, hung from her shoulders and trailed away upon the floor, and a golden and jeweled circlet bound her brows.

"Ain't that handsome, Benje?"

"Why don't she," whined Benje—"why don't she put her shawl around her neck an' arms? I should think she'd be so cold! Why does she let all those nice clothes lie on the floor, Richard? Oh, I wish I had her shawl all lined with fur to put on *me*! I'd not let it lie on the floor, and I'd be so warm! Oh, Richard, why can't I have a fur shawl like that? Why can that picture have everything? Who is she, Richard? Who is she? Why can't you tell me who she is?"

Benje was getting decidedly cross.

"I don't know, Benje," soothed Richard; "I'd tell you if I knew. I guess she's a lady, Benje."

"I think you might know," mourned the cold, hungry and inconsolable Benje. "Why don't you know everything, Richard? What's the use o' bringing me to see a picture with a fur shawl like that, and never telling me her name?"

"Well, I wish I knew; I'd tell you in a minute."

A young man looking over their heads at the picture laughed:

"Why, boys, can't you read? It's the queen.



Can't you see what it says?—'Portrait of Her Majesty. Painted for St. George's Society;' and so on. Yes, my little men, that's the queen."

"There! *he* knew," whined Benje as the young man went his way. "But I wish the queen would give me her fur shawl, Richard."

Well, the trailing mantle of royalty might be put to worse use than covering shivering childhood, but the smiling picture was oblivious as its original of the needs of Benje, and he whimpered on:

"What's in her hand, Richard? Is she going to play ball? Ain't that a queer-looking ball with a thing on top of it? And ain't that a queer bat she's got? And how can she run with that fur shawl?" after which irreverent remarks about sceptre, globe and train Benje went stumbling up the street by Richard's side, and presently complained that he was very tired indeed, and "so cold! Couldn't we sit down just one minute, Richard?"

"Oh yes, Benje," said Richard, with strained cheerfulness. "There's an elegant doorway over across the street. You can get down in front of me and lean against me and put your arms around my waist, under my jacket, and I'll hold you close, Benje, and bring my jacket about you, and you'll be so warm! You'll sleep splendid."

Benje had profound misgivings about the luxury of the accommodations proffered, but his small legs felt ready to fall off; so he trotted with Richard to



the deep doorway of an unoccupied building just around the corner of the street. Richard tied a black-bordered kerchief round Benje's throat and one about his own, turned up their jacket-collars, took Benje between his knees, and, holding him close, said,

"Now sort of sit on your feet, Benje, and you'll do splendid."

Lying against Richard's breast, Benje saw the file of straight brick houses on each side the narrow street. A gaslight nearly opposite the sheltering doorway, with here and there a lighted room in various stories, defined the houses from pavement to roof, but above the roofs hung infinite blackness. That dark pall disturbed Benje; he began:

"Richard, where are the stars?"

"They're gone," said Richard, as if explaining phenomena arranged for the especial good fortune of himself and his little brother. "They never come out dark nights. It's cloudy now, Benje."

"Richard, what is stars? Won't you tell me? What is stars?"

"Stars'? Well, Mary Lane told me stars was God's eyes."

"Who's God?" whined Benje. "Ain't he the one Mary Lane's father used to talk about when he got mad? Who's God, Richard?"

But Richard—one of the frequent heathen of this very enlightened age—had not enough theological



knowledge to answer his brother's question. Like greater teachers, he evaded a difficulty by starting a new issue :

"Tom Brewer says stars is dead people's eyes looking down."

"Do you believe it, Richard? Are they? S'pose they're Gran's?"

But Richard, recalling how the light had flickered and faded in Gran's eyes as she drifted out of life, could liken her dying eyes only to the gleaming and perishing of sparks on a dying coal.

"No," he said—"no, Benje; 'tain't so. Dead folks couldn't see so far. The stars are too big and bright for that."

Poor Benje was so uncomfortable that he wanted to complain about something. The stars afforded as hopeful a subject as anything that was sublunary. His little tired voice whined :

"Why don't the stars shine all the time? Why ain't they warm, like the sun? Why is it ever cold? Why is it ever night? I think the stars might—"

But Benje's complaints grew lower and more broken; and Benje was asleep.

Then Richard, just to shelter Benje and keep him warm, you know—not at all that he himself was cold or tired—bent his face against Benje's head, and so— Richard too fell asleep.

Then out of the black vault above the city wavered down little cold white flakes and pellets, and



settled in the wrinkles of Richard's jacket-sleeves, along the lines of the two turned-up collars, upon the caps and into the pockets of these sleepers; and so, at last, if left undisturbed at their work, the flakes might have covered up these two small boys as the robins covered with leaves the Babes in the Woods.

The narrow street was quiet and deserted. The guardian of the public peace seldom looked in there; when he did, he was so busy blowing his fingers and beating his arms about his chest to keep himself warm that he could not see the sleeping brothers.

It was that very uncomfortable little lad Benje who woke first, hearing these words:

"Why, children! Boys, wake up! You'll freeze to death. Whatever are you doing here?"

Benje opened his eyes. There, in the glow of the street-lamp, stood the queen, come out of her picture-frame to help them. The unframed queen was younger than she of the print-shop window. She had her hair curled across her forehead under the golden crown. Her neck and her arms were not bare, but gleamed in red satin embroidered in gilt. About her neck was a chain as thick as Benje's finger, holding a medallion almost as large as a door-knob. Benje could not see the "fur shawl," but he fancied it, as something voluminous fell from the shoulders of this brilliant creature.

Benje punched his brother's ribs:



“Richard! Richard! Wake up! She’s come! The queen has come out of the picture to help us.”

Then Richard looked up, and on the instant was wide awake, beholding the glowing red cheeks and the laughing lips of their visitant.

“Why are you here?” demanded the vision. “Why don’t you go home? Where do you live?”

“We are resting. Benje was so tired! He’s little, you know. We don’t live anywhere; we haven’t any home. We had one, but it’s—died,” said Richard, vaguely.

“Really not a place to go to? No mother? No father? No friends? Nobody?”

The stranger gave her questions in quick sequence, and to each one Richard punctuated “No!”

“Well, then, come along home with me. It is not far.”

“Are you the queen?” demanded Benje, staggering to his feet.

“The queen!” with a laugh that rippled out clear in night and storm. “No! I’m the Serpent-Charmer.”



## CHAPTER II.

### *THE OTHER QUEEN.*

IN and out the crooked London street went the Charmer with the air of one accustomed to threading highways and byways in the darkness—through a mews, into a “no thoroughfare,” up two pairs of stairs, into a room, and, putting a hand on the head of each boy, she pressed the forlorn brothers down upon their knees before a glowing grate.

“There!” said the Serpent-Charmer.

Beside the fire sat a clean old woman in a wide ruffled cap and a check shoulder-shawl. She was knitting very slowly, her hands being gnarled and twisted with rheumatism until they were bent like the twigs of some ancient tree.

“What do you think, Gran?” said the girl; and she told the tale of finding the waifs. Then the girl disappeared in a little back room, and returned shorn of her splendors and wearing a brown flannel wrapper.

Benje had been sorely disappointed at finding that his “queen” wore a great cloak of coarse waterproof instead of a sweeping “fur shawl.”



Now that she had neither crown, satin nor jewels, she fell rapidly in his opinion, and he was just beginning to whine, "Richard, why ain't she the queen?" when voices were heard at the door, and a girl of eleven came in—a girl with a deal of yellow hair braided in a club down her back, a girl with a grievance, like Benje.

"Why is it always so late when I get in? Why is it so cold? Why must I always be tired to death?" she cried.

But the old woman rose, took five bowls from a closet, put a tin spoon in each, and filled each bowl from a savory pot that steamed and bubbled on the fire. The aroma of this pot, wafted to the nose of Benje, had already appeased him as incense appeases an irate god. What, then, was Benje's satisfaction when the dame handed a bowl to every one, with the comfortable remark, "There! eat that, and we'll all be better-natured"?

For a little time nothing was to be heard but the sound made by the click of spoons and much unseemly supping.

Benje was a grateful little chap. When all his small body seemed warmed and expanded by the glow of the grate and the first hot meal he had had for months, he was inspired thus to express himself:

"Gran, your soup's awful good! I like it. I like your fire. I like you. If you'll let me live



here, I'll be pertic'lar good, an' I'll bring you your bottle of gin every day reg'lar."

"What!" cried the astounded old lady.

"Your gin, you know," explained Benje, affably.

"Bless you, boy! Gin! Why, I don't want any gin."

"Don't you? I thought all grans did."

"Mine is better conducted," said the Charmer. "If she wasn't, I'd shut her up.—Wouldn't I, old lady?"

Benje regarded the phenomenal old lady.

"Mine drank it," he said, finally—"a bottle a day reg'lar."

"What has become of the old sinner?" asked the Charmer.

"We planted her this mornin'," said Benje, sedately. "I went to see it done. I know all about it; Betty told me. When you plant seeds in the ground, you don't put 'em in a box, an' they come up ag'in; when you plant folks, you nail 'em up tight in a box, 'cause you're done with 'em, an' they never come up no more."

Having thus told all that he knew about the resurrection and the life, Benje contemplated his audience.

"Well, I never!" cried the old lady. "A bottle a day!"

"Didn't she, Richard?" said Benje, feeling his veracity called in question, and nudging his brother.



“It is so,” said Richard, with dignity.—“But I wisht you hadn’t mentioned it, Benje. I’m rather a gentleman in my feelin’s, an’ I know it isn’t respectable to drink gin. As long as Gran is planted, we ought to let her be.”

Benje feeling that he had erred, retired behind Richard and began to sniffle. The yellow-haired girl gloomily remarked that “dead folks is better off than live ones.” This drew to her the critical attention of the Charmer:

“Why, Elizabeth Allen! You’ve come home without your throat tied up, and you’ve been out without your gum shoes, and your feet are all wet!” She stooped, took off Elizabeth Allen’s boots, set them on a shelf above the grate to dry, and then placed Elizabeth Allen’s feet properly before the fire, acting quite as if the feet were articles with which said Elizabeth had nothing in common. “If you are so careless,” she said, severely, “you will not be able to sing a note.”

“Then,” said Elizabeth, “I’d be done with such unpleasant, disgraceful work as singing at a six-penny show.”

“It is not so unpleasant to sing at a variety-hall as to starve,” said the Charmer, “and not so disgraceful as to go to the ‘house.’ What did you sing this evening, Elizabeth?”

“I sang ‘I’m a Little Quaker.’ I wish I *was* a Quaker out in the country, and I wouldn’t be sing-



ing where I am. I hurried to get on my drab dress and white kerchief and hood just as fast as I knew how, but Mrs. Crosby gave me a slap for not being quicker, and Mr. Crosby called me a fool as I went on the stage. Then I sang, in my other dress, my skipping-rope song and dance, and a big man on the front seat—he was drunk—called out to me to throw him a kiss and he'd throw me a shilling."

"What did you do, Elizabeth?" said the Charmer, with great interest.

"I turned my back round to him and did all the rest of the song with my back to the audience."

"That was right," said the Charmer.

"And the people clapped and clapped," said Elizabeth, still inconsolable.

"They saw you were right. You and I, Elizabeth, who have no one to take care of us, must take care of ourselves. No one has been saucy to me since one man was impertinent and I took a snake by the tail and hit him with the head-end. But generally folks keep a civil tongue—always, unless they've been drinking. Drink, you see, disturbs their brains, and they forget what's manners."

"Elsie," said the old dame to the Charmer, "where do you mean these boys to sleep?"

"They can sleep on Elizabeth's lounge, and she can come in with me," said the Charmer.—"Can't you sleep on the lounge, one at each end, boys? There is a big quilt there."



“Thank you, ma’am. We can,” said Richard. “May we go and wash? Me and Benje always takes a wash before we goes to bed.”

“That is right,” said the grandmother. “I saw you were clean boys as soon as you came in.”

Elsie brought forth a quilt for the lounge, and she and Gran retired to the next room.

The despondent Elizabeth still sat toasting her feet.

“I wonder if she’ll let you stay?” said Elizabeth, looking at the boys, who, having washed, returned to the fire.

“Oh, I wish she would,” said Richard.

“You’d have to pay your way. We’re dreadful poor.”

“Of course I’d pay my way, and Benje’s too.”

“I wish she would let you stop. Maybe you’d believe me when I say everything is wrong and horrid; *she* won’t.”

“Who is *she*? What does *she* do?” asked Richard.

“She is snake-charmer at the Varieties. She gets fourteen shillings a week for charming. Did you see her dressed? Well, she goes right in like that in a den full of snakes, and she sits on a stone or log, and she picks the snakes up—big ones, thick as your arm—and plays with them and fools with them, and isn’t one mite afraid of any one of them.”

“Oh my!” said Richard.



“Oh my !” said Benje.

“She used to sell in Soho bazaar-store, and only got nine shillings a week. And I was cash-girl, for three shillings. Oh, but we *were* poor ! Gran knits. She took in a girl to board. The girl was a serpent-charmer at the Varieties. She told Elsie all about it—how most of the snakes they have aren’t poisonous, if they are big, and the fangs are cut out of the rest ; only you need to keep watch and see that they are not let grow. And she told Elsie how to handle ’em. Elsie isn’t afraid of anything. Elsie and the girl were great friends, and the girl got sick. She was afraid she’d lose her place ; to keep it for her, Elsie dressed up in her clothes and went and did Charmer for a week. They none of them knew the difference. But the other girl was taken to the hospital, and died, and then Mr. Crosby—the manager—asked Elsie to stay on ; and so she is Charmer, and gets fourteen shillings. Then she got me the place there to do ‘Little Musical Prodigy.’ I get eight shillings a week. It is no harder than being cash-girl. They are real hard on cash-girls, and they are real hard on prodigies. It is all just as horrid as it can be ; only now we have enough fire and enough to eat, and our feet don’t stick out of our shoes. I suppose that’s a comfort.”

Richard admitted that it was a great comfort.

“Elizabeth, come to bed,” said the autocratic



Charmer, thrusting from the bed-room door her pretty face set round with a bristling aureola of frizzing-pins.

Richard quickly undressed himself and Benje, and took refuge on the wide lounge. He was warm, well fed; the lounge was soft and well covered. "One, two, three"—so on to "twelve"—rang out a clock from a neighboring tower. Richard heard the first stroke, but with the last was sleeping the sleep of the just. The next thing he heard was the same clock striking seven. He rose and looked from the window. No one else in the Charmer's home seemed to be awake, but over the grimy city lay two inches of soft, new snow. Richard dressed himself, took an old stump of broom from behind the door and went forth to make his living.

The only place that seemed awake was the nearest "public." Into the door marked "Jugs and Bottles Only" went a procession of wan, thin children for the morning potions of their elders. Blue with cold, ragged, with bare, chilblained, often bleeding feet on the snowy pave, too accustomed to misery to cry as other children cry, they went; for England in the last quarter of the nineteenth century has no law against selling to minors, and no society for the prevention of cruelty to children.\*

In the doors marked "Bar" went men who had

\* Efforts to form such a society are now being made.



slept out all night, burly cab-drivers, the men from the mews, wretched, draggled mothers with more wretched babes in arms.

Richard was used to these sights; he never gave them a thought. He cleaned off the walk, and asked the proprietor of the public for a penny.

“Off with you!” said the man. “You did it without asking; you can go without paying. What do you think of that?”

“I think,” said Richard, “that I’ve seen plenty of money going into publics, and never any coming out.”

“Right you are,” said a cabman drinking his beer; “and if you’ll run behind my cab a block or two, you can carry out a bag for a fare I’ll take to St. Pankridge, and belike you’ll get your penny.”

Richard ran the three blocks, rang the bell, carried out two portmanteaus and held open a door, and got threepence. Then he cleaned a pavement and steps for a maid, who gave him a roll and a cup of hot coffee. By this time all the boys of the neighborhood were out with snow-scrapers and brooms, and, as Richard was a stranger and an interloper trespassing on their territory, they formed a trades union against him, and undertook to capture his broom and give him a thrashing with it.

But not vainly had Richard from his earliest recollection defended Benje and Gran’s gin-bottle and sixpences against all Miracle Alley. He had



learned to use his elbows as shields, his head as a battering-ram, his feet as catapults, his fists as battle-axes. His blood was up, and, though these self-appointed "counts of the Saxon shore" came upon him ten to one, he successfully practiced the arts of self-defence, attack and escape. The conflict swelled along the street; the boys abandoned bread-earning to fight. The skirmishers swarmed into the north-roughfare, all doing, like many older people, their best to make themselves and their fellows more miserable than needs be, and so, at last, Richard and his broom slipped into the doorway, up stairs, and without grace of knocking appeared before Gran and the Charmer.

"Here you are!" said the dame. "I thought you'd run away."

"He wouldn't run without *me*," said Benje.

"I've took care of him all my life, long as I can remember," said Richard, reproachfully.

The children of misery do not remember so far back as do children of happier fortunes. While the well-cared-for child has flashes of pleasant memories lying like sunshine to light up bits of its life from two, three or four years of age, the children of sorrow have only a hazy sense of long discomforts and wants, until experiences that happened when they were five or six begin to stand saliently out on the black background of their early history.

"Come get your breakfast," said the Charmer.



“I earned my breakfast,” said Richard, “and here are three pence to pay for Benje’s.”

“Are you going to let us stay here?” asked Benje.

That three of them were living in two small rooms on a stipend of less than eight dollars a week, with singing-lessons for the Prodigy to pay for, might have been a reason for the Charmer’s saying “No;” but the poor are wont to be good to the poor, and, besides, this sixteen-year-old damsel had been so much poorer that now, by contrast, she felt rich and able to play “Lady Bountiful.”

“What can you do for a living?” she asked.

“I can run round and pick up cinders and bits of wood, and wait on cabs, and clean walks, and—”

“Tut!” said the old woman; “those are none of them decent ways of making a living. You want to get a regular place and work steady.”

“So I’ve tried,” said Richard, “but I can’t. They all say there’s too many boys in the world. Peter Auberle, a man I know, says there was once a king named Bluebeard who ordered all the boy-babies to be thrown into the Thames, and that he ought to be king of England now and get rid of half, so that the other half of us could have work and bread.”

“Mebby you’d been the half pitched in,” said the gloomy Elizabeth.

“Are you there, Elizabeth? Go at once and take your singing-lesson,” said the household sovereign.



“I wish I had been pitched in,” said Elizabeth, incontinently bursting into tears. Elizabeth was always mournful, but the Charmer laughed for herself and her cousin.

“Gran,” said the Charmer, looking at Richard, “if you don’t mind having the little chap around, I can take this big one to the Varieties. He is large and strong; I should say he might clean cages, and so on. The other boy they had got his leg broke last night: the elephant knocked him off the platform.—You Richard, are you afraid of things?”

The hint of the other boy’s fate was not reassuring, but far be it from Richard to admit fear to this laughing girl, who, as Elizabeth asserted, was “not afraid of anything.”

“‘Fraid’! No!” said Richard the Dauntless, though rats and drunken men were the only wild beasts of which he had had experience.

The Charmer sat down to sew new tinsel upon her costume, which she had worn home for that purpose. Gran, aided by the ready Richard, set the room in order, and then the old dame began her painful knitting, while Benje held and Richard wound her yarn. The sun shone in at the windows; the scene was home-like and cheery. Up the stairs came now and then a high note of Elizabeth Allen’s much-reluctated song, accompanied by the shrill squeak of her master’s little fiddle.

“Oh how bad my hands is!” groaned Gran.



“Why do you knit, then?” said the Charmer. “You’re rich.—She gets five shillings pension a week for doing nothing, and by and by Mrs. Somebody is going to get her into an almshouse, and she’ll live like a lady all the rest of her life,” added the Charmer to Richard.

“I took care of her little gal through the small-pox when all the rest of the world ran and left them,” said Gran. “I used to do her washin’. Mis’ Tillman she was. She’s come into a fortin’ since then. I did for the child because she was the moral image of Elsie here. Well, the child died a year or so back, and Mis’ Tillman since she got rich and I got crippled she gives me five shillings a week, and as soon as one of the women in the St. Bride’s foundation almshouses dies I’m to go there.”

“What’ll *she* do?” asked Benje, pointing at the Charmer.

“Oh, no doubt she’ll get married,” said Gran.

“Not I,” said the Charmer, tossing her pretty head. “The girl in the cigar-box at the Varieties is married; she’s just my age, and her husband beats her. And Dollie that went to school with me married a man that got thirty shillings a week, and he lost his place, and Dollie couldn’t get but a pennyworth of milk a day for her baby, they were so poor; and when the baby cried, she gave it just warm water in its bottle, and it died of weakness. It was such an unhappy-looking, poor, patient, lit-



tle baby ! The only time it had a smile and looked real comfortable was when it was dead. Don't talk to me about getting married. If I have to starve, I'll do it alone.—Come on, you Richard, to the Varieties.”

Richard, carrying the bundle with the costume and following the Charmer, felt as if he marched in a triumphal procession. It was not that the Charmer had gleaming golden hair fluffed in a bang under her coarse felt hat, or that, draped in her long cloak, she skimmed along the dirty, wet pavements swift and graceful as a bird, so that people turned to look at the seemingly unconscious Charmer. No ; it was that for the first time in his life he was going to a great show—a MAMMOTH CONSOLIDATED VARIETIES MUSIC-HALL.

If we follow the old fairy-tales, at the birth of the Charmer had presided two fairies. One was very evil, and robbed her of fortune and took away her parents and condemned her to poverty under the charge of a crippled old dame whose ultimate end it was to retire to an almshouse and leave the Charmer to shift for herself ; the other fairy antidoted these ills by giving the Charmer a wonderfully pretty face, a brave heart, a cheery disposition, a frank, innocent, taking way and a generous mind. The Charmer was a queen at home, and ruled Gran and Elizabeth ; at the Varieties she was also a queen. The manager knew she was one of his attractions ;



the employés liked her for her kindly words and deeds; and when she marched Richard in and demanded for him a shilling a day, the place of the boy lately maltreated by the elephant and the risk of being maimed for life, Mr. Crosby did not refuse, but said, as he "was a new boy, four shillings a week would do."

"No, it won't," said the Charmer; "he has his little brother to take care of."

"I'm not responsible for his little brother," said the manager.

"If you were, you'd plan to starve him the first thing," retorted the Charmer. "And if this boy does his work, to begin with, just as well as he would at the end of three months, he is worth as much pay to begin with.—Richard, put down my bundle and sweep out that big glass-and-wire cage; my snakes are all in their boxes now."

The manager laughed, and Richard began his work.

There was work enough. From early morning until late at night Richard ran about with broom, brush or dust-pan. The Consolidated Varieties had a menagerie department, a human-curiosity department with dwarfs, giants, Indians, negroes, armless boys and double-headed girls, and an "art department" where somebody danced and somebody prestidigitated and somebody mouthed "Hamlet" and the Prodigy and others sang. And there



was one department of the Varieties almost as good as the famous Regent's Park Zoo—the Lion Hall. There all down the great hall were cages of lions, leopards, panthers, tigers, cougars, the princes of the Felis family, hungry and fierce, and restrained only by bars and walls from devouring their trembling admirers who sat on tiers of benches over-against them at "feeding-time." Richard had his dinner—a penny bowl of soup and a slice of bread—at the Varieties; about eleven at night he took the Charmer home, and soon after the little old Swiss who played for the dancing, brought home the discontented Prodigy.

To Richard it was a very beautiful life. Was not Gran kind? Was not little Benje warm and well fed? Did not they sleep well at night? Did not the Charmer smile? Did not he feel independent? In these days it never occurred to Richard that he or Benje could ever grow older or need a wider range in life, or that again a domestic cataclysm could render them homeless. Children fortunately live almost entirely in the present. The misery part is largely forgotten; the danger to come is never searched for in the horizon.

If anybody had been so officious as to tell Richard that the Varieties was a demoralizing place, that its ethical atmosphere was far from pure and that there were respectable people who would not enter it, he would have been astounded. As compared with



Miracle Alley, it was a sanctuary of decency. Mr. Crosby allowed no brawling, no loud or blasphemous language, and ejected all who were in the disorderly stage of drunkenness; in Miracle Alley oaths and recriminations, brutality and misery, had raised a chorus that swelled to heaven. It was a part—only a small part—of that exceeding bitter cry of London.

To still this cry have gone down into the seething mass of the royal city's misery and shame many gracious agencies—the Bible Society, the missionary societies, the Bible women and the Bible nurses, many also of noble individual and independent workers. But, though they seem to be many, in comparison they are so few, and the city is so great! And all the while, side by side with those who strive to work for God, go the missionaries of Satan—the atheist with his literature and his halls, the Romanist with his ceremonies and images, the man with the feeble gospel of human brotherhood to heal slightly the hurt of the wounded soul. The teaching and the helping and the preaching that have not in them the vitality of the divine Christ leave the hideous misery of great London practically unhelped.

Let no one think that, going down among those from whom all hope and help and comfort in this world are cut off by their pitiful environment, they can lift them up and comfort them with a reading-



room, a museum, a gymnasium, a picture-gallery, a concert. He only, brother of their flesh and of their woe, an eternal God with promise of eternal life in his hand, is sufficient for their need. Who should bring him to the knowledge of the Charmer and the Prodigy, of Richard and Benje?

When the second Sabbath of this millennial period came, the pressing need of clean shirts and socks reminded Richard that changes of each belonging to himself and Benje had been left at Jacob's. This was the reason why Jacob, pounding at a shoe-sole, heard a cheery "Hello, Jacob!" and there were the big black eyes of Richard looking over the half door.



## CHAPTER III.

### *A MULTITUDE OF COUNSELORS.*

“**W**HY, boy, are you back? Whatever became of you? and where is your little brother? Why did you go off like that?”

“I went off to get a place and earn my living,” said Richard. “I’m in a Mammoth Consolidated Varieties, and Benje is living with a lady, and we’re getting on splendid.”

“That is good news,” said Jacob, looking critically at Richard’s strong shoulders and rugged, leonine face, and seeing no marks of squalor or hunger thereon.

“We left some clothes here, me and Benje, and I thought I ought to come for them. I’m rather a gentleman in my feelings, and I like my shirt washed now and then.”

“The clothes,” said Jacob, “are tied up in that brown-paper parcel on yon shelf. Step in and get them.”

“Honor bright, Jacob, you won’t try to stop me nor keep me? You’ll not lay hold of me, will you?”



“What do you mean, boy? I don’t want you. I’ve no use for boys. If I’d wanted you, I’d have said so when the old woman died. Come in and get your clothes. If you’re doing well, I’m glad to hear it; if you’re not, it is none of my business.”

Thus encouraged, Richard entered into the den of this very reasonable and inoffensive wild beast, and took the bundle.

“You might as well sit down and rest a bit,” said Jacob, “and I will give you some advice. As I’m older than you, I can say what is for your good.”

There was a chair in the shop for the accommodation of customers, but Richard seated himself precariously on the corner of the coal-box. Boys seem to have a penchant for incommodious resting-places.

“Take good care of your brother,” said Jacob, waxing an end. “Be industrious: idleness is mother of crime. Be sober: man made in the image of God cannot offer his Creator a greater insult than to degrade himself lower than the brutes by drinking. Keep clean. Use not God’s name in vain; and if Benje’s shoes and yours wear out, bring them to me, and I’ll keep them mended, as I always have, for nothing.”

“Did you do our shoes for nothing, Jacob? That was pretty good of you. I supposed Gran paid you.”



“She paid me my rent. I did the shoes for charity, to commend myself unto God.”

This repetition of the word “God” aroused the curiosity of Richard, who recalled that of late he had not been able to answer one of Benje’s querulous “Whys.” He said,

“Who’s God, Jacob?”

“Foolish and ignorant boy, do you not know your Creator?”

“In course I don’t. Never knew I had one,” retorted the ward of Christianity. “Do you know him, Jacob?”

“Surely.”

“Is he worth knowing, Jacob?”

“Boy, he is the King of life and Centre of all glory.”

“Then, Jacob,” said Richard, with conviction, “I think if you knew him all this time, and never told me, you were blamed mean, that’s all.”

Jacob gave a start of irritation, then, relapsing into his usual grave, slow manner, said,

“I may have erred ; I might at least have taught you his commandments.”

“Has he commandments, Jacob? Are they any good?”

“Boy, they are the sum and substance of all good, and in keeping of them there is great reward.”

“Then,” said Richard, doubling up his fist and



shaking it at Jacob, "I think this is the meanest trick I ever heard of. Here was me and Benje, and you knew what was to bring great reward, and you never told us a word. What was mendin' of our shoes compared to keepin' a feller out of great reward?"

"Perhaps I erred," said the Jew, monotonously.

"Are there many of them commandments, Jacob?"

"Ten only."

"So? One for each of my fingers. Are they hard to do?"

"That depends entirely upon the temper and disposition of the heart."

"Well, my heart's all right, and so's my temper. If you know 'em, Jacob, suppose you tell 'em out now, till I see what I think of them. One;" and Richard held up a finger to keep tale.

"The first is that we are to worship the Lord our God."

"How could I worship him, when I never heard of him? Say, now, Jacob."

"That is true. It was your misfortune, not your fault. It reminds me of a bit of print here," and he began fumbling in his peg-box—"a bit I picked up on the street: 'How could they hear without a preacher, and how can they preach unless they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth



good tidings and publisheth peace! I should like to see the rest of a writing which so well quotes our Scripture.”

“And you get a reward for keeping the commandments?”

“Yes. It is written that if we do all that is ordered in the book of the law, we shall make our way prosperous and shall have good success.”

“If that is so, Jacob, why don't you go out and tell the commandments to all these poor people in Miracle Alley, and the rest of London, so they won't be so cold and ragged and hungry?”

“They wouldn't heed—” began Jacob.

“Humbug!” said a voice at the half door. “You know the whole thing is a fraud.”

“Peter Auberle,” said the Jew, “you know that I do not permit you to bring under my roof the blasphemy that there is no God.”

“Have any of us ever seen him?” said Auberle.

“No, but we have seen his works.”

“And do you not hold man chief of his works?”

“Yes; he was made in the image of God.”

“Then, if man is God's image, what can there be holy or worshipful in God? Hark to that crew yelling and cursing in the public. Look at us all. Ragged, unshorn, dirty, crippled, crooked, toothless, blear-eyed, miserable, degraded, hateful samples we are of creation! Don't tell me of God till you can show me a better breed of men. If we go over



into May Fair, they may be cleaner and straighter to look upon, but they are cold and cruel and tyrants, every one. Out here on the drinking-fountain they have carved 'God is Love.' What is the use of telling of the love of God if you never show us the love of man? Does man care if his brother goes hungry, so he himself is fed? Don't the strong crowd down the weak? Over in the West End don't they sing the song of the divine right of kings, and after them of nobles and the rich, and the poor man has no rights at all? He is no better than the beasts: the strongest beast plunders and devours the weakest. Men are all monsters."

"Are you a monster, Peter?" demanded Richard.

"Certainly I am. If I did what I feel like doing, I would take a torch and fire the city of London from end to end, and be as gay to see it burn as that king—Nebuchadnezzar or somebody—who burned the city of Paris and played on his fiddle."

"Hush! Don't fill the boy's head with wickedness. He'll learn enough of it in his own time. If things are so bad, no need to make them worse with fire, robbery and murder. You wouldn't be so ready for fire and destruction if you had your own home and your own children, Auberle. A man who has given hostages to the state in family and hearthstone doesn't set himself up as a universal destroyer."



“And why haven’t I a home or a family? Because I have been ground down and kept down without a chance. I’m a sober man, and I am ready to work hard day and night. Many is the time when I’ve walked six mile a day for wage of one and threepence. With rent and food high and wage down to six shillings a week, and often no work at that, how is a man to have a hearthstone or rear a family? When I was a young man, I knew a girl as nice as any girl, and we two talked like fools about marrying. She made ’levenpence a day slop sewing, an’ she sewed eleven or twelve hours for that. So she slaved for her ’levenpence, until, not being made of iron—some women *are* flesh and blood, Jacob—she fell ill and died. I nursed her as well I could, and I buried her; and I concluded that no children of mine should have her story and mine to live over.”

“Come with me, Auberle; I’m going to give a reading. Come on! If you would only listen to this book, it would bring you light and comfort,” said a new voice.

“Oh! Here you are, Mr. Renè, with your Bible! And you’ll go to your poor women down yonder, and they’ll ask you to read out of Revelation. The worst-off ones always likes that best. You read it to them when they’re dyin’, and it’s all a glow and a glory like a pleasant song. But, Mr. Renè, if you’ve got men to rescue and build



up and turn to account, you've got to give 'em a glimpse of the brotherhood of man before you can persuade 'em of the fatherhood of God. When the worst sweaters is men as calls theirselves lights in the Church, them as is sweated into a 'natomy won't take much stock in their religion. Penny readings won't do what's wanted, nor shows where quality comes an' sings an' plays a chune, or gives us a speech 'bout the blessing of contentment, won't do it."

"Auberle, tell me how many infidel clubs, duly organized and with places of meeting, are there in London? I suppose you know," said Mr. Renè.

"Yes, I do. Thirty," said Auberle, promptly.

"And do you know how many different infidel publications they keep on their tables for reading?"

"Yes; I've counted," said Auberle, proud of his accurate information. "Two hundred different kinds, and plenty of each."

"And how much better morals, cleaner men, happier homes, better husbands, wives and parents and more fortunate children, are there as the result of this infidel propaganda?"

"It hasn't had half a chance," said Auberle, sulkily, "we being so ground down by the rich. If we could hew off the head of the entire aristocracy by one blow, we'd come up."

"They that take the sword shall perish by the sword."



“I’d as lief perish as live—my miserable way,” said Auberle.

“Tell me, do you belong to one of these clubs? Are you an infidel?”

“No, not out and out,” admitted Auberle.

“And why not?” urged Mr. Renè.

“Here’s the living truth,” said Auberle: “*She* that was dear to me, and my old gran, who raised me till I was fifteen, and my mother, who died when I was six, all held there was a God, and a happy land to go to when they were dead, and a life where things go better than in this world. It’s a pretty belief for women, sir, and helps ’em, an’ often keeps ’em decent when all chances lie against ’em. Women, sir, holds more by them things than men. It may be they holds by their hearts, and not by their heads. But, sir, a man like me goes through the world with few to care for him, and I never had but them three I name, and I never could come out and out to deny what they held, nor to cut myself quite off from them as held me dear by saying square, ‘I am an infidel.’ It may be weak of me, sir, but that’s how I am. And when I go to your meeting, it is not for what *you* says partic’lar, but for the hymns and the singing, and the other things that gave them poor souls all the good they ever got in life.”

“Auberle,” said Mr. Renè, “whatever you come for, come. You are heart-lonely ; you are poor and



oppressed. If it could once be fixed in your mind that the Lord thinketh upon you and undertakes for you, it would lighten your burden wonderfully. You want to hear of brotherhood—sympathizing human brotherhood that knows how you feel, having felt it. But you want more than an earthly brother, who may misunderstand or forget or be powerless to help. You want a God.”

“No, I don’t,” said Auberle, bluntly. “God is too far off, and too high up, and too full of glory, and too infinite—if there is any God—to come into the feelings of such as me.”

“The God I wish to show you is human and divine—a man sitting on the eternal throne of heaven; a God who wore our flesh and blood in poverty and pain, who hungered, thirsted and was weary, who wept and was despised and wounded and rejected; a man who was a carpenter—a poor and humble woman’s son—and yet who had made all things by the word of his power; who even in his days on earth upheld the universe by his providence; who wears our nature still, being ascended into the heavens, and who matches our sorrows out of his own memories.”

“I told you,” said Auberle, “the thing you preach—the story of the city of God and of the Nazarene—is so beautiful that it takes hold of these poor lonesome ones. But, Mr. Renè, if it was *true*—if it *is* true—why hasn’t it done more



for such as me? Why hasn't it helped up all these wretches around us? Why don't those who say they believe it *live* it? You can see, sir, if such a story was lived before us and among us as well as talked in pulpits, it would take hold of us; it would stop this misery. If the government believed it, would the government license gin-palaces and have unjust laws? If the churches believed it, would they keep shy of us East-Enders as if we was lepers? If the men and women believed it, would they hold fast their money and let us starve while calling Christ 'brother'?"

The next sentence of Auberle was unheard, for he walked off with the slender, quiet, fair-faced Mr. Renè, who had taken it as his life-work to bring the knowledge of the gospel to Miracle Alley and its precincts.

"'Bout them commandments, Jacob?" said Richard, who had the tenacity of a bull-dog.

"There's no use telling them to you. I found a bit of print yesterday that said, 'For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all;' and that is true. As it is certain that you would not keep the Sabbath, it is no good to tell you the law about killing, stealing, swearing, and so on."

"Do you mean keep your Sabbath as you do?"

"Yes, surely."

"You'd better believe I won't. The Varieties is



open then, and I have a livin' to earn for me and Benje."

"Go your way to ruin," quoth Jacob, calmly.

"I can get along without your ten commandments, and—and I'll go my way till—" A gleam broke over his face; for the first time ambition flamed up within him, and by its light he saw wide horizons of hope. "Until I keep a wild-beast show, Jacob."

"Very good," said Jacob. "Come and see me again, and bring Benje. I'm your friend as long as you do well."

"Yes. Thank you, Jacob. Of course you are. All the folks are. It's the way with folks. But I often wonders where's there one to be a friend to them as does ill—where's there one to help a feller when he's down, which is the time he's most needing friends and help. Did you ever hear of such a one, Jacob? *I* never did. Such a one would be a most proper kind of friend to tie to, but where is such? That's what I want to know."

Being merely a benighted heathen product of a highly Christianized country, his question was one which seemed to him unanswerable. For him the ages had brought forth no fruit of peace; for him no one had ever lived who received sinners.

But the inquiry aroused in Jacob's mind the memory of a vanished hope:

"There has never been such a one as you ask



for, boy, and I doubt if there ever will be. This world is given over to the strong. Men praise you if you do well by yourself; but if you fall, they tramp over you. The ancient prophets foretold of One who was to come in a righteous kingdom to judge the poor of the people and save the children of the needy. That One was to have such abundance of power and glory that he would know how to help the needy in his distress and raise up all who fall. Very likely it was a dream, and our prophets were poets singing a song that has deceived our hearts. When I was your age, I used to look toward the skies in the east, hoping for the Glory of Israel to break forth like the sun. If he ever came, it was in some fashion when we did not know him; and he has gone, and left no trace."

"Perhaps he'll come back, wherever he is, Jacob?"

"No, my boy—no. I have given up all hope. I shall never see him, and you will never see him. No doubt the prophets meant other than they sang. There is nothing for you, Richard, in this world, but to be strong; for the strong man succeeds, while the weak man goes to the wall."

Richard held out his arm, and, opening and shutting his large stout hand, exercised muscles of which he did not then know the name.

"Since there is no one to help me, I'll help myself," he said. "You may just make up your mind,



Jacob, I'm not going to the wall for anybody. As long as I've got fists and elbows, I'm going to fight out a way for me and Benje."

Away went Richard with his bundle.

At the end of Miracle Alley there was Betty with a loaf.

"Heigho, Betty! Is your father well?" cried Richard.

"He's dead," said Betty. "I earned this loaf. I'm a step-girl now: I clean steps. A lady took Mary Brewer into school to learn to be a servant, and I clean all the steps Mary had. I earn four-or fivepence a day."

"I live in a splendid house," bragged Richard, "and there are two girls there, and they wash their faces and comb their heads and frill their bangs and mend the tears in their frocks. They are mighty nice girls, Betty. I think you might look rather nice if you did as much as they do. How old are you, Betty?"

"I'm thirteen."

"You're little for your age," said the burly Richard.

"Mam says I'd grow if I had more to eat," said Betty.

"It won't cost you anything to wash your face," said the bluff Richard, and went his way, having sown the seed of vanity and ambition in the unlucky Betty. She would mend her frock and frill her bangs.



“Where did you get these clothes?” asked the grandmother when Richard handed her a parcel, saying, “Here’s things for me and Benje.”

“I remembered I’d left them where we used to live with Gran, so I went and asked for them,” said Richard.

The old woman looked curiously at him through her spectacles :

“Who kept them for you?”

“Jacob.”

“And they are yours—surely yours? It is just as you say?”

“Yes,” said Richard, indifferently. He was looking at the Charmer.

The Charmer lay on the lounge. Her hands were locked under her curly yellow head; her elbows were sticking out like two wings; one foot—and the Charmer had a very pretty foot—drooped to the floor. There was marvelous grace in the round, flexible waist, the drooping foot, the chest expanded by the uplifted arms. Richard did not know that this attitude was grace, nor that the laughing lips, the deep-blue eyes, the brilliant complexion, of the Charmer were beauty; but he looked at her with the same feelings that woke when he saw bright pictures gleaming in golden frames or the flowers heaped in the windows of the florist.

The Charmer laughed at him :

“What are you staring at me for, Richard?”



Attend to Grannie.—Grannie, why are you so suspicious? What a world this is! Here it is so much easier to do ill than well, it is so common to be wicked, that we take it for granted that people are always wicked. The first thing is to suspect them of evil. Why don't we suspect them of good? You have lived so long, Grannie, that the wickedness of this world is always the first thing before your mind. Now, I have lived a shorter time. I'm good and I mean to be good, and I think every one else is good. I don't think Richard stole those duds; you do."

"Thinks I stole 'em!" cried Richard, a flame leaping over his rugged, strong face. "Thinks I stole! I won't stay here another minute.—Come on, Benje!" and, leaving on Gran's lap the cause of contention, he seized Benje and dragged him into the hall.

Where Richard was going he did not know; all London was before him where to choose. It has been before many others, and of some their final choice has been—the Thames!

Out in the hallway, high and sweet, came to Richard and Benje the voice of Elizabeth taking her lesson:

"In holiday-gown and my new-fangled hat!"

But something was wrong with the strain. Elizabeth stopped. The bow lingered on the string, and



the voice of the little Swiss master quavered in example :

“‘Fa-a-an-an-gledd.’ Pile on ze agony, Eleez-eebeth.”

“I want to go hear Elizabeth sing,” whined Benje.

Why not? It was on their way out—just at the foot of the stairs, indeed. Standing on the lowest step, they looked over a half door into a mite of a shop. At a pair of trestles in the middle of the floor a man chiseled and planed the lid of a little coffin. He whistled a tune—not loud, but gay, for he was earning his bread, and his tune kept unconscious time to the tap of his wife’s little hammer as she covered with coarse black cloth and staring round tin spangles the box of this same little coffin. On the floor of the shop two children of two or three years of age played gayly, making dollies of the shavings chipped by the father and the rags dropped by the mother. The woman wore a gay chintz short gown, a red flannel petticoat; on her head was a blue gingham kerchief; the children were in red and yellow flannel. This interior was a picture of vivid, cheery, unthinking life triumphing in the midst of death and fed by it. On a long unpainted box in the corner sat the little Swiss master, his cheek against his violin, his bow uplifted. Before him stood Elizabeth. The sun was setting, and through the westward street and between the houses fell a golden ray, and illuminated



the little shop and made resplendent the yellow hair of the singing Elizabeth.

“Seeng, my Eleezebeth, seeng !” urged the Swiss. “Do not let the tears come, my child. Earn your bread courageously, Eleezebeth—cour-a-gee-ously. Do not ask why you have no parents to take care of you. Do I ask why the emperor is the emperor and I am but the wornout old master who by the goodness of my niece am let sleep here in this large coffin every night, and when I can no more play at the Varieties must go to the workhouse ?”

“No, uncle ; you shall not,” said the woman, taking a few dozen tin spangles from her mouth, that she might speak distinctly.

“But I would not live on you to rob your children.”

“Never fear,” said the man, tossing a long curly shaving to his child ; “mine is a trade that always thrives. People die every day ; I am busy even on Sunday.”

“Seeng, Eleezebeth, seeng ! Bring out ‘I’m too young to wed,’ so as to make your audee-ence smile.”

The lesson presently finished, and Richard recalled his purpose of departure.

“Good-bye,” said Richard. “I am going away. Your grandmother thinks I steal ; she will not want a thief in her house. Good-bye.”

But Elizabeth seized him by the arm and began to call aloud,



“Grannie, Grannie! come here! What do you mean saying bad things to Richard? I won’t sing another note if you send them away!”

The old woman appeared in the doorway.

“Come, my boy! I think no ill of you. Come in. I’ve been watching the window to call you back. Come in, all of you.”

“Come in!” cried the Charmer. “I’ve made toast for tea—toast and sausages. Come in!—Richard, why are you so touchy? No one meant harm to you.”

“It’s enough to make a man mad,” said Richard. “I went to see old Jacob, and he says I’ll never come to any good if I don’t keep his Sabbath; he’s a Jew. Now, could I make my living and lie off work all day Saturday? I told him I couldn’t; it would be too inconvenient.—What Sabbath do *you* keep?”

“Not much of any, I guess,” said the Charmer. “The show is shut, and we rest.”

“Why don’t we keep Sunday?” asked Elizabeth.

“Because, as Richard says, it’s too inconvenient,” laughed the Charmer, buttering her toast.

“Because we’re all turned heathen together,” said the old woman; “and I make no doubt it is just as evil to take away the Lord’s Sabbath as to steal anything we could lay our hands on, only the law takes no notice.”

Richard’s natural shrewdness led him to obliterate



himself as far as possible when this family circle were gathered together. He realized that the fire was small, that the accommodations were narrow and that he and Benje were aliens present on sufferance. There was a box at one corner of the hearth, on which Richard seated himself with Benje between his knees. Thus situated, he could autocratically silence Benje's "Whys" if they became too importunate.

Elizabeth always drew her chair next the brothers. Sometimes she brooded over her disadvantages, sometimes she talked with the boys, and she and Benje sympathized, the one with the other, over mutual grievances: "Why were they not born in the country, where birds sang and flowers bloomed and sun shone? Why did they not have fathers and mothers to care for them?"

"Why can't we ever get out of London?" said Elizabeth. "Once I knew a girl that had been sick, and the Bible nurse—"

"What's a Bible nurse?" demanded Benje.

"She's a nurse that goes round among the sick poor folks, and carries a bag with beef-tea and bandages and crackers in it, and a book. She never charges a penny, and speaks kind and takes care of the poor people as if they were rich folks."

"I never see her in Miracle Alley," said Benje.

"Of course not! There's not near enough nurses to go round such a big place as London."

"Why ain't there enough?" complained Benje.



“Because there isn’t money enough for so many nurses and bags and beef-tea, and all that.”

“Why ain’t there money enough?” whined Benje.

“Because folks—rich folks—won’t give it.”

“*Why* won’t they give it, if they’ve got it?” insisted the insatiable Benje.

“Hush up, Benje, with your ‘Whys,’” said Richard.

“It’s because they don’t care; that’s why.—What about that girl, Elizabeth?” for, a theme once broached, Richard never gave it up until he had exhausted it.

“The Bible nurse sent the girl down to the sea-side for two weeks—two whole weeks. She told me it was splendid. The sun shone, and the waves—all white—ran up on the sand, and she found little shells.”

“I know,” said Richard; “I’ve been. I took Benje. He was sick when he was four years old; he could hardly hold up his head, and he wouldn’t eat, and he got so thin his bones stuck out. I carried him every day to the infirmary doctor, and he said all he needed was to get out of Miracle Alley for a while. I knew there was boats ran down the river and to Ramsgate every day—there was a man I got acquainted with that does nigger minstrel, and he told me about it—so I earned a shilling, and I made Gran give me two shillings, and I went on



the boat when the man I knew went. Some people on the boat that had dinner-baskets with 'em gave me and Benje lots of dinner. We went to Broadstairs, and the man took us up the beach to where the fishermen live, and one of them said we might sleep in his boat, or under his shed when the boat wasn't in. Benje was so weak when we went down I had to carry him. I stayed three weeks. I left Benje lying on the sand while I ran around and earned pennies. Benje got fatter and stronger every day, and he's never been sick since. You see, when I make up my mind to do a thing, I do it. I'm bound to."

"Then I'd make up my mind to do something worth while," said Elizabeth.

"What is worth while?" asked Richard.

"That going to the sea was all right and worth while then," said Elizabeth; "but if I were you, I'd make up my mind to be something better than poor and hungry all my life."

Here the Charmer, sitting by the lamp, began to read. The Charmer was fond of reading. She was considered brilliantly educated: she had been to "board school" until she was twelve years old. She could read, write and cipher, and she knew a little about geography. She gave occasional assistance to the keeper of a penny circulating library, and as a recompense got certain grimy and dog's-eared books to read on Sunday. The Charmer was



not particular; she read anything that came to her in covers. Sometimes, by great good luck, she got what was worth reading, and she read aloud for the improvement of Gran and Elizabeth.

Now the Charmer read:

“‘My brother, you may be poor, you may be even begging your bread, but does no clear beam of energy, of indomitable will, vibrate within thee? Have you no inspiration? Does no voice bid thee arise and lift up others with thyself? Even if your feet be bare upon the pavements, before them open two paths: one leads to poverty and shame, one to self-dependence and honor. What matter if no man help thee? Lift up thy cry, ‘My Father in heaven, help me!’ and go forward.’ Oh my goodness!” said the Charmer, dropping her book; “I forgot! I promised to go and give Letty a dancing-lesson. If I can get her to do three dances well, she can get a place at the Varieties, and come Christmas she can get into the pantomime, and Benje shall get into the pantomime too.”

“She’ll wish she hadn’t gone into the Varieties to be cuffed about,” said Elizabeth. “Mrs. Crosby is so ugly!”

“It is much better than up at four—or, maybe, three—to go for flowers to Covent Garden market, and out all day in all weathers, so tired you can hardly drag, and have half your stock die on your hands, and go hungry for a week to make it up.



Elizabeth, if you were a flower-girl, you would have something to fret over."

The Charmer was putting on her cloak to go and give her dancing-lesson. No doubt it was in the sight of Heaven just as fair a charity as certain that have a higher sound.

The coffin-maker's wife put her head in at the door:

"Elsie, will you go with me to the green-grocer's in Handel street? I'm carrying their baby's coffin there, and they have some flowers to put in it; and you have such taste, Elsie, I want you to put the baby in the coffin and fix its dress and the flowers."

"All right," said the smiling Charmer; "I'll stop with you as I go to give my dancing-lesson."

"I'm glad one more is dead," cried Elizabeth, gloomily.

"Oh fie, Elizabeth! The green-grocer could take care of the baby," said Gran.

"But if he died as my father did, then the baby must be knocked about as Elsie and I are."

"Well, hit back, as I do," said the cheery Charmer, going forth with smiles to wait on life and death.

Is it not possible that this girl, whose lot was such that she had nothing to give but a touch of a consoling hand to a mourning mother, and a dancing-lesson that might help a hungry girl to fill her mouth and pay for a shelter—keep her, perhaps,



from steps that take hold on death—was doing work more pleasing to God than some of the better-instructed sisters? There are some who think they owe their Lord absolutely nothing but to sit in his house reverently of a Sabbath, to join in the hymn as the organ peals, and to drop a coin for contribution when the baskets go round.

And yet these are they who admit that they are bought with a price, and that their Lord gave himself for them. The Charmer did not know that she owed the Lord anything; in fact, she had heard of him so little that for her he was not. The city was full of churches, into which she never went; it was full of Bibles, which she never read; it was full of sermons, which she never heard. Who was to blame for all this? Some one was terribly to blame. But we think it was not Elsie. If Benje had known of this state of things, he might have asked, "*Why* don't the good ones come to find us and tell us? *Why*, if Christ left his poor with them, do they not remember the poor? *Why*, if in the sick, the poor, the naked, the hungry, the imprisoned, he is ministered unto, is service not more of a delight? *Why*, if God abhors an idler, are we so idle? *Why*, if we are Christians, are we so unlike Christ?"

Why, O Benje, why, why, why?



## CHAPTER IV.

### *THE LOSS OF THE EWE-LAMB.*

THE tenacious mind of Richard had seized hold of what the Charmer had read. He remembered what he had said to Jacob about getting on in the world and rising even to the eminent position of keeper of a wild-beast show. Also had not Elizabeth just bidden him to do something worth while? He felt strong—strong as a giant—to grapple with all the wrongs which Auberle had enumerated, and to vanquish them.

“Elizabeth,” he said, “I have made up my mind. I can do something—something great—for me and Benje. Just as I always had a fire for us, and a bed, because I would have it, and worked for it steady; just as I took Benje to the seaside, because I was bound to do it,—so I’ll do something fine for me and Benje. What shall I do, Elizabeth? This afternoon, when Jacob was jibing me, I told him I meant to go on till I kept a wild-beast show. Would you, Elizabeth? Would you do that?”

“No, I would not,” said Elizabeth, very decidedly. “Mr. Crosby isn’t a gentleman; he’s a—



brute, I call him. If I were you, I'd set out to be a gentleman while I was about it. Haven't you ever been into Russel Square and Bloomsbury, and seen the fine houses and the carriages?"

"Yes, once," said Richard.

Rag Fair does not often intrude into the sacred precincts of May Fair. The children of the East End stray now and then into the borderland of Bloomsbury as if they went into a far country.

"Then that's what you ought to aim for," said Elizabeth. "If I was a boy, and not a girl—for girls can't do anything—that's what I'd aim for. I'd like to live in a grand house, and ride in a carriage, and have a coachman with silver buttons, and a footman; *only* I would not allow my coachman to hit at poor children with his whip if they came near the carriage. Don't poor children have it bad enough, being cold and hungry and no bed, and nothing, that everybody hits at them?"

"Well, Elizabeth," said Richard, "when I get the grand house and carriage, and everything, you and the Charmer and Gran, shall come and live with me; I can as easy take care of you all as of Benje. The thing, Elizabeth, is how to get there. Keep shop?"

"No," said Elizabeth. "It takes money to start a shop; you have no money. You must start on something you have. Perhaps you have—brains, Richard?"

"Yes," said Richard, doubtfully; "every one has.



I see them knocked out of a man once. He fell from a roof; and when his brains was out, he was dead. If you mean I've got more *think* in me than other folks, I b'lieve I have."

"That's what I mean. Now, with their brains people got to be bishops and lawyers. I've heard of bishops, but I never saw one but in a picture in a book; and they live in a palace and wear white frocks and long stockings and buckles. But lawyers are great gentlemen, Richard; they live in the Temple and Gray's Inn, and run round with a big silk gown and white curly wig and a boy carrying a blue bag for 'em. When the bag isn't very heavy, they carry it themselves. They have only to say to the bobbies, 'Put this man in prison,' 'Put that man in prison—'"

"I'd say, 'Let 'em all *out* of prison,'" quoth Richard.

"And they get piles of money and ride in coaches."

"Then I'll be a lawyer," said Richard, firmly.

"But then there are doctors," said Elizabeth. "The doctors get to be very great. Even the queen has to do what her doctor says to her; I read it in a paper. I have seen doctors living in splendid houses and riding in coaches. When rich folks are sick, they'll give a doctor a hundred pounds to cure 'em; and if a doctor only looks at a person's tongue, he gets a bright gold sovereign for it.



A doctor always wears a fine coat and a tall silk hat and yellow kid gloves and a shirt. Oh, such a shirt! white as white and glossy! Oh!"

Richard caught the enthusiasm of Elizabeth for the medical profession.

"I know, I know!" he cried. "I took Benje to the infirmary doctor, and once I went to see the minstrel-man in the hospital and saw the doctor; and I took some shoes once up to Birdcage Walk, where a doctor was to see a man. Oh, I remember! He puts one hand out on your wrist. The pulse? Yes, the pulse. He holds out his other hand to the man's other hand, and just fills his pocket with money. Why, of course! The doctor can save life, and the man will give all the money he has to get his life saved. What good would the money do him if he was dead, you know?"

Verily, Richard, did not Satan say long ago, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life"? But Richard did not know what authority he was quoting.

"And what's the good of the life, without any money?" asked Elizabeth, mournfully.

"I would not take quite all," said Richard: "I would leave them a few shillings; and dear little boys like Benje—I would feel their pulse for nothing and give their brothers five bob to take 'em to the sea. Yes, yes, Elizabeth! I'll be a doctor.



I'll be a gentleman as fine as any on Holborn Viaduct: I'll wear a coat with a velvet collar, and a silk hat half a yard high, and I will wear those kind of boots that shine like black glass, and I'll have those things called gloves—yellow, if you say so, Elizabeth—and a cane with a big gold top like an apple, and I'll carry it—so—between my two hands, with the top in my mouth;” and Richard seized the poker to demonstrate. “I won't wear a shirt that don't shine, and—”

“But the clothes don't make the doctor, nor even the gentleman,” said Elizabeth. “How will you get the money?”

“Oh, I know; I know how to do it. You take hold of a sick person's hand, and you look at the tongue, and you tell 'em in which bone of their body the trouble is. You say to the man, ‘You will be dead in ten minutes’—and you look at your watch, Elizabeth—‘unless I save you,’ and you write on a paper—or tell them, if you can't write—‘Get, say, some flies cooked in oil, or some weeds, or grass picked by a witch when the moon is full, made in tea.’”

“What nonsense, boy! Are you crazy?”

“I heard old women telling Gran such things would cure anything,” said Richard. “But, however I did it, I'd cure them, and I'd get my money; and I have heard of doctors that could take out a blind eye and put in another that could



see. I shall be such a famous doctor the queen and the prince of Wales will send for me when they are sick, and they shall hear of me even in the country of China."

"That is right," said Elizabeth. "But to be a doctor you must study; you must learn much. You cannot be a doctor and not know how to write; you must learn to read and to write. When you know how to read, you can learn all that is in books. And there will be great schools to go to; how you will pay your way I can't see. But you must learn to read first. Did you say you are twelve? You should begin at once. The Charmer and I could teach you; only we never have any time, and we are so tired, and perhaps we do not know how very well. She read in a book one night that some people had such a way of teaching that if you put your mind to it in a few weeks you could learn what other persons would take years to tell you. I was in board school three years, and I learned such a little!"

"Oh, I must learn everything—all there is to learn—before three years. I must learn it all in three months. I could learn to read in a week; to write, in another week. I believe I could make as good scratches now as any one, if I had a pen. I've seen Jacob do it. He puts his head down near the paper, and runs out his tongue, and shuts one eye, and makes long crooked marks. After I



learn how to do that, I suppose I could learn all the rest in two or three months."

"I'm afraid not; our board schoolmaster had been years in school. But first of all you must learn to read."

"Why can't *I* learn to read?" interposed the voice of Benje, low, sweet and complaining as that of a young turkey. "Why can't I be a gentleman, Richard?"

"So you can," said Richard, "and you shall begin right away.—Elizabeth, I shall send Benje to board school; I'll take him to-morrow. It is twopence a week to pay; I'll take that out of my six shillings, and I'll buy him a book and a slate.—You'll work like a man, Benje? You know when you learn to read all the books in the world you'll soon be a gentleman."

Benje settled himself back against Richard with a satisfied air, and, reaching up with both hands, took firm hold of Richard's ears. But Richard's ears lay close to his head, and this frequent grasp of Benje had never been able to make them flare out like jug-handles.

"And what will *you* do, Richard?" asked Elizabeth.

"I know," said Richard. "Peter Auberle can read and write; Jacob says Peter is very learned and knows more than all the men of Miracle Alley. I must get two hours a day to go to Peter and learn.



Do you suppose Mr. Crosby will give me two hours a day?"

"No; of course he won't."

"Then I'll make him," said Richard.

"Perhaps Elsie can make him," said Elizabeth.

But when Richard preferred his request for two hours' daily leave, it was as if he had asked the half of the manager's kingdom. Two hours! Mr. Crosby felt sure that anarchy and communism had now come into England to stay, when boys became so assuming and exorbitant.

Yet this boy worked fifteen hours daily—from seven in the morning until ten at night—for a shilling, a little less than one and two-thirds cents an hour. This labor, moreover, was in the hot, vitiated air of a show-place, particularly among the foul odors of the wild-beast cages.

But Richard had by this time formulated his opinions, and could speak less wildly than when he discussed medical practice with Elizabeth. He had also been to consult with Peter Auberle.

"Sir," he said to Mr. Crosby, "I must learn to read. You complain of the paupers and the poor-rate, but there are so many paupers because we people are not educated and cannot read and write. We act like beasts when we live without knowing more than beasts. I want to learn something, sir, so that there shall be one less beast in England, and one more man. I come here at seven in the morning



and stay until ten at night, and how can I have time to learn unless you give it to me? I'd like from one to three, sir, when the performances are not on."

"Every boy works as many hours as you do," said Mr. Crosby. "The butchers' boys have the same hours, and till twelve Saturday night; the bakers' boys, the dairy-boys, have longer hours: they begin at five in the morning."

"I don't mind the work," said Richard; "I'd as leave come at five, if you say so. If there were more hours in the day, so I could learn reading in two of them, it would be all right."

"You'd better let him go," said the Charmer; "he does more for his pay than any boy you ever had. I have made up my mind that Richard must have his chance; he has the making of somebody in him. He and Elizabeth and I could all get into the Islington theatre for the pantomime season for more than you pay us, and have three less hours a day."

"But not steady work year in and out," said Mr. Crosby. "However, Elsie, if you'll agree that none of you will leave me for a year, staying at the same pay as now, the boy may have his two hours a day, if it is to be spent in learning reading and not in fooling around gin-palaces or playing pitch-and-toss."

The Charmer, who was easily satisfied, agreed to



Mr. Crosby's condition: they would all stay for a year at the same price.

Behold, now, Richard, with threepence invested in pen, ink and paper, and threepence in a second-hand reader and speller! At one—no, truly, at ten minutes before one, taking part of the time allotted him for his dinner—off goes Richard with a rush for his tutor. Out of Shoreditch, into Brick Lane, into a court and a mews—this was Bethnal Green—Richard was in the very centre of the ancient silk-weavers' colony. Here, driven out of France by the *dragonnades* of Louis the Magnificent, came some of the sixty thousand Huguenots who settled in London in 1684. In those days half the silk- and velvet-weavers of Lyons fled for conscience' sake, and many of them set up their looms in Bethnal Green. As Richard ran on, looking up to find Peter Auberle's attic, he saw the wide casement-window, built so that, the loom fitting into the window, the light fell on the whole web.

As one notes now the squalor, the ignorance, the vice, the godlessness in general, of Bethnal Green way, it is hard to realize that this quarter was once filled with a fugitive host exiled for dear love of the word of God; that here once the Bible lay in the loom-corner; that in these rooms altars were raised to no unknown God; that here mothers told their children of their kin who had been martyred for the testimony of Jesus Christ.



Upon the roof, here and there, were little wooden erections—"pigeon-dormers;" for once Bethnal Green was the centre of the pigeon-fanciers' trade, as it was of silk-weaving. When the nineteenth century opened, the hum of the weavers at work filled the air and the flights of pigeons often darkened the day; now pigeons and weavers are nearly all gone. The pigeon-trade is "cruel poor," and the factories have driven the hand-looms out of the field.

The looms are empty; the few weavers left are old and gray. Their rooms are bare and desolate. In the land of their adoption the last descendants of some of the Huguenots have lost the ancient faith with the ancient trade and cheerful spirits. Auberle, sitting despondent by a loom that brought him six or seven shillings a week, was Auberle the almost infidel and anarchist; and Auberle was the only teacher to be found for Richard.

A ray of light came into the weaver's attic with the boy; he gave him a place for book and paper at the empty loom. With the boy came to the man occupation, interest; once more he was of use to some one. He took from a shelf a few old books.

"You shall learn all these, Richard, to spite them. They don't mean you to learn, my boy. In France and Germany they give you education free; they make you go to school whether or no. In America, I am told, they send you to school, and



gives you all your books, and puts over you the best teachers, and gives such schoolrooms and school-furniture, boards, books, globes, maps, all fit for the richest; and the rich ones go side and side with the poor and keeps the thing up. But here in England, my lad, it is no matter whether you learn your A, B, C or not. You may pay your twopence a week; you may buy your books. You are not expected to learn if you go, and you're not given much chance to go. Your master is allowed to work you twelve, fifteen or eighteen hours a day, and how much of you will be left for learning after that?"

"Yes, yes, Auberle!" said Richard, impatiently. "But teach me something, quick! I want to learn all there is in three or four weeks. Hurry up! What's first?"

"The alphabet—twenty-six letters—and then how to put the letters together. After that you learns all you can; and the more you learns, the more you find out what you don't know. Look ye, my son: there's *m* and there's *a* and there's *n*. Now tackle it. Whenever you sees them three together, *man* it means. *M, a, n*, 'man.' Now, them is print. Here, on this paper, I sets them in handwriting—*m, a, n*, 'man.' Now copy that all down that column, looking at mine to write, and at the book to keep the print in your idee. Three legs *m* stands on, like a cripple with a crutch;



two legs *n* stands on, like a man; and *m, a, n*, spells 'man.'”

Thus was Richard initiated by Auberle into the kingdom of knowledge. Full of zeal and ambition and self-reliance, greedy to learn, receiving as a golden coin each item of information given, the boy soon learned that all of the longest and busiest life would suffice only to gather up a very little of the lore of the universe.

The progress of Richard, as compared to the progress of most boys, was as the strides of the famous seven-league boots to the creeping of a snail.

If Fate had cast Auberle in other circumstances, he might have made one of the rarest of teachers. He knew how to encourage, to inspire, to economize the labor of his pupil. There was no droning through inane sentences in a reading-book for Auberle.

As soon as Richard could read—and in a month he read fairly well—he was set to read in his history or geography, and his writing-lesson was not a mere string of words, but was the statement of facts: “The earth is round like a ball;” “There are five zones—one torrid, two temperate, two frigid. ‘Frigid’ means ‘very cold;’ ‘torrid’ means ‘very hot;’” and so on.

All Sabbath afternoon Richard spent with Auberle at study. In the morning he studied, reading



to the Charmer or to Elizabeth. Sometimes he took Benje with him in the afternoon, and Benje sat on the loom and watched the last few pigeons of Bethnal Green wheeling over the streets where cold and ragged and dirty children fought and played. Until dark the insatiable Richard worked at his books, then back to Gran's, and after supper Richard and Elizabeth talked of that large future and the grandeur Richard would reach by learning.

“I have not said it to Auberle, but as soon as I learn more I mean to earn more money. After the year at the Varieties is done I shall get a place as secretary. A secretary reads and writes for a lord or a duke, and gets a great deal of money. All the great men I read about were first secretaries; the lord or the duke then had them made into bishops or book-writers, or whatever they wanted to be. I have not changed my mind: I mean to be a doctor. When I am a doctor, I shall cure people from morning to night, until not one sick or crippled person is left in London. I shall cure all the blind, and the humpbacked, and the club-feet, and the poor folks that crawl on their knees because their legs won't hold them up. Elizabeth, why do you not learn too? Why do you not go to live with a great lady and learn to make music like the ladies we see through the windows in fine houses? When I learn much, I will teach you, Elizabeth—not a great deal, but a little; a



little, nothing more, for women do not need to know much or to be as wise as men who are going to be great doctors."

"Richard," interposed Benje, "I got three pennies; must I give them to Gran, or may I keep them?"

"Give them to Gran, of course," said Richard, firmly.

Benje slipped from between Richard's knees and went to make his offering.

"Two ladies gave them to me," he said. "They said I had lovely eyes."

"Keep the pennies, my lamb," said Gran, who was fond of Benje.

"What will you do with them?" asked Elizabeth.

"I'll pay some of the children's school-money," said Benje, with his lip trembling sympathetically. "They come in the morning without the school-pennies, and then the teacher says, 'Go home! You can't come in without the twopence,' and they say their mother hain't any penny to bless herself with, and their father has no work. But the teacher makes them go, and they cry. Oh how they cry!" and tears ran over Benje's face at the recollection.

"Do they like the school so much?" asked Richard.

"I know how it is," said the Charmer; "I've



been. It is not that they like the school so much, but anything is better than where they live. It is warm at school; no drunken people are there to hit or kick them; they have chairs, and not the floor, to sit on. Often the teachers have penny dinner-tickets to give out; often the master has asked folks to send him shoes or caps or clothes, and he distributes them to the poorest. Those that are not there don't get dinner nor clothes, but there are plenty of them come without breakfast or shoes or shawls or the week's pennies, and they are sent out to stand in the cold slush of the pavements so hungry they feel as if they must fall. When I went to board school, if I ever got a few pennies, I used them to pay some children's school-money, so they could get in. Dozens of them are so cold and tired and weak as soon as they get into the chairs in the warm room they drop over against the desks asleep; when the teachers are kind, they let them sleep it out.—Here, Benje, is another penny; now you can pay for two to-morrow morning."

"Benje is very kind-hearted," said Gran. "This week I saw him three times saving his bit of bread at noon to take to some one who had nothing; he said the soup was enough for him. But I can't let him do it; he is a weak child, and he won't grow if he isn't fed."

"Keep your heart up, Benje," said Richard. "When we are rich, we'll set up school where every



one can come for nothing, and where we'll have a hot dinner for the poor ones every day."

But now Christmas had come, and Benje had been gotten into the pantomime at Islington Theatre, and the Charmer's protégée, Letty, took him to Islington at eleven in the morning, and about midnight handed him in to Richard such a very pale and weary little boy that he fell asleep while Richard washed his face and pulled off his clothes and laid him on his end of the lounge. Very big grew Benje's eyes, and very small his face, and very white, before by the end of January the insatiable public became weary of pantomime. But Benje by his services had earned forty-eight shillings—twelve whole dollars—and he and Richard had clothes to cover them; and after that last pantomime night Richard put his worn-out little brother to bed and kept him there an entire week, and fed him on soup, and, absolutely, meat every day; so at the end of a week Benje went back to school almost as good as new.

Then there came a day at the end of February. Mr. Crosby told Richard he must stay at the Varieties all night, as one of the watchmen was very drunk. Who would go home with the Charmer? She would go alone, as she had done many times; she would not wait for Elizabeth and the old Swiss.

"I really wish you would not go alone," said Mr. Crosby, who was by no means a very bad man



or a very cruel manager, and had a regard for his Serpent-Charmer.

“Why, I can take care of myself; I’m never afraid,” said the Charmer; and away she went in her old waterproof cloak and little old felt hat—the fair and smiling Charmer. She would not tell them why she was so set against delay, and Mr. Crosby and Richard wondered why she had been so insistent.

But Elizabeth got home before the Charmer, and she and Gran told the long hours of the February night sitting by the grate waiting for the Charmer who did not come—who never came again to the house in the No Thoroughfare where the coffin-maker lived at the foot of the stairs. And the pretty Serpent-Charmer was seen no more at the “Varieties Consolidated,” where she had promised to stay for a year. Richard searched for her; so did Mr. Crosby; so did the police, instigated by Mr. Crosby; so did Auberle and Jacob and Mr. Renè, stirred up by Richard; but none of them found the Charmer. They had no one to tell them that on that very foggy February night a carriage had rolled away into May Fair carrying the Charmer, and all the light and laughter had gone out of Gran’s home. The old dame’s stay and comfort and joy—her ewe-lamb cherished in her bosom, her Elsie better to her than ten sons—had gone from her.



These were sad days when Benje cried himself to sleep, and Richard watered the cages of the wild beasts with his tears, and Elizabeth's song broke into sobs, and Mr. Crosby tried to be patient without succeeding very well. Dark and hideous suspicions filled the mind of Gran. To Elizabeth the solution of the mystery was death; to the boys the Charmer was a good of late possessed, now lost.

But Gran had lived seventy years in London; this loss in her faded, chilly old age had taken out whatever little warmth and glow remained for her in life. She sat and thought unutterable things. She knew that the Charmer was far too cheerful a spirit to kill herself, and then girls whose rent was paid, whose toes were not out of their shoes, whose breakfast was secured, did not fling themselves into that baleful river.

"Elsie never left you of her own accord," said the coffin-maker's wife to Gran; "I most wish I had nailed her up in one of them," with a shake of her head toward the long pine boxes whereby she lived.

"I most wish you had," moaned Gran.

It was the old story of the beloved devoured by an evil beast—the old heart-cry, "If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

Yet in that old enchanting story no evil beast had devoured the child. No doubt Gran would have felt more comfortable about her child if she



had been lost in a desert where there are nothing worse than wild beasts, such as lions. In a Christian age and in the capital city of a Christian nation Satan has so made his seat that Gran knew the wild beasts there are of those who cast soul and body into hell. Reviewing all the train of her sad life, poor Gran lifted up Jacob's wail: "All these things are against me!"

"We can't do a thing for her," said the coffin-maker's wife—"she's out of reach—but didn't you never pray?"

"Long ago, when I was a child, I was taught, but I've forgotten all the words, it is so fearful long since."

"I don't mean that, justly: I mean when you has a trouble to speak it out of your own heart to God and ask him to help you. There's a street-preaching I go to Sunday nights where I heard about that, and that the Lord don't hold it bold of us to come with our sorrows, but always hears; and if so be he don't answer immejit, at last he's sure to help. He knows where Elsie is; you can't do better than pray to him to give her back."



## CHAPTER V.

### *ST. BRIDE'S FOUNDATION.*

EVERYTHING went wrong now that the Charmer was gone. There was no one to laugh and jest, to devise small treats and cheerful surprises of saveloy or buttered toast; there was no one to take a gay view of present surroundings and make the best of untoward circumstances. Benje and Elizabeth had no one to stem the current of their complainings. Richard, resolute and hopeful for the future, admitted, with Auberle and Jacob, that the present was as bad as the present could be. Gran had no future; she lived in the past, and she sat and sighed over it. There was no one now to see that Elizabeth's feet were kept dry, and Elizabeth had colds in her head, which were no improvement to her singing. And then with the Charmer went fourteen shillings a week. Now the small community had only Elizabeth's eight shillings and Richard's six, and the weekly five sent Gran in stamps by Mrs. Tillman, and what little Gran could earn by knitting—never over a shilling or two a week, for her rheumatism grew worse and worse.



So March was half gone, and it was a very cold, foggy, sleety, east-windy, depressing March. It was Sunday morning, and Gran sat by the fire nursing her gnarled fingers and prognosticating that soon she must go to the hospital. Richard had washed his clothes and Benje's, and had hung them on a stick out of the window to get what drying they could in the foggy air. The church-bells rang over the city, but they had no message for this household. Gran, in the days of her worst poverty, when now her hat, and again her best gown, and at another time her shawl, would be in pawn, so that she never had, free of the ominous "three balls," her entire paraphernalia, had ceased going to church. Church-going was a habit which had never been begun for the others.

Elizabeth was cooking the dinner. Watched carefully by Benje, she cut up meat, onions, turnips, cabbage and potatoes, and set the pot upon the fire in the grate.

"It will be a good dinner," said Benje, smacking his lips.—"Say, Elizabeth! why can't we have meat dinner every day? Why can't we never have a tart and—"

But a knocking at the door interrupted Benje's *whys*.

When any one knocked at the door now, the faces of this little family paled and their hearts stood still. It might be news of the Charmer—bad news,



of course. Apprehending a policemen and words about the "morgue," Richard opened the door. A very impressive-looking personage stood there, and behind her a very oddly-dressed old woman. The two came in without being asked. The personage with a rustling silk gown, a feather in her hat and a big black boa about her neck promptly took the chair which Gran vacated, and left the old lady standing meekly before her. The old woman who came with this grand lady was panting and coughing from ascending the stairs, and with a deprecating curtsy to the bonnet and the boa she sat upon the corner of Richard's lounge and made various gasps and jerks to recover her breath.

"I came from Mrs. Tillman," said the Silk Gown, majestically. "Old Mrs. Perch, at the St. Bride's Foundation almshouses, was buried yesterday, and now the house is vacant for you—No. 10, the corner house—and I'm sure you ought to be most thankful, for a very nice place it is. You are to take your own things—your bed and table and chest of drawers, and whatever you have, you know. I'm to tell a man to come for them this afternoon, and I've brought Mrs. Rossiter, who has No. 9 at St. Bride's, and she is to tell you all about it; and help you to put your things together, and go back with you in the cab—the cab is at the door; so you had better hurry about it. I can call another for myself."

Having thus exhaustively disposed of Gran's des-



tiny, the Silk Gown sniffed at Elizabeth's cooking, and, remarking that she "loathed onions," bade Richard open the window.

Gran looked about helplessly at the three children. There was now no autocratic, sensible Charmer to take care of them. True, none of them were of her kin. The two boys had been picked up in the streets by the Charmer, and Elizabeth was but the Charmer's second cousin—not on Gran's side of the family. Still, the three were all that Gran had in the world of familiar or affectionate; they constituted her family, and the tie was hard to rend.

"How can I leave the children?" she cried.

"Well, that passes all!" exclaimed the Silk Gown with asperity. "Here for five years you have been waiting until Mrs. Tillman could get you into St. Bride's Foundation, and thankful you ought to be. Old as you are, and poor, and crippled with rheumatism by the looks of your hands, do you think better of ending in the poorhouse, pray? You may make up your mind, if you won't take what you can get, Mrs. Tillman is not to go on sending the five shillings a week; she will give that to them as is more deserving and grateful. And if you change your mind to-morrow, it will be too late; I can find Mrs. Tillman some one to fill No. 10, and grateful to her for allowing it. So take it or leave it, and don't waste my time, I do beg of you."

To lose the five shillings, and no doubt soon to



be unable even to make a shilling or two by knitting, Gran would then be dependent on the slender pittance of the children, and the workhouse must be the result. Evidently, she must go to St. Bride's.

Elizabeth saw it.

"Gran," she said, "you have looked for it years; *she* said it was to be fine for you. Of course you'll go; we can get on."

"I'll take care of 'em," said Richard, hiding a sob in his throat by making his voice heavy.

"Can't I wait—a week?" pleaded Gran.

"I said take it or leave it at once," said the inexorable Silk Gown.

"Missis, you'd far better come at once, while you can; it's a rare chance," said the old woman, who had finally found breath to speak.

"I'll go," said Gran, and two great tears from fountains nearly drained by earth's sorrows ran over her wrinkled cheeks.—"Can I have an hour?"

The Silk Gown rose up and was more affable. Those tears may have melted a little of her hardness, or she may have been more pleased by Gran's concession than she cared to show.

"You can stay until after dinner, and Mrs. Rositer can stay with you and help you pick up. I'll send the cab back after you, and I'll not tell Mrs. Tillman that you was so ungrateful, and took it on you to make question about going, and acted as if it was a warrant she sent after you, and not a favor.



But it's like the ingratitude of poor folks—quite, indeed !”

“What an awful cross lady!—Elizabeth, why are ladies so cross?” cried Benje, when the last rustle of the silk gown had drifted down the staircase.

“If that's a lady, I don't want to see no more of 'em,” said Richard.—“And you needn't try to be one, Elizabeth.”

“She's *not* a lady,” said Gran ; “a lady is much more pleasant bespoken to the poor. She is Mrs. Tillman's maid, and to my certain knowledge she was brought up in the blue-coat girls' school, and as poor as poor ! But so it is, and I'll make warrant that, as she was so fierce to get me off to St. Bride's, she has some reason of her own in it, and I make no doubt that my weekly five shillings is to go to some of her own relations that she has to do for.”

Now, here the experienced Gran was very near the mark. Not that she shot beyond it, but she fell a trifle short of the facts in the case. She sat down in the chair which the Silk Gown had monopolized, and began a pitiful sighing and groaning at being so unceremoniously torn away from her home.

“Don't ye take on, my dear,” said Mrs. Rossiter, addressing herself to comforting Gran. “We are all as sociable as a hive of bees at St. Bride's Foundation. We'll not let you be lonely, and you'll be



as comfortable as can be. For us poor women that after a life of hard labor has only the workhouse to look to, St. Bride's is like heaven itself. You've a house to yourself, you see—one room twelve by twelve below, and one the same above, and a grate in each, and a ton of coal put in for you once a year. You have a little garden-spot the size of your room, where you may raise a posy or a lettuce or a cabbage or sweet herbs, as you may choose. A pound a month is give you to provide your light and food and soap, and whatever you may need. At Easter you gets a pair of shoes and six yards of flannel and six yards of factory. At Christmas you gets a bonnet such as I have on. On Whitsunday you gets a blue cotton gown, and on All Saints' day you has a flannel gown, and once in three years you gets such a shawl as I am wearing;" and, having mentioned her raiment, the old woman rose up and exhibited herself as a raree show, turning round and round. Her bonnet was a huge black silk scoop with a full cap inside; the shawl, a red-and-black check; the gown, a coarse warm blue flannel reaching to the ankles and with three tucks in the skirt.

Having exhibited St. Bride's Foundation fashions, Dame Rossiter sat down again and continued her discourse:

"And it's peaceful out there, mem; it do seem as if all the hurry and worry had fell away from



us an' left us a quiet time to prepare to meet the Lord, as we surely must. We poor women, as you know, mem, are that drove an' worked that Sunday is to us the same as Monday, and, as for souls, we don't know we have 'em, they not being outrageous after being fed and clothed as our bodies do be. But out at the Foundation, mem, the soul gets a chance to come to the front and stay there. We has the reg'lar services and the visits from the rector an' the ladies; we has our Bibles an' a quiet time to sit and read 'em; and nat'rally, when we comes to see each other, there is talk of the next world, and so at St. Bride's we ceases to be heathens and lives Christians."

Here Elizabeth prayed Mrs. Rossiter to lay off her bonnet and shawl and eat dinner with them, and then they would pack up Gran's goods.

Mrs. Rossiter continued her description of St. Bride's Foundation:

"No men, unless near relations, come into St. Bride's, nor yet boys; otherwise, your friends may call and see you as they please. But, as we are far out north-west, few of them please. If you want to go away for longer than a day, you must get leave. If you are sick, you lets the chief lady of St. Bride's Charity Guild know, and she sees that you are cared for well. To church you must go, unless ill, every Sunday morning; also Christmas, Good Friday and other chief church-days.



And that I do not object to, but find it comforting and quieting to go to the Lord's house and hear about heaven. A pound a month, when you crave a bit of meat and meat is high, and you needs your sugar and your drop of tea—a pound a month, being less than five shillings a week, with now and then a pair of shoes or felt slippers to buy, and all your kerchers and aprons and stockings,—well, it *do* keep you contriving. But the old cotton gown, when we gets the new one, do make us a bed-gown or so, and many is the good petticoat that the old shawls makes, not being nigh wore out when the new ones comes. Also, we helps each other. Them as can cut, sew or contrive well helps another; them with good eyes reads a bit of Scripture to them as is poor of sight. If there's one main good at writing, she writes the letters, if letters there be; and, as we are all so poor and need each other so much, we can't afford to quarrel, my dears. Also, we have all had times hard enough to make us willing to sit down quiet and not stir up wrath. And we are under strict orders to keep ourselves and our houses clean as clean!"

Having thus expounded life at St. Bride's Foundation almshouses, Mrs. Rossiter, protesting that she had "not had such a beautiful outing for five years," drew her chair to the table to partake of bread and Elizabeth's *olla podrida*. Then all was stir and bustle, putting up Gran's goods for leaving; for



the almshouses of St. Bride's were not furnished, and Gran must take what she had of household plenishing.

"It seems like robbing you," she said to the children generally.

"No, it don't; we'll get on. Besides, the things are yours, and that ends it," said Elizabeth, and she sorted out tea-kettle and frying-pan, iron pot and tea-pot.

"Whatever will you do? No tea-kettle!" cried Gran.

"It will save us the expense of tea," said Elizabeth, borrowing a leaf out of the Charmer's philosophy.

Then the carter came and the cab came. Gran's clothes and goods were packed; she had no trunk, but they put her few clothes in the one tub. The things were carried down; then they all followed Gran down stairs. And now self-control gave way, and they all cried, and Gran too lifted up her voice and wept, and Mrs. Rossiter wept for sympathy, and the Swiss master and the coffin-maker and his family came out and added to the general deluge; and it was very much as if they had put Gran in one of the coffin-maker's long boxes and carried her away. For at seventy years this leaving all whom she had ever known and going to live all alone in an entirely new place and in a new way of life seemed to poor Gran quite like dying and being



resurrected in a world not nearly so good as the burial service had promised.

The children came up to their dismantled abode. The square of carpet was gone from the floor, the table was gone, three chairs were gone, most of the dishes and cooking-utensils were gone, Gran's clock, which in its day had made many trips to the pawnshops, was now gone on its last trip—to St. Bride's Foundation. Gran herself was gone. The going of Gran was almost as sudden, and was quite as final, as had been that of the Charmer.

Benje threw himself on his face on the floor, and began his vain inquiries :

“ Why didn't they take us all ? Why haven't we any table ? Why haven't we any Gran ? Why is this such a bad world ? ”

Elizabeth, on the one chair that was left, bowed her face to her knees and gave Benje no answer.

Richard looked in despairing silence on the desolation of his first home ; then he pulled himself together to repair the ravages made by St. Bride's. There was yet left in the inner room the little bed of the Charmer and a bit of curtain drawn across the window. He smoothed the quilt over the bed, so that it should appear less desolate to Elizabeth. Then he swept the floor and remarked casually that it was good they had the box left : he and Benje could sit on that by the fire ; and there was the lounge yet, for them to sleep on. He went below



and begged the loan of a wide bit of board to serve as a table until it should be needed as a coffin-lid, and he rested one end of the board on the window-sill and one on the arm of the old lounge, and observed that it was "as good a table as any one need to see" and "there were dishes enough to go round."

The coffin-maker came up to see what the deserted children would do with themselves.

"We'll get on," said Richard. "I earn six shillings and Elizabeth earns eight, and maybe I can find Benje something."

"Fourteen shillings," quoth the good man, "and your rent will be five shillings; that leaves you nine shillings to get food and lights and fire and clothes for three—three shillings a week each. It's a tight fit."

"I've seen plenty tighter," said Elizabeth.

"Summer is coming," said Richard, "and we'll need no fire and no light."

How they did it who can tell? But through the spring and summer they lived on this pittance. On Saturdays, Benje sold flowers for an old dame at a stand, and usually earned enough to pay his two-pence schooling and buy himself five one-penny dinners weekly.

Brought into this close grapple with poverty, with no Charmer and no Gran to aid her, Elizabeth suddenly stopped complaining and became a wonderful little woman. She often rose at daylight



to mend her clothes and those of the boys, and to help Richard clean their poor room. How she managed their little cooking! How wise she looked buying bones for soup, and scrap-meat at fourpence the pound to make the dinner! How prudent was Elizabeth in getting the stalest loaf! how ingenious in making Benje think a penny's worth of treacle a wonderful luxury! how artful in getting slices of bacon and suddenly displaying them for supper when the three were exhausted on Saturday nights with twelve hours' weary work! What conferences had Elizabeth with the woman who trimmed coffins, learning from her how to make nothing serve as something and spread out a little until it seemed a great deal! Can words tell the veneration Richard felt for Elizabeth when she marked Sabbath as a white day by stirring together flour and suet and raisins—a pennyworth of each—and concocting therewith a pudding? And Richard continued his hard work with Peter Auberle. That things were so bad with them now was added reason for working very diligently for that future which was to pay them for all the pains of the present.

Auberle wondered at his pupil's progress. Richard devoured the few books on Auberle's shelf, and his retentive memory seemed to lose nothing which it had once grasped. He made his labors at the Varieties light and helpful by connecting with them his studies. As he worked among the cages of the



wild beasts he rehearsed what he had learned in a geography, a book of travels and a book of animals which he had read with Auberle.

“I’ll make a showman of you some day,” said Mr. Crosby to him, electrified at hearing Richard explaining to some lookers-on the native home and habits of lions, hyenas and cougars.

One Sunday afternoon Richard and Auberle were hard at work at an arithmetic—for Auberle had to labor to keep up with his pupil—when in came Mr. Renè. Master and pupil were sitting on the loom, close under the windows, for November was come again, and the light was poor.

“Auberle,” said Mr. Renè, “why have you not been at any of the Bible meetings for months? I’ve looked for you.”

“What do you want me there disputing for?” said Auberle.

“Even disputing helps you to think about it all, and I am always glad to listen and help to dissipate honest doubt, Auberle. I hope to do good to you some day yet.”

“Well, I’ve something better to do than go to your Bible readings, Mr. Renè. Here is this boy; used to live in Miracle Alley, and no more noticed or done for than if he had been a stray cat. Not that I blame *you*, sir, for, though I believe your religion is all a mistake, I’ll allow you work and give from morning to night, and to look after all is



more than one man can do. Well, sir, I've taken the boy in hand to teach. He's a marvel, sir. I never saw human take to books as he does; he's used up all I've got. He likes learning more than bread."

"Well, Auberle, if you'll come round to my room, I think I have there some of my old school-books. Come and help yourself; you're welcome to them. I wonder," added Mr. Renè, with a faint smile, "that they were not sold long ago; most everything else is."

"I know," said Auberle; "sold and the money given away. Well, sir, I'll come for the books for the boy; only they're not a bribe to come to the readings. We have no time for your readings; we have history and geography and arithmetic to work on, sir."

"It is written, 'These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone,'" said Mr. Renè.

"I don't believe that," said Auberle, stoutly.

"Not believing facts makes no difference with the facts; they remain, all the same. I know a man who does not believe that the earth is round, but his lack of belief does not alter the shape of the earth. Teach the boy all that you can, and I'll help you in any way that I can. I think you would both find an hour well spent and your knowledge increased if you came to the Bible class.



Why starve the soul while you feed the mind? It is written, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.' And I am sure, Auberle, that your goodness to this lad is an act of charity which shall not go unrewarded of God."

"I don't want any reward. And I've had my reward: I've got a little interest in life out of it. I began because the boy wanted to learn, and, as he was deprived of home, relations, food, clothes, friends, I thought it a pity that he must be deprived of knowledge too, if he craved and hungered for it. Besides, the knowledge will make him more dangerous to tyrants, and he can better revenge himself on them."

"Is that revenge your aim, Richard?" said Mr. Renè.

"No," said Richard; "what I want is to be a doctor."

"Come some day to my class, and I will tell you of a great Physician—the greatest that ever lived. He cured whoever came to him. He could make blind eyes see and dumb men speak and deaf men hear; he could straighten crooked bodies and heal all diseases with a touch or with the simplest form of remedy."

"Good!" cried Richard, with great joy. "I'll come hear about him. That is the kind of doctor I mean to be."



Running home through the cold, damp twilight, Richard ran against a girl. She caught his arm, crying,

“Why, Richard! Don't you know me?”

It was Betty. Betty had grown as tall as Richard. She was tidy; she wore a red frock, a little round hat with a bit of blue ribbon on it, a wide cotton-lace collar, a pair of whole shoes. A cotton kerchief with a colored border was stuck in her belt.

“Don't I look fine, Richard? Do I look as nice as the girls you told me about?”

“Well,” said Richard, critically, “of course you couldn't look as pretty as the Charmer—no one could—but I don't see but you look as well as Elizabeth, Betty. Her hair is yellow and yours is red, but that makes no difference. How did you get those good clothes?”

“Worked for 'em—worked four months,” said Betty. “I'm servant to the baker's wife in Magpie Lane. I get board and one and six a week. I give mam sixpence a week, and the shilling I have for clothes. But every minute I have I'm learning buttonholes, and I'm going in with two or three other girls for a buttonholer as soon as I can do it well enough.”

“You'd better keep where you are,” said Richard. “You have enough to eat; you won't get that at buttonholes.”



“But I never can have a minute now, only a little while on Sunday afternoon. I go to bed at twelve and get up at five, and I won't be allowed any followers ; and of course I will want a follower.”

“What !” cried Richard ; then, understanding, “Oh, you goose ! Why, you are only a little girl.”

“I'm near fourteen,” said Betty, “and many girls I know are married when they are fifteen or sixteen. I shall want some one to take me to a music-hall or a chop-house, and buy me sweeties too.”

“But Peter Auberle says that boys and girls getting married at fifteen and sixteen is the curse of the age,” said Richard. “Then the boys run off, and leave their wives to starve. You stop at the baker's shop, Betty.”

“No, I won't, if I can be independent,” said Betty. “It is much nicer to have some one to walk out with Saturday and Sunday evenings, and they all sing or play tag and look at Punch and Judy. I shall get me an ulster and wear my fringe down to my eyes.”

For an ulster, however draggled, and hair banged to the eyebrows are the badge of the London working-girl toiling sixteen hours a day for eight, ten, eleven or twelve pence at buttonholes, shoe-binding, slop-sewing, box-making, and various other trades conducted on a semi-starvation basis.



When Richard narrated his meeting with Betty, Elizabeth put on matronly airs and said that she "knew Betty was a bad lot, and he'd better never speak to her."

"She's not bad," said Richard. "She is industrious and honest and don't tell lies. She is awful good to her mother and Aggy, her humpback sister, who is older than Betty; she gives them all she can, and will half starve rather than share their little bit. If Betty only had well-off folks to be good to her, there wouldn't be a nicer girl in London."



## CHAPTER VI.

### *IN POPLAR COURT.*

**T**HERE are many families in London to whom three shillings each a week, with rent paid, would be a fortune. Ten, twelve, fifteen, shillings for a man with wife and five or six children, with rent and fuel and all to buy—that is the luxury of the London poor.

But Elizabeth & Co. had extra expenses from their business. Elizabeth was expected to be dressed as a musical prodigy should be. She must have button boots for the stage, a white frock for a Maying song, a Scotch plaid for her Scotch song, a green dress for her Irish song, and also such broad sashes and cotton-lace collars as the taste of the PUBLIC demanded. Elizabeth must keep these garments in order and pay for having them laundried. Elizabeth had also her music-lessons to pay for. True, the old Swiss lowered his price from fivepence to twopence, and Elizabeth worked harder now, but there was not only the twopence to pay, but the new songs to buy. Richard also had to have whole shirt, shoes and trousers in which to appear at the Varieties.



With such drains on their small resources, it was very hard indeed to get enough to eat. Twice in the summer they went on Sunday to see Gran, and found her well and becoming accustomed to St. Bride's. But they were too weary on Sunday to go often to St. Bride's Foundation, which was far beyond Primrose Hill.

Elizabeth was not so fortunate as the Charmer in her enterprises. The pretty Charmer had been able to get Benje into the pantomime, but Elizabeth found no opening for him.

Should they go to some cheaper room? This was the question. The coffin-maker and his wife said that if they went to tenements where the rooms were one and six or two shillings they would be in houses that were full of thieves, drunkards, pick-pockets, the worst of the city.

"We are all very respectable here," said the coffin-maker, "but there are houses where, between dirt and disease and wickedness, those children would be ruined."

So they stayed on, and it was December. Then, all at once, the Musical Prodigy lost her voice; only a faint, hoarse squeak came from the lately melodious throat. The Prodigy had had her voice overtaxed and overstrained. She had had no one of late to see that her throat was tied up and that her feet were dry. In truth, she had had no rubbers and no under-flannel and but little food;



so the unhappy Prodigy broke down and stood mute and gasping before the audience, and the audience hooted and hissed and laughed, and the Prodigy left the stage with tears rolling down her cheeks. She foresaw starvation and the streets, poor child! Mrs. Crosby seized her by the shoulder and shook her until she lost her breath, but did not find her voice. Mr. Crosby was merciful; he waited a whole week for the Prodigy to recover. Then he turned her off and hired a Vocal Wonder with black curls.

The Vocal Wonder bought Elizabeth's stage wardrobe for eight shillings; that eight shillings soon being spent, the family now had only Richard's six shillings to live upon. The first week that the rent was not paid the agent stared: for over three years the tenants of this room had been punctual. The next week only part was paid, and he whistled. The third week only a shilling.

"This won't do," he said.

The fourth week—nothing. The agent investigated.

"What! Only three children in the rooms, and only six shillings to depend on? Out you must go," said the agent. "Before I know it you'll be two or three months behind. That will never do."

But Elizabeth begged hard. She was sure she would get work soon; Richard earned enough for



rent and coal; lights they could do without; food they could pick up: wouldn't he only try them a little while, please? She would that very day sell some things and bring him two shillings of what was due. So the agent was appeased for just a little time.

It was through Benje that final ruin came. Elizabeth had found a place to help Saturdays at a green-grocer's. She received that day her meals and some vegetables for the day's work. As they had no fire all day at their room and now the flower-vender did not want Benje, Richard often took him to the Varieties, where he kept warm and ate nearly all of Richard's dinner, and could ask,

“Why do the monkeys smell so bad? Why has the snake no feet? Why can he walk without feet? Why is the tiger striped? Why has the panther such a big mouth? Why does the bear look so dull?”

Mr. Crosby winked at Benje's presence; he was such a pretty child that Mr. Crosby could not turn him into the street.

Daily, at noon, Richard hung out at the door of the Consolidated Varieties a placard: “THE LIONS FED AT FOUR O'CLOCK.” Spectators began to crowd in, and it was then that the Varieties was most popular. The eager sight-seers filled from floor to ceiling the tiers of narrow benches opposite



the cages of the felines. The ravenous animals—fed but once in twenty-four hours, and then with a lump of raw meat barely sufficient to check the immediate pangs of hunger—became fiercely impatient as feeding-time drew near. Those who had been sleeping or dully supine roused up; with long strides they began to pace their cages. A low, deep murmur filled the air. Quicker grew the restless motion in the narrow bounds. Manes were erected, eyes glowed like coals newly fanned, tails lashed ceaselessly from side to side. The murmur became deep and loud, like wind rising in a forest or the beat of the swelling tide upon the shore. Faster, faster, up and down, turning with the swiftness of light, the long frenzied strides of the beasts told what a mad rush there would be were walls and bars once broken and the open gained. Deeper, louder, louder, fuller, rose those furious chest-murmurs, until all the house was filled and pervaded with the tumult in which the clash and din of outer London, sweeping by the door, was lost. The lion ruffled and shook his mane and looked twice his size; every hair on the lioness's body stood erect; the great tiger bristled; the leopards sped to and fro like tongues of flame; the cougars no longer strode, but sprang, from one side of the cage to the other. The lion pealed forth in a roar, the leopard responded with a scream. Terror and dumbness fell upon all the other creatures in the show; the lookers-



on were breathless ; expectation reached its utmost height.

Mr. Crosby, coming now to throw the meat, which was carried on great trays by two of his men, began at the leopard's cage, and, taking the little cougars next, by some mischance flung through the opening in the top of the cage, not one allowance, but two. The cougar seized one, and Mr. Crosby hastily ordered Richard to pull open the little front door of the cage and rescue the other lump of meat. Richard the Fearless obeyed, but just as he drew the bolt he saw with horror that Benje had crept under the iron bar of protection and neared the lion's cage, so close that the angry beast thrust out a paw and gripped Benje's shirt-sleeve. The cougar was forgotten ; the people screamed. Richard flung himself on Benje and bore him to the floor, leaving the shirt-sleeve, a little bloody, in the lion's paw. But as Richard sprang for Benje the unbolted door of the cougar's cage fell open, and out like a flash came the cougar after liberty. Richard, clasping Benje, saw the furry yellow body leap by him, heard the wild cries of the crowd growing through all the Varieties into one universal shriek—heard the infuriated Mr. Crosby shout as he passed him,

“ If I find you here in ten minutes, I'll be the death of you both !” and without waiting to know if the cougar ate anybody or anything, or if he were even caught, Richard, dragging Benje, fled away



from the Varieties summarily dismissed and now entirely destitute.

There was no hope for them now; out of their home they must go, and no doubt their little all would be seized by the agent for rent. What should they do? The three children spent most of their time in the streets looking for work which they could not find. Until he could get work Richard could not even go near Auberle. What would it be but begging of the poor weaver? And Richard knew the man had of late pawned nearly all his clothes, and was now gaunt from famine.

On a Saturday afternoon—the very Saturday before Christmas; but the poor have no Christmas—Richard met an old man whom he had often seen selling matches near the Varieties.

“You did well not to go back,” said the old man. “Mr. Crosby says his damage was five pounds, and if he ever sees you two again he’ll take it out of you by breaking every bone in your bodies. What are you doing?”

Richard told his tale—nothing to do, no food, no fire. That very night they might be turned into the street and their few goods seized for rent. The people in the house were all so poor! They were kind; they had given them their food for a week among them. And now Benje was all the time asking why he must be so cold, why they had no soup and meat, why everything was wrong with them.



"I can tell you," said the match-seller, "where you can get all the room you want for nothing. The agent has given up the houses; he has not been there for six months.

Where was it, and why was it? Richard asked.

"In Saint Pankridge," said the old man. "It's Poplar Co't. The 'ealth-hofficers condemned it two year ago. Then the other man, 'e says as 'ow it was agoin' for to fall over and folkses must get hout. Then the Saint Pankridge vestry tries to get 'em out, an' landlord, 'e fights. They do say landlord be in fer two 'underd pound of fines along of 'is fight with Saint Pankridge vestry. So six months back landlord, 'e runs away, an' since then there's no agent an' no rents, an' folks stops there till Saint Pankridge vestry gets the lor on their side to pull all down. 'Tain't what you'd crave nor I'd crave to live in. It's dark, 'cause the windows was boarded up to make hus move out, but some of the boardin' is tore off for fuel. All you've got to do is move in an' take a room. There's eight 'ouses in the co't, an' six rooms in a 'ouse. You can go right hin; there's no do's: the folks 'as pulled hoff the do's to burn 'em."

"It must be an awful place," said Richard.

"So 'tis—so 'tis," responded the match-seller, with a pride in his exceptional surroundings. "None worse in all Lon'on. It's a reg'lar rookery. But what will you 'ave, with no rent hasked for?"



It's better than the streets ; for hif you sits hin the streets, 'long comes a bobby, hand 'Move hon!' 'e says, hand you ain't nov'eres to move to."

Well, what better could be done? Richard had the astuteness of children brought up in a hand-to-hand strife with direst poverty. He argued that if they waited until nightfall they were likely to be evicted, with the seizure of their few possessions for rent due. He knew a good-natured coster-lad called "Covent Garding 'Arry" by his peers. This coster—a lad of seventeen—lived in the nearest mews ; he would move the household goods on his barrow to Poplar Court.

Going in search of him, Richard found him just reaching his home, his barrow being empty. 'Arry asked no better fun than to help Richard in a flitting. To run out goods from under the grasp of a wrathful landlord is a joy to a coster's soul.

"Let's be quick," said 'Arry. "I've done well to-day ; sold my barrow out twice. If I keep on like that, I shall look about me an' get married. I'm in a 'urry to-night ; I want to clean myself a bit and get on a clean neck-'ankercher and go see my sister, what's a button'oler over by the Tower 'Amlets. There's three gals lives together an' button'oles. Saturday nights I hoffen takes 'em hout for a treat, an' carries 'em a pinch of salad or a few taters for Sunday. I'm goin' to give 'em stewed tripe an taters to-night for a reg'lar blowhout."



In great haste Richard explained the Poplar Court enterprise to Elizabeth, and, they being utterly penniless, with neither fuel nor food in the winter cold, what could Elizabeth offer better? It was Poplar Court or the street for a choice.

The coffin-maker's family shed a few tears at seeing them go. They did not ask where they went. True, they had lived long under one roof, but people poor as these have no time to pay visits or to keep up acquaintance.

The goods were piled on 'Arry's barrow. They were few enough when they set out; they were fewer when they arrived. Elizabeth stopped at a second-hand dealer's and sold her bed and mattress, the chair, and all the dishes but one plate and three cups.

"It's a rum place, an' glad I am 'Arry ain't to live 'ere," said the stout young coster as he helped Richard and Elizabeth carry their belongings up the tottering and broken stair to an empty room. The lounge, two quilts, an iron pot, an iron pan, three cups, a plate, a knife and fork, an empty box,—these were the sole relics of the Charmer's lately cozy home.

And what a place was this where Richard, Benje and Elizabeth had found refuge! The windows were boarded up; the banister and every alternate step of the stairs, the baseboards and most of the doors had been torn off for fuel. The room which



Richard and his family had seized had still a door with only one panel broken, and also a grate. The reason that such a palatial room was left vacant was that three persons had just died in it.

These houses in Poplar Court had never had gas in them; the poor denizens used farthing candles or little smoky oil-lamps. During the two years that the vestry of St. Pancras had been doing their best to abate the nuisance, the water-supply had been cut off from these Poplar Court houses; the rates had not been paid, and the effort to make the place absolutely untenable had been carried to this extreme. But the cutting off of the water had not driven away the miserable human vermin of the city who had no other refuge; they herded there still, and the nuisance and the danger to public health simply became worse and worse daily. Unspeakable filth reeked in Poplar Court; an awful stench rose from every corner of the eight houses. The helpless wretches who fought, shivered, starved, in these houses were resolute to stay in their free shelter until it was pulled down over their heads.

With these disinherited humans lived rats; great rats such as infest sewers swarmed in Poplar Court. The baseboards being torn off, nothing obstructed the excursions of the four-footed tenants of the condemned houses. How Benje shrieked as these great uncanny beasts careered about the rotten, broken floor and fairly ran over his nearly bare feet!



With part of the money—the very, very little money—gained by the sale of her household goods Elizabeth had bought a bucket of coal, a halfpenny-worth of kindling and a little food. Richard made the fire and went into the nearest street for some water in the iron pot. Then the lounge was pulled up before the little grate, and their house-settling was accomplished.

Elizabeth cut up half a stale loaf into the water, adding a halfpenny-worth of beef-suet and some salt and pepper. This, when boiled, would be—bread-soup. While they waited Elizabeth rolled herself in one of the quilts, Richard and Benje were wrapped in the other, and thus they kept from freezing.

When they had eaten the soup, Elizabeth said they should “get to sleep quickly, before they got hungry again.”

To prevent any of the neighbors robbing them of the small stock of food for the morrow, Elizabeth wrapped it all in a newspaper and put it behind her, as she lay at one end of the lounge, Benje lying at the other, and one quilt serving for both. Richard, rolled in the other quilt, lay on the floor. During the night the rats ran over him, and once or twice nipped at his toes. But Richard, as we know, was used to wild beasts.

Did we say that Poplar Court was a free shelter? We erred vehemently. Death was landlord



there, and Death demanded heavy rents indeed. There was never silence in Poplar Court. That night, and every night, Richard & Co. heard the yells of men in delirium tremens, the groans of those in extremity in fever, the crying of little children who were cold, hungry, afraid or deserted, the curses and complaints of those whom famine had made fierce and despairing. And through all this hideous misery rioted Death.

These houses, choked with sewage, were rife with fever. The wonder was not that so many died, but that any lived. The record of the winter was a record of fever-scurge; not merely malarial and scarlet fever, but typhoid and black typhus, raged. Daily the dead were hurried off in pine boxes to the pauper's burial. The fever spread out of Poplar Court into the nearest streets, and then into streets farther away, and the bells of beautiful St. Pancras began to toll for decent Christians, and more and more desperate and distracted grew the vestry of St. Pancras, waiting the slow motion of the courts, and the strifes over mortgages, and the interference of the railroad, emulous of more room near its station. And so the fever reeked up to heaven.

Dwelling in this plague-stricken spot, Richard, Benje and Elizabeth suffered only from cold, fear and hunger. They sold pencils, matches and flowers; they even begged. They sold the lounge, and all slept on the floor. They ate up the iron pot and



the saucepan one Sunday; the dishes, another Sunday. Having thus sold all that they had, they lived on dry bread—if they could get it; if not, they went without. They had now and again a rift in the darkness, and a little light came through to them. God sent it, no doubt, to keep them alive for less evil days that were to come—as one evening Benje came in transfigured. His eyes shone; there was a gleam of color over his white face. He looked without craving at the small dry loaf Richard and Elizabeth were prepared to share for supper.

“I’ve had my supper,” said Benje, grandly. “I was out by the end of the court, and I cried, I was so hungry; and a boy—’bout your size, Richard—asked me what was it, an’ I said I was so clemmed! An’ he took me up to his room, Richard. He’s got a *mother*. And there was a fire, like Gran used to have, and a pot bubbled and boiled and steamed. And they let me get warm, and gave me soap and hot water to wash me, and then they put me at the table, near the fire. The mother had a gal an’ two boys. An’ they gave me all I could eat—porridge, hot, with treacle on it. I’m so afraid I ate nearly all they had! I told ’em I was sorry I ate so much, only I couldn’t help it, I was so empty. An’ the mother, she said God bless me! I was welcome; to go right on. An’ I ate till I was full;” and Benje patted his diaphragm with vast satisfaction. “Say, Richard! they ain’t like us. Before they ate



they put down their heads—so—and made a pray. They said God bless 'em and make 'em good, an' that God give 'em the supper. Richard, why don't we make pray? Why haven't we any supper to pray about? Why haven't we a mother? Why—say, Richard!—why haven't we any God? Why don't God give us a supper? The mother said I might come again, only to-morrow she is going to move, for there's too much sick around here. She said she'd pray God for me, and I was a poor little lamb. Say, Richard," cried Benje, suddenly inconsolable, "why can't I have a mother and a God and a house? And why am I a poor little lamb?"

They were all poor lambs, as far as that went. They grew whiter and thinner, but they lived. Whether it was that there was too little blood in them for the pest to feed upon or that they had never poisoned that little with whisky or beer, these three walked scatheless while Death smote their neighbors by tens and scores.

The fever spread and spread. The St. Pancras district was thoroughly alarmed. The doctors, druggists, undertakers and cheap coffin-makers throve that winter. And the bells of St. Pancras tolled and tolled.

Before things became so bad with them, and while yet they had whole garments to cover them, when first they moved to free quarters, they went of a Sunday to see Gran. They went pledged not



to tell her of their extremity, or that they had lost their places at the Varieties and been forced to flee from their decent little home. Why trouble poor Gran, who could do nothing but weep over their woes, and who was daily making her moan over the lost Charmer?

It was a long pilgrimage—taken fasting—to St. Bride's Foundation. How glad they were when they saw the ten little red-brick houses with white-brick facings, the neat little fences and the tiny squares of garden! And then how comfortable Gran looked! There was a fire in her grate, and she had a pot of geranium in her window, a Bible and Prayer-book—furnished by St. Bride's—on her table, and the well-known square of carpet on the floor. Gran welcomed them, and, reading faintness in their faces, made them tea and toast at once. Then Benje lay flat on the floor with his feet to the grate, and went to sleep.

Gran made Richard and Elizabeth sit in a warm place while she cooked dinner. Good Gran! she was prodigal in her dinner. She cooked the stores that would have served her for days, and having cooked which, she must live on bread and tea for a week to get even with Fate.

A lady of the guild had sent her a currant loaf, and Gran made the children take that home with them. She gave Benje a pair of mittens which she had knit to sell, and Elizabeth a pair of stock-



ings. They were so loath to leave such pleasant quarters that they stayed until nearly dark, and reached Poplar Court at midnight. They ate the current loaf for breakfast.

“But we won’t go again, Richard—not till we are better off and can take Gran something,” said Elizabeth. “She sees how bad off we are, and it frets her; and I *know* we ate up all she had in the house.”

“I s’pose we did,” said Richard, penitently, “but I was so hungry I could not stop eating.”

“Nor I couldn’t,” said Benje, with conviction. “I felt just like—like a mad dog. Oh, Richard, why must I be hungry? Why must I be cold? Why don’t anybody care? Why was I made?”

And these three were valiant enough to keep away from poor Gran, and the dismal days of cold and famine and fever went on until March. Then, one morning, the beadle of St. Pancras, in all his splendor, came through Poplar Court and told the people that now the vestry of St. Pancras was in full possession and this nuisance must be abated at once, and out they must go. Some few submitted, picked up their little all and went; the parish officials, finding some ill in—no, not in bed, but on heaps of rags or waste paper—summoned cabs and sent them to hospitals. The rest of the denizens of Poplar stubbornly sat in their rooms.

Richard & Co. sat still. Not that they were



stubborn, but tired—very, very tired. They had not even their two quilts now: some one had stolen them while the little owners were out. They sat forlornly huddled on the floor, until about four o'clock they heard policemen passing through the rooms evicting the recalcitrants of Poplar Court. Then Richard, Benje and Elizabeth walked—or, rather climbed—down the broken staircase, and went and sat on the crooked curbstone with their feet in the dry gutter. The others of the evicted made little heaps of their broken stools, old rags or tattered beds in the middle of the narrow street, and sat there and cursed Authority for cleaning out the most dangerous and death-dealing slum in all London.

A big policeman, looking with pity at the three children, bade them come with him, and as they followed despairingly led them to a little coffee-house and briefly bade the proprietor “fill 'em up.” They were given coffee, bread, carrot-stew and pudding—all they could eat. In the warm little room they sat, eating slowly, slowly, until even they could eat no more. They “were warmed and filled.” Heaven bless the policeman who had given them not good words only, but those things which are necessary to the body! They felt like new beings. They went to the nearest fountain, washed their hands and faces, smoothed their hair, and Elizabeth rebraided her long yellow locks.



But where were they to spend the night?

“Come on,” said Richard; “let’s go to the West End. I’ve heard there are rich folks there. I’m told that lots of people sleep on or under the benches in Trafalgar Square, and plenty more sleep on the benches in Birdcage Walk, at the Green Park.”

Truly, there was no use in going to the East End. Old Jacob had distinctly said he was Richard’s friend as long as Richard did well, and now Richard—through no fault of his own—was doing very ill indeed. He could no longer ruffle and boast himself, as when he kept wild beasts. In these four months of bitter misery, when all the strife had been for daily bread, Richard had not gone near Peter Auberle. Why burden Peter? They had no claims on the people in the house where they had lodged in Gran’s time. The poor know better than to carry their woes to other poor, who are evidently burdened already as weightily as they can bear. Yes, of course; let them go to the West End. The wide streets, the huge buildings, the gay shops, the bright lights, were there.

St. Pancras parish lies midway between the East End and the West End, but a little north of midway; so first the three wandered down into Bloomsbury. No one noticed them: they were merely a gaunt, scantily-clad boy and girl of twelve and thirteen leading an under-sized lad of seven whose burden of mind was “Why?”—



“Richard, why didn’t we come here before? Why don’t we live here, Richard? Why can’t we buy those good things in the windows, Richard? Why ain’t we like these other people, Richard? Richard, why are there any poor people like we?”

They wandered on, and it was getting late and cold. At last they came to Trafalgar Square, where a stone Nelson and stone lions, Havelock and Napier in bronze, and the First Gentleman (and greatest knave) in Europe, on horseback, watch over the pavement and benches where nightly Lazarus comes to lie at the gates of Dives.\*

It was so late that all the benches, and the equally-coveted spots under the benches, were full. Trafalgar Square had no room for Richard & Co.

“Let’s come on to the Green Park,” said Richard.

Slowly they dragged on, and now the spectacle of the gayly-lit West End afforded them no consolation. They were so very weary! The miseries of the last few months had—as well they might have done—made them feeble.

Arrived at Birdcage Walk, they were happy in seeing a man leaving a bench—to “go for another drink,” they heard him mumble. As it was likely that he would be too drunk to find his way back, they gladly seized his vacant quarters. They lay down on the little bench, Richard’s head at Eliza-

\* Sleeping in Trafalgar Square was forbidden in 1877.



beth's feet and Benje held close to his bosom to try and warm him, for Benje was asking,

“Why is there no home for us? Why is there no room for us in all the world? Why is it so cold for little boys like me?”

A woman sitting in a despairing attitude on an opposite bench watched them; she had a child asleep in her arms. After a little she rose, took off her shawl, and came and tucked it over the three with a motherly touch. Elizabeth, too drowsy to more than half understand, heard her say,

“There! They can have the shawl, poor things! I'll do one good act at the last. This is what children come to in London. I'm done with it; I'm going to the river—me and my baby.”

She went away swiftly. Whether she went into the river who can tell? Perhaps a day or two later she and the little one lay in the Morgue; perhaps one of God's human angels sent on errands of mercy met her and rescued her upon the way.

Oh, it was very raw and cold that night in the Green Park! The fog came and hid the skies; the lamps faded away in the mist; the moisture pointed on the bare boughs and ran off like rain. When these three awoke in the morning, they were wet and faint and stiff. The fog was so dense they could not see a yard from their faces. They rose and crawled about to warm by motion their aching limbs. They got out into the street; a cab rattled



down almost upon them. They parted and fled this way, that way, barely escaping instant death. Other cabs crossed and passed.

Richard had held Benje fast through it all, but Elizabeth was parted from them. Where was she? So Richard sought Elizabeth in the thick darkness, and Elizabeth sought Richard. Their voices were muffled in the mist and drowned by the crash of cabs, and they lost each other as they had lost the Charmer.



## CHAPTER VII.

### *RAG FAIR AND MAY FAIR MEET.*

WHEN Elizabeth, finding herself almost under the feet of the horses, dashed here and there in the gloom and found herself almost under the feet of other horses, she thought only of escape, until she stumbled upon what proved to be a doorstep, and, standing on the threshold, she considered herself safe. Then she called "Benje! Richard! Rich-arrrd!" but her voice was deadened in the fog and lost in the clash of wheels. When she had ceased trembling and found that she could neither see nor hear her comrades, she ventured out into those soft gray, yielding, impalpable, impenetrable walls which as she moved still closed about her.

Here and there she searched for her lost ones. Now she wandered beyond the curbstones and was once more in jeopardy among the wheels; now she nearly fell down an area; now she found herself in a space that seemed infinite; now she guided herself by keeping her hand on the house-walls, and so bumped against railings, and foot-passengers stumbled against her and swore at her. At last she



was upon a descent that seemed long and straight, and she went far—very far—and came up, at last, against a parapet. Below this she heard the lap of water. She had come to the Thames Embankment.

Elizabeth saw something in the gloom: it was an iron seat. Completely exhausted, she curled herself up upon it and fell asleep. When she awoke, damp, stiff and sore, the fog had melted away and the March sun was shining, but coldly. As she sat up and looked around a policeman approached her:

“You must not stay here, my girl. Have you nowhere to go?”

“Oh yes, yes!” said Elizabeth, in great terror. She had somewhere to go; only, the fog—

“You looked so tired,” said the policeman, “that I could not make up my mind to wake you, but now you must go home, you know; it is after mid-day.”

Oh yes, of course, Elizabeth said, she would go home at once; and she set off as fast as her weak, aching legs could carry her. She paid no attention to her direction, but she chanced to go north-west, and on, on, through Vauxhall Bridge Road and Grosvenor Place, until about three o’clock she reached Hyde Park, and, utterly exhausted by fatigue, cold and nearly twenty-four hours of fasting, she sank down on a bench.



In those long months of privation and self-reliance, Elizabeth, while growing thinner, had grown taller, and not only pallor, but profound gravity, made her face seem older than her less than thirteen years. Her clothes were scanty, thin and worn, and she looked with shame and pain at her feet and ankles in ragged shoes and stockings freely displayed by her short torn frock.

Just now she thought of nothing; she was in a state of stupor. The splendid carriages with coats-of-arms, coachmen, footmen; ladies in velvet, lace and feathers; little dogs in silver collars and velvet blankets; dogs barking over carriage doors in well-fed insolence; dogs which resented Elizabeth's intrusion into Hyde Park; splendid processions of ladies and gentlemen and grooms on horseback; stately old dames in fur-trimmed satin mantles with saucy little pages in button-trimmed jackets following them,—none of these things Elizabeth saw. Slowly her head sank back against the seat; her eyes closed: she was becoming unconscious. Then four people who were leisurely promenading along the walk stopped before her.

First, there was a girl of Elizabeth's own age, but smaller, dressed in green velvet, with a long ostrich-feather curling about her hat and drooping to her shoulder. She stopped, on tip-toe drew near, bent forward, and like an angel of mercy looked on her sister from the East End.



When little Lady Hobart stopped, her governess stopped, protesting :

“Lady Hobart, I insist on your coming right on; you will get some disease. The police should not allow—”

Behind the governess stopped Lady Hobart’s page, in blue and canary, grinning chronically, and also stopped a woman with a bundle who was passing through Hyde Park to refresh her eyes “with the sight of quality” as she took home her work.

“What is it? What is the matter?” cried Lady Hobart.

“She’s going in a faint,” said the woman. “She’s clean wore out. You can see she’s clemmed.”\*

“Lady Hobart,” said the governess, “you *must* come on.”

“I won’t come a step,” said Lady Hobart, “till I help this girl.”

“She is no doubt a very idle, thievish, naughty girl—”

“No doubt at all she is a very good, patient, kind, industrious girl—a great deal better than I am. My cousin Elsie has told me lovely stories of poor girls.”

“Your cousin will be the ruin of you. I wish—”

“What can I do for her?” asked Lady Hobart of the woman.

“Feed her—as quick as possible.”

\* Starved.



“My good woman,” interposed the governess, “cannot you take charge of this girl?”

“Indeed, no!” cried the woman. “A poor body like me, in service—”

“Well, then pass on, will you? If you cannot help us, go on, and do not, by standing here, make us more conspicuous,” said the governess, with dignity.

Lady Hobart had in the mean while taken two and sixpence from her purse. She handed it to the reluctant page:

“Go at once! Run! *hurry!* Buy me fruit-cake, biscuit—something, anything—from the nearest place. Mind, if you are slow, I shall have you dismissed. Hurry! I’m watching you.”

But, in the velvet bag, with the purse she had found two chocolate-creams. She put one in Elizabeth’s mouth; presently, the other. As this delicate softness and sweetness melted in her dry mouth Elizabeth opened her eyes and looked steadfastly at the bright vision before her. RAG FAIR AND MAY FAIR HAD MET.

The page came back, red from haste, and from rage that he must carry a brown-paper bag in the service of a beggar. The governess withdrew a little in indignant protest against the behavior of the rebellious Lady Hobart.

Lady Hobart calmly seated herself by her sister from Rag Fair and opened the paper bag:



“Which will you have? Here! Sponge-cake? Banana? Macaroons? Biscuit? Roll?”

Elizabeth eagerly held out her hand for the warm roll, and ate it hungrily.

“That is good; now you are better. Take this sponge-cake and the banana. What can I do for you?”

“Lady Hobart, if you do not obey me and come with me instantly, your uncle will find you another governess,” said the guardian of the disobedient miss of May Fair.

But here came a girl a little older than these two. The girl had whole but very coarse shoes, a faded cotton gown, a rough ulster, a shabby round hat; her red hair was banged in a fringe to her eyebrows; her features were small; her mouth was red and open; her gray eyes were round, innocent and anxious. In fact, she was Betty, advanced to be a “buttonholer.” She stopped, surprised at Rag Fair and May Fair making picnic together in Hyde Park. Sight unprecedented!

“Girl,” said Lady Hobart, “can you take care of this poor child? She says she has no home and no friends. I will give her all the money I have; it is only half a pound. Can you take care of her or get her work?”

“Oh yes,” said Betty; “I can take her home to mam, and perhaps I can get her work in the match-box-factory with Aggie;” and she took with alac-



urity the half pound. Half pounds did not come to Betty every day.

“Well, sit here, then, and help her eat up these things; and when she is rested, take her with you. Good-bye! I don’t see why I can’t do more for you both;” and so Lady Hobart went off, holding her head high, while she received a lecture from her governess “on low tastes and dangerous associates.”

Betty and Elizabeth consumed the remainder of the supplies in the bag, and then Elizabeth asserted that she felt quite able to walk to the Tower Hamlets.

Oh, that was a long walk! Elizabeth at last moved on mechanically, feeling stiff and sore as if bruised from head to foot. But on Holborn Viaduct they met a coster with a nearly empty barrow.

“Hello, ’Arry!” cried Betty. “’Ave you ’ad a good day?”

“Fairish,” said Harry. “’Ow do you come off ’ere, Betty?”

“The boss’s wife sent me t’other side of ’Ide Park of a herrand, an’ give me eightpence for a-go-in’; so I ’ad a kind of ’oliday, you see, ’Arry. An’ this gal I found in ’Ide Park, an’ a young lady give me ’alf a pound to take ’er ’ome an’ do for ’er; so I’m takin’ ’er to mam. She’s nigh dead, ’Arry. Can’t you give ’er a lift on yer barrow?”

“In course I can,” said Harry, lifting Elizabeth



upon his barrow and moving on with Betty by his side, with her hand lying on the handle of the barrow. "You ain't takin' of 'er to Sis, then?"

"No; she can't make button'oles," said Betty, with a toss of her head. "Aggie'll take her to the factory. Her ten bob will get her some clothes and pay mam for keeping of her till she gets work. We sha'n't rob 'er."

"You wouldn't rob anybody," said Harry; and Betty looked well pleased and her cheeks grew red. "I'll come on Saturday night, Betty, and we'll all go out agin for a lark," said Harry.

"I'll tell 'em you arsked 'em to go," said Betty.

"I sha'n't care at all for 'em to go 'less you come, Betty, 'an we'll have fried liver and bacon."

Betty looked more pleased than ever, and walked on lightly beside Harry. She was just past fourteen, but, with the precocity of girls from the East End of London, felt herself grown up and old enough to have a lover, and to be thinking of marriage; and this jolly young costermonger, with whose sister and another girl she lived, making buttonholes, was quite to her mind.

Betty made about elevenpence a day by twelve or fourteen hours' steady work. She and the other two girls slept in one bed, lived in one nine-by-twelve room, about one window of which they crowded with their sewing, supported life on bread and tea, with meat not more than twice a week,



went in rags and hunger day after day, and had no other idea than to risk even worse hardships and entail on other beings the miseries of their own condition. The misfortunes of "mam," who had shared beggary with five children—among whom she counted a humpback and an imbecile—did not deter her daughter from designing to marry before she was sixteen. Indeed, these miseries had not had the effect of deterring "mam" from making a second marriage with a navy who was generally out of work.

Said Harry,

"I b'lieve I moved that gal's things last fall to Poplar Court. She had on better clothes then. I'm sorry for her. I won't answer for your new dad's use of her ten bob if he gets eye on it."

"He won't get eye on it," said Betty. "And he's no dad of mine; I don't claim him. Mam was a fool."

"I hope you're not against marrying, Betty?"

"Not against it *once*," said Betty, giggling and blushing.

"I've got to turn up here," said Harry.

"All right! you've give her a good lift.—Come on, girl; I guess you can walk now. We'll buy you some shoes and stockings and a woolen skirt pretty soon."

"Don't forgit me, Betty," Harry said as they parted.



“You’re too good looking to forgit, ’Arry,” said the child of Rag Fair, frankly.

Betty, whose long struggle with evil fate—a struggle as long as her life—had made her shrewd, laid out seven shillings of the half pound on clothes for Elizabeth. Then she took Elizabeth up to “mam’s” attic, and handed over the remaining three shillings to mam for a week’s board for Elizabeth. The money was a godsend to “mam,” and she welcomed her boarder. True, mam, her new husband and her four children were living in one room; an old mattress lying on the floor in one corner was the bed of Aggie, the humpback, her sister of ten and Elizabeth, the boarder. Two boys, one six and one twelve, lay on the floor wherever they happened to throw themselves; a “two-thirds” bedstead was the luxurious couch of “mam” and the navy.

“Mam” did not drink, and the navy was more merciful than were many of his fellows in that he did not rob mam of her small earnings, nor beat her when he was drunk. When he was drunk, he merely took the whole bed to himself and left mam to find a place on the floor.

Mam’s youngest boy was imbecile; the eldest boy picked up what he could alongshore, and was sometimes picked up himself by the police. The ten-year-old sister had fallen heiress to Betty’s business as step-girl. Aggie had just been “taken on” at



the factory, and received a pittance of three shillings a week.

By Monday morning Elizabeth was pretty well rested, and set out with Aggie to seek for work at the factory.

Aggie was sixteen, but small from her infirmity; she was soft of voice and pensive of face, and in her there was something meek and patient that Elizabeth had never seen in any other girl, and which drew Aggie to her lonely heart. Probably she should never see Richard and Benje again; she meant to look for them whenever she went into the streets, but already they might be dead, starved, trampled in the fog by horses, carried off by policemen. Her tender heart claimed some one to love, and she seized upon her new companion, Aggie.

As they went along through the streets, early on Monday morning, toward the factory, Elizabeth sighed, looking for the two boys and feeling that they were finally lost to her. Aggie, holding by Elizabeth's arm, said,

“Don't be down-hearted; you may get work. You are straight and strong, and you may go on to earn great wages. I know of a girl that earns six and six. I asked God to let you get work.”

“But why is it we poor folks are so dreadful poor and miserable?” cried Elizabeth, rebelling against her fate. “No one helps us; no one cares for us. The little beautiful lady I told you of wanted to,



but the big lady wouldn't let her. They think we are poison or wild beasts. They hate us!"

"Oh no, I am sure not. There are some, I have heard, that spend all their time doing good to the poor. But we are so many that they cannot care for us all. Those of us that do not get cared for must wait, you know. And then God is never too busy to care for us; he remembers us. It is no sign that he does not love us if we are poor and miserable. After a while he will take us to heaven, and heaven is much more beautiful than the country or the West End. There we shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more. That is a text Mr. Renè gave us at the Bible reading. As I cannot read, I can only get bits of news in my mind. Did you never sing about Paradise, where we shall go when we die?"

No; Elizabeth had learned many songs, but none about Paradise.

Aggie, in a sweet, thin voice like that of a caged linnet which has never heard the songs of other birds in the open, began to sing:

"O Paradise! O Paradise!  
 Who would not sigh for rest?  
 Who would not be  
 At rest and free  
 Where those who love are blest—  
 Where loyal hearts and true  
 Stand ever in the light,  
 All rapture through and through  
 In God's most holy sight."



Betty sang this song about Paradise as she threaded the foul and dismal streets of the Tower Hamlets.

It was very pretty, Elizabeth said—prettier indeed than the songs she had once sung herself. Now she had quite lost her voice. But she knew how to read.

“To read!” cried Aggie. “Oh, then you will read to me? Mr. Renè said if ever I found any one to read to me he would give me a Bible with all about rest and heaven and the love of God in it.”

Yes, Elizabeth would read to Aggie—certainly.

They reached the matchbox-factory, and the foreman took Elizabeth on.

A hundred wild and lawless girls worked in this factory; the rattle of machines, the sharp orders of the foreman, the disputes, shrill laughter, loud quarrels, or even swearing, of the girls, made a fearful din. The air, with the smell of resin, oil, fires, glue, the flying of dust, tin-filings and emery-sand, and the odor of unwashed persons and garments, was almost as foul as the air in Poplar Court.

When the bell struck for noon, the girls bolted into the factory-yard. There was a long shed there, with benches and a rough board table: it was the factory dining-hall. Thither rushed the “hands.” Some of them made little pots of tea at the furnace-fire; some had only dry bread or bread and cheese; some raced out to a little eating-house around the



corner, and came back with a tin plate of bacon or a tin cup of soup. Each provided her own food, and each ate her independent dinner, while the din of the work-room seemed renewed and redoubled.

Aggie had brought two thick slices of bread spread with "dripping."\* She filled with water a tin cup which she had brought, and she and Elizabeth sat down at a corner of the table.

Then a plain, kind-faced woman in a black cloak and plain black bonnet came in, and, standing at one end of the table, near Aggie, began to read. Elizabeth was so tired and her head ached so that for a time she heard nothing; then these words came to her ears: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

During the reading some of the girls listened, some were dully quiet, some talked, some jeered, making more noise than ever. When the reader paused, some called out, "Go on! Go on! We will listen; we like it." And when she went away, they shouted, "Good-bye! Come again, Bible-woman!"

In the factory the work which was given Elizabeth was to sit on a high stool and pull down an

\* "Meat-dripping"—mixed fat tried out—is sold in the poorer shops of London to the many who cannot buy meat or butter.



iron handle which drove a stamp upon some thin sheets of tin, cutting out at each blow several boxes. She had only to pull down the handle; then the tin bits were cut, and fell into a box. Nothing could be conceived more monotonous; nothing in the line of work could require less thought or attention. Pull, pull, pull, all day at an iron handle—that was all. It was work for a machine, not for a human being.

While there was no variety in the work, there were incidents in the home-life. There were incidents of being hungry and of being terrified by the navvy when he was drunk. Then, one night, the girls came home to find mam and the two younger children crying. The twelve-year-old boy had been arrested; next day, he would be sent to prison. Aggie, who had been so exhausted that Elizabeth had to help her up the final steps to the attic, roused herself and said she would go to Mr. Renè. She was gone until nearly nine, and Mr. Renè brought her back.

“It will be all right,” said Mr. Renè. “We have been to the lieutenant of police and the magistrate. To-morrow, when he is brought into court, he will be handed over to me, and I will get him taken on a school-ship. We will make a man of him yet; you will see him a fine fellow some day.”

“I’ll go to Mr. Renè’s Bible class Sundays after this,” said mam. “I never would, but now I will.”



“No, you won’t,” said her navvy, who was drunk. “If you do, I’ll knock your head off. I’ll have no pious dodges round me.”

There is no protection in England for a woman whose husband undertakes “knocking” her, so “mam” was afraid to go to Mr. Renè’s class. Aggie and Elizabeth went.

Shortly after, the navvy brought home a big man who carried a small black bed on his back.

“He’s my mate,” he explained, “and he is going to board with us. He’ll pay four shillin’ a week for his board; so, old woman, you see to it that he and me gets meat every day, and strong tea. No slops.”

“My goodness!” cried mam; “there’s no room here for him. We’re thick as herrin’ in a box here now.”

“There’s room,” said the navvy. “Daytimes he can put his bed atop of ours; nights he can drop it on the floor wherever he likes.”

There were eight persons for the one room, including two men; there had until now been seven. It is a style of living common in the East End, but not conducive to health or to morals. The drunkenness, cursing and loud talk of the navvy and his mate terrified Aggie and Elizabeth almost out of their wits. They endured it for a week; then one day the ten-year-old girl vanished. Mam pretended to cry and be anxious, but her grief was a sham.



Again Aggie had gone to Mr. Renè, and the girl was safe in the hands of Miss McPherson, to be emigrated. The navvy vowed that she had run away, and that if he "met her in the street he'd beat her half dead." There was no fear of his meeting her.

Then, the navvy being off drunk, the six-year-old boy failed to come home from board school, where Aggie, at expense of more hunger to herself, paid his useless weekly twopence. He never came back, and it was because Mr. Renè had interposed once more, for Aggie's sake, and the boy had, with his mother's consent, been taken to a home. And, now that Aggie had done what she could for the children, she and Elizabeth prepared to go. For mam nothing could be done: mam had recklessly chained herself to the navvy, and he could claim her, no matter how drunken, brutal, abusive or criminal he might be.

"I'll come to see you Sundays, mam, and I'll bring you a sixpence whenever I can," said Aggie, with tears, parting with her mother. "And Betty will do the same, and Betty will come to see me. And you come too, mam, for oh it is such a nice place!"

For the doors of Paradise had swung open for Aggie and Elizabeth. The Bible woman, interesting herself in these her two most attentive hearers in the factory, had heard of the horrors of that den



where two men, a woman, two young girls and three children slept and lived in one room so small that when all were laid down at night there were not two square yards of unoccupied floor. She had planned the rescue of the little ones, and she had secured for the two girls shelter in the Factory-home.

This was a tiny mission home, a free-and-easy home, for twelve girls. It had a motherly matron not too old, a bright kitchen with a range where the girls could cook their food, and a well-scrubbed table with clean dishes where they could eat it. There was a little sitting-room with some books, pictures and sewing-materials, and there were three bedrooms, each for four girls. In these beautiful tidy bedrooms were white beds with soft blankets, a looking-glass, a table, chairs, a bowl and pitcher, towels and brushes. The sun shone in, the air was pure, the floors were scoured clean, the matron's cozy room was the heart of the home, and there the matron sat like a mother. So, when Aggie and Elizabeth entered that home, it seemed to them that they had entered Paradise.

To Aggie this refuge was even more delightful than to Elizabeth. In spite of all her miseries and deprivations, physical life was strong in Elizabeth. She was quite capable of being betrayed into vague hopes that even in a world hitherto so hard some good thing might happen to her and she might be



happy. But Aggie's feeble life held loosely to this earth and all that belonged to it, and divine influences were drawing all her thoughts and hopes toward that city where the nations of the saved walk, and where the Lamb is the light.

To be able now on the Sabbath to creep into the most remote corner of a church and hear prayer, psalm and sermon; to have her heart lifted up to that region of indescribable beauty where gates were pearls and streets were gold and the glory of God filled all the city that lieth four-square; to think of the sea of glass, the full tide of the river of life, the tree whose leaves heal the nations, the harpers harping night and day, the crowns, the white robes and the palms,—this was to Aggie ineffable joy.

And then, at evening, when the other girls were abroad and the weary Elizabeth slept with her head on her arms, Agnes talked with the matron. Those stories of the Christ which to us are twice-told tales were new to her. She seemed to hear his voice speaking to Mary, to see him touch the bier when those who bore it stood still. She almost felt his touch when he laid healing hands on the daughter of Israel bowed down for eighteen years. Once let the mysterious gates between this world and the other swing open and her slip through, she should see him as he is and *as he was*. She, like Mary Magdalene in the garden, would sink down at his



feet crying, "Rabboni." He would call her—yes, even her, Agnes—by her name. He would give her welcome among the saints in light; to him she would not be a pariah from the East End of London, but one bought by his own blood.

It would have been idle to speak to Agnes in vague terms of a God, an all-Father, a Fountain of light far away. Her heart took hold of the thought of a personal Christ; she, like Job, had needed, claimed and found a Daysman that should lay his hand upon both.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### “UP BETHNAL GREEN WAY.”

ELIZABETH having reached the month of May and the gates of Paradise, how has it fared with her *confrères*, Richard and Benje?

In that dense black fog, when Elizabeth and Richard fled each a separate way, thinking only of present extremity, Richard, true to the habit of his life, held fast to Benje. Dragging his little brother, he dashed about wildly, bewildered by the shouts of men, the clash of hoofs, the crash of wheels. In a moment or two—though it seemed a very long time indeed—they stumbled against a colossus which proved to be a policeman. The policeman quickly placed them on a sidewalk at a street-turning, saying,

“Get you home as fast as you can. This is no day for you to be in the streets.”

London policemen always take it for granted that every child they see has a home to which to go. Yet the statistics of London give the policemen no ground for such an inference. Twenty thousand children, say the statistics, are homeless and destitute in London and its environs.



"Why can't we see Elizabeth?" wailed Benje. "Why is it so dark? Why do I ache so, Richard? Why don't somebody give me a breakfast?"

Never being was less in harmony with environment than was Benje.

"We're looking for Elizabeth, Benje," said Richard, with forced cheerfulness. "And the fog will clear up soon, and we'll find a breakfast."

So, as Elizabeth had gone blindly here and there, went Richard also, but always in ways far off from those taken by Elizabeth; and, as she went south and west, Richard went east and north, and in a few hours the major part of London was between them.

Richard walked slowly. He talked boldly and cheerfully; he stopped to rest; he carried Benje, he did all that he could do to console that very chilly, hungry and uncomfortable little boy. And all in vain, for Benje found it impossible to be consoled as long as his blue toes stuck out of his shoes, and the raw wind entered great holes in the knees of his trousers, and his stomach was empty of anything but fog. Poor luckless Benje!

When the sun came out, it did not add particularly to Benje's happiness, for now he saw bakers' shops full of bread, and sausages hanging at the pork-shop doors, and apples and oranges at the fruit-shops; and savory whiffs from chop-houses and pastry-cooks tantalized his yearning palate.



All that day no one seemed to think of offering these brothers a penny or a bite; no one had an errand for them to do, a cab door to open or a horse to hold. Then, about the time when Lady Hobart improvised for Elizabeth a picnic in Hyde Park, Richard concluded that he and Benje could not sleep out of doors again. If they became unconscious from hunger and cold, who could tell where they might be taken or how entirely they might be parted? He would go to Auberle for a shelter; if Auberle were dead, he would go to Jacob.

Auberle was first in preference and nearer in situation. If Richard had gone first to Jacob, he might have come across the path of Elizabeth; but, giving up the idea of finding her that afternoon, he dragged and carried Benje "up Bethnal Green way," and at last, full of fears, he staggered up his humble tutor's staircase. Richard and Benje were about at the end of their forces. What if Auberle should not be there?

But "Come in!" answered to Richard's knock. There was Auberle, sitting at a little table, reading by the bright lamp his favorite halfpenny paper. There was a cheery fire in the grate before him, and on the fire a pot sent out whiffs that hinted broadly of impending supper. Auberle's right leg was laid out over an upturned soap-box.

Auberle drew his shaggy brows together, looking at the door beyond the circle of lamplight. There



he saw two pale and thin and ragged lads—a tall large-boned one and a small and slender one—clinging together and looking toward him.

“Richard, Richard!” cried Auberle. “It’s never Benje and Richard! Come along here, you rascals! Why have you given up your lessons and never come near me? I looked for you well, and made sure you were dead or gone to the bad sooner than I expected you to go. Of course, in this cursed city, you’re bound to go to destruction some time; you can’t help it.”

By this time the exhausted boys were close by the fire and on their knees, holding out their cramped fingers to the glowing coals. Auberle interrupted himself to reach up to the shelf over the fire, and, taking down a stale loaf, he cut a thick lump of bread for each of his guests. Manna never tasted better in the desert than that morsel of stale bread to these two waifs of London.

“I am glad you came,” said Auberle, eying them as they tore and worried at the crumbs of bread like a couple of starved terriers. “I’m flush, Richard; I earned ten shillings a week for four weeks. I took home the last of the velvet the other day, and somehow, coming back, I gave my ankle a bad sprain. It swelled the size of a water-bucket. But that woman they call a Bible nurse that trots about here heard of it, and in she comes. I knew, Richard, that I was giving myself away as soon as she



set foot inside my door, and I'll tell you why. She didn't fling it up to me; she didn't need to: she knew I'd work it out myself. Have all the infidel clubs that talks brotherhood and charity e'er set a woman with a wise head, a skillful hand and a full bag to go about among the sick poor and nurse them? No! It's only the Bible people has done that, Richard, and you may make out of it the best you can. I've heard Mr. Renè go it over more than one time: 'By their fruits ye shall know them;' and I tell you, Richard, when I come to investigating fruits as an honest man, I get shaky in some of my opinions. It's true, on the Christian side, there ain't as much fruits as there ought to be, but on the other side there's none. Well, I was tellin' you about this woman called a Bible nurse. She bathes and she bandages and she does one up. Well, it was a clean wonder how she did it. She swept my room and rubbed the window and set all to rights and cooked me a meal. I knew well she'd been waiting this three years to get a chance at me. But, in course, Richard, I couldn't fault her slingin' her Scripture at me when she was handling my ankle to beat any doctor ever I knew. Next day she comes again and brings as pretty a spoken lady as a man could wish to meet. The lady makes herself agreeable and inquires about weaving, drors a picter of the loom, asks all about the old weavin'-ways and the former pigeon-trade, and I gives her



three or four old wood-cut picters I had up on a shelf this ten year. Then, when they leaves, soon a boy comes in with a sack of coals, a quart of oil, a basket with marrer-bones, peas for soup, bread and taters an' 'alf a pun' in a letter, saying it was not a present from the lady, but only pay for what the information an' the picters I had give her would be worth for a book as she was a-writing. Think of that, Richard! A lady as writes books sittin' where you sits this blessed minit'! So, Richard, there's coals and there's lights, there's provisions and there's money on hand, and welcome you and Benje are to share them all; only you'll tell me fair and square how all has gone since I set eye on you."

Benje was already asleep on the floor, but Richard, refreshed by bread and heat and the good cheer of Auberle's narration, was able to begin the Iliad of his woes. It did not take long in the telling, but Richard's sunken eyes and hollow cheeks and Benje's squalid little figure were more eloquent than were words.

As the boy told his story Auberle's eyes glowed; he shook his big fists toward all quarters of the great city, lying about him.

"This is London!" he cried, fiercely. "Feasting and famine! The men, the women, the little children, of the East End starved and kenneled as the West-Enders would say was cruel for their dogs and cats! There's them as don't know how to kill



their time, nor yet how to get through with their money, and never thinks they've errand or duty to human brothers that starve in dens that would sicken a brute." Then, becoming, happily, practical, he added, "Well, Richard, you ought to have come to me before. And now, boy, fill the kettle at the hydrant down in the street, will you, and heat a pail of water and give you and Benje a wash? You can wrap Benje up in the bed-blanket, and, as I've got my other coat out of pawn lately, you can put it on you and take all your clothes and his, and this shilling, down to the woman on the floor below, and she'll be glad enough to wash and mend up your duds for it. A master-hand she is at it, and keeps a stock of tailor's bits to set patches. By the time you're clean the soup will be done, and we'll feast, my boy. And then you turn that little kid into bed, and you and I will take down the books, my boy. Why, there's all Mr. Renè gave me for you hardly studied yet, and I'll be bound in four months you've nigh forgot all you learned so fast. Easy got, easy gone, my boy."

The soul of Richard revived within him at thought of cleanliness and decency, food, bed, books, once more. He made haste to fill the kettle, observing, as he did so, that Auberle's small stock of household goods and his clothing seemed to have returned *en masse* from the pawn-shop. There was a wooden pail to do duty as a tub, a square of brown soap



and a towel left conveniently by the nurse, and Richard made the lather fly as he rubbed and scoured himself and Benje. Benje was so pleased to see whole continents of white skin appearing through his general griminess that he forgot to inquire why Richard rubbed so hard, why soap made your eyes smart, why suds had such an evil taste.

So, at last, the dirty boys were clean boys; the soiled and tattered clothes were delivered to the old woman down stairs. Benje, pinned up in a quilt, sat in a heap on the hearth-corner, and Richard, buttoned into Auberle's coat from his neck to his knees, kept as near the fire as he could; and they all ate pea-soup.

Then, while Benje slept, Richard explained to Auberle that he had not forgotten what he had learned, for amid all his tribulations he had found up "Saint Pankridge way" an old man who kept a second-hand-book stall, and he had done little jobs for this man to pay for the privilege of reading his books; and when he could do nothing else with his time, he had sat under the old man's counter and read, and had worked out examples in arithmetic upon the flagging of the sidewalk. Had he given up the idea of being a doctor? Not he! He more than ever meant to be one. He did not intend to stay thus beggarly all his life. But he had read books enough in the old man's stall to find out how much there was to learn. He must learn not only English, but



a queer tongue called "Latin" and a thing called "chemistry," which tells you what all things are made of, and also botany—another study, all about plants. Then he got down the books which Auberle had brought from Mr. Renè, and found among them a grammar in "the queer tongue Latin," but Auberle said he knew nothing about it. But there was a *Natural Philosophy* which Auberle said he himself had "dipped into and found it fine," and a *Chemistry* which had such hard words and odd expressions and symbols that both master and pupil concluded "it would take them a rare time to get even with that."

Perhaps there were hardly two happier people in London that night than were Auberle and his recovered pupil examining Mr. Renè's half dozen old school-books. But now and then between the blessed pages and Richard's eyes drifted the wan face of Elizabeth, and a great sigh rose from Richard's heart as he thought she might be starving and terrified, sleeping out in the cold, damp night in Birdcage Walk or Trafalgar Square.

For the next three days Richard and Benje scarcely left Auberle's room, except to run now and then for bread. They were recovering from months of cold, weariness and starvation. The Bible nurse said Benje must lie still near the fire, and she got him an order for a pint of milk a day for a fortnight.



"Another few days, and that little boy would have died of exhaustion," she said to Auberle.

"A country has come to a pretty pass," cried Auberle, "when men are a drug in its markets, and lest too many of them grow up to dispute for wages and loaves they starves and perishes 'em when they are little."

"I hope these two will grow up for better things," said the nurse. "That Richard is a fine boy, and I believe he will make his way up and take little Benje with him."

But now Richard was himself again, and Auberle's ankle was so much better that he could walk by leaning on a crutch which the nurse had lent him.

Richard must now get work.

"You ought to get into a 'pothecary's shop," said Auberle, "but the nurse can't find us one, no more than she can find Elizabeth, as you asked her to look for. I don't know any 'pothecaries, nor no other folk do I know with work to do, except it is a barber. Boys is more wanted in barber-shops than in any other."

"All right," quoth Richard; "I'll bet I can barb with the next one. Where's a barber-shop? I know how it is done—lather the face and whirl a razor over it; go for the head with a comb in one hand and a brush in the other; tie a towel on their necks, whisk another towel over their faces; pour something out of a bottle on their heads; make 'em a bow.



‘Next gentleman!’ I’ve looked through the windows loads of times.”

“It is not what I want for you,” said Auberle, “though, as I read, in ancient times barbers were a kind of surgeons also, and so part of the doctors. They bled people, and put on leeches and blisters, and did not merely dress hair, as they do now. Now a barber-shop is not on the road to a doctor’s carriage.”

“I’ll make it on the road, as there’s where I’m going,” said Richard Cœur d’Leon of “Bethnal Green way.”

“I can get you into a barber’s shop I know of,” said Auberle. “It is a small shop and he is a poor man, but he can find you in work and pay honest what he promises, and him and me belongs to the same club.”

“What’s ‘a club?’” demanded the revived Benje.

“A club,” said Auberle, “is men meeting together to talk of how all things is as they should not be and what will you do about it? The West-End clubs, no doubt, finds things to their minds, they having the upper hand entirely, and then they discusses how they can keep the poor man down and get the most work for the least wages, we to stand always hat in hand before my lords. They has club-houses all gold and marble, plate-glass, picters and velvet carpets and lace curtings. My club meets in the back room of a public; we has



one smoky lamp and a row of chairs without back to 'em, and our dues is threepence a week and our meat and drink whatsoever we can pay for; if not, go without."

After this discourse, Auberle—a very mild manner of agitator and anarchist, whose natural kind heart, as shown toward Richard, was ever at war with his head, as discovered in his remarks about the West End—set forth with the two boys to the barber's shop.

Richard already in anticipation felt a personal pride in the striped pole, and saw himself, like the barber-surgeon of a few centuries back, lancing an arm or setting a leech or cupping or administering a potion. Auberle's influence, added to the immediate need of "a handy boy" and Richard's unbounded confidence in himself, caused the little barber—Mr. Maypinn—to hire him at four shillings a week if after a week's practice, without wages, he should be found competent. During this trial-week Richard was to have his dinners, and, as it was pleaded that Benje could run errands, wash the steps, clean brushes and combs and wash out mugs, he was to be allowed to stay in the shop and get his daily dinner with the barber and his wife.

Richard, during his week of probation being allowed to try his hand on such customers as for a free shave and comb would risk being slaughtered by the zealous neophyte, discovered wonderful



dexterity in the tonsorial art. He combed, shampooed, trimmed, cut and shaved with the skill of an experienced hand, and, though he might not have been tolerated in the West End, he became popular "up Bethnal Green way."

So, in May, when Elizabeth found a factory-girl's paradise, Richard had reached his kingdom in a barber's shop.



## CHAPTER IX.

### *WEST END AND EAST END.*

FOR a whole year did Richard stay in his shop and Elizabeth in her paradise. It was a year almost without events in their history. On the whole, the boy had much the better of it. His wages were regular, Benje went again to board school, and the barber's wife, taking him into her affection, gave him his dinners. The boys lived with Auberle, and Auberle charged them no rent; so they were fed and clothed—after a fashion.

And Richard studied. He kept his book open on a window-sill and committed passages, tables, formulæ, rules, vocabularies, as he cut, combed, shampooed, trimmed, shaved heads. Mr. Maypinn was rather proud of his bookish apprentice, and glad that Richard could keep for him his small accounts and write out his little bills. Not only did Richard study with Auberle, but he found free evenings, now and then, to go to Mr. Renè and begin "the queer tongue called Latin," and get a certain light on chemistry, and be drilled in English grammar.



So, going to Mr. Renè, he no doubt might have come upon trace of Elizabeth had not Aggie and Elizabeth passed out of Mr. Renè's district and knowledge.

The girls had been in their new home but two months when mam died. She was taken ill, sent to the hospital, died, and was buried without the navy giving himself the trouble to inform either of her daughters. They had only Sabbath afternoons on which they could go to see her. One Sabbath she was in her wretched home, complaining of headache; the next Sabbath the pauper's burial-place had her. Another family lodged in the attic-room; the navy had sold the two or three bits of furniture and departed.

Betty and Aggie, meeting on their useless quest, heard the news from the neighbors, and, sitting down on the stairs, put their arms around each other and shed a few tears.

"You was always a good girl to her, Aggie."

"I wish she could have gone to the Bible reading," sobbed Aggie. "It do seem so dreadful to have such hard times all along in this world, an' never hear of anything better that's to come. It do seem so dreadful, Betty, to go out of this world with it all dark about what's to be hereafter. It do seem so dreadful not to know anybody—not God nor anybody in the world outside of this."

"I wish there wasn't any world outside of this,"



said Betty. "I do get so fearful tired button'oling! I feel like as when I die I want to be done with, for I know I couldn't be alive and not be tired."

"You ought to sleep more, Betty dear," said Aggie. "Me and Elizabeth, we gets to bed just as soon as we can. We may sit a bit on the doorstep to cool and rest, and then we gets to bed. But many of the girls stays out on the streets till ten past, and Saturday nights they runs about till after twelve. Matron says it's wrong."

"Matron is an old prig, then," said Betty. "We must have our larks and a mouthful of fresh air. I'd rather run about a bit in the ev'ning than eat nor sleep. We gets a little fun chaffin' people and playin' tricks. You, bein' weakly, don't know the fun of it."

So the sisters parted, Betty promising that sometimes on Saturday nights or Sunday afternoons she would go and see Aggie. And Aggie came no more into the Tower Hamlets: her duty and her home were far away, and Aggie, with hard work, hard fare and crooked back, was but feeble.

Thus Agnes and Elizabeth went out of Mr. Renè's knowledge. He was busy enough in the Tower Hamlets. Half a million inhabitants, in round numbers, dwell in the Tower Hamlets. Of these, seven thousand are habitual criminals, eighty-five thousand are the "very poor," such as "mam" and Betty, and seventy thousand more are of families



numbering from four to eight or ten, living on four or five dollars a week, and so knowing, as daily household guests, hunger and cold and exhaustion and hopelessness. Undoubtedly, the heart and the hands of Mr. Renè, and those who, like him, are trying to ameliorate the misery and enlighten the darkness and lift out of degradation this mass of wretched humanity in the Tower Hamlets, were right heavily burdened.

Betty, according to promise, came now and then to see her sister. Betty was now tall and thin, looking nearer twenty than fifteen. Premature womanhood had come upon her. There had been no golden age of childhood for her. She had stepped out of infancy into the sharp strife for bread and the knowledge of life's bitterest realities. As she had had no golden age of childhood, so she would have no calm, strong, helpful years of middle life; after her sudden womanhood, old age or death.

There was in Betty a painful longing to be happy, to enjoy herself; there was a pathetic striving to be lively and pretty and nice. Now and then, when something gave her pleasure, her eyes would brighten and a faint wild-rose flush would glow across the thin face where famine and weariness and foul air had fed upon the roundness and the color.

When Betty came to see Aggie, she brought 'Arry with her. Betty laughed loudly—a laugh rather spasmodic than joyous. She made rude jokes; she



was reckless of the present and of the future. She lived according to her lights. Agnes was powerless to guide or control her. What could Agnes offer her but a share of starvation and early death?

After Betty and Harry left them, and Elizabeth and Agnes had gone up to their bed, before any of the other girls were in, poor Agnes would lay her head against Elizabeth's and cry over Betty :

“Poor Betty ! She is so industrious and kind and generous ! What hard times she has had ! Never a winter but she's been cold all the time ; never a day in her life but she's been tired ; never a day, I really believe, that she has had all she wanted to eat. She's only a little girl yet, but she thinks she is a woman grown, and pretty soon she'll marry and have five or six little children crying about her. And 'Arry'll get discouraged because he can't do for them and they wear him with their crying, and he'll be cross with hunger, and he'll take to drink and beat her and them, or he'll run away and leave them. That is the way it goes for all of them ; I've seen it all my life. So it will be for my poor Betty. I'm glad I'm a humpback, Elizabeth, and too feeble to live very long.”

Whereupon Elizabeth also would burst into tears, for she was of a tender nature and loved Agnes, and had no one else in the world to cleave to, having lost the boys and the Charmer.

The girls of the factory were even less to Eliza-



beth's mind than was Betty ; they were loud, profane and quarrelsome. Yet there was also a rough loyalty and generosity among them, and a certain honesty, and each girl had a "mate"—another girl by whom she stood staunchly "in evil report and in good report," for better or for worse, in sickness and in hunger, sharing and helping.

The little home where twelve of them lodged was very free and easy. Had it not been, only Agnes and Elizabeth would have been found to stay there. The rule was that they must all get in by half-past ten at night, with allowance of an extra hour on Saturday. They did not obey the rule very closely, and the matron winked at the infringement, striving by gaining a friendly influence, by helpfulness, example and advice, to create better habits and sounder ideas in her lawless charge.

To get a neck-ribbon, however soiled, and to have a bang or "fringe" of hair close down to their eyebrows, giving them, as nearly as possible, the look of little dogs—this was their ambition. But we pause to ask, Why should they not cultivate the appearance of brutes? Had they been better fed or lodged or taught, or kept cleaner than dogs? In all sincerity we say, "No." As far as most of them were concerned, dogs had much the better of it.

Genteel London was apt to denominate "horrible creatures" these girls—the girls of the match-factories, the kindling-wood yards, and many other fac-



tories where neither brain nor skill was demanded, so that their daily tasks, instead of elevating by inducing thought, depressed them by deadening their mental faculties. Genteel London turned from them in high disgust, and gave them the sidewalk, since they claimed it.

When they went out in numbers through any district, they locked arms, three, four or five abreast, and took the whole pavement. If a woman of a better class held her way, perhaps unconsciously, they promptly swept her into the gutter. If a gentleman came by who did not step out among the vehicles, one of them would give a leap and dextrously knock his hat off among the wheels, and a shriek of laughter would follow him as he went to regain it. The butchers' boys and the bakers' boys knew well that their trays of meat and bread would go where the hat went if they came within arm's length. "Don't you crowd us, miss!" these factory girls would cry to unoffending young-ladyhood tripping along, aggravating them with kid gloves, a neatly-fitted gown, collars and cuffs and general well-being. So young-ladyhood was vigorously jammed against a lamp-post or a wall.

Horrible creatures indeed! Is that the verdict? Was not all this merely the fierce revolt of humanity conscious of its human needs and rights lifelong denied. These individuals whom they attacked were to them merely representatives of a class and a sys-



tem of things. And that system of things had seared their sensibilities, withered their gentler qualities, scorched and blighted their capacities, branded them as outcasts. In their petty way they were merely hinting of masterful and gigantic methods which in this world have avenged, if not righted, wrongs. Their lawless deeds were as little tongues of ignition smoldering, licking and lapping—little lambent fires akin still to those floods of flame which in the *Jacquerie*, the *Peasants' War*, the *French Revolution*, have burned out many iniquities, if they could not bring in righteousness.

And the police? Why did they not interfere? If the police perceived and slowly advanced, the brigade of girls unlocked arms and fled in every direction with a chorus of derisive laughter.

With these rude spirits, Agnes by her softer nature, and Elizabeth not by her superior nature only, but by her better education and more careful nurture, had little akin. The two kept together, and shrunk from the rest. These for a time tormented or attacked them, then jeered at or ignored them. But the few who showed desire for improvement, and who, amid all their disasters, still possessed some hope and ambition, and evidenced the same by taking advantage of the mission home, presently came to like these two better, and to look on Aggie with sympathy and reverence, as one doomed to early death.



The mission home did not pauperize the factory-girls by offering free shelter. One and six or two shillings a week was the charge for fire, shelter and lights. There was a little wash-room, with tubs, where they could do their own washing, and the matron tried to teach them how to do it well. They took turns in a certain amount of scrubbing and cleaning which kept the house in order, and each one provided her own food according to her own taste or means, and cooked it as she chose. Here, again, the matron was zealous to teach wise methods, and to give instructions in judicious cooking and providing.

Not only were wages very low, so that it was hard to provide enough garments for decency and enough food to keep the wolf, famine, from gnawing at their vitals, but if once a girl lost a week, or part of a week, from illness, it was almost impossible to make up for that small bereavement of the daily wage.

Then, in winter, there were apt to be days or weeks when work was very dull and the factory was shut entirely, or open only a day or two in the week for a few hands. Then these poor creatures sold or pawned anything that they could possibly go without. They lived on bread and weak tea, had only one meal a day, and grew gaunt and hollow-eyed and parched of skin. Their hands shook, their legs trembled; they were hysterical



and broke into floods of tears or paroxysms of dry sobs, and talked wildly about the river and the rest to be found there.

And all these hardly-pressed ones were of ages from ten to twenty, and had such flesh, blood, bones, humanity, spirit, cravings, yearnings, needs, as the girls you and I, good friends, shelter in our homes and are careful lest the very winds of heaven should visit them too roughly.

When no work made times so sorely hard, the matron begged or borrowed money and took the few pence the girls could gather, and, buying some vegetables, bits of meat and broken bread, cooked meals to keep her household from starving and gave them lessons in how to get the most food for the least money.

On a feeble girl such as Agnes the winter starvation bore heavily; also the confinement in the close room, when she had work, wore sorely upon her, and, as she breathed in emery-dust with all the other evils in the atmosphere, her lungs inflamed and ulcerated. She had a racking cough, a hectic fever, and soon was far gone in consumption.

When May came round and Agnes and Elizabeth had been a year in the mission home, Agnes lay in her bed all the time, and Elizabeth pulled the monotonous handle of her machine to support them both. As she earned only four shillings a week, the support was meagre, though now the matron



charged no rent for Aggie and provided her breakfast and nursed her tenderly.

It was when Elizabeth was bewailing that she could not buy for Agnes oranges and grapes, and other delicacies, that one of the girls said to her,

“Why don’t you sell your hair? I know a girl that sells her hair every two years. She sells it to Mr. Maypinn, up Bethnal Green way.”

This notion being in Elizabeth’s head, she took an afternoon when there was no work and trudged off to Mr. Maypinn’s shop.

Benje was in school; Richard was out on an errand. Elizabeth removed her little hat, shook down her back the heavy golden braid that had been part of her capital as a prodigy and asked,

“Will you buy my hair?”

Mrs. Maypinn gave a cry of admiration, but suppressed it with a view to the interests of trade, saying,

“You’ll be much ’ealthier with all that ’air hoff your ’ed. And the time you’ll save not ’avin’ of it to do hup!”

Mr. Maypinn controlled his emotions, asking,

“What do you want for it?”

“All I can get,” cried Elizabeth. “I’m selling it because my mate is dying and I want to get her nice things. Not that they’ll cure her, but I want to feel I made her comfortable, poor dear!”

Mrs. Maypinn was soft-hearted; she said,



“Maypinn, you do your best by ’er.”

“I’ll give you sixteen shillin’, an’ that’s the last ’a’penny I can pay for you it,” said the barber.

Elizabeth sat down in the big chair. She was eager to get the money; Mr. Maypinn was eager to close his bargain. The result of this mutual haste was that Elizabeth had been gone ten minutes when Richard returned, and, beholding on the table the long, thick braid of gleaming gold, cried out,

“Where did you get that? I knew a girl once—a very pretty little girl—with just such hair.”

“This ain’t her,” quoth Mistress Maypinn; “this one was tallish, and not pretty at all.”

“Clean yourself quick, Richard,” said Mr. Maypinn, with great joy, “and go over with this hair to Monshue Fleur, in Oxford street, and tell him ’ere’s the very braid he’s been a-lookin’ hover Lunnon for. An’ threepun ten is the least penny I’ll part with it for, an’ you’re to take the money an’ give a receipt. So off with you! ’Ere’s threepence, so you can ride the best part of the way.”

Off with speed went Richard, never guessing that he was carrying the hair of his dear Elizabeth.

When Richard had delivered the braid and set off for Bethnal Green with the money, Monsieur la Fleur cried in rapture to his stylish little clerk,

“Take this beautiful hair to Madame Tillman, and tell her I have just come on what she has



searched London and Paris for, and six guineas is the very lowest price I can take."

Away then went the clerk with Elizabeth's hair, over sixfold advanced in value during three hours.

Mrs. Tillman, protesting grievously at the price of the coveted hair, nevertheless bought it and carried it to her boudoir, crying,

"At last I have found just such hair as I had when I was young.—Look, Elsie!"

A girl in a blue silk gown, blue silk stockings blue kid slippers—a girl with a fluff of lace about her pretty throat and a cloud of golden hair about her pretty face—dropped her novel and rose up with a cry :

"Oh, where did you get that, dear mamma? Tell me! It is just such hair as my own blessed little Elizabeth had. Hundreds of times I combed it for her. Where did you get it?"

"I bought it. And I wish you wouldn't recall those times, my sweet Elsie. Of course it is not Elizabeth's, and I'm sure it is only your fancy that hers was ever as nice. And you know that Elizabeth—poor thing!—is dead long ago, and there is no use of your fretting yourself and spoiling your eyes thinking of her."

But this petted maiden of May Fair was no other than the lovely *Serpent-Charmer*, and the sight of that golden braid perfected in her a purpose long secretly entertained. She had, indeed, been told



that Gran and Elizabeth were both dead of a contagious fever, and that the little boys had been taken off to Canada. Mrs. Tillman had told Elsie this when, out of weeks of unconsciousness, she had aroused to find herself, not the Serpent-Charmer of the Varieties, but the adopted daughter of a lady of sentiment and fashion. Mrs. Tillman said her maid had searched for Elsie's family, and had found them dead or vanished. But into the mind of Elsie had stolen doubts, and now she concluded to satisfy these doubts.

Elsie took into her confidence little Lady Hobart, a second cousin of Mrs. Tillman's, and these two made a secret escapade from governesses and lady's-maids, and went in a cab to the No Thoroughfare where once the Charmer had lived with Elizabeth and Gran and Richard and Benje.

But the breath of fire had passed over this spot, and half the No Thoroughfare lay in black ruins, and no one was left there who knew anything of Gran or Elizabeth or the boys.

"But, miss, my dear," said a loquacious shirt-maker who was interviewed by Elsie, "if they said they was dead with fever, no doubt it's true as true. I only wonder one of us is alive. Black typhus it were, an' it crep' out of Poplar Court, and it took off the folk 'ereabouts by the tens. I never see so many 'earses nor so many coffins in all my born days together, and fifty year old I am. Friller my name



is. Anybody will tell you about me—‘Mrs. Friller, as lives in ’Andel street, formerly ’Enrietta, a first-class shirtmaker an’ well respected by all who knows ’er.’ That’s me, my dear, and dead they all are with black typhus, poor souls !”

So Elsie’s quest ended.



## CHAPTER X.

### *LONDON LODGINGS.*

THE night before Agnes died Betty came to see her. She sat on the side of the little white bed, and cried over her sister's extremity.

"Don't cry for me, my dear," said Agnes. "I'm fearing you're the one as ought to be cried over. I haven't an ache nor a pain, and I don't want anything. I'm 'appy, and I'm just waiting. Elizabeth has read me so much out of the Bible about the good land and the city. I am not to be kept out because I don't know anything, nor have anything, nor can't do anything. I don't need to do anything. Jesus bein' 'special good to the poor and weak, all I have to do is to let him just carry me along. It is as when one carries a little child. But I'm main uneasy about you, Betty, my dear."

"You needn't be," said Betty; "I'm all right. 'Arry an' me was married yesterday, an' 'Arry is as good as gold to me, an' says he allers will be."

"Married"! These luckless children! One was fifteen; the other, nineteen. They had not a penny



laid up, nor a stick of furniture. Betty, by hard work at buttonholes, could make about five shillings a week ; 'Arry had the uncertain gains, the frequent losses, of a coster. Probably this marriage did not afford unalloyed consolation to Agnes's dying-hour. Happily, she had other comfort :

“ Read me the verse, Elizabeth—*my* verse, you know.”

“ ‘ Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth give I unto you,’ ” read Elizabeth.

“ Yes ; He gives to keep,” said Agnes. “ And the 'special good ones, Elizabeth, so's Betty can hear too.”

“ ‘ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more : neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.’ ‘ Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and he shall be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away.’ ”

“ And it says, ‘ Whosoever will, let him come and take freely.’ It's for me and you, Betty. Kiss me, my dear, good-bye.”



After Agnes died the matron took Elizabeth to sleep on a little cot in her own room, and was to her as a mother. She taught her to sew neatly, and in the evenings they read together the books in the matron's little library. Elizabeth, having these readings and conversations to think over, was saved from imbecility; for what can be more likely to destroy mentality than to sit for twelve hours a day monotonously raising and depressing an iron handle?

This went on for another year, four shillings being the weekly wages, with intervals when nothing was to be earned. The matron was Elizabeth's only recourse, and it was hard to keep in whole shoes and garments. Then expired the lease of the small houses among which was the mission home. The land was rented for a great factory; the home was broken up. The matron at this juncture was called from her work to the country to attend upon her paralyzed mother. Elizabeth's friend was gone.

Elizabeth and two other of the home-girls hired a room and put in it a few things given them by the departing matron. But this life with the two girls—no quiet evenings, no food for thought, nothing but daily gnawing of hunger and daily twelve hours of raising and depressing the iron handle—became unendurable. Elizabeth was past fourteen; she felt as old as happier people do at fifty. She was slender and had gained nearly her full height. She felt that she must make a last desperate effort at



self-rescue ; so, with four shillings of wages in her pocket, one Monday morning she turned her back on the factory-gates and fled toward Highbury. Labor had lost a machine ; humanity had gained a woman.

Elizabeth went to an intelligence or servants' office which she had seen advertised. She had a few lines of recommendation from the matron. What could she do ? She could clean and scrub, dust, make a bed, sweep, cook vegetables, make soup and tea ; the matron had taught her.

“ Sit by,” said the manager ; “ I will see what I can do for you.”

There was nothing that day or the next, but the third day Elizabeth got a place at two and sixpence weekly as maid-of-all-work for “ a decayed lady ” who was keeping lodgers. Elizabeth could not help a whimsical feeling that the home and all its belongings had shared the decay of the fortunes of her employer. The mistress was a thin, weak-voiced, pale creature in a faded gown and a faded silk shoulder-wrap, habitually worn to conceal ragged waists. She had a cap with faded lavender ribbons, and about her throat a tangle of worn-out lace. Her carpets, curtains, bed- and table-linen, chairs and sofas were worn into holes. After darning became ineffectual, the various articles had been abandoned to the processes of destruction.

Elizabeth was now the lodging-house slavey.



Cheap lodgings there were for clerks who would come far up north for sake of low prices.

What was Elizabeth's daily life? She rose at half-past five and scoured the front steps, walk and area and polished the door-handle. Then she made the kitchen-fire and "tidied" the front basement-room, which served her and her mistress as dining-and sitting-room, and where, as there was no other place for her, Elizabeth slept on a lounge. Then she put on water to heat, and, going through the house, collected four pairs of shoes, set at the doors by the four lodgers, and, coming back to the kitchen, she polished them. After that she took a pair of shoes and a pitcher of hot water up to the attic and knocked vigorously on the door until "the Attic" in question woke up. Down stairs now in haste, and a cup of tea, two rounds of toast and two boiled eggs were made ready on a tray and carried up to "the Attic," by this time dressed and ravenous. With this tray Elizabeth managed to carry a tin can of water and two pair of shoes for "the gents in the third story." These gents were wakened as the Attic had been, and again to her basement went Elizabeth, made tea, fried bacon and potatoes, loaded a tray with these viands, dishes, a loaf, a pat of butter, and up to the third story without loss of time to spread forth a breakfast for "the two gents who roomed together."

And now "the drawing-room," or second-floor,



lodger must be awakened, and, as he possessed a sitting-room as well as a bedroom, Elizabeth swept and dusted said sitting-room, while the "Drawing-Room" himself—for these lodgers were known by their localities—dressed, and the Attic and the Third Floor went off cityward on top of a 'bus.

Back in the basement, and there she found her mistress, in a draggled wrapper and the inevitable shawl and lavender ribbons, cooking a chop for the delectation of the Drawing-Room. Elizabeth made ready the tray, with tea, toast, salad and meat, and carried it up to the Drawing-Room.

By this time it was half-past eight, and Elizabeth had been hard at work for three hours. But now she and her mistress could eat. They took their meal together in great amity, the "decayed lady" drawing the curtain with care, so that no one should guess that she ate with her servant. She was not a cross nor an illiberal person. She gave Elizabeth butter for her bread, a fair share of the chop or ham, allowed her a spoonful of the marmalade and put milk and sugar in her tea.

Elizabeth had never been so well and regularly fed. She was better off in this respect than were most lodging-house slaveys. After breakfast she went around the rooms for the dishes, brought them down and washed them. She set in order all three bedrooms, swept the stairs, and then went out and did the buying for all the house, for to



go to market and carry a basket were acts far beneath the dignity of "a decayed lady."

When the buying was done, Elizabeth cleaned windows and polished knives; and if fires were needed, she laid one ready to light in each room-grate and carried up from the cellar to every room a scuttle of coal. At two she and her mistress ate dinner. Then vegetables were prepared and towels were washed and ironed, and at five the Drawing-Room was home and wanted his dinner. Usually he wanted much more than his dinner. He wanted Elizabeth to go and buy him a paper; he rang his bell and bade Elizabeth go post a letter for him; he rang again, and ordered her to run and see why the shoemaker had not sent home his shoes; he rang and told her to go to the stationer's for pens or ink or "commercial note"—to the fruit-stall for pomegranates. He was a most exacting Drawing-Room.

At six the Attic and the Third Floor wanted tea at the same time; they were waited on in the order of their financial merits, and their consequent dignity. The Attic was served last, but Elizabeth hurried as fast as possible. Also the Attic and the Third Floor had errands for Elizabeth to do.

Between-whiles of the errands Elizabeth and her mistress got their tea and toast. Then the dishes were washed, and at nine all the bells in the house were simultaneously rung for supper. Out flew



Elizabeth to the nearest public for three pitchers of beer. Up the stairs she sped with trays of sandwiches, bread and cheese, salad, potted meat or Welsh rarebit—and the beer. Finally, she and her mistress had their cold tea and bit of bread and cheese. The trays were carried down; the dishes were once more washed. It was half-past ten or eleven, and Elizabeth might go to bed. For all this she had two and six\* a week, “and found.”

All the week went this way. On Sunday there was no stair- or window-cleaning, nor marketing, nor errand-going, but all the lodgers were home for a three-o'clock dinner. The landlady went to service in the morning unless the weather was too unpropitious. She made for Elizabeth a hat and gown, and gave her a little silk shawl and a pair of gloves that had seen wear, and sent her to church every Sabbath evening with a warning to “hurry back in time to fetch the gents' beer.” Also the landlady bade Elizabeth “read her Bible if she had time,” and asserted that she herself had been quite a religious person before her fortunes decayed.

For two years Elizabeth held this place. Having no one to share her pittance of wages, and having developed great good taste and sense in buying, cutting and making her clothes, by degrees she became reputably clad. Now and then, on Christmas or from a departing lodger, she received a few shil-

\* About sixty cents.



lings as a present; and these gifts enabled her to get a good woolen gown and a coat. Her work was hard, indeed, but it developed thought, and her constant association with her mistress, and with no one else, improved Elizabeth's speech and refined her ideas and her manners. The landlady had a number of books that had belonged to her husband—books of history, poetry, travels, novels, biography. Elizabeth read them all. Of all, she best liked a book on nursing, by Florence Nightingale.

At the end of two years hard toil broke Elizabeth down. A doctor, being called, said she must go to a hospital, and that her cure would require five or six months. He had often noticed Elizabeth, as he lived in the neighborhood, and he was interested in her, and said he not only would secure her admission to the hospital, but would speak about the case to a friend of his among the hospital doctors, and would see to it that Elizabeth was not dismissed until she was thoroughly cured.

The landlady parted with Elizabeth with tears in her eyes. She never saw her again. The next slavey proved, like many other slaveys, "not fit to be trusted." And, besides, the "decayed lady" was not sure that it would be quite genteel for her to go and visit her servant. If Her Ladyhood had not fallen into a state of decay, possibly she would have considered that on the part of those of high



degree nothing could have been more gracious than to care for the lowly.

And now, week after week, Elizabeth lay in a white bed in a hospital ward, and hardly noticed the days which drifted by.

Elizabeth's mind was too unformed to realize that in this world we are at school, and that our vicissitudes are various classes in each of which we are learning something. At the Varieties, at Poplar Court, at the factory, Elizabeth had been learning lessons in sympathy, in helpfulness, in depths of human need—lessons that were to serve to make her largely useful by and by. At the lodging-house Elizabeth had—in a hard way, it is true—learned lessons in order, in housework, in personal care, neatness, thoughtfulness. She had learned to keep house, to manage and to have her wits about her in an emergency. But in the hurrying life of the lodging-house she had had little time to cultivate her soul or her mind. She had grown a little, spiritually and mentally, chiefly by reading, but she needed just what she was now getting—a time to think, to learn, to meditate on what she learned.

Christ took his disciples “apart into a desert place to rest a while,” and so he takes his people apart into deserts still, and gives them “their vineyards from thence.” Those of us who are of busy natures are apt to think it only evil when the strength flags and energy fails and lightest tasks prove burdens ;



and then all burdens must be laid down, and we must "rest a while." But these are, perhaps, to be the very hours of our best growth. God sets us apart from the ceaseless toil of sowing and reaping for others that our own spiritual harvests may grow and be garnered.

Hospitals are among the splendid fruits of Christian civilization; atheism and the much-boasted heathenisms do not develop this fruit. As hospitals are the product of Christian civilization, so they are held dear in the hearts of Christian people. There are those who go to them with the word of the good Physician, the Balm of Gilead. They walk among the hospitals as their Master walked in the porches of Bethesda. Some of these found Elizabeth, and, lo! the time in the hospital became a gracious growing-season for body mind, and soul.

Where all this while was Richard? For a year after the day when he sold Elizabeth's hair Richard worked unremittingly at his books and in the barber-shop. He became so skillful in shaving, cutting, trimming, shampooing, hair-dressing, that Mr. Maypinn advanced his wages to six shillings a week and his dinners, and was in daily terror of losing him to some rival establishment.

Now, it happened that Richard had by this date been through a small work on physiology, and had been promoted to the study of a large book on *The Human Body*—a book which for four months he



had saved money to buy. This book enraptured him and filled all his thoughts. He studied it night and day, and refreshed his mind when pursuing his barber-work by repeating to himself the names of the various nerves, veins, muscles, or other portions of human anatomy which he wished permanently to impress upon his mind. One day he was shaving a tall, raw-boned young Scot, and as he vigorously lathered his subject he repeated, and, unconsciously, half aloud, the charming names of the facial muscles—"stylo-maxillary," "digastrices," "stylo-hyoid," "sterno-hyoid," "thyro-hyoid."

"What in thunder are you mumbling over my head at that rate for?" demanded the young man.

"Beg pardon, sir; I didn't know I was mumbling. I was saying to myself the names of your muscles—'occipital frontalis,' 'corrugatores supercilii,' 'orbicularis.'"

"Well, here *is* a go! How did you find them out?"

"I'm studying anatomy, sir. I mean to be a doctor some day, and I keep up in my books along with my barber-work."

"Come round here and let me get a look at you."

Richard came around, and he and his subject looked at each other. Richard was then past fifteen; he was big of body, had a large head, a rugged, dark, leonine face—a face full of power. Little could be seen of the face of his interlocutor, for



Richard had covered it from ear to ear and from brow to chin with foam until only a pair of keen blue eyes and a big mouth were visible among the waves of lather.

“You mean to be a doctor?”

“Yes; I’ve meant to this four years. And I’ve worked—oh how I’ve worked! But I’m getting on. The names are so long and so hard to remember that I have to keep going over them all the time; so I take them in with my work. I’m studying *The Human Body* now, and the muscles just fetch me. Have I got ’em all, did you say? No, sir; I haven’t. But I will, seeing there’s only four hundred of ’em. I begin at the top and say them all the time. Or I take a dig at the nerves. The inferior laryngeal is here, the glosso-pharyngeal is here, the superior laryngeal is hereabout—”

“Look out there with that razor! If you flourish it in that fashion, I’ll have you performing a tracheotomy on me, whether or no.”

“Oh, sir, do you think I could? I read about it. I go to an old book-stall when I have a little time, and I read. The dealer keeps medical books, sir. I read all about tracheotomy: it’s cutting in right here. I know I could do it, to get out some substance or let air in; I believe I could.”

Richard in his zeal was gesticulating wildly with his razor, and seemed ready to attempt the beautiful operation he was describing.



“Have done now,” said the student, “and take this lather and beard off my face at once. I suppose you will be saying more big words over it, as shaving seems such an ‘aid to memory.’”

“Of course, sir. Why not? Hear me on the bones of the head. Here I come down with the brush; I must touch you up again with a bit of lather, sir. Styloid, temporal, basi-hyal, thyro-hyal. Now I’m round on your chin: mandible. Up where you don’t prefer to grow a moustache: superior maxilla. A dab under your eye: malar; and when I get stuck for a name, I run to peep at my book. Now I take my razor in my hand and lay hold of you at the nasal. I notice, when I take up the hair-dressing, that your cranial structure inclines to be bald. Yes, sir, since only by being in a barber-shop I could get bread, I’ve made up my mind that the barber’s shop sha’n’t keep me out of the doctor’s office.”

Finally, Richard had the young man’s face shaved, washed, wiped, rubbed with bay-water, his hair dressed and trimmed, the check apron whisked from his shoulders, his collar and necktie put on:

“There you are, sir, fine!”

“Come here to the window,” said Andrew Garvin, “and let me have a look at you. You like this study?”

“Like it! Oh, sir, it’s beautiful! There never was anything else so beautiful. To think how, as



you may say, your backbone—I mean your vertebra—makes the pattern for every other part of you, and your spinal column grows up just like the stalk of a flower and blooms out into your skull—I should say your cranium. And how the spinal cord—otherwise the cerebro-spinal tube—grows straight up inside the bones and blossoms out into brain, which has a terrible hard name—en— Something.”

“Encephalon.”

“Thank you, sir! Yes, just as a lily might grow up and bloom. It’s beautiful! I’m glad, sir, I’ve been made, just to study about it.”

“How old are you, my lad?”

“Well on to sixteen, sir.”

“And how long have you been studying?”

“Four years ago I did not know my letters, but I seemed to wake up all at once, and since then nothing has been hard to me. I learn things as soon as I look at them. And I keep them, too. My brain has got a grip like my hand. Feel my biceps.”

“You *have* got a muscle. And how far are you with your studies?”

“I’ve had arithmetic, and Peter Auberle and I study algebra together. I’m at equations. Mr. Renè helps me, and we have English grammar, and Latin into Cæsar. There’s a Frenchman where we lodge, and I learned to read French, as I’ve



heard the French are grand doctors and have great books about medicine. I've gone through a geography and read a bit of history, and a *Chemistry*. I have read along in the *Chemistry*, but it is so hard I'm going over it a few times more. This shop gives me a good bit of time to study. That's why I stay, or perhaps I might get a place with more wages. I used to study all Sunday, but Mr. Renè has proved to me that Sunday study is bad for my brain and my body, so I rest; and Benje goes to Bible class with me, and we have a Bible and some books about it to read, and so we got on."

"This interests me," said Andrew Garvin. "I am poor myself, and am studying medicine. I have had to help myself pretty much, but I believe the self-helped men have the best of it in the long run. I am now in the medical school for a four years' course; I'm just ending my second year. I'll tell you: you need some tutors who know just how you ought to be drilled and will put you through for the King's College examinations. You know about King's College, over at the West End? It is entirely an examining college. You study where and as you can, and take your examinations there, and your degrees—if you can get them."

"I know! I know!" cried Richard, joyfully.

"Well, I'm in King's College medical school. And you should be tutored and pass the examinations and go through that medical school, do you see."



“I see! I see!” cried Richard.

“Well, good-bye to you. I’ll be here again with some of the other fellows perhaps. I take an interest in you. Dig away; you’ll make something by and by.”

“I’m glad,” said Auberle, when Richard told him, “that it is a poor man working his own way that’s taken to you, not one of those my lords at the West End. One of them would take you up for a curiosity or a pet, as he would a new breed of dog, and then drop you after he had just made you sick of working your own way in life, and scornful of your poor friends and tender of his idle class.”



## CHAPTER XI.

### *A STUDENT'S PARADISE.*

THE student Andrew Garvin came again, and brought with him two or three other students, who waited for Richard to shave them, and meanwhile discoursed.

“Mary Anne,” said Mr. Maypinn to his better half, “never did I have apprentice like this Richard, from first to last, and now, mark my words, I’m going to lose him. Keep your eye on them chaps from the medical college; they’re after him.”

“Well, Matthew Maypinn,” said Mistress Mary Anne, “you and I ain’t people to stand in the way of a boy’s bettering himself if he can. There’s few in this country can do it. ‘Born in the gutter, stay in the gutter,’ is the rule. It’s hard to rise, because there’s so many a-top of us. I have listened to Peter Auberle many’s a time, and he do speak gospel truth, though he don’t hold with the gospel.”

“There’s where he’s wrong,” said Mr. Maypinn, “and I’ve tackled him with it in the club. ‘Auberle,’ says I, ‘you’re complainin’ of our hard lot and of the inhumanity of man, and you turns your back



on the only system as recognizes the brotherhood of man. The gospel says, "All ye are brethren;" it says, "God made of one blood all the nations of the earth;" it says, "God is the Father of us all;" it teaches to "do to others as we would have others to do to us;" it tells us every man is our neighbor that we can help; it shows how God made us all of one dust, and sends us all to one grave, and has only one heaven for rich and poor.' "

"Maypinn, you do talk beautiful," sighed his wife. "I wisht I could go to club and hear you."

"Mary Anne, clubs ain't no place for women," said her lord, with dignity.

"Well, I know I could understand and speak just as well as any of them," said Mary Anne. "Don't I see how in this country, where the land goes down in one line from father to son and is kept for amusement instead of for bringing out bread, and where the poor man can't expect ever to be a landowner, and where he can't look to reach high office or ever to be considered, on account of being crowded down by the idea of aristocracy,—don't I know hope is gone, and the poor have nothing to look forward to but poverty and just have existence for theirselves and children, to hunger and rags and cold, father, son, grandson, and so on? When hope is gone, Maypinn, all is gone; and if you want to see a dull, hopeless, dispirited lot of people, just cast your eye around the Tower Hamlets and Bethnal



Green and the East End, and the North Side generally. Oh, I know, if I am a woman and can't go to no clubs. And I'm glad I've had no children to endure it, though most women has about sixteen, and says to me, 'It do look mighty unnateral, Mrs. Maypinn, as you hasn't any.' Howsomever, Maypinn, we won't stand in the way of Richard's betterment."

Meantime, the students were quizzing Richard.

"Give me a few bones of my head while you shampoo me," quoth one.

"Frontal, parietal, squamose, temporal, mastoid temporal, ali-sphenoid," said the boy, glibly, touching here and there the head which he was shampooing.

"Let's hear the fifth declension," cried one.

"Deal out a few exceptions under the rule for the accusative," said another.

"Have a try at the axioms," suggested another.

"He is a prodigy," said Andrew Garvin.

The word gave Richard a twinge. How he had searched for the Prodigy of the Varieties, lost as effectually as the Serpent-Charmer! He had gone twice to see Gran, but she knew nothing of either of the girls. That discouraged Richard, and Gran was so far off he went no more. If he had gone six months later, he would have heard that Elizabeth had been given one holiday in her two years' service, and had gone to see Gran. Gran was yet



in St. Bride's, hale and hearty and likely to see out her century. These mediæval almshouse charities of England seem really to have more true philanthropy and meeting of human need in them than half the modern benevolences.

"Now, see here!" said the students to Richard. "We'll take you in hand. You shall be coached to take your first examination at King's College next fall; we'll put you through King's College, if tutoring will do it, like a coach and six; you'll come live with us. There are four of us, and you shall be our man-of-all-work—"

"And maid-of-all-work," hinted another.

"In fact, the only servant we have," said Andrew Garvin. "Just now Mrs. Friller, under pretence of waiting upon us, keeps us waiting while she finishes jobs of sewing. She tolls our coal and potatoes, overdoes our steak and thins out our milk, and makes mistakes about the tea. You are to clean for us, cook for us, wait on our table after you have laid the meals, do our errands, polish our boots, be our factotum. We will board you, teach you, coach you for your examinations as fast as you can take them, cram you with knowledge, and let you have all the books you can use. Your wages will be four shillings a week, and no doubt you will work like a slave from daylight until midnight. You must do our washing—all but our shirts and collars."

"I can do it," cried Richard; "I'm strong. I



will!" To him it looked like nothing less than Utopia, this living with four medical students, having all the books he could use, hearing their discussions, being taught by them, able at any moment to lay a difficulty before his masters.

"We are poor and you'll have it hard," said Andrew Garvin, "but you will find it hard, at the best, to make your way as a doctor in the midst of competition and patronage. It is as well to get inured to hardships from the first; you'll make a tougher man. The Scripture says, 'Blessed is the man that hath borne the yoke in his youth.'"

"I don't believe," said Richard, with modest pride, "that many folks have had it harder than I have all my life."

"How much time will it take you to break up here?" asked Garvin. "The sooner you tackle your books under our supervision, the better. I'm in a hurry to see what I can make of you."

"I must give my master, Mr. Maypinn, a few days to get some one in my place," said Richard, "and I must see Auberle and Mr. Renè. And oh, there's Benje! Can I bring Benje?"

But the students were all against having a lad of less than ten at their lodgings: "They had no use for small kids."—"You'll never study if he's around."—"Couldn't find the room for him."—"Couldn't stand the noise and capers of a kid." They condemned Benje unseen. One and all felt



that the little brother would be a hindrance and a burden to the progress of Richard.

“Well, I must see about it,” said Richard. “I have taken care of Benje ever since before he couldn’t walk, and I mean to have him study and rise as I rise, and I must see what can be done with Benje before I know what I can do myself.”

After the students left, Mr. and Mrs. Maypinn heard their propositions.

“It will make a man of you,” said Mr. Maypinn. “So long as you mean to be a doctor and needs to go through colleges, why here’s a master-chance for you, and I call it a clear rendering of Providence. You go ’long, and I’ll take care of Benje.”

As soon as custom in the barber-shop so slackened that he could get away, off ran Richard to Auberle.

Auberle agreed with Mr. Maypinn that here was a good chance for Richard.

“It will not be a deserting of Benje,” said Auberle. “Benje is to live here with me, and I’ll instruct him in place of you. I’ll miss teaching of you the very worst kind, Richard. You can see the child every week, and he must pick up a bit of living for hisself. You did it at his age; and if you are going to college examinations, and such like, you must keep enough of your wage to go with a whole suit on your back. The best brains, Richard, wouldn’t get you on the examiners’ lists



if you went with rags on your back and toes poking out of your shoes."

"Thanks to old Jacob, my toes and Benje's have been always well kept in, except those dreadful months we lived in Poplar Court."

"As it turned out, I'm glad you did live there," said Auberle. "Now you know how part of the world does live; and if the time comes as you sleep in down, you'll know them as has equal flesh and blood lies on the rotting boards of dens with sewer-rats running round over them and nibbling at their toes. No matter how rich you may grow, unless you lose your memory you will remember that starvation and pain and rags and drunkenness riot in half this great city among people upon whom the door of Hope is shut, and, wherever you go, the bitter cry of Misery will be one of the notes that ring in your ears."

Auberle had a native eloquence, and he cultivated speaking in his club. His words and tones impressed Richard; he looked earnestly at the weaver:

"Auberle, don't speak as if I meant to grow away from them—these people I've been among. To me all the tired, hungry children will always be Benje asking 'Why?' all the poor girls will be Betty. I saw Betty the other day, Auberle; she looked very poor and worn out, and had a sickly little baby in her arms, and she said her husband



had had big losses and small gains of late, and she had lost work on account of not being strong enough to work steady since her baby came. Poor Betty! she's so thin and pale! And Elizabeth, Auberle: in the poor little girls trying to find work, and not able to, I'll see Elizabeth; and in others— Well, there will be the thought of the Charmer. When I shut my eyes, Auberle, I can see the Charmer looking like an angel when she found Benje and me in the snow, or when she lay back on the lounge and talked to Gran. The poor Charmer!"

What would Richard have said to see the Charmer at that minute sitting in an opera-box—a charmer all blue satin and swan's-down—with Mrs. Tillman at her side, very proud of the Charmer whom she called her daughter, and whose lowly origin she sedulously concealed?

Mrs. Tillman's lawyer said to her,

"Either legally adopt that girl, settle something on her in your will, provide for her or teach her a business. You are cruel to her. You make no provision for her future; you do not teach her to provide for herself. She is kept as the mere pet of your idleness, dependent on your bounty."

"Don't talk to me of wills and such grizzly things, and speak as if I were going to die!" cried Mrs. Tillman. "I'll live as long as Elsie does. Besides, I shall marry her to some rich man."

The lawyer shook his head:



“The rich man will begin to ask about her family and her fortune; and when he knows that she is a penniless girl once in a show, he will, like the priest and the Levite of the parable, pass by on the other side.”

“What about the priest and the Levite?” said Mrs. Tillman. “Perhaps, if they passed a pretty girl by, it was not for her want of fortune, but because their Church did not allow them to marry.”

The lawyer's little allusion had failed and this irritated him. He said testily,

“You are bringing up the girl neither for this world nor for the next. You are not seeing to it that she is assured of the clothes and the bread that she will need in this mortal state, and you are keeping her in a round of idle, silly amusements, whirling her from opera to theatre, from theatre to card-table, from that to the ball-room, and so on. It is nothing but dress, dance, read novels, flirt and fool from morning until night. The girl is a good girl, sensible, kind and frank; if she had a half a chance, she would be a really useful woman. The extreme you keep her in in May Fair is about as disastrous in its outcome as the Rag Fair you found her in. They are equally out of the road to heaven.”

“Oh, you horrid man! If you'd only go near the East End and take one look at the dreadful old ragged women—”

“And if *you'd* only go up to Madame Tussaud's



and see that wax of 'An Old Belle' talking to Voltaire, you'd see what gaudy, leering, unvenerable age women reared as you prefer come to. A godless old woman is—a horror!"

"That!" shrieked Mrs. Tillman, who remembered the figure. "Why, we never allow ourselves to look like that. We have new teeth made, to look like real."

"The inane vain selfishness is there, teeth or no teeth. If you look a little better in these days, thank the dentist," said the lawyer. "I tell you it is all wrong. You are starving mind and heart and soul; the East End devotes itself chiefly to starving the body. In each case the result is—wreck. Well, I've said my say. You are not doing a fair thing by this girl you have adopted."

But, while Elsie was thus the plaything of a great lady, Elizabeth was slavey for a "decayed lady" and Richard went to be factotum for four poor students. That first summer he worked so well at his books under his zealous tutors that when he went in the fall to take his examinations he entered as freshman on the rolls of King's College. That summer he had saved every penny of his earnings, so that he could be decently clad when he went to be examined, and great was his pride when he showed himself to Mr. and Mrs. Maypinn, Benje and Auberle. He was dressed in a new pepper-and-salt suit, a white bosom-shirt, collar and



cuffs, a new blue necktie and a new felt hat. Jacob made him a pair of shoes and gave him his blessing. Mrs. Mary Anne openly wept, and Auberle concealed his gratulation by raving against the West End.

Indeed, Richard—a stalwart fellow with eyes full of intelligence and a strong face refined by intellectual labor—was a lad good to look upon, and Benje inquired,

“Why didn’t Richard always have good clothes? Why don’t all the boys have good clothes? Why do so many boys Richard’s size stand about the streets, and be all dirt and all rags and toes out of their shoes, and have no hats, and get drunk? Why?”

“Because,” cried Auberle, angrily, “these lads are all wasted capital. The land makes small account of her sons. Britain is no Cornelia leading up her boys and saying, ‘These are my jewels.’ She says, ‘Go to the dogs; there are too many of you.’”

“Benje shall not be wasted capital,” said Mrs. Mary Anne.

In truth, Benje was not suffering. He lodged with Auberle, who taught him as he had taught Richard; but he found Benje slower, more dreamy, more poetic, more philosophic and preferring more history and geography and “nice reading.” Benje spent the days at the Maypinn barber-shop, and Mrs. Maypinn gave him his meals and did his washing and mending.



“He must pick up pennies here and there running errands, holding horses, and so on, to get his clothes,” said Auberle.

“His clothes won’t cost much,” said Mrs. Mary Anne. “I’ve always a bit of knitting in my hand, and I can keep him in stockings, and Jacob provides his shoes, and I can get him up most of his vests and trowsers out of Maypinn’s worn-outs.”

And then there was Mr. Renè. He was poor and daily denied himself for dozens of pensioners in the squalid hamlets where he labored, but he managed, by pinching himself a little more, to give Benje now a hat, and now a coat.

At the lodging-house the work of Richard was much like the work of Elizabeth. The students had shabbily furnished a sitting-room and two bedrooms. These Richard kept in order, blacked the shoes, ran the errands, did the buying, set tables and waited on them, ran to the door, and down in the basement cooked the meals and did the washing. In all these tasks he kept his books near him, and studied with all his might. To his regular studies for King’s College examinations he added continuous work on *The Human Body*. “You can’t know anatomy too well,” said his four mentors. Richard made his clothes-washing a help in his studies, as before-time he had made the barber-work a help. He washed socks and recited the bones of the foot—tarsus, metatarsus, astragalus, os calcis,



scaphoid, phalanges, hallux—and expounded unto himself relative positions and uses. He washed undershirts, and while he rubbed and wrung at sleeves he chanted the names of muscles of the arm and shoulders—trapezius, rhomboideus, levator-anguli, scapulæ, subclavius, biceps, brachiali anticus, triceps anconeus. He made the suds fly around a pair of drawers, and on he went—psoas, iliacus, pectineus, adductor longis, brevis, magnus, quadratus femoris. Well, it was as queer a washing-song as ever was sung. Sometimes Mistress Friller, who had the basement and kept the stairs clean (nominally) and made shirts, found a chance “to get a few reasonable words out o’ the chap.” She learned how he had once lived in No Thoroughfare, and she told him how a lovely yellow-headed girl in velvet and silk had come inquiring for Gran and Elizabeth, and how she had told her they were all dead of the fever.

“It was just as well,” said Richard, angrily. “None of us are dead, but she don’t deserve to see any of us. If ever I see her, I’ll give her a piece of my mind, so I will.”

For by this time Richard cherished hard thoughts of the Charmer, and concluded that she had run away from them as scorning and loathing the poverty she shared, and that she had cast herself away for her own vanity and folly.



## CHAPTER XII.

### *BETTY AND THE CHARMER.*

AND now the passing days had brought Richard to triumphant examinations for his second collegiate year, and Elizabeth to that white bed in the hospital, and Betty to be seventeen with a baby in her arms and a baby in its grave; and the Charmer still lived in splendor and was twenty years old, and no rich suitor had come to woo.

In all the circle of people where Mrs. Tillman spent her days in trying to kill time the person whom the Charmer charmed the most was a young doctor just trying to get into practice. He was seen now and then in the gay resorts where Mrs. Tillman took the lovely Charmer. He came because he had a great-aunt who said she "wanted to show him a little decent society sometimes." If it had not been that he saw the Charmer, no doubt he would soon have declined this society as unsuited to a poor and hard-working practitioner.

Mrs. Tillman by no means approved of the young doctor.

"Ferguson has no money, Elsie," she would say;



“he’ll never have any. He never boasts, and he is too charitable, and he runs to poor cases who can’t pay him a penny. Don’t have anything to do with him; there’ll a rich man come along some day. You’ve had enough of being poor. Wait, and you’ll ride in your carriage all the rest of your life.”

Elsie laughed. She knew well how hard it was to be poor, but she considered that there were circumstances in which she could be happy even without a carriage. For instance, if she had *some* money with which to do good, and could go back by times to the East End, and could help the poor and dying there, could give them sympathy, aid, work. But Mrs. Tillman would not allow her protégée even to mention such things, much less to do them.

There was a day when Mrs. Tillman’s carriage, rolling along Holborn, going from St. Paul’s Churchyard back to Belgravia, was stopped in a press of vehicles, and Elsie saw near the wheels a faded, thin, bent girl looking thirty, and yet also looking like the seventeen-year-old child that she was. Pale, miserably clad, hugging a babe under her poor shawl, a few flowers held up in her shriveled hand, she turned her hopeless eyes toward the Charmer. It was Betty.

Elsie had never heard of Betty, but her heart owned this helpless East-End sister. She reached for the few flowers, and gave Betty in their stead all the money which she had—a ten-shilling gold-piece.



Mrs. Tillman was never very liberal to her protégée in the way of money; it was seldom that Elsie had a pound. She sweetened this gift with a smile as the carriage rolled on.

Mrs. Tillman angrily tossed out the poor flowers:

“Elsie, why will you do so? If you want flowers, get them at a florist’s at the West End. Very likely these wretched things had fever or cholera or small-pox in them. Who knows what dens they came from?”

“I know,” said Elsie, sadly. *She remembered!*

The ten shillings seemed a godsend to poor Betty. She and Harry had such bad luck! Harry’s barrow had been knocked over by a runaway team, and his stock spoiled. The utter loss of a day’s stock is so much to a poor coster! And Harry had had lung-fever from being out wet day after day, and had been in hospital, and Betty and the baby had nearly starved flower-selling. And now Harry was back from hospital, but how could he refill his barrow? This gold-piece brought them hope again. The weather was better; the trade grew better. People wanted radishes and spring onions and rhubarb, and later they patronized berries and cherries, and other things that Harry cried. Harry was sober, and he was kind to Betty, as he had vowed he would be. The poor young pair clung together and loved each other, and tried to comfort each other in their dismal attic-room, where light and food



and fuel were insufficient, and where the yearly baby yearly faded before their eyes into the pauper baby's grave. It was better so, of course; what could the babies have lived for? As Benje would ask, "Why should they live to suffer, and to know only the sinning side of earth?" But Harry and Betty loved these poor little skeleton babies which Betty brought home from the lying-in hospital, and they grieved to see them die.

So another year went on after the day of the gold-piece; it was another baby now that whined in Betty's thin arms. By this time the Charmer was still unmarried, still very merry, with little reserves of sorrowful memories and yearnings for a chance to help where help was needed. And Richard surpassed himself and the wildest hopes of his friends by taking his sophomore and junior examinations in one year and doing well.

Now a word must be said about London—London, *the city*, the ancient corporation, the sacred circle of the Bank, the Exchange, Guildhall, the Mansion-House, Bow Church; London proper, with its six and twenty wards; London, where the street-car does not intrude upon the ancient monopoly of the omnibus.

London of banks, business and beggary is governed by a board of aldermen, and by a lord mayor chosen by that body out of themselves, generally on the principle of seniority; but the greater London



that surrounds this—the vast outlying parishes which, crystallized about London proper, make up that mighty capital, “the political, moral, physical, intellectual, artistic, literary, commercial and social centre of the world”—is, among other things, a very curious specimen of civic government. Those vast parishes which in their expansion about *the city* have coalesced and become one metropolis were suburban villages of mediæval times, each centred in its parish church or cathedral in days when parish priest and his clerks or bishop and his chapter were lords temporal as well as lords spiritual, and when the Church made and administered the laws of the community. It results from this that the government of each several parish is in the vestry of the parish, and great London has no unified, equalized, homologated system of city government. Taxation, appropriation, municipal laws, sanitary regulations and general administration of parish economy are not uniform throughout great London: each parish largely manages, makes or mars for itself; and thus, as in many other regards, London is the world’s epitome. The various parishes are the various nations of the world. Each one for itself makes its laws, and holds its boundaries, and rules its inhabitants, and maintains its courts, and chastises its offenders.

Now, parish limits are much like the boundaries of countries: they are lines passed over unawares; and a man may wander well into a parish before he



knows it. Also, the unlearned and ignorant who do not read the daily papers and cannot spend their time investigating and recording the changeful ways and whims of parishes may come into a parish and may transgress some of its laws all unconsciously, and a man may become a culprit while he proposes to be, and fully supposes that he is, a law-abiding citizen. Now, when one becomes a culprit, it is often very easy to proceed and be a criminal. There is in these affairs a momentum which carries the human creature whither he never intended to go.

It happens that there is a parish in London where a costermonger has been pronounced a nuisance and a vagabond. A man with a barrow, a hawker shrieking his wares, is an abomination in the nostrils of the vestry of this parish, and they cannot away with him. Now, this word "vestry," used of a London parish, refers rather to the present authority in municipal or parish temporalities than to the church officers administering for their church, and the vestryman in the United States has neither the office, duties, position, powers nor difficulties of the member of a London parish vestry.

This parish just referred to had made new laws for itself in regard to barrows and their owners. Other parishes regarded the coster as a convenience, a necessity, an annoyance to be endured with urbanity; this parish declared him a nuisance to be abated. Across the confines of this parish, on a raw Novem-



ber Saturday night, Harry wheeled his barrow and cried with might and main cauliflower and Brussels sprouts, cabbages and turnips. That barrow sold out, Harry would take home a bit of beef and one of his cabbages, a loaf, a little bag of coals, an ounce of tea and some sugar for Betty, who was poorly; and he might perhaps indulge in a couple of yards of warm flannel to make the baby more comfortable. Harry had been lucky that day: he had sold out one barrow nearer home, and he had paid his rent, and he and Betty had had a pea-soup dinner at a stall.

But just as Harry was dispensing cabbages, along came somebody clothed in a little brief authority and bade him begone; he should not sell from a barrow in that street, nor yet in that parish. At this interference Harry's blood rose up. To what end had he paid a heavy price for a coster's license if he must be restrained in the privilege of selling? He had never heard the like before. Law was surely on his side, thought poor Harry; so he remarked that the intermeddler might go about his business, and he lifted a lusty shout of "Cab-aaages! Cab-aaages!" In another minute his enemy caught hold of his barrow, whirled it toward the middle of the street and overturned it, and under the feet of the crowding teams rolled and were ruined Harry's vegetables.

Pell mell sprang the bystanders into the *mêlée*, some



for the parish, some for Harry. Boys rescued turnips and cauliflower from the roadway and fled amain. People cried, "Shame on the parish!" Others cried, "Down with the coster!" Over went the barrow, and was speedily broken to kindling-wood; over went two parish officers under the fists of the raging Harry. Then was Harry overpowered by numbers and carried off to prison, and all night long, cold and hungry, Betty and the baby cried for him. It was Sunday night before Betty heard what had become of him.

Early on Monday morning poor Betty went to court, and her Harry, dazed and utterly overwhelmed at the wreck of all his fortunes, was brought up and sentenced to a month's imprisonment for assaulting officials. Harry and Betty were not allowed even to say "Good-bye" to each other. This costermonger was regarded as such a very dangerous fellow! The wretched pair could only look their anguish at each other across the court-room, and Betty, with a flood of tears, held up her miserable little baby.

Before the month of imprisonment was out, some other prisoner who was brought in informed Harry that Betty was in a wretched state of poverty, and that the baby was going to die. Harry, at this, sat down and hid his face, and great sobs shook his frame. He exclaimed against the cruelty of laws which had defrauded him of his right to labor for his



family. A jailer coming by with angry and taunting words was told the case of Harry's child, but, being a brutal man with no consideration for others, retorted that "it had better die; the world was well rid of such brats."

Harry, blind with rage and heart-pain, hit out with the first thing that came to his hand; it chanced to be a big iron bolt, and the jailer fell senseless with a broken skull. He lay at the point of death for a month. Harry was then tried for "assault with intent to kill," and was given three years in the penitentiary—a very merciful sentence, they told him!

When Betty, her child perishing with weakness, and herself gaunt with hunger and now shelterless on the verge of winter—for her landlord had ejected her for rent—heard this, her last feeble powers of mental and physical resistance gave way. Yet a day or two, fed on scant crumbs of the charity of those nearly as poor as herself, she wandered about the Tower Hamlets, moaning for her "'Arry." Then, as the gray, cold, misty night fell and her little one wailed plaintively against her empty breast, under her scanty shawl, Betty went with staggering, almost unconscious steps down to the wide, cold, muddy stream that lapped and throbbed and murmured under the beautiful bridges, among the boats and ships, against the strong embankments of the city that offered to her no hope and no home. For Betty



and her little one there was neither bread nor shelter in the world of London.

It was in these cold November days, when bread was dear and work was scarce—so scarce that thousands of workingmen were unemployed and wages were low, while rents and fuel were unusually high—that riots rose in London. There were mobs. Hungry, ragged and dirty mobs they were, almost preternaturally quiet, and asking only for labor and for bread. They marched up and down the streets, gathered in the squares, eyed the emblazoned coaches, the magnificently decorated club-houses, the shops crowded with articles of luxury and ornament, the splendid mansions of the rich. No violence was attempted. The Saxon heart is slow to rouse to iconoclastic outrages; the oppressed and indignant spirit burns and writhes, and years or generations pass before the hand of fury is lifted against the temples of folly and selfish pride. And by his patient waiting, by being strong to suffer, the Saxon commoner arrives betimes at a bloodless conquest and receives the victor—perhaps the martyr—crown of him who endureth.

One day, as such a crowd of brooding discontent, yet restrained by the inborn regard for honesty and order, surged through the Strand, Richard, coming down that way, interested, sympathizing, recognizing some faces, entered the throng and marched with them, listening to the low-voiced complaints on every



side—complaints of loss of work, ejections for rent, homelessness, sickness, enforced separation of destitute families.

Richard was now shot up to his full height—a great broad-shouldered, large-headed, keen-faced fellow. As he moved on with his East-End brethren, wondering how with justice to all England's problem of poverty was ever to be solved, he saw that an open landau had come from Waterloo Bridge and was entangled in the throng, so that it moved slowly, with the mass of malcontents pressing it on every side. On the box of this carriage sat coachman and footman in livery. On the plush cushions sat, alone, a young and lovely woman in a white hat with a white plume, a white fur coat, a fluff of yellow hair, blue eyes that looked with gentle interest on the rough faces all about her. AFTER LONG DAYS, THE CHARMER!

Richard was a youth of strong purposes and of fixed opinions; he had nourished wrath as well as sorrow for the Charmer. He sprang with one bound upon the steps of the landau. He held fast by the door, and, bending over it, to the astonished girl poured forth hot words of remonstrant anger:

“I have found you at last! You ran away from us who loved and respected you; you ran away from hard but honest work; you have put to shame the good old Gran and poor little Elizabeth, who had only you for sister and mother and friend! Don't



you know me? I am Richard! I thought you were an angel of light; I never dreamed you could be tempted away to choose evil rather than good, to disgrace—”

“Richard, Richard! It *is* Richard! Stop! You shall not speak so. How dare you think evil of me? I have looked for you all; I did not desert you. When I found that Gran and dear little Elizabeth were dead—”

“They’re not dead. You may want to believe it for an excuse. They are not dead.”

“Richard! Then where is my Elizabeth? Quick!”

“I don’t know, and I would not tell you if I knew.”

But by this time a couple of mounted police, seeing one of the marchers upon the steps of a carriage, leaning over the door and soundly rating a lovely young lady, had pushed their way to the rescue. They seized Richard, one by each shoulder, and dragged him upon the ground.

At that instant the mob had reached Charing Cross, and the width of the way gave the terrified coachman room to hasten his speed. He whipped up Mrs. Tillman’s grays, and Elsie, in vain looking back for Richard, was whirled toward the safer precincts of Belgravia.

Richard, thrown upon the ground, was somewhat bruised before he recovered his feet. Then the crowd opened for him, and, glad to escape arrest, he



hastened down to the Thames Embankment, and so eastward, until he reached London Bridge. His heart was still hot with anger, suspicion and ancient memories roused by the apparition of the Charmer. He went out upon London Bridge and stood in one of the little niches looking down into the Thames. He was near the Middlesex shore, and as he looked at the swiftly out-running tide suddenly he seemed dimly to see something under the water. The fast-receding stream—traitor to that which in it had sought shelter and hiding—slipped away, and through the faithless river was seen a something lying in the ooze of the bank. Away, away fell the muddy veil of the waters, hurrying toward the sea, and through them came out clearly a woman's prostrate form. A tangle of wet hair which lit with a ruddy gleam as the afternoon sun smote it, a ghastly face with open eyes, a ragged gown which quivered as the unkindly current ebbed away, slender feet crossed upon the black slime, the shoes having been lost from them while this figure had tossed and rolled, the sport of the flood in death, as of misfortune in life; something clutched fast by lean arms to a bosom taking the first calm rest of its nineteen years.

Others also had seen this bit of London wreckage; many leaned over the parapet. A boat of the river-police rowed fast toward the spot. But one of the river "birds o' prey" rowed faster still, and



cut in before the more ponderous police-boat, and laid hands on the body, now quite uncovered by the water and lying on its bed of black mud.

“I found it! The pay’s due me—double pay. Here’s two of ’em. There’s a baby in her arms, held fast through it all, poor thing! Two! I found two.”

But Richard had run down in long leaps from the bridge and was ankle-deep in the mud now, and great tears were rolling over his face as he recognized in this poor dead creature the hungry, patient, self-sacrificing guest of his childhood with whom his bread had been shared—the uncomplaining little slave of ill-paid toil, the premature wife and woman, the girl denied of all things which girl-hearts crave, the daughter of the East End who had known neither childhood nor girlhood, heiress of nineteen years of cold, toil, pain, famine, sorrow, disappointment, homelessness, hopelessness—Betty!

Is this the executorship of the Church for the wards it holds for the Christ?



## CHAPTER XIII.

### *THROUGH EVIL DAYS.*

WHEN Richard was nineteen, he had taken all his examinations in the course in arts, and had entered the medical school connected with King's College. This school has associated with it the King's College Hospital, in Portugal street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, where twenty-one thousand poor patients yearly receive assistance.

No student among the many who thronged the lecture-rooms of the school and the wards of the hospital was more enthusiastic in study than Richard, none was better prepared to receive instruction in medicine, none was more desperately poor, none lived in greater daily straits.

About the time when Richard entered upon his medical course his attention was especially devoted to the diseases of the eye. Every leisure moment which he had he spent in reading treatises on the eye and the works of great oculists. For at this time Richard was again living with Auberle, and Auberle was becoming blind.

One by one the four students who were Richard's first patrons had completed their scholastic studies



and received their degree, and all had gone their several ways. Andrew Garvin was practicing in Edinburgh, another was studying in Germany, a third was a medical missionary, a fourth had sought fortune in Australia. Two others who had taken in the lodging-house the places of the first departures had also gone from London—one to Leeds, and one to Birmingham. Thus the students' club which Richard served was broken up, and Richard went back to the room in Bethnal Green where lived Auberle and Benje. He had not been there long when he perceived that a cloud was coming over Auberle's sight. As darkness thickened about the weaver, and as the loom which poor trade had so often kept idle became idle altogether, he gave up the room where he had lived so long, and with the boys moved into the densely-crowded district near Drury Lane. There he and the brothers shared an attic, and Auberle became one of the street-venders of toys, odd notions and fantastic trifles sold for a penny or two along the sidewalks of Cheapside, Holborn and Oxford streets and the Strand. Partly to increase the small gains which would not suffice to keep him from semi-starvation, and partly to relieve the intense feeling of degradation which the weaver experienced at becoming a peddler of small wares, Richard proposed that he, Auberle and Benje should open a night-school, instructing pupils of any age at from one to threepence weekly. The attic



was large, and it was soon filled with evening pupils. Parents, finding that for the penny or twopence weekly required by the board school their children were equally well taught and had the advantage of being able to work during the day and earn something, or could take care of the family babies while the mother went out washing, charring or flower-selling, sent their boys to the night-school instead of the board school. A number of 'prentice-lads and young workmen, finding that Richard could give instruction in French, book-keeping, chemistry, history, and other advanced branches, came to be his pupils.

Although very nearly blind, Auberle could teach reading and arithmetic, and so from four in the afternoon until ten at night the attic had more or fewer pupils. Earlier in the day Benje was errand-boy for a green-grocer, and Richard supplemented his small gains from the night-school by keeping the books for various little shops in Drury Lane and Fetter Lane.

Between Richard and Mr. Renè, Benje's education went on; for Benje had become dear as a son to Mr. Renè's soul. With instant care the minister had tried to guard the boy from the influence of Auberle's unfaith, and the task had not been a difficult one. Auberle had found that his creed of negations could not satisfy Benje's perpetual "Why?" Mere denial fell far short of vast regions where



Benje divined Eternal Cause, and other regions equally vast where his prescient soul discerned immanent and perpetual Consequence.

“It is easy to say things are not so, Auberle,” Benje would say. “It only needs about two letters to deny. Any fool could get out of every question, it seems to me, by denying everything and saying that nothing has any reason. It takes wise people to tell us why. Mr. Renè says we can often find out ‘how,’ ‘why’ almost never, and to me people seem wisest who know enough to know that they cannot know everything—that the bigness of creation is so very big that there must be in it a great deal that they cannot understand, and that only some one who made everything knows all about everything. And He lets us know as much of what he has made and done as we can hold; and some of us can hold more, and some can hold less. Richard and Mr. Renè can hold a great deal, and Mrs. Maypinn can hold only a little. And as we grow we can hold more ideas; and if we keep growing for ever, we shall come to hold a great deal.”

“If you say ‘for ever,’” said Auberle, “you give us a fair chance of knowing everything there is as we go on.”

“Not quite, Auberle,” said Benje, “for, you know, God has had that part of for ever that lies behind us to be doing and making wonders in, and



all the for ever that lies in front of us will be going on the same. I read a verse that 'we cannot by searching find out God; we cannot find out the Almighty to perfection.' Some people find this thought of God such a weight to them that they try to get rid of it by saying that there is no God at all. But that don't make it so. And, though you say it, Auberle, I believe—deep down in your heart—you feel sure that what you say isn't so."

"I believe, Benje," said Auberle, uneasily, "that there is even more in your head than in Richard's. Sometimes you seem to have very large thoughts for a boy of your age."

"I don't ever expect to come up to Richard," said Benje, "but the things I like to study about and think about are wide and have God in them. I've talked to Mr. Renè, and— We don't know how I'll manage it, but I want to go through college, and then up into Scotland to a great school where they study about God. 'Theology,' they call it—the study of God."

"How can you study God—if there is a God?" said Auberle.

"We can study God as he has shown himself, Mr. Renè says, and he has shown himself in what he has made and what he has said. You have studied with Richard some of the things he has made, and you yourself have said they were so curious, and fitted together so well, that there must



be a Maker for them. What he has said is in the Bible. You've never given the Bible a fair chance with you, Auberle, but, now that you can't see to read other books, I want you to let me read some of that to you every day, and just hear it fair and honest as you hear other things."

And so in the daily-increasing loneliness of his daily-increasing darkness Auberle listened to Benje's reading, and, being of a thoughtful mind, he pondered these things in his heart. And, while the light of the sun in heaven shone ever less clearly upon his darkening retina, the light of the Sun of righteousness began to send from far off a faint ray into his heart, as the first tremulous, uncertain beam of dawning comes through the mists and clouds exhaled from and enwrapping our lower world.

"I don't know but it's rather good reading to think of," said Auberle to Benje.

"Mrs. Maypinn says it is," said Benje. "She says without it she could hardly get along since Mr. Maypinn fell dead and she had to sell out the shop and be so poor, and go and live in one room, doing sewing and knitting. If it wasn't for what she reads in the Bible, she says, she'd go wild. I told her a verse Mr. Renè has pasted in the cover of his Bible:

'A comfortable book for those that mourn,  
And good to raise the courage of the poor;



It lifts the veil, and shows, beyond the bourne,  
Our Elder Brother in his home secure,  
Which, for us pitiful, he died to win,  
Repeating, "Come, ye blessed! enter in." "

"Mrs. Maypinn and I has hard times of it," said Auberle, picking up his cane and his tray of penny toys, and preparing to set forth for Tottenham Court Road. "We both would be worse off if we hadn't you, Benje;" and Auberle, as he went down the steep, narrow stairs, kept his hand on the shoulder of the thirteen-year-old lad. Just as he listened always for Benje's returning steps and sweet, clear voice, Mrs. Maypinn listened for him to come, often with Richard, but sometimes alone, for his Sunday afternoon visit to her lonely room.

About midwinter of that first year at the medical school, Richard had made such friends with his instructors that he ventured to ask one skilled as an oculist to allow him to bring Auberle to him to have his eyes examined. The surgeon offered to get Auberle into the ophthalmic hospital, and advised his going there for a few months. Thus Richard and Benje were left alone, much as they had been when Gran died, only they now had Mr. Renè.

But presently Mr. Renè was gone from them. Mr. Renè's only brother had been long in Australia, and was at last returning to England. On the ship he was taken very ill, and the doctor advised that he should go at once to the South of France; he



went, taking Mr. Renè with him. Much as Mr. Renè was pained at the thought of leaving those poor people among whom for years he had toiled and spent his little all, and who, except for him, had no comforter, he felt that it was now his duty to go and attend upon this his only relative, who was very ill, and who seemed also poor and unable to secure good hired service.

When Mr. Renè had left England, Richard and Benje, busy as they were with study and work—for Richard was a very vigorous tutor to Benje—still found some hours to miss their vanished friends.

“Don’t you wish we could find the Charmer and Elizabeth?” said Benje to Richard one night.

“I don’t ever want to see the Charmer or hear of her again,” said Richard, angrily.

“But dear little Elizabeth? Don’t you remember Poplar Court, Richard?”

Yes, Richard remembered. He wished much to find Elizabeth. He had paid another of his far-between visits to Gran, and had heard of that call which Elizabeth had made when the “decayed lady” gave her that single holiday. Where Elizabeth lived Gran could not tell, but Elizabeth had said she would come back. After that Richard looked much for Elizabeth as he went about the streets. During a year he went regularly each month to see Gran and to inquire if Elizabeth had returned. But no; Gran had seen and heard no more of the



Prodigy. As we know, she had no more holidays, and then she went to the hospital.

By the end of a year Richard grew tired of going to Gran and of hearing that monotonous "No news." He told himself that he had no time for such long excursions, no pennies for car- or omnibus-fare, and Gran was content and comfortable and did not need him.

Auberle was gone, Mr. Renè was gone, and now winter was gone; and then everything else went—but misery. Benje was taken sick. He was very sick. Typhoid fever declared itself in a severe form. Richard knew his duty well enough to banish all the pupils from the attic where Benje lay scorching, tossing, raving, in fever. Both love and knowledge conspired to make Richard a good nurse. The dispensary doctor was skillful, and from him Richard could get most of his medicines. But all his little income was gone except some odd sixpences for making up a few books as he watched by Benje's bed.

The spring days were raw and cold. Richard must have fuel, and he must have oil to keep a light all night. Also he must have soap, so that in the narrow hall he could wash changes of clothes and sheets for Benje. And he needed food for himself in his heavy work as nurse, and fruit, ice and milk and beef for beef-tea for this dear sick Benje.

And oh how near down to death went the be-



loved Benje ! There were hours when Richard felt as if each moment would snatch from him the little brother whom he had loved and nursed and cared for since Benje was a tiny baby unable to walk and Richard was a little faithful nurse staggering about under that baby's weight. Neither of them had ever known anything of home or of parents or relatives except their dishonorable Gran so unlike the Charmer's—their Gran who lay in their attic and drank gin.

There were days and weeks of this watching, nursing, fearing, hoping, praying, before danger was passed ; and then Benje was such a white skeleton of a boy, scarcely conscious, weak as a new-born babe and needing so much delicate nourishment.

“Feed him ! feed him !” said the dispensary doctor. “Fine bread, chicken-soup, jellies. Nourish him ! That is all that will bring him round.”

So the doctor came no more—he had not come very often at best—and he did not inquire where Richard would get the food needed for Benje.

Richard looked about the attic and asked himself, and had no answer ready. He could not bring back the pupils, for poor Benje was so weak that the least noise in the room threw him into a faint or a high fever and threatened him with a relapse. Richard had sold everything from the room except the bed on which Benje lay, the bedclothes, a chair, a little table and three or four dishes. These be-



longed to Auberle, and no poverty had ever forced him to part with the three pieces of furniture: they had been the property of the poor girl whom he had loved.

These things, then, our Richard could not sell, and yet Benje must be fed. Poor Benje! he did not know that, as he had a roll and a penny pat of butter, or a penny glass of milk and an egg that cost three halfpence, he was living on Richard's beloved, needed, hardly-earned books.

Benje ate up all the books; he got better. And Richard earned his own food by any hard jobs he could pick up in Drury Lane, and still Benje got better, and had chicken and chop and steak and baked potato. Being scarcely fourteen, and ill at that, and hungry, and in the *dolce far niente* of convalescence, he did not realize that in these luxuries Richard's coat, shirts, shoes, hat—all Richard's clothes—vanished, until Richard possessed for worldly all nothing but a faded flannel shirt and a pair of ragged trousers. He paid the rent by teaching three or four lads evenings now, but spring was passing, and former pupils were otherwise occupied in work or pleasure in the long mild evenings.

It was in these days of watching by Benje that Richard learned to pray. All human friends had failed him; he had failed to himself so far as potency to help was concerned. That dear profession which had seemed to him to hold in its might the



keys of life and death had proved feeble. The terrible loneliness of a life bereaved of Benje had risen up before him. In those hours of agony all that Mr. Renè had taught him, all that he had been learning from the Bible and from Christian men with whom he had been brought into contact, suddenly crystallized about the idea of the willing and consoling Christ—the Brother born for adversity. Into the solitude and anguish of his spirit fell a voice: “Come unto me.” Richard did not need to say, “Who art thou?” It came to him clearly as to Saul on the road to Damascus that this was the Son of the Blessed.

What a wonder all at once to speak out in the darkness and silence, and to know that his words entered a listening ear! What a wonder, there in the dark places of the earth, to have assured audience with Heaven! What a wonder to be able to spread all his wants, his fears for Benje, his needs, his great longing for the boy’s recovery, before God! What a wonder of wonders to know assuredly that his voice had entered into the ear of the Most High and touched the heart of infinite Pity, and that some subtle chain of communication had been found between Heaven and earth and there had been *answer*! There had been no miracle—he had not asked nor expected miracle—but the way of death had become the way of life; the forces of Nature, disintegrating in Benje, were reintegrating. No raven had been



sent to feed them, no hand had reached out of heaven, but they had been fed. And now all seemed gone but what was best of all, the power of God; and Richard was waiting.

Of course, in all these weeks, Richard had not been at his classes, and his professors had missed him. At last one of them found out where he lived, and came to see him. Benje was propped up in the one chair, was wrapped in the one quilt and was sucking an orange. Richard, sitting on the floor by the window, was teaching two lads arithmetic, and had between his knees a small boy who was learning to read. He rose and flushed when his professor came in, and he offered him a seat on the side of the bed. Then came questions as to his absence from lectures and a very succinct and clear account of Benje's case.

"At least, I've learned how to nurse a case of typhoid fever," said Richard.

Meanwhile, the keen eyes of the professor traversed the poverty of the attic, the half-clad, lean form of Richard:

"Well, now you can leave the boy, and you are losing a great deal. You will hardly make up these lectures if you stay out much longer."

Richard grew crimson. He could not go back to his classes barefooted and coatless and hatless, with ragged trousers and a shrunken, faded shirt. He hesitated.



At last Benje understood.

“Richard,” he said, “I want some water. Get me some water. Go clear to the corner, won’t you, to the drinking-fountain? I’m so thirsty and so warm, Richard!”

When Richard was gone, Benje broke forth:

“Oh, I didn’t know till now, but now I see. Don’t you see, sir? I have had so many things! He is so good to me! And I did not know! But I’ve eaten up all his books, and all his clothes and his shoes, and all his things.”

“You are quite a cormorant,” said the professor; and he laughed.

Then, when the cup of water was brought,

“Richard, where are the pawn-tickets for your books?”

Richard’s face glowed with shame as he took the tickets from a paper box on the shelf.

“Do not be ashamed,” said his professor; “I am proud of these tickets. Let us shake hands. To-morrow I expect to see you in the lecture-rooms.”

Away went the professor, and Richard recommenced teaching two big lads arithmetic and a little lad reading.

Then, shortly, up stairs came the pawnbroker’s boy with an armful of Richard’s books. Soon after him came a lad with a sack of coal and half a peck of potatoes; next came the grocer’s clerk with a



basket filled with bread, cheese, jam, tea, sugar, butter, ham. But even yet the procession of "Greeks bearing gifts" had not closed. Here came a pair of shoes, a bundle with socks and shirts, and then a tailor's 'prentice with a suit of clothes and a hat, and with the advice to "come change 'em if they don't fit."

By this time lessons were impossible, and the pupils were each treated to a roll and jam, and were dismissed.

"Oh," cried Benje, "I'm so glad I'm not dead! A little bit ago I thought it was a pity I'd stayed alive; now I'm glad I'm here. Richard, isn't your professor a good man!"

Yes, Richard had known the professor's reputation of old: he lived only to do good. Devoted to his teaching, liberal in practicing among those too poor to pay, he lived plainly, almost solitary, and gave the major part of his moderate income in charity.

A week later the professor came back to see the brothers:

"This little chap needs to go into the country. There's the card of a good widow who will mother him for a month; take him down there to-morrow, and be back Monday. After the month we will think of something else for him. Richard, I want you for my assistant. There's a little room off my office where you can put your bed, table, chair and



books. You can attend to my office while I am out, and you will learn as much from me outside the lecture-rooms as you learn in the classes, and so make double acquisitions. I'll give you your living, and six shillings a week at first."

Monday evening found Richard snugly established in the doctor's office, getting paid for using such an opportunity as many would have given a high premium to share.

Richard hastened to see Auberle and tell him of his good fortune. Almost total darkness had fallen over Auberle's vision.

"They tell me that in two or three years there may possibly be help for me in an operation," said Auberle; "I'll look to you to perform it, Richard. Study the eye. It seems to me that there are more blind and more sore-eyed people—especially poor children—in London than in any other civilized city in the world. Like Benje, I ask, 'Why?'"

"And I answer," said Richard, "that there are elderly blind people whose eyes were deliberately put out in their childhood that they might be better and more successful beggars. There are many women and children whose eyes have been destroyed by blows, for there is little protection in England for women and children from the brutality of drunken or ugly husbands and fathers. And then the foggy air, the damp, ill-ventilated, overcrowded living-rooms, dens—not homes—poor food, too lit-



tle fire, constant dirt, faces and eyes unwashed for weeks,—these are the causes of the prevalence of diseases of the eye.”

Could Richard weary of the study of that pellucid chamber, the microcosm of the visible creation? As years went by, more and more reverently, yet with more and more serene courage, would he enter with knowledge and experience that wonderful crystal tabernacle wherein is comprehended and abbreviated the architecture of the universe. Pursuing these mysteries feebly and afar off, but sincerely, he followed Him after whom the son of Bartimeus cried entreating for the divine gift of sight.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### *THE FAVORS OF FORTUNE.*

WHAT should he do with Benje when the month in the country had passed and Benje was again strong and well? Richard foolishly lay awake at night discussing this question. We mortals often waste our forces wondering how we shall meet emergencies which never occur, and how we shall provide where Heaven has already richly provided.

Mr. Renè came back. Through Auberle he learned Richard's address; and when Richard was busy with his books in the office of his good patron, in came Mr. Renè.

"My brother is dead," said Mr. Renè. "I supposed that he was very poor, but it seems that he had considerable property, and he left it all to me. I shall live among my destitute people just the same. Now I can carry out some plans for them—plans of cheaper and better homes, plans of a cheerful meeting-place for evenings which shall rival the public-house. And plans for Benje: I want Benje." Then, seeing Richard's look of



anguish and consternation: "Not to take him away from you, Richard; I only want to provide for him, to send him through college and his course in theology. I cannot use better for my Master some of the wealth of which he has made me steward than by equipping Benje for his life's work. Let us share Benje."

So suddenly wide horizons opened for Benje.

"I think," said Mr. Renè, "we ought to find out what is your surname. You have stood heretofore on college-rolls as Richards; let us see if Jacob knows anything more about you."

But Jacob knew nothing:

"The old woman told me her name, but I never laid it in mind. She was a bad old 'un, and I never considered that her name was yours or that you boys belonged to her. There was something wrong about it that I couldn't get to the bottom of. She got drunk, but she never talked, drunk or sober. You, Richard, was less than seven, I should say, and Benje couldn't stand alone, and you had better clothes and better ways and better books than the children down in the Hamlets. The old woman had a store of money; I don't know how much. It was gone—just—when she went. And she had made some kind of an oath about only drinking one bottle of gin a day. Limiting herself like that was, I think, the only thing of which the old sinner ever repented. No, Richard, I can't



tell you anything about your name; you'll have to make a name."

"Very well," said Richard; "then I'll be Richard Richards till the end of the chapter, and my brother shall be Benjamin Richards. I'm glad it is likely that I never had any kinship to that terrible old woman."

"It is evident to me that you and Benje came of some stock accustomed for more or less generations to study," said Mr. Renè, "for study is easy to you both, and does not strain your physical constitution. There is a vast difference in the way in which intellectual application affects those who come of families unaccustomed to mental labor."

"I remember," said Richard, "that when the Charmer used to address her cousin as 'Elizabeth Allen' I always wished I could be called 'Richard'—something. I wonder shall I never find Elizabeth Allen?"

Where, indeed, was Elizabeth Allen? Eight months she remained in the hospital, becoming the especial favorite of physicians and nurses. For the last two months she shared the private room of one of the nurses, and during all the period she spent a great part of her time in reading and received the particular care of a lovely lady who visited the hospital weekly.

These eight months made a great change in Elizabeth. Mrs. Maypinn would not now have



described her as "a tallish girl not a bit pretty:" she would have said she was "a tall girl and very pretty." Her hands and her complexion, which had been roughened in the days of her lodging-house servitude, became soft and fine as they had naturally been; her hair, sold for Agnes's sake, had now grown again, a superb length of wavy, burnished gold; a peaceful, tranquil expression smoothed out the anxious lines and curves traced by the Varieties and Poplar Court. Careful observance of all the best that she had seen had refined her manners and her expression.

As the time drew near for her to leave this shelter which had proved so fortunate for her Elizabeth wasted some anxieties for herself, as Richard had wasted some anxieties for Benje. What should she do now?

But God made for her

"A way no more expected  
Than when his sheep  
Passed through the deep,  
By crystal walls protected."

"What do you wish to do now, Elizabeth?" asked the lady-visitor who had for eight months befriended her.

"I do not know what I *can* do," said Elizabeth, "but I know what I would *like* to do. More than anything I should like to be a nurse. I must make



my living, and it seems to me that I would like to nurse sick people, especially sick little children."

"Very good," said the lady; "I will put you into a training-school for nurses. How old are you, Elizabeth?"

"Almost seventeen."

"You shall have three years' training as a nurse."

So followed for Elizabeth three beautiful years when, in a quiet, well-appointed little hospital, she was taught by certain gracious and consecrated women and venerable physicians the art of nursing the sick. She learned to soothe the body and calm the mind, to comfort, to encourage, to enliven, to open the gates of health, and to show the promises that gild the gates of death.

"Like faith or peace in dark affliction's place,  
She smoothed the furrows on the front of care,  
Lit with the glory of a smiling face  
The gloomy dens and caverns of despair,

"And, blest as hope, sent forth her kindly hand,  
Bearing its gracious gifts from door to door,  
Till like a ray of light across the land  
Her heart's large love went brightening more and more."

When Elizabeth's three years of training were finished and she was ready to begin work, the first place to which she was called was the home of the lady who had befriended her. In one of the prettiest suburbs of London this lady was fading away



in a slow consumption, and for two years Elizabeth was her constant attendant. She sat with her, nursed her, read to her, was instructed by her, was the almoner of her charities, and became more like a sister or a dear friend than a hired nurse. Then for two years longer Elizabeth remained in this family, nursing the aged mother of her benefactress, and it was at her death, when Elizabeth was twenty-four years old, that she entered upon wide duties. Her friend had established a fund for the support of a nurse in the crowded neighborhood of Portugal street, and Elizabeth was there the first nurse.

Elizabeth took two sunny, neatly-furnished little rooms overlooking Lincoln's Inn Fields, and was ready day and night to go her rounds, not only among the chronically destitute, but among those other, and even more-to-be-compassionated, poor who have known better days, and who find a terrible shrinking sense of humiliation added to the keenness of poverty. She sometimes wondered, as she went her rounds, whether she should ever come upon her beloved cousin Elsie. Remembering the sudden fashion of the Charmer's disappearance, Elizabeth felt that only death or greater evil could have been the Charmer's fate.

And since that day when the mistaken and indignant Richard assailed her in her carriage with reproaches the Charmer had seen many changes in her affairs. Mrs. Tillman, who had insisted that



she should live as long as her adopted daughter did, died suddenly. Those women who do nothing but pursue fashion and kill time generally manage to wear themselves out as soon as, or sooner than, any of their sister-women who are overburdened with honest work.

Having eschewed even the mention of "wills, and such grizzly things," she had made no provision for Elsie, and left the girl absolutely nothing but several wardrobes full of gay garments, while she shared the jealous envy of all Mrs. Tillman's legal heirs, who had resented her semi-adoption.

"What can you do for yourself, Miss Elsie?" said the lawyer who had more than once remonstrated in her behalf. "You are left without support."

"I used to charm serpents in a Varieties," said Elsie, "but now I find in myself no fitness for serpent-charming. I simply could not dress up fantastically and enter a snake-cage before a crowd of leering idiots."

"And aside from that?"

"I suppose I can sell gloves or candy or lace in a shop, if any one will give me a place," said poor Elsie, "and I can sell all these gay clothes to a second-hand dealer for a twentieth part of what they cost."

"It is thus by being given no visible means of support, no education that will assure independence,



that young women are wronged," said the lawyer. "You are allowed, in dress and luxuries of all kinds, to live up to the limit of the large income of some one who is supporting you, and then that person dies, and the income dies also so far as you are concerned, and, used to splendor and idleness and amusement, you are suddenly without even the means to buy a pair of shoes. This condition lies back of many miserable histories."

"You remember," said the Charmer, quietly, "that before Mrs. Tillman took possession of me—because she liked my appearance and thought that I looked like her dead daughter—I was very poor. I knew how to go without almost everything that people generally think necessary, and I have earned my own living. I can do it again, only in some other way. I must now, as I said, be a clerk behind a store-counter, unless some fashionable *modiste* will hire me to show off bonnets, hats and cloaks by trying them on."

"Yes, yes!" cried the old gentleman; "and either of these employers would expect you to wear a silk gown and a pretty collar, and meanwhile, expecting you to be dressed like a lady, they would give you the wages of a scullery-maid. You would be occupied all day, without an hour's time to make or mend your clothes, or to wash them, or to cook your food. You would be required to be well dressed and to have fine, well-kept hands. Mean-



while, your pay, leaving your clothes quite out of the question, would not be sufficient to provide you decent food and lodging."

"But what am I to do?" asked Elsie. "I must take what I can get and do the best I can. I could not have laid up money, because Mrs. Tillman gave me almost none, and the few shillings I had I could not help giving to the very, very poor whom I saw—because, you know, I from my own memories could tell how needy they were."

"And how about the rich man you were to marry?"

"Oh," said Elsie, looking down with a blush, "the rich men were all like Mercy's suitors, in the *Pilgrim's Progress*. They liked me well enough, but not my conditions. Rich men do not want to marry 'Nobody' without a penny in her pocket. And now I am twenty-five, and I think I am old enough to make my own way in the world."

"You might," said the lawyer, "if you had ever learned to do anything, and if you had not the manners of a woman who has been spending all her time pleasing and amusing people in society, and if you did not look six years younger than you are, and if you were not half so pretty. As it is, I cannot see that you can do better now than to come home with me to my wife—who, as all her daughters are married, will be very glad to have you to keep her company—while we think of some-



thing better for you. Are all Mrs. Tillman's relations and friends against you?"

"All but little Lady Hobart," said the Charmer, "and, as she has no fortune and many expenses, she is about as poor as I am."

"Well, then you must descend from Belgravia to Russel Square," said the lawyer. "We at least shall make you very welcome. I've no doubt there is some place for you in the world, if you wait quietly for it."

So Elsie went with the old lawyer and became to him as a daughter. Her merry face lit up the lonesome home in Russel Square. The good matron there renewed her youth in Elsie's cheerful chat, and, being deeply engaged in various philanthropies, she found the Charmer such an efficient helper that she only hoped to retain her the rest of her life.

So she might have done had it not been for Dr. Fergueson. He had not forgotten the Charmer. He heard of Mrs. Tillman's death, and that her protégée was lost out of the glittering regions of May Fair. Then, several months after, he met "little" Lady Hobart, as she was called from her childish size and ways. Very naturally, the conversation turned upon the Charmer.

"And you," said Lady Hobart, "have deserted her, like the rest of her summer friends! I am the only one who has stood firm. I should have



stood by her still even if she had become nursery-maid or a clerk in a confectioner's. I go to see her, as it is, often, for all I can do for her is visit her and love her just the same. I'm as poor as a church-mouse, you know. Don't you think poverty and titles fit very badly together?"

"Nothing about you seems inharmonious, Lady Hobart, for you have sincerity and simplicity, which unify things that seem by nature most diverse. And *she* is happy?"

"She seems to be much happier than when she lived with my cousin Mrs. Tillman. She is with Mrs. Tillman's lawyer—a very bluff old gentleman—and his wife, who spends all her time in philanthropy. The old lady is very devoted to orphanages and asylums and homes and penny dinners and working-girls' clubs, and Elsie is in all, heart and soul. I never see her but she is making a wadded jacket for some old woman, or getting hospital letters for somebody, or a cork leg, or an India-rubber hand."

"I did not desert her when trouble came," said Dr. Fergueson; "she deserted me long before. At least, when I had called several times, and had the door shut in my face—"

"Elsie never shut the door in any one's face."

"At least, I had word that she was 'not at home,' when I positively knew she was at home."

"Elsie never sent such word. My poor cousin



Tillman was given to society lies, but Elsie—never! The truth is, doctor, I know that it was Mrs. Tillman's manœuvre, and Elsie—was sorry about it."

"Then—then, perhaps, Lady Hobart, you think she would see me if I called now?" said Dr. Fergusson, eagerly.

"You might try, and see. There is great interest in experiments; it was only by experiments that I ever learned anything," said the little lady, demurely.

And so it happened that Dr. Fergusson appeared in Russel Square without loss of time, and was not told that the Charmer was not at home. But it was owing to this, also, that in about six months the good lawyer and his wife lost their pleasant young companion, who went to make sunshine in Dr. Fergusson's not very sunny home in Bloomsbury.

Elizabeth and the Charmer were now not so far apart as when one had lived in Rag Fair as a factory-girl and the other dwelt in May Fair as Mrs. Tillman's plaything. It seemed that now they might meet, for both were to be found so often in the homes of the poor. But London has so many poor that lines of philanthropy are by no means sure of crossing one another.

And if the Charmer, walking on her errands of mercy or riding betimes in the modest coupé which she shared with her husband, had seen Elizabeth, she would not have known her. The little Eliza-



beth had grown tall, and the hair that had hung in a club down her back was now bound about her head, and instead of the rebellious vexation at being obliged to sing for a living a serene peace had come into her face. Now, in a long blue flannel dress and cloak and a little close blue bonnet, Elizabeth, carrying her bag of needles, thread, scissors, lint, bandages, camphor, simple remedies, little packets of beef-tea, ground rice, and other delicacies, all compactly bestowed, went daily from house to house; and when the eye saw her, then it blessed her, and comfort came where she came.

On one of those days, when Elizabeth in her rounds had on her knee a little child suffering from one of the many accidents which befall London poor children in their crowded homes, the impulse came to her to soothe the unfortunate infant with a song. For all these years she had not tried to sing; now unconsciously she began. And her voice had come back to her—not now high and strained, as when she sang in the Varieties, but rich and sweet and low and motherly, as tuned to slumber-songs.

After that how often did Elizabeth calm the restless spirits of her patients or lull their babes to sleep or win their turbulent thoughts for heavenly themes by song!

“Sing to me, nurse, won’t you?”

“You’ll please sing me just one hymn? It stays by me all day.”



“The little ones, they do try to sing to each other as you sings to them.”

“Well, it do seem, hearing of you, as if an angel had come right down out of the sky.”

Then Elizabeth would laugh and say that angels were sure not “to wear flannel frocks and carry about bags weighing four or five pounds.”

How often passers-by in crowded Drury Lane or Portugal street or Fetter Lane, heard drifting down from low-browed upper stories or attic-rooms or floating out of dark rear-tenements a voice sweet, full, soothing!—

“Come unto me when shadows darkly gather,  
And the tired heart is weary and oppressed;  
Seeking for refuge with your heavenly Father,  
Come unto me, and, coming, be at rest.”

OR

“When gathering clouds around I view,  
And days are dark and friends are few,  
On Him I lean who not in vain  
Experienced every human pain.  
He sees my wants, allays my fears,  
And counts and treasures up my tears.”

More than once Richard heard this beautiful voice, and in it there were notes which reminded him of days when the Prodigy practiced new pieces standing before the old Swiss master, who sat on a pine coffin and touched, here and there, a note on his little worn-out violin.



“Who is this sweet singer?” asked Richard.

No one knew. The Londoner is constitutionally opposed to knowing anything outside of his immediate business: he even knows nothing about the metropolis beyond the confines of his particular neighborhood.

Richard would pause and listen till the singing ended; then he would move on to avoid attracting attention or unpleasing remark.

Richard heard by and by of a nurse who was so comforting and helpful and “who sang like an angel.” He began to connect together the nurse and the singing which he had heard:

“What is she like?”

“Oh, just nice!”

“Just as good as gold!”

These poor creatures have no descriptive vocabulary. A niceness that touches helpfully their trouble—that is all they know about it.

“What is the singer’s name?”

“Why, ‘Nurse’! That is all. She never wants to be called anything else.”

“Not a common nurse?”

“Oh no! Just like a lady. Only she said that she had been poor.”

Once or twice, as Richard went to some of the poor patients whom he shared with his professor, he thought he saw this famous nurse—a well-made woman who walked nobly and simply, as having



work to do, and whose dark-blue garb vanished before him up some alley or court.

Richard had at one time a patient—a child whose eyes he was treating—and this nurse came into the case, washing the child daily and teaching its mother to air the room, to cleanse the bedding and to make good soup. The medical treatment thus reinforced, the child's eyes were saved. But the nurse always paid her helpful visit early in the day, at a time when Richard was in the lecture-room.

There was Richard learning with skilled and daring hand, with surgical knife which became the chisel of genius, to enter the delicate pavilion of sight, the cornea, to thread his perilous way between rescue and ruin, respecting here the hyaloid membrane and there the precious unreplaceable vitreous humor, pursuing with reverent wonder the mysteries of one of the choicest manifestations of life.

Richard had now completed his course in the medical school and had received his degree in surgery, and his intense desire was to go to France and to Germany for a year of study under eminent oculists. How he should accomplish this desire he could not tell, but he felt that accomplish it he must. He had a debt of gratitude to pay.

The memories awakened by the voice of the unseen singer had driven Richard again to search for Gran. He found Gran hearty and likely to live,



but a veil had fallen over her sight: cataract had darkened both eyes. And Gran did not bear her deprivation with the stoicism that characterized Auberle.

Perceiving that Richard had some knowledge of her case, Gran implored him:

“Oh, Richard, Richard! can't you help me to another sight of the sun? They tell me the operation would be dangerous, but never mind. I'd risk dying for the sake of a chance of seeing light once more. Oh how darkness weighs on me!”

“If only I could try! If only I could succeed!” said Richard.

“Had Gran seen Elizabeth again?”

No, never, since that holiday from service now years gone by.

Then, surely, thought Richard, Elizabeth must be dead. But Richard had no time to mourn for Elizabeth. Here were Gran and Auberle pleading with him to give them back the light—pleading, though the doctors said each case was hopeless.

When this was said, Richard's thoughts were wont to revert to the days when he was studying by Auberle's loom and Mr. Renè had asked him to come and hear of the greatest physician who had ever lived, who had cured diseases with a touch and who had given sight to blind eyes. It had made him often feel very near to the Christ to consider what joy had filled his merciful heart when some



suffering one had at his hands received instant healing. The more desperate the case, the greater the joy of recovery; and, while Richard did not expect to work miracles, he felt that the limit of human wisdom and human skill had not been reached, and that God gave great rewards to honest, faithful workers. So with him study and effort and prayer went hand in hand.

Richard was the more inspired to this by a little incident that occurred one day in his ministrations among the poor. He congratulated his patient upon her remarkable improvement. The patient was the mother of several fatherless children, and she desired to live.

“I think we have just the right treatment here,” said Richard, “and the nursing seems to be excellent.”

“Ay,” said the woman, “and the praying’s excellent too, doctor.”

“I don’t quite understand you,” said Richard.

“It’s the nurse,” said the woman. “She comes here and does all she can for me, and makes me comfortable, and ‘I’ll give you a verse,’ she says, ‘for your soul to rest on through the day, and we’ll say a word of prayer to God that he will bless the means that are taken and give the doctor skill and understanding;’ and then she takes hold of my hand. And it is a soft, strong white hand she has. And for a minute she prays most beautiful,



and I feel most sure the praying does a vast of good."

"So it does," said Richard. "Tell her I thank her and ask her to pray for me."

Richard never dreamed that he sent this message to the dear and lost Elizabeth.



## CHAPTER XV.

### *IN THE NIGHT.*

WHILE Richard thus came close to Elizabeth's path of life, and yet narrowly missed her, he recognized and laid hold upon one who for a brief hour had shared her way and his—" 'Arry."

Richard had been back to "Miracle Alley," back to the cobbler's shop where for so many years old Jacob had wrought with awl and last, and where now his years of toil had drawn to their close, and the low seat by the window and the little cobbler's tray of tools had been left for ever. In his increasing prosperity Richard had not neglected to visit Jacob. In the hard times of Poplar Court and of Benje's typhoid fever, Richard had drawn back within his miseries as a snail in its shell, and had not thought of telling to his poor friends the rosary of his sorrows. When he could bring them the good cheer of a sunny face, a hearty hand-clasp, an encouraging word, and sometimes help or care, he went back to those who had brought into his childhood what small share of comfort he had known. Thus it happened that he had marked Jacob tread-



ing "the downward way to death," had visited him daily, sat by his bedside those last three days of the very many days of his life, and had dutifully closed the old man's eyes.

"I don't need to be beholden to you for help, my lad," Jacob had said; "I have laid enough by to keep me for a week or two, and to bury me. Give my few things to the widow in the cellar over the way. The rent's paid for nine months ahead, so let her come here and live the time out. She is not of the seed of Abraham, but she is of the race of Adam, and I'll die more comfortable if I feel she is the better for my having been in the world and for my going out of it."

"I'll look after her," said Richard. "Suppose we have her eldest boy taught cobbling, to take your tools and place?"

The old man's sunken eyes lighted with the joy of benevolence. Then a sudden thought came to him:

"Richard, I had not believed that I should die like this. When I was a boy and heard the rabbis or the devout women talking, when I was a young man like you, I believed that soon—very soon—a Deliverer would arise for Israel, the Christ would come to rule his enemies with a rod of iron, to break the oppressions of the Gentiles, to set up a kingdom for the chosen seed, and that I, who was looking and longing for his kingdom, should dwell



under his sceptre with great delight. I expected to live in that empire where peace and righteousness reign, where a child shall die at a hundred years old, where war and violence and sickness and the pains of old age are not known. I gave up my hope long ago; I grew weary waiting for him. But I tell you, Richard, I have missed him out of my life."

"My father," said Richard, bending over the dying Jew, "I have told you over and over again—Mr. Renè has told you—that he, the Messiah, has come and you perceived him not."

"It is false! It is false!" cried the Jew, lifting himself up on his elbow. "If he had come, he would have at least left his impress on the world he made. His image would have lain upon the hearts of men; the grace of his laws would have moulded the apostate race of Adam; we should have seen the track of his footsteps across the earth. I cry out for my King—for the Lord whom we seek who shall suddenly come to his temple—and you tell me of the Nazarene, a carpenter's son, a man, a man who died! What good can a dead man do me? Why did he come if that dying was all?"

"He came because that living and that dying—and what came after—were enough and worthy of a God. He came to fulfill what the prophets spoke. If the ancient Scripture is the truth of



God, must not every word of it be fulfilled? And how could a King descending in power and reigning in glory fulfill these words?—‘He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter. He was taken from prison and from judgment.’ Is this spoken of a world-conqueror—of a king with the nations under his feet?”

“But was he not ‘to divide a portion with the great, and the spoil with the strong’? Was he not ‘to sit as a refiner of silver’? And is it not written ‘that every one that is left of the nations shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts’?”

“Yes, it is written, and it shall be fulfilled. But the other must also be fulfilled. It has been fulfilled. First he came in his advent of humiliation—true God and very man, bearing the sins of his people; true Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world—and yet again he shall come in his glory with all the hosts of heaven at his feet; and so not one jot or one tittle shall pass from the law or the prophets until all be fulfilled. In the Man Christ Jesus, Jacob, behold also the true Messiah, the very God, two natures in one person. Think



of all I have read to you about him. The man hungers; the God multiplies loaves and fishes and turns water into wine. The man sleeps heavily on a pillow; the God rises, and winds and sea obey him. The man prays all night on the mountain, and in the morning walks the water, a God. The man is betrayed by his friend; the God calls the dead friend, Lazarus, from the tomb. You see a human body lying in the sleep of death; you see the God rising from that rock-hewn tomb. Is not this the Christ?"

Jacob's eyes were fixed on Richard; a strange wonder was in his face. He suddenly in a wild monotone took up a chant:

“The man whose eyes are open hath said: he hath said which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty falling into a trance, but having his eyes open; I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh; there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall arise out of Israel.”

Then his voice sank away; he dropped slowly back on his hard pallet. One trembling wrinkled hand was held out as if to grasp the hand of some Helper who passed by in the night and the darkness, and the lonely pilgrimage of eighty years was ended.

It was after the neighbor-people had come in and prepared old Jacob's body for burial, and when the



dead lay covered with a sheet—as Gran had lain so long ago—that Richard went out into the lanes and streets of the East End, finding his way home to the precincts of Lincoln’s Inn Fields. His heart was full of memories of that wretched time when he had daily gone for Gran’s gin and Benje’s bread, and when he had often shared his scanty crust with that weaker child of misfortune—Betty. Something drew him to go down the steps to that dark river where Betty had found death. He stood against an archway ; he looked at the black tide rising under the lines of the lamplight scattered from wharves and bridges, and he thought of Betty and the little babe stifled in the muddy Thames.

“ It was a short journey through the river to the Lover of little children for the baby,” said Richard to himself. “ And what about Betty? Poor Betty ! she too was only a child—a child, mind and body. The age, the careless age which should have nurtured her, really dwarfed and crippled her. It was not the brave, self-forgetting, self-sacrificing, steadfast-hearted Betty that went down to the river : it was a poor creature crazed with hunger and heart-sorrow and despair. What a comfort it is to remember that wider than all human hearts is the compassionate heart of Christ ! There is One who understands us better than we understand one another or ourselves.”

And just as Richard thought of that, a tall, gaunt



figure clad in rags, hatless and shoeless, came down the steps, and with that hasty coming was about to find refuge in the river, only that the brawny arm of Richard, suddenly held out, stopped him, forced him back upon the steps, and held him there, while Richard said,

“No, no, my lad! Not the river now.”

“Let me go,” said the man, panting. “There’s naught for me in a world made only for the rich and lucky. Let me go! I’m clemmed, I’m nigh naked, I’ve not a bed but the stones. I’ve lost her as only cared for me—my wife—and there’s no work for the like of me, with the prison-stamp on me. But it wasn’t my fault—no, it wasn’t. It was all the rest of them’s fault, so it was. Let loose of me, I say!”

“No,” said Richard; “I will hold you and help you. I stood here thinking of a friend—of one I had known as a boy, of one whom I loved, my poor little sister in misery, who came here to die and no arm was reached out to hold her back. I will hold you back for her sake. If you are starving, come; it is but a few steps to hot food. I have clothes for you; there is a bed for you where I lodge. I have known all about hunger and cold and pain and hopelessness, and I have lived them down. And so must you.”

He pulled the man up and guided him along the steps and through the silent street to a little all-



night-open chop-house, where he ordered hot meat and coffee. Then, as he watched the man eating ravenously, he saw that it was—" 'Arry."

"I won't trouble you more," said "'Arry" as they went into the street again. "The food has put a bit of heart into me. But this is a hard world, a hard country, a hard city, for the like of me."

"You'll come home with me," said Richard. "You forget me, but I remember you; you helped me once. You were a jolly young coster then, and you helped me flit away from lodgings I could not pay for, into free lodgings in Poplar Court."

" 'Arry" searched his memory for the reminiscence, and found it.

"You? You?" he said, stopping under a gas-lamp to stare at his companion. "Why, you're a gentleman!"

"I'm that little boy grown up and helped along by friends as I'm going to help you. One good turn deserves another."

"I never see you ag'in till now," said Harry, "but I see 'er ag'in."

"Who?" demanded Richard.

"The wise little gal with the yaller 'air. I see 'er 'long the next spring. She 'ad fallen in with a gal I knew named Betty who was takin' of 'er 'ome, an', bein' as she was nigh done out, I give 'er a lift down Tower 'Amlets way, on my barrer."

"I owe you more now than for helping me,"



said Richard, seizing Harry by the arm to aid him on. "Here! come in here and have a bath and a shave, and then come to my room. I'll buy you some clothes while you're getting a wash; there's always a place open here in Drury Lane."

Richard, full of excitement, believed he might now be on the track of Elizabeth; but when Harry was safely in his room and lying on a bed Richard had hastily made up for him, he could tell almost nothing of Elizabeth:

"She went to Betty's mam's. She was pal to Aggie, a humpback sister of Betty's. They went off somewheres along of mam's husband acking so wicked ugly. I don't know what become of the gal with the yaller 'air. Aggie died a couple of days ater me an' Betty was married, an' I never see the other gal ag'in."

He had forgotten where Aggie and Elizabeth went, or what work they did, or where Betty had visited them. He remembered only his own most wretched story, and he poured it out hotly, furiously, with wails of pain and rage for his wife and child and the madness of a wounded wild beast against his persecutors:

"I can't find Betty nor the kid nowhere; I can't get no track of them. I make sure they're dead, but I want to know they ain't starving. I've been out two months, and I've looked for them, and I can't hear a word."



“I can tell you,” said Richard, very gently. “They are far better off than you can make them. I knew them; I knew Betty from the time when she was a little girl. She did not have long to suffer after you were shut up. Betty was not very strong, you know.”

“She’d a-bin strong enough if she’d ever ’ad ’alf enough to eat,” interrupted poor Harry, fiercely. “There’s some gals—good uns too—comes into this world never to get so much grub as other women gives lavish to their dogs.”

“It is true, my poor Harry!” said Richard, with tears in his eyes. “But Betty is done with all that. She is dead—she and the baby—long ago. I saw them dead—very quiet and peaceful; and they had had no long sickness, and had not to go to a hospital or to the house, or to be parted. They—just died. And outside of the troubles of this world, Harry, there is a world of rest and peace and plenty, and the good Lord knows his own, though men may not.”

“Dead!” said Harry. “Dead! Gone! I’m glad of it. Done starving! Done freezing! Done wearing out by inches! I’M GLAD!—But oh, Betty, Betty, Betty! I loved you and you loved me, and you were all I had.” Then, furiously, “Now I’m going to live only to rave and rage and rob and tear these cruel demons who ruined me and my Betty.”



It was Richard the embryo doctor who sent Harry to sleep with a strong opiate. It was Richard the friend who in weary days of illness calmed and comforted poor Harry, never telling him that fatal truth about Betty's death in the river. It was Richard the man who, aided by Mr. Renè, put heart and hope and humanity into that enraged wild beast that modern society had produced. Finally, it was Richard who sent Harry off with some emigrants to Canada, facing a new life, having learned to hope once more, to look back—at less than thirty years—to long ages of loss and pain, but on to possibilities of self-help, of home, of family. After that, during many years, Richard heard occasionally from Harry—labored epistles from the man who had learned to read and to write when almost in middle life. In these years Richard learned that Harry had found in the New World a God, a home, a little competence, a wife, a family, but that he had never forgotten the wife of his hopeless London struggle, and that his eldest daughter was, though born to better fortunes, named "BETTY."



## CHAPTER XVI.

### *THE SUCCEEDING OF SUCCESS.*

WHY had not Elizabeth been to see Gran? Surely her charity should have begun at home, and should have taken her to visit the old dame living in St. Bride's almshouses. So it would have done, but Elizabeth supposed that Gran was dead. While she lay in the hospital she had seen the notice of the death of Dame Mary Hodge at St. Bride's almshouses. She never imagined that "Mary" was an error for "Martha," and that Gran was still alive, while her fellow-pensioner of the same surname had made room for another.

If Elizabeth had been able to go out at that time, she would have visited St. Bride's to learn something about Gran's last days. As several months passed before she could go out for such an excursion, she grew accustomed to the idea of Gran's death, and so went no more to St. Bride's. She pursued her daily nursing-rounds, not knowing that her voice sometimes reached the ear of the long-lost Richard. Soon it reached Richard's ears no more, for scarcely had he received his diploma than he left



England for that year of study on the Continent. His benefactor the professor was killed in a railroad accident; he left Richard his little all—five thousand pounds. The only way for Richard to show his gratitude was to use the bequest well, and to raise up for his dead master a lasting monument in his own highest achievements.

Elizabeth had been going her rounds nursing in her district for some fifteen months in all when Richard returned from his year of foreign study. Elizabeth, in the humble circle of her duties, was now a loved and honored name; Richard came back to England preceded by the encomiums of his teachers and by reports of his skill in many difficult operations. He was one of the men who rise early and rapidly into notice, born to be a success.

In England, Gran and Auberle awaited Richard with impatience. Gran had been told by various surgeons who examined her eyes that her case was hopeless, and that her age made an operation dangerous; but Gran insisted that she was ready to risk death on one small chance of having sight restored, and Richard believed there was for her one such chance—"one in a thousand," he told her.

"I'll risk it," said Gran, with trembling impatience. "I have lived long enough, any way—too long if I am to be blind. I sit in the dark and think of Elizabeth and of my dear lost Elsie, and of all those who made comfort in my life and went



out of it so long ago. I am not afraid to die, and I know I have more friends and kindred in the other world than in this. If the Lord wills that I shall live on, it will be all right. If he wills that I should die, that will be just as right, and maybe, son Richard, very much better."

So Gran was removed to the hospital to make ready for the operation.

Auberle had been lodging for some time with Mrs. Maypinn, who made him as comfortable as she could. Richard no longer allowed Auberle to stumble about the streets and sell toys; since he had some small means of his own, he took care of Auberle.

Auberle had been told that there was hope that the cataract that obscured his vision might be successfully removed; Richard begged him to place himself in the hands of a famous oculist.

"Not I," said Auberle; "I'll have no one but Richard. If he puts my eyes out finally, I'll be no worse off than I am, and I shall know that he tried his very best to help me and put all his good-will and all his skill into his work. But if he succeeds, it will be a great credit to him, and will be talked about, and will help him make his fortune. When Richard was a poor little lad just beginning to study, I taught him all I knew, to try and make a man of him; now the last thing that is left me to do for him is to let him try his hand on my eyes. I won't



have any West-End swell cutting at me ; I'll have Richard. Poor folks should help one another."

"You'd think Richard was a West-End swell if you could see him now, Auberle," said Mrs. Maypinn. "He wears a mighty good suit of clothes, and shiny boots, and a watch, and gold buttons in his shirt, and a cambric handkerchief."

"His heart's in the right place, if he does," said Auberle, uneasily. "And you know, Mistress Maypinn, if he's to live, he must earn money ; he can't make his way by doctoring poor folks only, and that for nothing. He must have some patients among the rich ones ; and if he is to have them, he must wear such clothes as you are describing. He'll make his living among the rich and spend his money for the poor. I know Richard."

"You don't know how he looks," said Mrs. Maypinn, aggravatingly. "He is as handsome a gentleman to look at as you could wish to see, and speaks according, and carries a cane."

"Well, he don't look like a dandy, and he ain't a dandy," cried Auberle, testily ; "and if you holds up as he is a dandy, Mistress Maypinn, one thing is set : I won't eat my dinner."

"And who'd go hungry then ?" quoth Mrs. Maypinn. "Not me, for sure. But Richard is no dandy ; it was only yesterday I see him down in the street looking at the eyes of a beggar-woman's baby. And he carried the little thing off to the children's



hospital in his own arms. Well, the people did stare, him, so big and fine, marching off with the poor dirty little youngster in his arm, and it a-eating of a Bath bun all over his good coat."

Auberle was mollified; he listened with satisfaction to Mrs. Maypinn as she left her sewing and heated the soup for their dinner.

Mrs. Maypinn "finished off trousers." By working with all her might from daylight until bedtime she earned seven shillings a week. Out of this she paid three shillings for rent and light and one shilling for coals; for food and clothes Mrs. Maypinn had left the immense sum of three shillings—less than sixpence a day. If Auberle had not been ingenious in helping her, having learned in his blindness to sew on the trouser-buttons neatly, Mrs. Maypinn would have been able to earn but six shillings a week.

Richard paid two and six a week for a room for Auberle, in which he had put Auberle's treasured furniture and a few other things. He also paid Mrs. Maypinn five shillings a week for Auberle's board, and this made it possible for the widow to live without suffering painful privation.

The operation on Auberle's eyes proved entirely successful. Amid profound silence Richard made his brief excursion into that microscopic world the eye. To enter there removing obstruction, and to return leaving light instead of darkness, is an undertaking



as stupendous as to weigh worlds or to measure the magnitudes of space. Those who stood about and waited for the final result of that short but splendid labor were as those who stand looking for the resurrection of one dead or for the coming of a new world into being.

But in Auberle's case others had admitted that there was a probability of success, and would have undertaken the task of restoration; in having any hope for Gran, Richard stood alone. No one expected anything but failure. One of the leading oculists of London said to him,

"You'll have the old dame's death on your hands, Richards. I wouldn't undertake it, if I were you; there's no hope and too great risk."

But Richard had seen a similar case in Germany, where he believed that at least partial vision might have been restored. Alone in his opinion, he undertook the task of giving light to Gran; and here also he was fortunate. With firm hand he completed the operation.

"Shall I see? Shall I see?" cried Gran.

"In good time you will know," said Richard, delicately adjusting the bandages. His lion-like face showed no triumph, gave no hope and took no hope away. Science had done its best, and waited now on Nature.

Richard was calm, and limited his words to giving the most rigorous orders concerning his patient.



Then days passed on, and in rest and darkness Nature's work was done, and—Gran could see. The sight had come back in one eye; the veil had been removed. She could see the light and human faces, and could guide once more her own way.

Thus had Richard paid his debt to his early benefactress. And by this exploit of surgical skill he established his reputation. He became notable at once; he was placed as the peer of much older practitioners, and cases crowded upon him.

Among others who applied to Richard was a rich banker, Mr. Rudolph; his wife, Lady Fanny Hobart Rudolph, was suffering constant pain in her eyes and great sensitiveness to light. Going to visit her, Richard found a pretty, engaging little lady in a dimly-lit, luxurious room. Wearied of enforced idleness and retirement, Lady Hobart Rudolph welcomed hope in her young doctor, and soon in the daily visits there grew up a simple, sincere friendship between them.

“I think, Dr. Richards,” said Lady Hobart, “that your mother must be proud of you—very proud.”

“I have no mother—at least, I do not know that I have any parents.”

“What do you mean by saying you do not know?”

“I never knew any parents, and I never knew anything of their death. I do not even know my true surname. My first name was Richard; and



when I needed a surname, I simply reduplicated the first, and made myself Richard Richards."

"You are, then, that very interesting and remarkable being a self-made man?"

"That phrase—'a self-made man'—seems to me very open to exception. Some men are forced to be more self-helpful in early years than others, but we are all largely indebted to other people for aid and instruction. My first friend was a kind old Jew cobbler who mended or made my shoes, and gave me some notions of the moral law, and fortified my instincts for cleanliness and decency."

"And had you really no relations?"

"I had the dearest little brother in the world—Benje. He is now in Edinburgh University."

"'Benje'!" cried Lady Hobart, with animation and at once additionally interested. "Do tell me more. Have you not fifteen minutes more to spend here? I am so bored by being shut up and idle all day! What you tell me will be so delightful to think about! After the blessed old Jew, what friend had you?"

"A young girl—a laughing, beautiful creature who found Benje and me in the streets one night and took us home."

"Tell me about her!" said the patient, imperatively.

"She was sweet and good, and a serpent-charmer in a Varieties show, poor child!"



“And what became of her?”

“There was also her grandmother, a kind old woman who took an interest in two wretched little lads, and Elizabeth, a little girl a year younger than myself,” said Richard, dropping the grievous theme of the Charmer. “Elizabeth figured as a musical prodigy. She was a child of wonderful good sense, generosity, womanliness, courage. I never saw her equal.”

“And she died?” said Lady Hobart, sadly.

“I fear so; I lost her years ago.”

“And then who befriended you next?”

“Auberle—a poor weaver, a man with a kind heart and a mind somewhat warped, a man with a grudge against the world, which had not been greatly good to him; and yet he did daily all the good he knew.”

“Oh, are you going? Why not tell me more?”

“I have other patients,” said Richard, “and I make it a rule to spend some time each day working among the poor in the East and North of London—the poor from among whom I came, or at least among whom I lived, and all whose miseries I shared as a child. I cannot spend in pleasant houses such as this the time that is due to them.”

Lady Hobart Rudolph was not dull and lonely that day; she had plenty to think of and rejoice over and plan for. How often had her dear adopted cousin Elsie told her of those serpent-charming days,



and of "me and Benje" found asleep in the snow-storm, and of Gran, and Elizabeth! How delightful it would be to learn more of this history from the young doctor, and then to tell Elsie how part of her long-lost family could be found, and to bring these long-parted ones together! When her grave, middle-aged husband came home from his bank and hastened to bring the news of the day to his petted wife, he found her overflowing with news herself, and the rest of the afternoon passed swiftly while he heard tales of dearest Elsie, and serpent-charming, and "me and Benje."

"And how are your eyes?" he asked, at last.

"My eyes? Oh, I'm sure they must be better. For the first time for weeks I have forgotten all about them."

"If this young man cures your eyes, I'll surely make his fortune," said Mr. Rudolph.

The next day the amiable patient could hardly wait until her eyes were examined and her maid had received careful directions about lotions and potions before she broke forth:

"Doctor, you must take five minutes to tell me how you came to think of your present profession."

"It was Elizabeth who first inspired me to educate myself and do something in the world worth doing—to be, as we called it then, a gentleman. We discussed professions as if all lay open to my choice, and we selected that of medicine as the most



desirable. We had neither of us any idea of the greatness of the undertaking, and expected very swift results from very little labor. But by Auberle's help I began, and by help of Auberle and others I kept on. I remember that I promised to share all my good fortune with the dear little Elizabeth, and even now all the success and emolument that I have seem worthless to me because I cannot fulfill that promise."

"And now, as I see you pulling on your gloves, I suppose you are off and will end the day among the poor people. Will you take my purse and use all that is in it for the ones that need it most? I have an adopted cousin whom I love very much who was once poor. She told me very many things about the poor, and made me long to help them, but I never had any money or freedom to do good until I married, and then, just as I really was able to be of some use in the world, here I had this trouble with my eyes. Until they are well you and my cousin must do good in my behalf."

The next day there were more questions about the past, and also tales of what Dr. Richards was now doing among the poor and what Mr. Renè was doing; and Lady Hobart said she should have Mr. Renè to dinner, so that he could tell Mr. Rudolph of his schemes and his success, and Mr. Rudolph—who was "the very best man in the world"—would subscribe largely to his charitable undertakings.



And now Lady Hobart, having enlivened her solitude by beautiful plans, sent for her cousin Elsie to spend a whole afternoon with her. Then she told Elsie all about Richard, and Elsie for the first time confessed how she had seen Richard once marching in a mob, and how he, a gaunt, fiery-eyed youth, had sprung upon her carriage steps and rated her for deserting Gran and Elizabeth, and for not having courage to endure honest poverty.

“We’ll make him take all that back in fine style,” said Lady Hobart Rudolph, lying back on her cushions and fairly shrieking with laughter.

“Your eyes must surely be getting well, my dear,” said her husband, coming in, “and I shall trumpet this doctor’s praises through all London.”

In pursuance of the plan carefully arranged by Elsie and Lady Hobart, Dr. Fergusson was to seek out Richard and make his acquaintance; there was no one who could resist the friendliness of Dr. Fergusson. Then Dr. Fergusson was to invite his new acquaintance to a family dinner, and in the pleasant little home in Bloomsbury, Richard was suddenly to behold the Serpent-Charmer, the vanished Elsie, in his hostess, and to hear the curious story of her disappearance.

“Dear me!” said Lady Hobart Rudolph; “I think I never had such a lovely time in my life. And, as my eyes are bound to get well, I really don’t regret the trouble I’ve had with them.”



## CHAPTER XVII.

### *WHEREIN CROOKED PLACES ARE MADE STRAIGHT.*

WHEN Richard, agreeably to Dr. Fergusson's invitation, appeared at the modest Bloomsbury mansion, he was shown into the drawing-room, and there, in a low chair by a grate, sat a golden-haired lady leaning back and smiling at a little image of herself which, standing on her knee, held up her arms to "show how big she was."

The lady hastily gave the child to a nurse who waited beside her, and advanced with both hands extended to Richard. The same fluffy hair, the same bright smile, the same look of candid innocence—the same Charmer as in the years gone by!

"Richard! Yes, it really is Richard—my Richard of the Lion-heart and of the wild-beast days!—My dear," turning to Dr. Fergusson, who entered, "this is the Richard of the 'Me-and-Benje' tales.—And," when they were seated near the grate and the nurse had departed, "I have never been able to see you since the day you sprang on the carriage steps and said a number of hard things to me, Richard."



“I’m sure I beg your pardon. I was very hasty and mistaken and brutal,” said Richard, looking down.

“I know a deal of your story, because my cousin—my adopted cousin, I mean, Lady Hobart Rudolph—has told me; it is only fair that I should tell you my history before I ask you any questions. You remember that last evening I was at the Varieties, Richard?”

“Yes, indeed I do, and how we lost you, and looked for you, and cried—all of us—and expected you day after day with sick and frightened hearts.”

“You remember I would not wait, but went off alone? I would not wait because the young man who sang tenor in the music-hall of the Varieties always would walk home with me or follow me unless I left before he could get away. He was a saucy fellow. You know our part of the show closed half an hour earlier than the other, and I always left Elizabeth to come home with the old violinist. That night, if you will recall it, was raw, dark, windy, rainy. The streets were slippery with a pasty mud; the wind fluttered my old brown cloak and slapped the wretched little cape into my eyes, blinding me. The cape was swept up over my face in this way at a turn on a crossing just as I slipped in the mud; and while I tried to keep my footing and to release my face from the folds of deep cloth, a carriage driving swiftly



knocked me down. What came next I have been told, but cannot recollect, for I was senseless. A wheel of the carriage went over my foot, but, as the foot lay between two large cobble-stones, it was not broken, only badly bruised. A policeman came up; the coachman got off his box, and the lady who was in the carriage stepped out. They concluded that I was not seriously hurt. The lady said to the policeman that, as I was evidently a poor girl and probably had no very comfortable home to go to—and, at all events, they did not know where it was—she would take me to her own home, see that I recovered from my injuries, find my friends for me and give me a compensation for my loss of time. She did not want me put in a hospital and have remarks made in the papers about her carriage having driven over me. The policeman, seeing from the card which she gave him, the lady herself and coachman, that she was a person of respectability, agreed to her proposal, and I was put into the carriage, and we were driven over to her home in May Fair.

“The lady was Mrs. Tillman, an impulsive, kind-hearted, liberal, thoughtless and selfish person—a contradictory character, Richard. Arrived at her house, she handed me, still unconscious, to the care of her maid and housekeeper. As my clothes were wet and muddy and blood-stained from some slight scratches which I had received, they took out for



me clothes that had belonged to Mrs. Tillman's daughter, who had been dead over two years. They also put me into the bedroom that had belonged to her.

“From the shock, the blow on my head, the chill of my wet clothes in the carriage and the fact that I had long been overtaken, I fell into a high fever, and was either stupid or delirious for two or three weeks. Mrs. Tillman was so anxious about me, and so kind-hearted, that she nursed me herself, and became very fond of me. She thought me like her daughter, and I suppose I was, for Gran had said so, and she knew and had nursed Annie Tillman. When I finally came to my senses and could think, I told Mrs. Tillman about Gran and Elizabeth and the rest of you, and she said she would send some money, and would let Gran know.

“But by this time Mrs. Tillman had formed a plan to keep me in her daughter's place. She was lonely and not on good terms with her relations by marriage, and had no family of her own. She thought me pretty, and she thought if she had a pretty young lady with her in society she would be more sought after and would receive more invitations and attentions, for she was very fond of fashionable life and had within only a few years been able to enjoy it, when after a lawsuit she recovered all the property that Mr. Tillman had left.



“After a few days Mrs. Tillman broke the dreadful news to me that on sending to find Gran she had learned that both Gran and Elizabeth had died of a contagious fever, and that the little boys who lived with them had gone no one knew where.”

“She told you that?” cried Richard. “Well, what then?”

“I had a relapse, and was very ill. When I grew better, Mrs. Tillman took me to Torquay, and then to Scotland. Then, in the winter, we went to the South of France, and Lady Hobart went with us. She was a dear little girl a year or so younger than Elizabeth; I liked her and the odd name Hobart—for her uncle—which we called her.

“We were on the Continent until spring, when, by means of constant French governesses and monitions of all kinds, Mrs. Tillman considered me sufficiently improved in manners to bring back to England. But it was a year before she introduced me among her gay friends. About the time when I was considered a properly-finished young lady I somehow began to suspect some deception about Gran, and Lady Hobart and I ran away one day in a cab and visited the old place where we had lived,—you know, Richard. But I found that it was all true. There had been a fire which had burnt out many people, but a big woman who made shirts said every one about there had died with a malignant fever.



“Mrs. Tillman was very fond of me. I was still living with her that day when in the carriage I saw you, Richard. Afterward she died, having made no provision for me by a will, and I was as poor as ever. Her lawyer—a dear, good old man—took me to be companion for his niece, kind old wife. They were like parents to me, but I did not stay long with them, because Dr. Fergueson persuaded me that I must come here with him.

“You see, Richard, that it has been my fortune to have an easy, idle, useless life; only since Mrs. Tillman died I have been able—and, indeed, trying—to live like a person responsible to God and desiring to serve humanity. You and Benje have had the hard times, and dear Elizabeth escaped all by dying when Gran did.”

“But you were both deceived and mistaken,” said Richard. “Elizabeth certainly did not die with Gran, for Gran is living yet, hale and hearty. Your husband has no doubt heard of the very old lady upon whose eyes I operated? That was Gran.”

“Richard! Do you tell me Gran—*my* Gran—has been alive all these years? Where is she? How is she?”

“She is very well and cheerful, and she is just where Mrs. Tillman sent her—in one of the almshouses of St. Bride’s Foundation.”

“I shall go to her the first thing to-morrow.



The idea of my being in this pleasant home, and my dear old Gran, who was so careful of me, in an almshouse! And then only Elizabeth died of the fever?"

"Not for a year after you disappeared, at least; we were together for that time. I see the whole thing, Elsie. I beg your pardon: Mrs. Fergueson. Mrs. Tillman wanted to keep you, and she did not want your interests divided with others or your progress in society encumbered with any poor helpless relations. She deceived you."

"Oh, oh, can I believe it?" cried the Charmer.

"Let me tell you our story; then you will see for yourself."

So Richard told of the mourning after the Charmer, and of how Gran was summarily taken to St. Bride's by Mrs. Tillman's maid.

"I can understand now what the hurry was," he said: "Mrs. Tillman wanted Gran out of the way for fear you should get back to her. She no doubt felt that Gran would be better off and you would be better off, and for the rest of us it did not matter. No doubt the maid was paid to do her part well."

"I remember," said the Charmer, "that Mrs. Tillman had given Gran five shillings a week, and that afterward she gave it to an old aunt of her maid's whom otherwise the maid would have had to help."



“That makes the cause of her zeal in the case clear,” said Richard.

“But how did you poor children get on, left alone?”

Richard told his story fully. Arrived now at competence and reputation, he did not sigh over his own past woes, but the Charmer sobbed passionately and tears were in the eyes of Dr. Ferguson; and Richard's voice was low and broken as he told of the miseries and the true-heartedness of the dear Elizabeth, and of how, searching much, he had never found her. Could she be living yet?

“Why not advertise for her?” said Dr. Ferguson. They did advertise in several papers, but Elizabeth was too busy with her poor patients to do more than read the news-headings of the daily journals; so she never saw the advertisement.

Next day the Charmer and Richard went up to St. Bride's, and Richard, going into the little almshouse, found the aged dame cheerily washing up her three or four breakfast-dishes. He took but few words to inform Gran that her long-mourned grandchild was sitting at the gate in her own coupé, and was just as sweet and pretty and good and affectionate as she had ever been.

As a matter of course, the Charmer insisted that her grandmother should not be a pensioner on a charity, but must come and live with her. Gran went in high glee. She had a pretty bedroom, a



black silk gown, a white mull cap and kerchief; she played with the baby, rode in the coupé and had dessert every day for dinner.

For a fortnight Gran was entirely happy; then splendor such as this palled upon her. She wearied for the tiny rooms, the petty cares, the daily planning and forethought; she longed for the company of the other old ladies, her companions now for twelve years. Gran was homesick for the almshouse.

“It is no use, Elsie,” said Richard; “you only injure Gran, trying to keep her here.”

“But, Richard, I cannot let her go back to live on a charity; and if I were willing, why her house is already taken.”

“True; but do as nearly what she longs for as you can. She is too old to sever from all her past life.”

So they hired for Gran lodgings of a small sitting-room and a small bedroom very near the almshouses. They were neat, sunny rooms with a brisk little landlady. A tidy girl who had waited on Gran while she was quite blind was brought back, and with her most of the poor little bits of Gran's cherished furniture. Elsie reinforced this with new articles for use and ornament, and Gran was given a pound a week to spend, her rent being paid by the quarter. Arrived at her new abode, Gran solemnly laid aside the silk gown and mull cap, and rehabil-



itated herself in the flannel garb and black cap of a St. Bride's pensioner. She folded her fine clothes neatly, and said to the Charmer,

"Elsie, *them* I'm to be buried in, remember."

And now for the rest of her days was Gran indeed content. She could make daily calls at the almshouses on old friends, and, being invited when they had received any luxury, could remain to dinner. Every day she had one of the old ladies to five-o'clock tea, and she trotted out with her little servant, and bought buns, shrimps, cress and kippered herring for a treat for tea, and then she further regaled her guests by telling of the splendors in which Elsie lived and the greatness of Dr. Richards.

Meanwhile, Benje had come back to Richard for a long vacation, and Richard had set up housekeeping. He leased a pretty house in Torrington Square, and Mistress Maypinn came to keep house for him, with a sturdy, rosy housemaid for her assistant. Auberle came also, and was in his element answering the bell, doing the marketing, keeping the front steps and the area tidy, and sitting in the office to answer questions when "the doctor was out."

There was a bright little sitting-room in the basement where Auberle read the daily papers and choice selections from the medical journals to Mistress Maypinn, and where they had their meals together.

"You see, Dr. Richard, my lad," said Auberle,



when Richard suggested that formerly he had been more than thankful to sit at the old weaver's board, "foreign travel and calls in May Fair have given you various new-fangled ways which I don't object to, but I can't fall in with, owing to your not being able to teach old dogs new tricks. Moreover, breakfast at nine and dinner at six are ways me and Mrs. Maypinn couldn't settle to. So you'll please let us be comfortable in our ways, just as you saw to it that Gran was let be comfortable in hers."

"Very well, Auberle," said Richard; "only you've been a father to me, and all that I have is open to you."

And now it was two years since Nurse Elizabeth had begun making sunshine in shady places near Portugal street; and again and again Richard had heard her voice, but had not seen her face. One afternoon, going to visit a patient in Portugal street, he heard, as he opened the door of the outer of her two rooms, the sound of soft singing; he recognized the tones which had so roused the memories of old days. Stepping gently toward the half-open door of the inner room, he saw a blue cloak and a little blue bonnet lying on a chest. His patient, bolstered up in her neatly-made bed, had closed eyes and folded hands, and was quietly falling asleep.

In a low chair near the bed sat the nurse. She had her back to the door and was rocking to and fro, singing to sleep the sick woman's teething baby.



The child's head was on the nurse's shoulder, and now its eyelids were drooping, but its restless hands had pulled down the golden coil of the nurse's long hair, and the bright braid fell over her shoulders as Elizabeth's had fallen long ago. And the voice was the voice of Elizabeth, and the song was a simple little ballad taught by the old violinist and once sung at the Varieties.

As Richard stepped forward the singer turned her head, and they looked into each other's eyes. Then Elizabeth rose up, but the instinct of the nurse was strong in her, and she laid the slumbering baby safely on the foot of the bed before she went toward Richard :

“ Oh, Richard, can it be? Are you really what we planned so long ago—the doctor?”

“ Yes, Elizabeth, but not with such access of splendor as we imagined in those old days. I make most of my rounds on foot, and I never drive six horses.”

“ And where is Benje?”

“ At my house just now. And I have found the dear Charmer—just the same sweet Charmer as before, and now Mrs. Fergueson. And, Elizabeth, to find you is the one great wish of her heart—of all our hearts. Let us go to her at once.”

“ My rounds for the day are just finished ; this is the last place,” said Elizabeth. “ Yes, let me go to see Elsie.”

“ And we have such wonders to tell each other—



you and I, Elizabeth," said Richard. "All these years I have been looking for you, and never found any one who seemed to me quite so true and brave and good as the poor little Prodigy and the little Elizabeth of Poplar Court."

Elizabeth shivered :

"Richard, I wake up at night even now from dreadful dreams of Poplar Court, with its rats and its fever memories and its *delirium tremens* raging."

"Now I think of it, Elizabeth, you must come home with me, for Elsie and her husband are coming there to tea with Gran and Benje. They will not be there for over an hour after us, and you will have time to tell all your story to 'me and Benje,' and to hear ours."

Elizabeth smiled at the old phrase.

Richard called a cab, and they drove to Elizabeth's lodgings, and he waited in the cab while she went up to make ready. She came down after a time with her "nurse's dress" laid aside and wearing a gray silk and a lace collar which she had worn when living with the friend who had been her first patient. A fair, sweet woman looked Elizabeth in her shimmering gray gown and a gray hat with a cluster of blue violets under the brim.

"How glad Benje will be to see you!" said Richard.

Then, when they reached Richard's home, the first thing was to surprise Benje, and then to see the



whole house, and then to sit in the little drawing-room, Elizabeth between the two brothers while she told her story of privation, toil, struggle, help, hope, the present of useful work.

And the story of Richard and Benje was untold when the Charmer arrived with Gran. Then all was to be told over again, and dinner came in before Elizabeth heard the Charmer's story. After that Richard narrated his adventures and Benje's. And now they could laugh at some things which had made them cry before.

"And where is the dear old Jew Jacob?" asked Elizabeth.

"He died two years ago."

"Well, I must go straight down stairs and shake hands with Auberle and Mistress Maypinn;" and when she came up, "It was to that very Mrs. Maypinn I sold my hair."

"And, dearest Elizabeth, I *know* it was your hair that Mrs. Tillman bought. And, now I think of it, I am sure you were the poor girl Lady Hobart found in the Green Park," cried the Charmer.

But Richard did not that night tell Elizabeth the story of poor Betty and her misfortunes; that would have been too sad.

"You must come home with me to-night, Elizabeth," said Elsie; "you belong to me always. It is half-past ten; are you ready to go?"

"Yes, but not with you, dear; I have my rounds



to make early. I could not desert my sick people so.”

“I am going to take Elizabeth home; I have ordered a cab,” said Richard, decidedly.

So the others went away, and Richard and Benje stood under the chandelier in the pleasant drawing-room with Elizabeth between them.

“Elizabeth,” said Richard, “you know we planned that I was to be a doctor and have a three-story brick house and make money. I am a doctor, and here is the house, and I am making some money—enough, at least.”

“The planning has turned out well,” cried she, gayly.

“But we also planned that you were to come and live with me, and to share all that I had, Elizabeth.”

“And why can’t Elizabeth come now?” demanded Benje.

“Why not, Elizabeth?” said Richard.

“There are my poor patients, you know, Richard.”

“I know. There is exactly the right kind of nurse at King’s College Hospital just finished her training; she can take your place, Elizabeth, and you, according to our means, can be the Lady Bountiful of the whole district—your nurse’s tower of refuge.”

“But—but I was trained, you know, for a special purpose, and my friend devoted that much money



to do that very work. If, now, I throw away my training—”

“You will never throw it away; you will always be more useful for that training and for your experiences, Elizabeth. Besides, we will make that good also. You and I will find some suitable girl and give her just the course in nursing which you took. Now, Elizabeth, there can never be to me but one Elizabeth in all the world. You shared my miserable boyhood; share now my fortunate manhood. Why not, Elizabeth?”

“Why not?” echoed Benje.

“There is—no reason why not,” said Elizabeth.



## AFTER-THOUGHT.

### INASMUCH.

“IF I had dwelt”—so mused a tender woman,  
All fine emotions stirred  
Through pondering o'er that Life, divine yet human,  
Told in the sacred word—

“If I had dwelt of old, a Jewish maiden,  
In some Judean street,  
Where Jesus walked, and heard his word so laden  
With comfort strangely sweet,

“And seen the face where utmost pity blended  
With each rebuke of wrong,  
I would have left my lattice, and descended,  
And followed with the throng.

“If I had been the daughter, jewel-girdled,  
Of some rich rabbi there,  
Seeing the sick, blind, halt, my blood had curdled,  
At sight of such despair,

“And I had wrenched the sapphires from my fillet,  
Nor let one spark remain:  
Snatched up my gold, amid the crowd to spill it,  
For pity of their pain.



“I would have let the palsied fingers hold me ;  
 I would have walked between  
 The Marys and Salome while they told me  
 About the Magdalene.

“‘Foxes have holes’—I think my heart had broken  
 To hear the words so said—  
 ‘While Christ had not’—were sadder ever spoken?—  
 ‘A place to lay his head.’

“I would have flung abroad my doors before him,  
 And in my joy have been  
 First on the threshold, eager to adore him,  
 And crave his entrance in.”

Ah ! would you so? Without a recognition  
 You passed Him yesterday,  
 Jostled aside unhelped his mute petition,  
 And calmly went your way.

With warmth and comfort, garmented and girdled—  
 Before your window-sill  
 Sweep heart-sick crowds ; and if your blood is curdled,  
 You wear your jewels still.

You catch aside your robes lest Want should clutch them  
 In its implorings wild,  
 Or lest some woeful penitent might touch them,  
 And you be thus defiled.

O dreamers dreaming that your faith is keeping  
 All service free from blot,  
 Christ daily walks your streets, sick, suffering, weeping,  
 And ye perceive him not !

MARGARET J. PRESTON.























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